

Global religious leaders reviled at Baghdad church killing

by [Peter Kenny](#)

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Geneva, November 1 (ENI)--The World Council of Churches general secretary, the Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit, has joined Pope Benedict XVI and other religious leaders in condemning the "criminal act of terror" in Baghdad when gunmen took hostages in a city church, resulting in the deaths of nearly 60 people.

"The World Council of Churches strongly condemns the criminal act of terror that took place on Sunday in the Sayyidat al-Najat Church in Baghdad and expresses its deep sympathy and solidarity with those who lost their loved ones and prays for a speedy recovery for the injured," said Tveit in a 1 November statement.

Earlier in an address to mark All Saints Day, the Pope told pilgrims in St Peter's Square, "I pray for the victims of this absurd violence, all the more ferocious in that it struck defenceless people united in the house of God, which is a place of love and reconciliation."

Iraqi television stations said assailants wearing suicide vests from the Islamic State of Iraq, an al-Qaida-linked group, stormed the church in Baghdad's Karrada district during an evening service. Hostages and police officers were killed when security forces raided the Baghdad church to free the more than 100 Iraqi Catholics who had been captured.

In East Jerusalem the group known as Islamic and Christian Religious leadership released a statement to ENInews which said, "All of us are responsible when people, children of the one God are killed in a house of God." It noted in its statement, "No religion or religious person can hide behind the word of God and justify what is happening in Iraq. We from Jerusalem consider those who stand behind this murderous act as outside of any religion of God."

In his statement Tveit said that the WCC's 349 churches representing more than 500 million Christians have been deeply troubled by the "by the continuous suffering of Christians in Iraq and continues to stand in solidarity with all churches as they pass through turbulent and challenging times ... amidst hatred and aggression".

The WCC leader stated, "This is not the first time that such attacks have targeted Christian communities in Iraq. All those responsible need to be brought to justice, and governmental authorities should take their responsibility to bring safety and security to all citizens and particularly to those in vulnerable situations."

Tveit made his comments shortly before delivering the opening address at a Christian-Muslim meeting at the WCC headquarters in Geneva, taking place from 1-4 November.

- Link to conference "Transforming Communities: Christians and Muslims Building a Common Future": www.muslimsandchristians.net/