

Kidnapped principal beheaded in the Philippines

A kidnapped state school principal was beheaded by his abductors on a southern Philippine island, a regional military spokesman said Monday.

The head of Gabriel Canizares, 36, was recovered at dawn Monday at a petrol station in Jolo town on Jolo Island, 1,000 km south of Manila, Major Ramon David Hontiveros said.

Hontiveros said two motorcycle-riding gunmen, believed to be Abu Sayyaf rebels, allegedly threw a plastic bag containing the victim's head in front of the petrol station.

Police officers were still looking for Canizares' body.

Canizares was seized Oct 19 by a dozen Abu Sayyaf guerrillas in Patikul town while travelling in a passenger minibus.

The kidnapping occurred despite intensified military operations against the Abu Sayyaf rebels after the release in July of the last of three international Red Cross volunteers seized by the guerrillas on Jolo in January.

The Abu Sayyaf is the smallest but most violent Muslim rebel group in the southern Philippines. The group has been responsible for deadly terrorist attacks and high-profile kidnappings in the country.

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo Monday ordered the military and the police 'to put an end to the Abu Sayyaf group's heinous and inhumane atrocities'.

'The death of Mr Canizares will not be in vain,' deputy presidential spokeswoman Lorelie Fajardo said. 'Rescue efforts will shift to punitive action.'

'The police and military operations are in full swing,' she said. 'We shall make them pay for the enormity of this savagery.'

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