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TO: BROTHER PROVINCIALS AND COMMUNITIES

FROM: THE SECRETARY GENERAL

BROTHER HENRI VERGES HAS BEEN MURDERED

On Sunday 8th May, a day on which a March of Reconciliation took place in Algiers, our Brother Henri Vergès (of the Province of N.D. de l'Hermitage) aged 64, was murdered along with a nun in the library where they were welcoming a number of secondary school pupils in a working class district of the city.

Two young armed fundamentalist Moslems wanted to enter the library. Sister Paule-Hélène remarked that they did not have their enrolment cards. When they insisted, Sister took them to the room where Brother Henri was. Shortly afterwards our Brother and the Sister were executed. Brother Michel Voute, who was in another part of the house, was alerted by the cries of the students who had witnessed the double murder.

Brother Henri Vergès was sent to Algeria in 1969 and immediately began studying Arabic. He was then 39 years old. The following year he became principal of our college, St Bonaventure's, working in close collaboration with the parents of the pupils.

In 1976 our establishment was nationalised. The Brothers returned to France, but Brother Henri, on the appeal of the Archbishop of Algiers, remained there. He obtained the post of French teacher in a state secondary school 120 km from Algiers.

He lived alone for several years very close to his pupils, forming special bonds with the Moslem teachers, leading a life of intense prayer, and of profound dialogue with his Moslem friends.

Brother Jesús Marcos of the Province of Peru joined him in 1983. A trial struck the two Brothers in 1988: they lost the right to teach. Archbishop Tessier suggested that they take on the responsibility and direction of a library formerly run by the White Fathers, open to senior secondary school pupils of the Kasbah, one of the working class suburbs of Algiers.

Brother Henri had applied for Algerian citizenship. Along with the priests and other religious present in the country they lived in close solidarity with Algerian people, never showing fear or distress in the atmosphere of mounting tension and hostility towards foreigners.

He was passionately convinced of the importance of the presence of the Church in Algeria, an Islamic land and a nation more and more destabilised by fundamentalism. A Gospel Presence lived

daily solidarity, in joyous openness to youth, completely at the disposal of events seen as the
ns from God, a deep spiritual life which allowed him to communicate with numerous Moslems
o truly loved God.

te are some extracts from his intervention on the occasion of the celebration, in 1991, of the
tenary of the arrival of the Brothers in Algeria:

ie hundred years of travelling with the Church in Algeria, sharing her limits but also her humble
ilability to the call of the Lord, and to the call of people, in a patient dialogue, and attentive to
Thanksgiving in the Holy Spirit with Mary, in an untroubled openness to the future.

at is in store for us in this our second century which is beginning? God alone knows!
enough for us to go on in faith, like Abraham who did not have much idea where God was
ing him!

from stage to stage he went on."