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Iraqi archbishop 'not afraid' after shooting

by Carol Glatz by Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY -- Gunmen shooting at guards keeping watch over the archbishop's residence in Kirkuk in northern Iraq triggered a firefight, leaving two of the gunmen dead and five policemen wounded.

Chaldean Catholic Archbishop Louis Sako told Vatican Radio he had just returned home from a parish visit before the drive-by attack Wednesday.

After the shooting, the archbishop said he immediately went to the scene to bolster the spirits of guards and bystanders.

"We are not afraid," he said. "It's also true that the situation is a bit tense, and there's no order or control in the country. We, however, were not afraid, at least not immediately."

Sako said he believes the gunmen had the wrong target. Police suspect the attackers were targeting a member of the Iraqi parliament who lives next to the archbishop's house and whose home also was attacked Sunday, according to the Rome-based AsiaNews.

Sako said the gunmen were from Baghdad "and, therefore, were not sure where to go. They found themselves facing our security guards and fired, without knowing who they were shooting at."

Three men in a white car shot at the residence guards. The guards at the archbishop's residence and the parliamentarian's house returned fire. Police nearby intervened as well, the archbishop said.

Two of the three gunmen were killed, and one was arrested.

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