

Pastor Shot and Killed After Church Service Is Latest Casualty in String of Attacks on Religious Leaders

The latest casualty in the scourge of deadly violence against members of the clergy in Mexico is a pastor who was shot following a Sunday church service.

Several weeks ago, Charisma News reported that Pastor Alfrery LÍctor Cruz Canseco was sitting in his car outside Fraternidad Cristiana church in the town of Tlalixtac de Cabrera in Oaxaca state when he was shot at point-blank range. He died while being transported to a local hospital.

“Priests are at grave risk in Mexico as well as in Colombia, yet little attention is being paid to how grave the situation regarding criminal gangs targeting Mexican priests and pastors has become,” said Dede Laugesen, executive director of Save the Persecuted Christians. “Our hope and prayer is to raise awareness among Christians about these deadly attacks so they can advocate on behalf of the priests and pastors and urge that the criminals carrying out the violence be held accountable.”

Save the Persecuted Christians, which advocates on behalf of hundreds of millions of Christians facing heavy persecution worldwide, also raises awareness about endangered clergy in Mexico through the “The People of the Cross” exhibit, a series of vertical traveling banners that details Christian persecution in various countries around the world. The exhibit’s panel on Mexico reports that, until recently, priests didn’t even have the right to vote. As secular ideology flourishes and its populace elects socialist leaders,

Mexico is increasingly hostile to religious expression.

“Often corrupt and violent, Mexico has become one of the most dangerous places for clergy,” the Mexico panel reads. “Drug-gangs ruthlessly murder priests and pastors, and indigenous leaders attack converts to Christianity, often without fear of arrest.”

Christian Solidarity Worldwide also reported that Pastor Cruz Canseco’s recent killing comes on the heels of a series of attacks that has targeted religious leaders in the region. Among these attacks was the kidnapping of Pastor Aarón Méndez Ruiz, who ran a shelter for Cuban immigrants in Nuevo Laredo and was abducted in early August.

“The People of the Cross” banners also feature images, facts and quotes from recent news stories about the persecution of Christians in multiple countries, such as North Korea, where Christians are tortured, imprisoned and executed; Syria, where Christian girls and women have been sold into sex slavery; Nigeria and East Africa, where terrorists are exterminating Christians with genocidal intent; and China, where Communists are increasingly hostile to people of faith and churches are demolished. A majority of the countries highlighted in the banners are high on Open Doors’ 2019 World Watch List, including Mexico at No. 39.

“The People of the Cross” exhibit tours the United States, reaching an audience to date of at least 50,000, and is available for churches, public venues and special events. This exhibit has been joined by another, “Warfare on Women”, released during the 2019 U.S. Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom, which reveals the specific terror-tactic used to demean and degrade female believers to instill fear into the heart of Christian communities. To learn more about hosting a traveling exhibit contact Save the Persecuted Christians or visit the website, where panels are available to view online.

The mission of Save the Persecuted Christians is to save lives and save souls by disseminating actionable information about the magnitude of the persecution taking place globally and by mobilizing concerned Americans for the purpose of disincentivizing further attacks on those who follow Jesus.

According to Aid to the Church in Need's biannual report on Religious Freedom in the World, over 300 million Christians experience persecution. According to Open Doors USA World Watch List, 245 million Christians are victims of high to extreme levels of persecution (torture, rape, sex-slavery, expulsion, murder and genocide), an increase of 14% over 2018. Open Doors also estimates 1 in 9 of the world's Christians experience persecution and that every month, 345 Christians are killed, often in public and without regard to gender or age; 219 Christians are abducted and imprisoned indefinitely without trial and 106 churches are demolished.

Save the Persecuted Christians has developed a dedicated news aggregator—to capture current instances of persecution and to provide readers with an easy way to share these heartbreaking stories with others. Stories are categorized and resource reports are easily accessible.

With so much of the world's Christian population being attacked, imprisoned and/or exiled for their beliefs, such as clergy in Mexico, the need has never been greater for the sort of grassroots campaign STPC's SaveUs Movement is working to foster. Its efforts are modeled after a miraculously successful one that helped free another population suffering from heavy persecution—Soviet Jews—by penalizing those in the Kremlin responsible for such repression. Through this movement, Save the Persecuted Christians endeavors to provide American policymakers with the popular support they need to effect real change worldwide and alleviate systemically the suffering being experienced by so many of those following Christ.