

Priests Murdered in Colombia Buried Amid Community Protests

Father Bernardo Echeverry, 62, and Father Hector Fabio Cabrera, 35, who ministered at San Sebastian Roman Catholic parish in Roldanillo village, Valle, Colombia, were found murdered late Sept. 27.

Neighbors reported to police having seen two men running from the parish. Investigating officers found the priests' bodies in the residence they shared near the church.

Open Doors Colombia notes that in the last year alone, eight priests have been killed in the country.

According to police and media reports, two men broke into the residence while the priests were celebrating 8 p.m. Mass and awaited the priests with knives. The murderers fled with offerings, a computer and an iPad.

Local authorities convened a security council meeting where Ubeimar Delgado, governor of Valle, linked the double murder to organized crime. Gen. Rodolfo Palomino, national police director, promised that his organization would not allow the snatching of this community's most sacred members: its spiritual leaders.

After the priests' Sept. 30 funeral, Roldanillo residents peacefully marched to demand justice for the murders.

In Medellín early Sept. 28, disabled priest Luis Javier Sarrázola Úsuga was found stabbed to death in his residence in the Manrique neighborhood. According to media reports, a woman bringing a meal to Sarrázola Úsuga entered his home as an unidentified young man fled with a suitcase. The woman and

neighbors found his body, which had been stabbed in the chest more than 30 times.

Sarrázola Úsuga, 48, operated a charity called by its acronym FUNEPALIS, or Educational Foundation for Peace and Social Freedom, which served the poor in Medellín's Carambolas neighborhood. Some media reports state Sarrázola Úsuga was affiliated with the Anglican church.

According to the Episcopal Conference, in the last 29 years in Colombia, 84 Roman Catholic priests and two bishops have been murdered.

Pray that the Lord would strengthen and sustain the families of these priests. Pray for the village of Roldanillo and Medellín's Carambolas neighborhood. Pray for the Lord's guidance for the new spiritual leaders appointed.

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