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## MEXICO | Police Officer Killed Defending Residence

A police officer was killed Oct. 21 in an attempted attack on a former Archbishop in Mexico City, the latest in a series of attacks on Catholic priests this month.

José Javier Hernández Nava was shot dead when three armed men attempted to break into Cardinal Norberto Rivera Carrera's house, located in the Colonia Florida neighborhood in Álvaro Obregón borough, Mexico City.

José Javier Hernández Nava was one of the bodyguards charged with protecting Cardinal Norberto Rivera Carrera, the former Archbishop of Mexico City (1995-2017), an influential figure in the church for many years.

The current Archbishop of Mexico City, Carlos Aguiar Retes, sent a tweet expressing his sympathies to José Javier Hernández Nava's family and calling for more information from the authorities, "I pray for his family and the eternal rest of his soul, we continue to wait for the official information on behalf of the authorities."

Initial investigations carried out by the Attorney's Office indicate the attack on the Cardinal was an unsuccessful robbery, but other motives have not been ruled out. Guillermo Gazanini Espinoza of the Catholic Multimedia Centre (CCM) stated, "The matter is not minor. Today we have a dead police officer who confronted strangers who simulated the delivery of a package and opened fire against him. Although the motive could have been robbery, direct action must exhaust all possible lines [of investigation] so that public opinion is truthfully informed"

The attempted attack on Cardinal Norberto Rivera Carrera follows a series of attacks against Catholic priests this month.

Father Enrique Madrid Hernández disappeared from Texcaltitlán, Mexico State on Oct. 17. He was later released by his captors and seen in public again on Oct. 19. Father Ícmar Arturo Orta was found dead with bullet wounds in Rosarito, Rosarito Beach Municipality, Baja California State on Oct. 13 after he had been missing for three days. Father Juan Carlos Alatríste Flores was kidnapped from Gustavo A. Madero municipality in Mexico City on Oct. 2 but managed to escape on Oct. 6. Ten religious leaders have been killed in Mexico in 2018, more than double the number killed in 2017.

The expansion of violent criminal groups in the country has led to an increase in violence against religious leaders. Many of these groups view church leaders, both Catholic and Protestant, and their influence, as a threat to their power. Church leaders have been targeted because of their refusal to cooperate with criminal groups. For example, attempts have been made to coerce church leaders into paying protection money or to allow their church to act as a front for money laundering. In March 2017, the CCM reported that 520 priests were currently being extorted.

Anna Lee Stangl, CSW's Joint Head of Advocacy and Team Leader for the Americas said, "We extend our condolences to the families of Father Ícmar Arturo Orta and police officer José Javier Hernández Nava, who lost their lives this month. We call on the Mexican government to work with religious associations to put in place mechanisms to provide effective protection for religious leaders in Mexico, especially those who are working in dangerous areas or who have received credible threats. We urge the government to strengthen rule of law by carrying out thorough, transparent and impartial investigations into these events, ensuring that persecutors are brought to justice."