

(UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION)

COLOMBIAN BISHOPS REJECT PRIEST'S MURDER

The Colombian Bishops, informed of the bloody murder of Rev. Father Gualberto Arrieta Oviedo, pastor of Our Lady of Carmen Church in Capurganá, Diocese of Apartado, wish to express their deep sorrow and concern for this new act of violence which has inflicted loss and afflicted the Catholic Church deeply as well as the Colombian people.

With the murder of Father Gualberto Arrieta Oviedo, the number of priests rises to six that have been murdered in Colombia so far in this year of 2011. "A very worrying figure, which demonstrates the state of violence and moral decay in which our society lives," said Monsignor Juan Vicente Córdoba, Secretary General of the Episcopate, stressing "the courageous commitment of our priests to the prophetic denunciation of injustice and the cause of the poorest in the country. "

We remember the priests who through recent violence in our country have been killed:

Father Reynel Restrepo Idárraga, pastor of the town of Marmato (Caldas), who had served for two years as pastor in the same locality, shot in the afternoon of September first, while riding a motorcycle on the road linking the towns of Bethlehem of Umbria with Guatica.

On January 27 were found in the town of Kennedy, in Bogotá, the bodies of the priests Rafael Reátiga Rojas (of the Diocese of Soacha) and Richard Armando Piffano Laguado (Diocese of Fontibón).

On the night of February 12, the priest Luis Carlos Orozco Cardona was killed in the town of Rionegro (Antioquia).

On May 12, the priest Gustavo García, Chaplain of the University Minuto de Dios, was murdered in Bogotá by a man during an assault to rob him of his cell phone.

Bishop Juan Vicente Córdoba urged the authorities to provide effective protection to the pastoral ministers of the Church. "These acts of violence must be investigated rigorously and punished to the fullest extent of the law, preventing them from going unpunished," concluded the Secretary General of the Episcopate.

According to figures from the Episcopal Conference of Colombia, between 1984 and September 2011, there have been killed in this country two bishops, 79 priests, eight men and women religious, as well as three seminarians.