



AMERICA/COLOMBIA - A few hours after the end of the Week of Peace, another priest was killed, the sixth in 2011

Bogota (Agenzia Fides) - The Bishops of Colombia have expressed their deep sorrow and concern over the murder of don Gualberto Oviedo Arrieta, priest of Our Lady of Carmen in Capurganá (10 kilometers from the border with Panama, about 280 km from the capital Bogota), in the diocese of Apartadó, which took place at dawn yesterday, September 12. Father Oviedo Arrieta was 34 years old and had been a priest for 2 years. The Episcopal Conference of Colombia issued a statement, a copy of which was sent to Fides, which states: "the Catholic Church mourns for this new act of violence that has deeply saddened the Colombian people".

According to what was communicated by Radio Caracol, police sources reported that the priest's body was found, covered with wounds and stabs, in the rectory of the parish in the touristic resort of Capurganá, on the shores of the Caribbean Sea. At first glance no acts of violence were noticed within the house and nothing was stolen.

The murder took place just hours after the conclusion of the "Week of Peace" which from 5 to 11 September saw schools, universities and institutions mobilized in Colombia on such an important issue in the current national context. The closing Eucharist of the Week was celebrated by Father Joaquin Sanchez Garcia, SJ, Rector of the Universidad Javeriana, who recalled the country's human rights defenders and St. Peter Claver, the patron of human rights. The event took place at the Simon Bolivar park in Bogota for the great influx of people.

The Bishops' note underlines that with the killing of Fr. Gualberto Oviedo Arrieta 6 priests have already been killed in Colombia in 2011: "a very worrying figure, which shows the state of violence and moral degradation in our society", says Mgr. Juan Vicente Cordoba Villota, Auxiliary Bishop of Bucaramanga and General Secretary of the Colombian Episcopate.

The note lists the cases of other Catholic priests murdered in Colombia this year, Father Reynel Restrepo Idárraga (01/09/2011), Father Rafael Reátiga Rojas (of the Diocese of Soacha) and father Richard Armando Piffano Laguado (of the Diocese of Fontibon) (27/01/2011), Father Luis Carlos Orozco Cardona (12/02/2011), Father Gustavo Garcia (12/05/2011). According to the Episcopal Conference of Colombia, between 1984 and September 2011, two Bishops, 79 priests, eight religious men and three seminarians have been killed in the country. (CE) (Agenzia Fides 13/09/2011)