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AMERICA/VENEZUELA - Another Catholic priest killed in Latin America

Barquisimeto (Agenzia Fides)- Another Catholic priest has been killed in a Latin American country. Fr. José Ramón Mendoza, age 44, was shot dead in the evening of Sunday 17 February in the Venezuelan state of Lara (about 400 km from Caracas) Fr. Mendoza was driving along the El Manzano road in the district of Iribarren. When he stopped at the traffic lights he was attacked by a gang of bandits. According to information supplied by the police probably the priest's first reaction was to accelerate, but, fatally wounded with a shot to the head, he was found dead at the crossing of via Uruguay and via La Riberena.
The first news of the tragic event published by the local El Informador newspaper, said the crime would appear to be an attempted car theft which ended in tragedy. Local authorities have opened an enquiry to establish what actually happened.
A report sent to Fides said that Fr José Mendoza was the parish priest at San Juan Evangelista parish, in the Brisas District of El Obelisco.
The Archbishop of Barquisimeto, Archbishop Antonio José López Castillo, who went to the morgue to identify the body, said, addressing some local Catholics who had gathered at the site: "Fr. Mendoza was a man of prayer. Violence is never a way forward. They have taken the life of a minister of God. They have taken the life of an innocent man".
The archdiocese has issued a statement calling for respect for human life, and urging the authorities to put an end to all violence.
In 2010 a Catholic priest was killed in the state of Bolivar. Since the beginning of this year 2013, a total number of 4 priests have been killed in Latin America. (see Fides 05/02/2013). (CE) (Agenzia Fides, 19/2/2013)

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