

Blanca Sarahí Izaguirre Lozano National Commissioner for Human Rights of Honduras (CONADEH)	Rosa Seaman Vice-Minister for Protection Secretariat for Human Rights (SEDH)
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March 21, 2022

Dear Commissioner Izaguirre and Vice-Minister Seaman:

We are shocked and saddened to learn of the killing of **Father José Enrique Vásquez**, the parish priest at San José Catholic Church in the Medina neighborhood of San Pedro Sula, Cortés Department. His lifeless body was entered at the morgue as an unknown person at about 10 p.m. on March 2. There were six bullet wounds in his body, including two in the head and two in the chest.

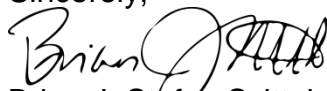
Earlier in the day, Bishop Ángel Garachana of the Catholic Diocese of San Pedro Sula had denounced the disappearance of Father Vásquez when he did not return to his parish after leaving his mother's house in Santa Cruz de Yojoja, Cortés Department, at 10am. He was traveling back to his parish in San Pedro Sula for Ash Wednesday religious services when he was killed on the La Regina bridge, in Morazán, Yoro Department, which borders Cortés. His vehicle, a gray Mazda, was found in Victoria, Yoro Department.

The Bishops' Conference lamented that "the majority of deaths in Honduras go unpunished, it is the sad reality... the murder and impunity...is a serious problem in Honduras that the new government must solve." Bishop Garachana added that Father José Enrique Vásquez was another victim of the ceaseless violence in Honduras, which is a kind of pandemic because it has killed 4,000 or more people each year.

We understand that two suspects (Jorge Martín Guzman Maldonado and José Lenim Medina Buezo) were arrested on March 16 in connection with the murder of Father José Enrique Vásquez, who, in his 16 years as a Catholic priest, had never reported any threats against him.

We strongly urge you to conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into the murder of Father José Enrique Vásquez, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice.

Sincerely,


 Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator


 Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Luis Suazo Barahona, Ambassador of Honduras to the US ~ via email and US mail
 Carlos Bernal Pulido, Rapporteur for Honduras, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email and US mail
 Isabel Albaladejo Escribano, Representative to Honduras of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OACNUDH) ~ via email
 Alice Shackelford, UN Resident Coordinator in Honduras, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ~ via email
 US Embassy in Honduras: Colleen Hoey, Chargé d'Affaires; Nate Rettenmayer, Political Officer; Ariel Jahner, Human Rights Officer ~ via email
 US State Department: Molly Runyon, Honduras Desk Officer ~ via email
 US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
 US Representatives Beatty, Brown, Gibbs, González, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

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The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter: