



People carry the coffin of Catholic priest Marcelo Perez, who was killed in San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas state, Mexico, Sunday, Oct. 20, 2024. (AP/Isabel Mateos)

by Associated Press

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The Roman Catholic church confirmed Tuesday that an altar boy was one of two minors killed by gunmen outside a church on Mexico's Gulf coast.

The Catholic Multimedia Center said the other boy had been helping his mother clean the church in the Gulf coast state of Veracruz.

Gunmen on a motorcycle sprayed the two boys with bullets in the village of Entabladero and then drove off late Saturday.

State prosecutors confirmed the killings and said the possible motive remained under investigation. They were the latest in a series of murders that have hit the church in Mexico.

A priest and Indigenous peace activist [was gunned down](#) in the southern state of Chiapas on Oct. 20, becoming the tenth priest killed in Mexico in five years.

In 2023, another priest was killed in the western Mexican state of Michoacan.

Also Tuesday, in the neighboring state of Oaxaca, officials confirmed the coach for a well-known Indigenous youth basketball program had been shot to death.

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While state prosecutors identified the victim only by his initials, activists of the Triqui Indigenous community identified him as coach Rigoberto Martínez.

The Triqui youth basketball program works with kids from villages so remote and so poor that they play without shoes. Many see the sport as a way out of the poverty and violence that characterizes their home region in the mountains of Oaxaca state.

The team rose to fame when the Triqui youths played U.S. school teams during a 2013 trip to the Los Angeles area. The players were featured in a 2015 documentary “Gigantes Descalzos,” or “Shoeless Giants.”

Alejandro Moreno, the leader of the opposition Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI, lamented the killing and noted that 34 murders of members of the Triqui community remain unpunished.

Factional fighting has plagued the region for almost two decades.

In 2010, a Finnish human rights observer and a Mexican political activist were shot to death when unidentified gunmen ambushed a convoy of activists.