News

Fredrick Nzwili

View Author Profile

Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

NAIROBI, Kenya — October 18, 2019

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint



Father Gerald Matolo, the priest who first received Fr. Michael Maingi Kyengo at the Thatha Parish is seen in this 2017 file photo. Father Matolo said Father Kyengo may have been targeted by someone who thought he had money. (CNS/Fredrick Nzwili)

A Catholic priest who disappeared from his family home was found dead in a shallow grave in southeastern Kenya a week after he was reported missing.

Police investigators and pathologists Oct. 16 exhumed the body of Fr. Michael Maingi Kyengo, 43. They said his body had been stashed in a sack.

Onlookers watched in shock as Kyengo's body was pulled from a seasonal riverbed. Police said he had been strangled and that his body had been disfigured.

Kyengo was a parish priest in Thatha at a parish in the Diocese of Machakos.

He had been staying with his parents at their home about 32 miles north of Nairobi before his family reported him missing Oct. 11. He had traveled there for his annual leave Oct. 1, said Fr. Josephat Kyambuu, another priest at the parish.

"I had heard not from him for two weeks. It hit me to hear of his death," Kyambuu told Catholic News Service Oct. 17. "He never said he was facing any threats."

The death is among a string of clergy homicides in recent months.

Kyengo's body was found after investigators traced his cellphone, car and credit card from a 25-year-old suspect, who was arrested and was being held in police custody. Police said the suspect took investigators to the shallow grave.

A local newspaper reported that as many as four people may have participated in the killing. Kyengo had served as a priest in Thatha since his ordination in 2012.

Other Kenyan priests also have been killed during robberies as well as for their opposition to human rights abuses and strong stands against corruption.

"Many bishops and priests have been targeted for exposing evil practices. They are being killed for standing for the truth," said Fr. Nicholas Mutua, justice and peace coordinator in the Diocese of Garissa.

In some cases, authorities said, the clergymen were likely targeted by people who think they may be carrying large amounts of church funds.

In December, Fr. John Njoroge, a parish priest in Kiambu, 10 miles north of Nairobi, was shot dead by thugs who robbed him of the weekly church collection.

Four men had blocked the priest's car on a dirt road and demanded a bag containing money that he was carrying. The gunmen shot the priest through the windshield of the car in which he was riding, striking him in the chest.

Advertisement