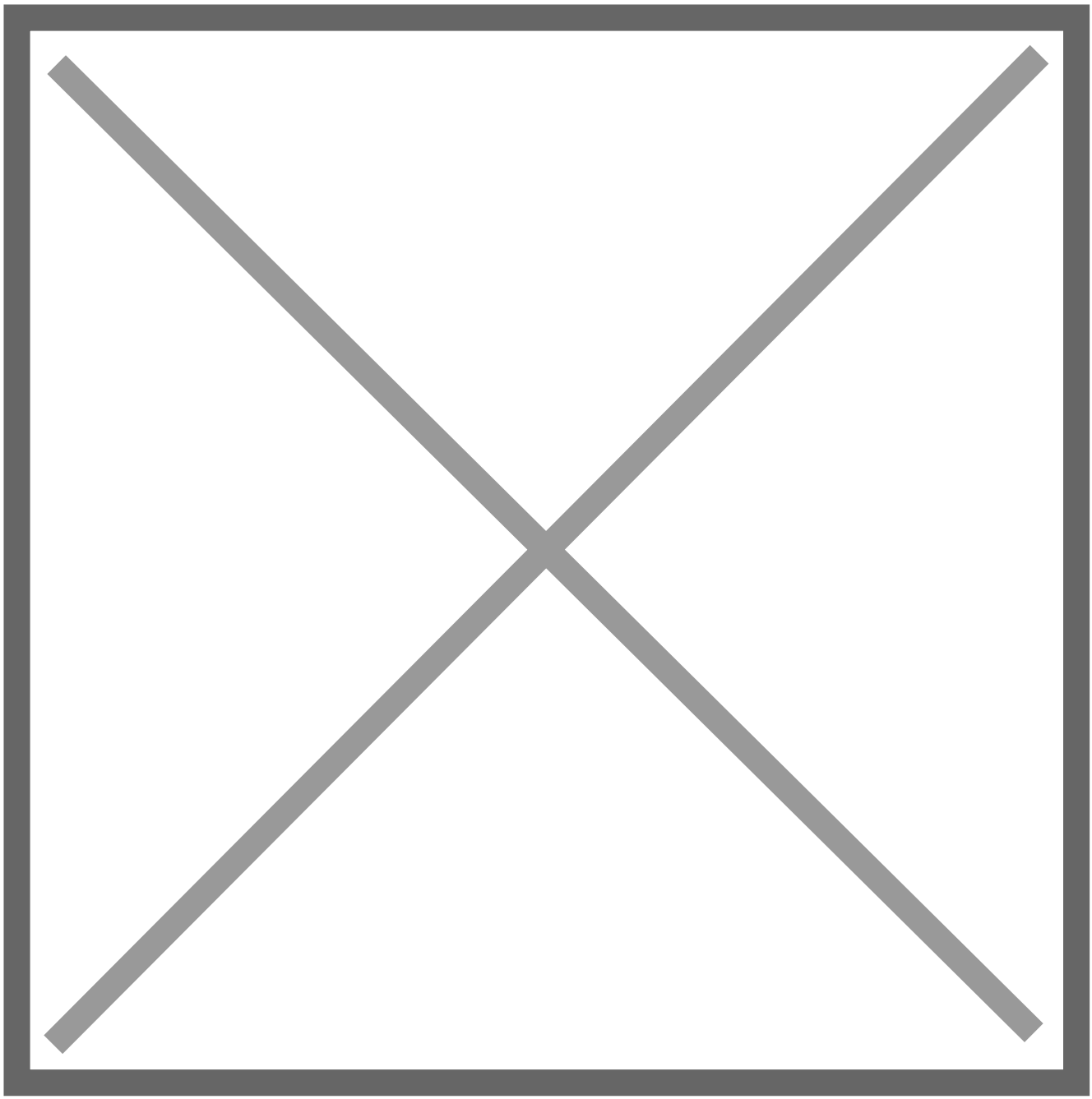
News



Nicaraguan police officers keep watch outside a Catholic church in Managua where Bishop Rolando José Álvarez of Matagalpa was taking refuge after he had been targeted by the police, May 20, 2022. (CNS photo/Maynor Valenzuela, Reuters)



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Detained Nicaraguan Bishop Rolando José Álvarez appeared in a video Aug. 11, a week into his de facto house arrest by government authorities, saying that he and the companions who are with him have hearts full of forgiveness and love.

The video, taken inside a chapel of the church building where the group is being detained, is part homily, part update on the spirits of the priests and lay Catholics with the bishop. Police in riot gear have prevented all from leaving the building.

Some worry about whether food or medicine has been allowed in.

Their detention came after government officials shut down radio stations under the auspices of the Diocese of Matagalpa, in northern Nicaragua, where Álvarez serves.

The bishop has criticized the government over their repression of the populace. The government has accused the bishop of "organizing violent groups" and encouraging them them "to carry out acts of hate against the population."

In the video, Álvarez mentions the day's Gospel, which "invites us to forgive up to 70 times seven," he said, in a likely reference to the group's captors and the situation they find themselves in.

"We were talking among ourselves, here in the curia, precisely about the state of our hearts ... we want to tell you, brothers and sisters, that our hearts are full of love, and we're at peace. Our hearts are full of forgiveness. That's why we're at peace. Our hearts are full of the mercy of God, and so we're at peace. As I said at the beginning of the celebration, we are at rest in the hands of the Lord."

The group's plight has caught the attention of human rights activist Bianca Jagger, a Catholic and native of Nicaragua.

On Aug. 11, she said she was making an urgent plea to Catholic leaders, particularly episcopal conferences worldwide: "Do not abandon Bishop Álvarez."

On Aug. 12, Auxiliary Bishop Silvio José Báez of Managua, who now lives in Miami after being forced to leave the country following death threats in 2019, condemned the government's actions via Twitter, calling the detention a "kidnapping."

"I am with him (in spirit) with my love and prayers," he said of his brother bishop. "He and those with him must be released!"

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