Vatican
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The headshots of two older brown men are shown side by side. One has a moustache, the oth

Mexican Jesuits Fr. Javier Campos Morales and Fr. Joaquín César Mora Salazar were murdered in their rural parish June 20, 2022, while providing shelter to an individual fleeing a gunman. (CNS photo/courtesy The Jesuit province in Mexico)



by Catholic News Service

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Vatican City — December 30, 2022
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Most of the 18 Catholic missionaries murdered in 2022 were not carrying out high-risk missions when they were assassinated but were simply "immersed and submerged in the ordinariness of their lives and their apostolic work," said the editor of Fides, the Vatican's missionary news service.

The 13 priests, three religious sisters, one seminarian and one lay leader recalled by Fides were killed in the midst of carrying out their daily service "for the good of all, including -- sometimes -- their own executioners," wrote Gianni Valente, the editor, in a column Dec. 30.

Since the 1980s Fides, the news agency of the Pontifical Mission Societies, has published a list of missionaries killed around the world. The agency always notes that the list is not complete and that while it recognizes those killed as witnesses of the faith, it leaves the technical judgment of whether they are martyrs to the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints.

Half of the 18 missionaries listed by Fides were killed in Africa; eight were killed in Latin America or the Caribbean and one was killed in Asia.

In the past few years, Fides said, Africa and Latin America "have alternated in first place in this tragic ranking."

And, the agency said, from 2001 to 2021, 526 missionaries have been killed in the world.

The Fides' summary for 2022 listed:

-- Four priests murdered in Nigeria: Fr. Joseph Aketeh Bako, parish priest of St. John's Church in Kudenda, who was kidnapped and died between April 18 and 20; Fr. Vitus Borogo, who was killed June 25, during a raid on the Kaduna Prison Farm where he was visiting; Fr. Christopher Odia Ogedegbe, who was kidnapped and killed during a confrontation between police and kidnappers, June 26; and Fr. John Mark Cheitnum, who was kidnapped and killed July 15.

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-- Two priests and a religious sister killed in Congo: Adorno Fr. Richard Masivi Kasereka, killed by armed men when he was returning to his parish Feb. 2 after celebrating the World Day of Consecrated Life; Fr. Godefroid Pembele Mandon, who was shot and killed in the night between Aug. 6 and 7 in the parish of St. Joseph Mukasa in Kikwit by armed bandits; and Sr. Marie-Sylvie Kavuke Vakatsuraki, a physician and member of a member the Little Sisters of the Presentation of Our Lady in the Temple, who was killed along with other people when bandits attacked and set fire to the clinic she ran in Maboya on the night between Oct. 19 and 20.

-- Missionary of Africa Fr. Michael Mawelera Samson disappeared June 10 from the youth center of the church in Mbeya, Tanzania, where he worked. His body was found the next morning.

-- Comboni Missionary Sr. Maria De Coppi was killed in an assault on the mission of Chipene, Mozambique, on the night between Sept. 6 and 7. The attackers destroyed the mission facilities, and De Coppi was shot in the head and died immediately.

-- Three priests and a seminarian were murdered in Mexico: Fr. José Guadalupe Rivas, a priest of the Archdiocese of Tijuana, was found dead May 16 on a ranch in Tecate; Jesuit Frs. Javier Campos and Joaquín Mora were killed June 20 in the Church of San Francisco Xavier in Cerocahui; and José Dorian Piña Hernández, a seminarian for the diocese of Zacatecas, was killed Dec. 27 during an attempted robbery.

-- In Honduras, Pablo Isabel Hernández, a leader of the Lenca Indigenous group and pastoral worker, was killed Jan. 9 by unknown men who shot him in the back as he went to lead a celebration; and Fr. Enrique Vasquez's body was found March 2 in his car in a suburban area of Santa Cruz de Yojoa, where he had gone to visit his parents.

-- Franciscan Fr. Wilberth Daza Rodas was killed on the night between Holy Saturday and Easter, April 16-17, by thieves who entered the Church of San Francisco in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia.

-- Sr. Luisa Dell'Orto, A Little Sister of the Gospel of Charles de Foucauld who cared for street children in Haiti for almost 20 years, was killed June 25 in Port-au-Prince, most likely the victim of an attempted robbery.

-- Vietnamese Dominican Fr. Joseph Tran Ngoc Thanh was stabbed to death while listening to confessions in the parish of Dak Mót by a mentally unstable man.