News

Commemorative social media graphic for Dieudonné Barondezi, bearing his image and the da

Dieudonné Barondezi, director of the Caritas branch in Kalonge, in Congo was shot and killed Sept. 19, 2024, by an armed militant group while approaching a roadblock, Caritas Internationalis announced in social media statement. (OSV News/Caritas Internationalis X account)

Junno Arocho Esteves

View Author Profile

OSV News

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

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

CHOLOBERO, Congo — September 25, 2024

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

The director of Caritas in Congo was shot and killed by an armed militant group while approaching a roadblock, Caritas Internationalis announced.

In a statement published on social media Sept. 23, Caritas International said it was "shocked by the news of the death of our colleague, Dieudonné Barondezi, director of the Caritas branch in Kalonge, in the Democratic Republic of Congo."

"Dieudonné was shot in the head on Sept. 19 at a roadblock, in the village of Cholobero, by members of an armed group who demanded he pay the toll, even though, as a humanitarian, he was not obliged to do so," the Catholic charitable organization said.

Barondezi was taken to a hospital following the shooting, where he was declared dead.

"Let us pray for him, his family, and all humanitarians worldwide who lose their lives to help others," Caritas said.

Barondezi's death is the latest in a string of violent attacks targeting humanitarian aid workers in the country, where armed rebel groups continue to fight against Congolese forces for control of gold and other resources.

According to a July report by The Associated Press, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Congo called for the protection of aid workers in the region where some 170 security incidents targeting humanitarian workers were reported.

"At a time of immense humanitarian need, it is unacceptable that those working to help affected people are being attacked and killed," Bruno Lemarquis, the U.N. humanitarian coordinator for Congo, said, according to AP.

Advertisement

In August, Humanitarian Outcomes, an aid research advocacy group, warned of increasing attacks against humanitarian workers in its 2024 Aid Worker Security Report, stating that "2023 was the deadliest year for aid workers ever recorded, with fatalities more than double the annual average."

According to the report, which was compiled by the Aid Worker Security Database,

595 aid workers were victims of major attacks in 2023, including 280 who were killed in 33

countries.

It also noted that the Democratic Republic of Congo was among the countries that was "notable for high numbers of aid workers affected by major attacks in 2023.

On World Humanitarian Day, which is commemorated annually Aug. 19, the United Nations said in a statement that "2023 was the deadliest year on record for humanitarian workers" and "2024 could be even worse."

"These facts lay bare a glaring truth: the world is failing humanitarian workers and, by extension, the people they serve," it said. "And while civilians, including aid workers, pay the ultimate price, the perpetrators continue to evade justice."