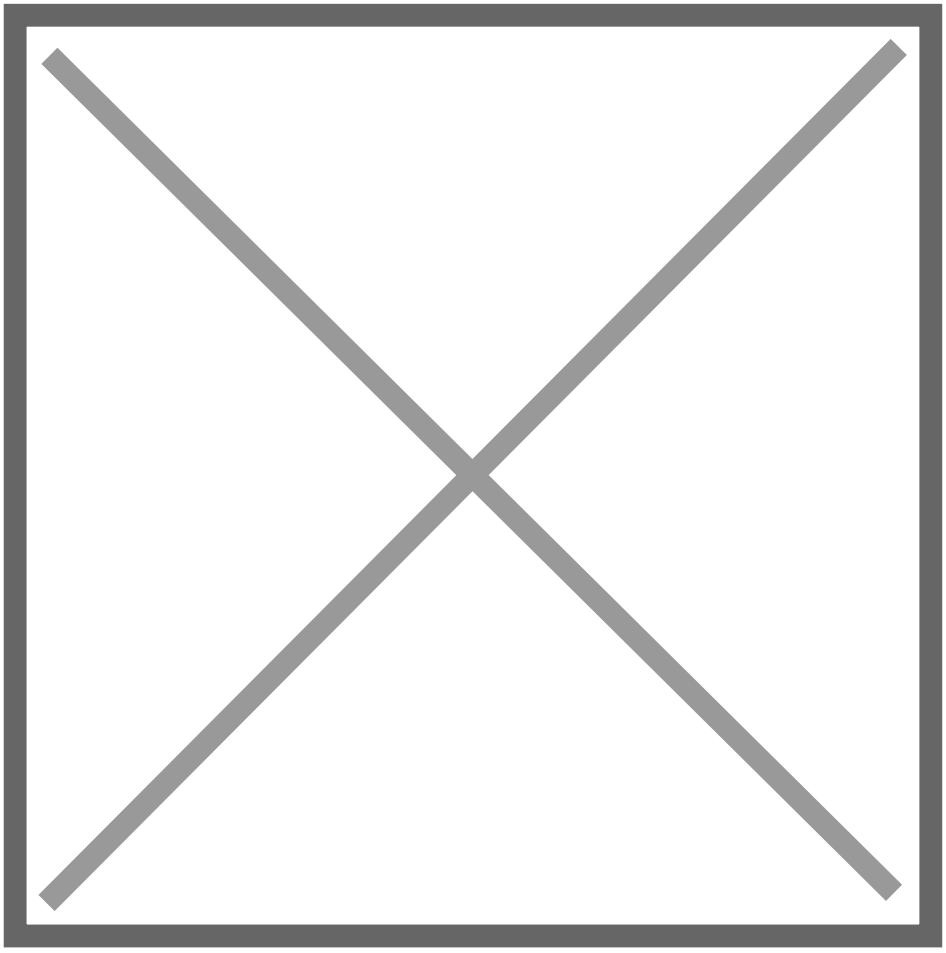
News



Fr. Crépin Martial Monga, vicar of St. John the Baptist Catholic Parish in Zémio, in southeastern Central African Republic, is seen in an undated photograph. He was killed June 29, 2026. (OSV/Courtesy of ACN)

Fredrick Nzwili

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BANGUI Central African Republic — July 8, 2026
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A Catholic priest working for peace and reconciliation in the Central African Republic was killed by armed men near his residence in the town of Zemio on June 29.

Fr. Crepin Martial Monga, vicar of St. John the Baptist Catholic Parish in Zémio, in southeastern Central African Republic, or CAR, was shot in the head on a road leading to his residence in Zemio in Haut-Mbomou prefecture, which is in the southeastern part of the country.

Although the details of murder remain scarce, Church sources suspect the killing was intentional.

Bishop Aurelio Gazzera of Bangassou, the diocese where Zémio is located, lauded the vicar's longstanding commitment to peace and reconciliation across the area. The bishop is an Aid to the Church in Need project partner who has 35 years of experience as a missionary in the CAR.

"At some points he and the parish cared for more than 3,000 refugees at the mission. This work was very important. In addition to this, he maintained many contacts with various rebel leaders and the authorities, always striving to mediate and find resolutions for the conflicts," Gazzera said.

Because of these targeted diplomatic efforts, some within the diocese strongly believe that the priest may have been murdered precisely as a consequence of his peacemaking initiatives.

Monga led a peace committee in Zémio, a town which experienced persistent tensions and clashes throughout 2025.

A local ethnic militia known as Azande Ani Kpi Gbe, or Azande Militia, carried out attacks targeting government officials and the United Nations peacekeepers in the area, as well as members of the Fulani and Puel ethnic community.

St. John Baptist Church in the town is currently hosting 2,000 people who were displaced in the latest clashes in January.

Mervyn Thomas, founding president of the Christian Solidarity Worldwide, a human rights organization specializing on the freedom of religion or belief, called for investigations and justice following the killing of the priest.

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He urged the authorities "to ensure that adequate resources are sent to the region during this time of mourning and support is given to Fr. Monga's work to bring peace and reconciliation to communities in Zimeo," said Thomas as he expressed his condolences to the family, the parish and the Catholic Church in the country in a July 3 news release.

CAR faces a complex political and humanitarian crisis that features armed conflict, massive population displacement and extreme poverty. A conflict that ignited in 2013 and pitted the mainly MuslimSéléka rebel alliance and the pro-Christian anti-balaka ("balaka" is the Sango word for machete, and "anti-balaka" roughly means "invincible") — has destabilized the country, displaced millions of people and destroyed the infrastructure.

The Catholic Church is at the forefront of peacebuilding efforts, working for peace in an interreligious approach together with the Muslims and Protestant churches.

Pope Francis visited CAR in a daring apostolic trip to an unstable country in 2015. The extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy began on Nov. 29, 2015, when Francis opened the Holy Door of the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Bangui, the capital.