

# Cardinal says nunciature attack is attack on Catholics

CARACAS, Venezuela – A Venezuelan cardinal called the explosive attack on the apostolic nunciature in Caracas an attack on “the sentiments of all Catholics” in the country.

Cardinal Jorge Urosa Savino of Caracas also urged an end to “a sort of upsurge of acts of political violence which must be stopped immediately.”

A small explosive was thrown against the nunciature Feb. 14, damaging a door and windows and prompting a new round of criticisms by church leaders of the government. No one has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Retired Archbishop Ramon Perez Morales of Los Teques placed part of the responsibility for this and previous attacks against the nunciature on the government. Archbishop Perez said Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez offers “insults and aggressions” against church leaders.

The archbishop pointed out that the nunciature previously has been attacked and vandalized. He criticized the government for not providing the nunciature with security, which he said was the government’s commitment under international agreements.

“One can take it for granted that the nunciature is watched, controlled, spied on, but there’s nothing to prevent acts like these,” he said.

A university student leader opposed to the government has lived in the nunciature for more than a year while seeking political asylum. The student, Nixon Moreno, claims he has been politically persecuted, but the government says the nunciature should hand him over to be tried for common crimes. Fliers denouncing Moreno were found after the explosion.

Catholic Church leaders in Venezuela and the nation’s leftist government for years have had a hostile relationship, with the church repeatedly calling the government a

threat to democracy and accusing it of violating human rights. Chavez has accused church leaders of acting more like politicians than religious leaders.