

Men shoot and kill Salesian priest in Nepal

ROME - A Catholic priest was shot dead by armed men who broke into the priest's residence in Nepal.

Salesian Father Johnson Moyalan, from Kerala, India, had been living in Nepal for more than 10 years before he was killed July 1. The 60-year-old priest was the principal of a Don Bosco school in Sirsiya, in eastern Nepal.

A group of four or five armed men forced their way into the mission and locked up one of the two priests residing there while they assaulted and shot Father Moyalan, said Salesian Father George Kalangara in an interview with the Asian church news agency UCA News.

Father Kalangara told UCA News by telephone from a Salesian center in Dharan, Nepal, that it was not clear what happened next but that there was an explosion that caused extensive damage to the building.

According to an Indian police report sent to the Salesian Generalate in Rome, the armed men detonated small bombs at the residence.

Father Moyalan's body was found on the floor of his room. He had been shot twice.

Father Kalangara told UCA News that a pamphlet from the Nepal Defense Army was found at the residence. The Nepal Defense Army is an extremist Hindu group fighting to restore Nepal as a Hindu state and has taken responsibility for several bomb blasts across Nepal.

While some priests and religious in Nepal have been threatened or kidnapped, the July 1 murder was the first time a Catholic priest had been killed in the predominantly Hindu nation, according to the Rome-based missionary news agency AsiaNews.