

Mexican bishop files complaints after center burglarized

MEXICO CITY - A Mexican bishop who has received death threats because of his human rights work filed legal complaints after his diocesan human rights center was burglarized.

On Dec. 26, Bishop Raul Vera Lopez of Saltillo filed complaints with the Coahuila state attorney general's office for injury, aggravated robbery and breaking and entering after the Fray Juan de Larios Center for Human Rights was robbed by two hooded perpetrators. Documents were removed from the premises and a female employee working in the office was tied up in the Dec. 20 incident.

Bishop Vera, who was traveling at the time of the robbery, noted at a Dec. 24 press conference that the theft took place at the same time efforts were intensified to achieve justice for 13 sex-trade workers sexually assaulted by members of the Mexican military in Castanos in 2006.

Bishop Vera had said that the acquittals of some of the accused soldiers "open the door even wider for members of the Mexican military to continue carrying out all kinds of atrocities."

In November, a judge in Coahuila state filed a complaint with the Vatican about Bishop Vera's "ecclesiastical abuse of power" for his comments. However, Jackie Campbell, diocesan spokeswoman, said in early January that Bishop Vera has not received notification of any action by the Vatican.

At the Christmas Eve press conference, Bishop Vera also reported that he had received death threats during the latter half of December.

“Starting with the cases of Castanos and Pasta de Conchos, we have received a series of threats and calls to the office and the home where I live,” the bishop said.

The diocese has been working on behalf of the families of 65 miners killed at the Pasta de Conchos coal mine in February 2006. The families are pressing the mine owner and the Mexican government to resume searching for the bodies of 63 deceased miners still trapped underground. They also want the mining permits revoked at Pasta de Conchos, about 85 miles from the U.S.-Mexican border at Eagle Pass, Texas.