

# **Murdered Jesuits honored 20 years after their deaths in El Salvador**

WASHINGTON - Twenty years after they were killed at Central American University in San Salvador, along with their housekeeper and her daughter, six Jesuit priests are being honored by the Salvadoran government, the U.S. Congress and Jesuit institutions.

Salvadoran President Mauricio Funes announced in early November that the priests would receive the National Order of Jose Matias Delgado awards, the country's highest honor, on Nov. 16, the 20th anniversary of the killings.

Funes said the awards would be presented as a "public act of atonement" for mistakes by past governments. Two Salvadoran military officers were found guilty in 1991 of ordering the murders.

The U.S. Congress, meanwhile, approved a lengthy resolution honoring "these eight spiritual, courageous and generous priests, educators and laywomen" and urging "the people of the United States, academic institutions and religious congregations to participate in local, national and international" commemorations of the anniversary.

Such events were scheduled in November at the 28 Jesuit colleges and universities in the United States, and at other sites around the world.

The eight killed in the early morning hours of Nov. 16, 1989, were:

- Father Ignacio Ellacuria, 59, rector of Central American University.

- Father Ignacio Martin-Baro, 44, vice rector and director of the university's Public Opinion Institute.
- Father Segundo Montes, 56, dean of the department of social sciences and a sociology professor.
- Father Amando Lopez, 53, a philosophy and theology professor.
- Father Juan Ramon Moreno, 56, a professor of theology.
- Father Joaquin Lopez y Lopez, 71, founder and director of Fe y Alegria (Faith and Joy), which opened 30 educational centers in marginalized communities throughout El Salvador.
- Julia Elba Ramos, 42, cook and housekeeper for the Jesuit seminarians at the university.
- Celina Mariset, 16, Ramos' daughter.

The Jesuits had “dedicated their lives to advancing education in El Salvador, protecting and promoting human rights and the end of conflict, and identifying and addressing the economic and social problems that affected the majority of the Salvadoran population,” said the resolution passed by both the House and Senate in late October.

The resolution also noted that “the international and Salvadoran outcry in response to the deaths of the six Jesuits and two women and the subsequent investigations into this crime served as a catalyst for negotiations and contributed to the signing of the 1992 peace accords, which have allowed the government and the people of El Salvador to achieve significant progress in creating and strengthening democratic political, economic and social institutions.”

It said, however, that “social and economic hardships persist among many sectors of Salvadoran society.”

The resolution urged U.S. agencies to “support and collaborate with the government of El Salvador and other public, private, nongovernmental and religious organizations in efforts to reduce poverty and hunger and to promote educational opportunity, human rights, the rule of law and social equity for the people of El Salvador.”

Jesuit and other Catholic universities in the U.S. planned a variety of activities to commemorate the anniversary.

Scheduled events at Xavier University in Cincinnati include a live feed from San Salvador of the procession and vigil in remembrance of the Jesuit martyrs Nov. 14; special Masses, exhibits and film showings; and a reflective vigil and procession on campus Nov. 19.

Santa Clara University in California sponsored a series of events throughout November to mark the anniversary, including a Nov. 5 talk by Jesuit Father Jon Sobrino, a co-founder of Central American University who was away from the residence the night of the murders.

Father Sobrino also was to join in a discussion at Boston College Nov. 30 with historian Noam Chomsky and Jesuit Father J. Donald Monan, chancellor of the college, on “Memory and Its Strength: The Martyrs of El Salvador.”

Father Monan, president of Boston College at the time of the killings, was among a group of Jesuit priests who visited the site of the tragedy soon after the murders occurred.

He also moderated a Nov. 4 program on the anniversary, with panelists including

Jesuit Father Rodolfo Cardenal, former vice rector of Central American University, and U.S. Rep. James McGovern, D-Mass., who as an aide to the late U.S. Rep. Joseph Moakley, D-Mass., helped reshape American policy toward El Salvador.

“The 20th anniversary of the murder of the Jesuits ... is a time, certainly, for sadness and reflection,” said McGovern in a statement. “But it is also an opportunity to rededicate ourselves to the principles of social justice and peace to which they dedicated their lives and their ministries.”