

# **Priest, 80, found murdered in Mexican state of Oaxaca**

GUADALAJARA, Mexico - An 80-year-old priest was murdered July 28 in the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca, where church officials say attacks on prelates have become distressingly common.

Father Carlos Salvador Wotto, pastor of the Our Lady of the Snows Parish in the central part of the state capital, Oaxaca, was found at approximately 6 p.m. local time bound and gagged in his living quarters beside the church.

The Oaxaca state attorney general, Maria de la Luz Candelaria Chinas, told reporters that Father Wotto died of asphyxiation and that robbery was the probable motive. The newspaper El Universal quoted parishioners saying that Father Wotto had been stabbed.

A spokesman for the Archdiocese of Oaxaca, Father Jose Guadalupe Barragan Oliva, condemned the killing and called on the state government to take action. The newspaper Milenio reported Father Barragan saying organized crime has targeted the church, with there being at least 40 assaults as well as thefts of religious art over the past two years.

Officials were not certain if organized crime was to blame for Father Wotto's death.

Political observers say priests in the poor, but culturally rich state with a large indigenous population are often at odds with municipal governments, which are dominated by local strongmen known as caciques.