

El Salvador Lutherans report intimidation: Church is outspoken on politics

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The Lutheran Church in El Salvador and officials at the Salvadoran Lutheran University contend that a robbery and brutal murder on their campus in late January was an act of intimidation aimed at the church for being outspoken in politics.

Though computers, stereo equipment, cash and documents were stolen, university officials said in a statement the motive was not armed robbery. The murder is believed to be an attempt to silence the Salvadoran Lutheran Church and the university, said Medardo Gómez, the Lutheran bishop of El Salvador, in an interview with a Salvadoran newspaper, *Diario Co Latino*.

Speaking in Spanish, the bishop called the attack “politically related threats because we are a critical church.”

Héctor Fernández, Lutheran University president, said January 31 that the university is known for “promoting a critical conscience in society, accompanying the people in their struggles for justice, and in giving opportunities of education for the poor in El Salvador.”

Fernández also said the January 29 murder of guard Manuel de Jesus Martínez, 46, who was tied up, blindfolded, gagged and hanged from a tree on the university’s campus, reminded him of violence perpetrated by armed groups during El Salvador’s 12-year-long civil war, which ended in 1992.

Mark S. Hanson, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, wrote a letter February 7 to Salvadoran President Elias Antonio Saca calling for a full investigation of the murder and increased security at the university. —*Religion News Service*