

**Catholic Mission
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Italian Priest Shot Dead in South Philippines

Following the tragic death of Italian priest Father Fausto, as reported in ucanews, Catholic Mission's National Director, Mr Martin Teulan has called for Australians to pray for him, and all Missionaries.

"During World Mission Month in October, we are deeply saddened and reminded of the dangers that Missionaries face every day."

An Italian priest doing mission work in the hinterlands of North Cotabato, southern Philippines, was gunned down inside the compound of Mother of Perpetual Help parish in Arakan town, according to a local official.

Fr Fausto Tentorio, 59, of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME), was shot dead by a lone gunman as he was about to board his pickup truck at around 7:30am, said town councilor Leonardo Reovoca.

The murder was immediately condemned by the Diocese of Kidapawan, Church groups and environmental organizations in the country. "This is really heinous. We're so sad and shocked that this killing happened in broad daylight," said Bishop Romulo dela Cruz of Kidapawan.

Autopsy reports showed Father Tentorio sustained eight gunshot wounds in different parts of his body. Senior Inspector Benjamin Rioflorido, chief of Arakan police, said four empty shells from a 9mm pistol were recovered from the crime scene.

"We're studying lots of angles but nothing is definite as of this time. We have yet to know the motive and the identity of the killer and the mastermind in the killing," Rioflorido said.

The suspect was wearing a crash helmet and made his escape by walking away casually from the scene to a nearby motorcycle, Reovoca said.

The priest was due to attend a regular meeting of Kidapawan diocese clergy at the house of Bishop Romulo de la Cruz in Kidapawan City today.

Reovoca said Father Tentorio had been an active law and order campaigner in Arakan town. Only recently, he was appointed as head of a civilian anti-criminal task force in the town, councilor Reovoca said.

"I am a witness to Father Tentorio's strong stance against mining and other projects which are not sustainable and would harm and affect the indigenous peoples, in particular."

Father Giovanni Re, PIME Philippines regional superior, said Father Tentorio had escaped attempts on his life by paramilitary groups in the past, "but this is a bit of a surprise for us because the situation



here has been quiet for some time."

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) also condemned the killing, calling it a sign of degeneration of morality and spirituality in the country.

"We condemn this killing in the highest possible terms. This is brutality and savagery that no civilized men or groups could possibly do," said Muhammad Ameen, chairperson of the MILF Secretariat.

Bishop dela Cruz said Father Tentorio's remains will be brought to his parish in Arakan town for the wake until Wednesday, before his body is transferred to the compound of the bishop's house in the city.

"What we really want is for authorities to act swiftly so that justice for Father Tentorio's death would be achieved." he said.

Father Tentorio first arrived in the Philippines in 1978 and served in Zamboanga archdiocese. He becomes the second PIME priest killed while doing missionary work in North Cotabato. Father Tulio Favali was killed in 1985 while serving as parish priest in Tulunan town.

"We remember and honour those who have given their lives in love of God and neighbour, like Fr Fausto, particularly at a time when the Universal Church celebrates Mission."

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