

ACAT (Harrow group) – prayer case of the month (*November 2021*)

Please pray as you feel led for Father **Marcelo Pérez Pérez**, parish priest of Simojovel, Chiapas state in Mexico. Since March 2021 he has been subjected to an intense campaign of stigmatization, death threats, and acts of illegal monitoring and surveillance.



Father **Marcelo Pérez Pérez**, helps indigenous Tsotsil, Tseltal and Zoque people use legal means to defend their land. He also provides assistance to migrants and the displaced communities of the Altos de Chiapas region. He has been publicly stigmatised by the elected mayor of Pantelhó municipality, who has accused him of links with an armed group, Self-Defence Forces of the People ‘El Machete’, which is pledged to defend indigenous people against drugs cartels. The mayor’s action has exposed the priest to serious violence and retaliation.

Earlier, in 2015, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) had granted precautionary measures to Father **Marcelo Pérez Pérez** and ten other parish members following a constant cycle of threats and acts of violence. However, the measures have not been properly implemented, so the harassment has not stopped and the priest remains at high risk.

Against a background of forced displacements, land dispossession, threats and harassment directed at communities of this region, several armed groups have emerged. Mexico is considered one of the most dangerous countries in the world to be a priest, and religious leaders belonging to a wide range of denominations are often particularly targeted with violence, abduction and extortion.

According to a report from campaign group Global Witness, 227 environmentalist defenders were killed around the world in 2020, the highest number ever.

Updates: IRAN: **Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe**, our prayer case for October 2016, has lost her appeal against her second jail sentence without a court hearing, and there are fears she may be returned to Evin prison. Meanwhile, her husband Peter Ratcliffe is on hunger strike over the lack of progress in her case. RUSSIA: **Valentina Chupik**, our prayer case for last month, has been allowed to fly to Armenia. SAUDI ARABIA: Some good news! **Ali al Nimr**, our prayer case for January 2018 who had been sentenced to death following his participation in Arab Spring demonstrations, has been released!