News



David Agren

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A Dominican sister was shot in the leg as her humanitarian relief team came under gunfire from paramilitaries in Mexico's southern Chiapas state.

Dominican Sr. María Isabel Hernández Rea, 52, was struck Nov. 18 while attempting to take food to a group of Indigenous Tzotzil people displaced from a hamlet in the municipality of Aldama. They had been forced to flee due to a land dispute.

The injuries sustained by Hernández Rea, part of the Dominican Sisters of the Holy Rosary and a pastoral agent of the Diocese of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, were not considered life-threatening, according to the diocese. She had traveled to the community with the diocesan Caritas team and a nongovernmental group promoting Indigenous children's health.

"This action is criminal," said Ofelia Medina, an actress and director of the NGO, Fideicomiso para la Salud de los Niños Indígenas de México. "We couldn't get close (and) the people are experiencing a food emergency because of daily gunfire."

In comments provided by the Chiapas-based Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Human Rights Center, Medina said: "On the day of the shooting, we got some courage and our colleagues said, 'Let's go,' and a trip was organized. The food was delivered and they were shot."

In a Nov. 18 statement, the Diocese of San Cristóbal de Las Casas said violence had escalated in the municipality and humanitarian assistance was not arriving. It has called on the government to disarm the paramilitaries and to "punish" the intellectual authors of the attack, along with those "who have caused communities to suffer in the area.

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