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Guatemala: Christian Democrat Leader Assassinated

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On Aug. 1, five gunmen dragged Christian Democrat Party leader Danilo Barillas Rodriguez from his home in Guatemala City and shot him to death. According to police, Barillas' body was hit at least 30 times. President Vinicio Cerezo rushed to the scene of the shooting. He told reporters, "I am deeply concerned. This is deplorable. It's a shame." No organization has claimed responsibility for the killing. Cerezo said he blamed "extremist groups" for the slaying and promised not to spare any effort in bringing the killers to justice. The president called the killers "stupid people who want to continue with such confrontations and keep people on edge," and added, "We will act firmly." Barillas was chairman of a Guatemala City council commission in charge of urban planning and development since 1987. Previously, he served as Guatemalan ambassador to Spain where he participated in talks between leaders of the Revolutionary Nationalist Unity (URNG), and a government delegation to establish the bases for starting peace negotiations. The talks were stalemated, mainly because the military insisted on the rebels' complete surrender. From 1970 to 1974, Barillas served as general secretary of the Christian Democratic Party and as a legislator in the Chamber of Deputies for a time. (Basic data from AP, Notimex, 08/01/89)

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