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ARGENTINA | Church Wants Investigation Into Attempted Murder of Pastor

The first oral hearing into the case of the attempted murder of Pastor Marcelo Nieva in Río Tercero, Córdoba Province on Oct. 21 will take place in Córdoba Federal Court on Nov. 13. Pueblo Grande Baptist Church, which Pastor Nieva leads, will demand federal oversight of the investigations into the assassination attempt and a campaign of intimidation towards the church and its members.

Pastor Nieva and his colleague Daniel Carreño escaped unharmed when they were shot at multiple times while driving in Río Tercero on Oct. 21. National and provincial Baptist leaders in Argentina expressed alarm at the attack, pointing out that it is the latest and most severe instance of a pattern of threats and harassment against the church, which works with victims of domestic violence, sex trafficking and drug addicts.

In a statement, the Baptist leaders directly accused “narco-trafficking linked assassins who have infiltrated the Córdoba Police and out of revenge [have targeted him] because of his pastoral work and the earlier complaint he filed about them to the Federal Court of Córdoba.”

Dr. Alejandro Zeverin Escribano, who will represent the Pueblo Grande Baptist Evangelical Church at the hearing in Córdoba Federal Court, will demand that serious action is taken to search for Pastor Marcelo Nieva and Daniel Carreño’s attempted assassins and that the individuals behind the damages, attacks, and acts of intimidation aimed at the church building and members are identified and prosecuted.

He will argue for both investigations to be consolidated under the jurisdiction of the Federal Police of Argentina, removing responsibility from the Río Tercero City Police and the Córdoba Province Public Ministry. Escribano will also call for the identification and prosecution of local authorities or civil servants who were directly involved in the assassination attempt, and who continue to obstruct freedom of worship at the church, whether they are directly implicated in the campaign of threats and intimidation against it or have failed to take action to protect and defend the rights of church members.

CSW’s Chief Operating Officer Andy Dipper said, “We echo the call from Pueblo Grande Baptist Evangelical Church for Federal oversight into the investigations into the assassination attempt on Pastor Nieva and Daniel Carreño, and the campaign of harassment and intimidation against the church. Impunity in this case will only embolden those responsible, so we urge the Federal authorities to ensure that the investigations are thorough and that the perpetrators are held to account.”