

4 Salvadorans Killed in Way That Evokes '80s Conflict

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MEXICO CITY, Feb. 20 — A grisly quadruple killing in a rural part of [Guatemala](#) on Monday in which three Salvadoran lawmakers and their driver were shot and their bodies burned may be a sign that the ghosts of the bitter civil wars that raged through Central America in the 1980s still linger.

Among the charred bodies recovered in El Jocotillo, about 25 miles east of Guatemala City, was that of Eduardo D'Aubuisson, a son of the late Salvadoran rightist leader Roberto D'Aubuisson.

The elder Mr. D'Aubuisson, a former national guard major who died of cancer in 1992, was found by a [United Nations](#)-sponsored investigation in 1993 to have ordered the assassination of the country's Roman Catholic primate, Archbishop Óscar Arnulfo Romero, in 1980. Roberto D'Aubuisson is still reviled and revered in his country.

His son was on his way to a meeting in Guatemala City of the Central American Parliament with two fellow members, William Pichinite and José Ramón González. Their driver was not immediately identified. The Parliament, created in 1986 to pull the fractious region together, has 132 members from five of the seven Central American countries.

Eduardo D'Aubuisson and his colleagues represented [El Salvador](#)'s governing party, the Nationalist Republican Alliance, known as Arena. The party, once linked to death squads, has remade itself and now competes politically with the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front, an outgrowth of the leftist guerrilla movement that fought the Salvadoran government in the 1980s.

Investigators from El Salvador and Guatemala, which also endured decades of civil conflict, were trying to piece together details of the

killings on Tuesday. The vehicle that the victims had been riding in was riddled with bullets and then set afire, prompting officials to doubt that the killings on a remote back road about an hour's drive from the Guatemalan capital were the work of robbers. Still, the motive remains a mystery.

“It wasn't coincidental,” the Guatemalan president, Óscar Berger, told reporters. “We have various theories, and we aren't ruling out the possibility that it was a political crime.” The Salvadoran president, Tony Saca, decried the killing at a cemetery ceremony to mark the 15th anniversary of the death of Roberto D'Aubuisson, who founded Arena.

“They burned their bodies several times,” Mr. Saca said. “They killed them. They riddled their bodies with bullets. They made them suffer in a cowardly manner. This was directed by someone who wants to send a message, and if the message is to scare Salvadorans who love liberty, then that person is wrong.”

Although the elder Mr. D'Aubuisson is widely considered to have been behind the death squads, which killed thousands of innocent civilians, he remains a hero to many of his countrymen.

Mr. Saca, a close ally of Washington, proposed in recent weeks that he be designated a “meritorious son” of El Salvador. That proposal prompted outrage among church leaders and human rights workers, who staged protests in an attempt to defeat it.