

= María Santos Gorrostieta Salazar =

María Santos Gorrostieta Salazar (1976 ? 15 November 2012) was a Mexican physician and politician of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) . From 2008 to 2011 , she served as mayor of Tiquicheo , a small town in the Mexican state of Michoacán . In spite of three failed assassination attempts during her tenure as mayor , Gorrostieta Salazar continued to be outspoken in the fight against organized crime . In a fourth attack , Gorrostieta Salazar was kidnapped and assassinated by suspected drug traffickers on 15 November 2012 . Michoacán is home to several violent drug trafficking organizations such as La Familia Michoacana and the Knights Templar Cartel .

= = Career = =

Gorrostieta Salazar was born in 1976 in Tiquicheo , a small town in the state of Michoacán , Mexico . She attended the Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo in Morelia and earned a PhD in medicine .

She began her political career by joining the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) , and from 2008 to 2011 , she served as the mayor of Tiquicheo . While in office , she survived three assassination attempts . She ran for the Chamber of Deputies of the Congress of the Union , but she did not get elected and returned to her office as mayor . After some differences with the PRI , which had urged her to resign , Gorrostieta Salazar left the party and joined the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) in August 2010 . She said her Catholic faith influenced her approach to her duties as a politician . She has been described as a " heroine of the 21st century " for her opposition to Mexico 's drug cartels and for refusing to take bribes .

She had three children with her first husband , José Sánchez Chávez . After he was killed in the October 2009 attack , Gorrostieta Salazar later married Nereo Patiño Delgado .

= = Assassination attempts = =

= = = Background = = =

In 2008 , Gorrostieta Salazar was elected mayor of Tiquicheo . Several drug trafficking organizations , particularly the La Familia Michoacana and the Knights Templar Cartel , are based in the area . Michoacán is a leading producer of marijuana and opium poppy , making it a lucrative route for smugglers taking narcotics into the United States . Despite receiving threats , Gorrostieta Salazar publicly denounced the activities of these groups . The drug cartels , which are constantly fighting each other for territorial control , often target mayors who confront them . Other mayors , however , are corrupted and bribed by the cartels . Mexico has more than 2 @, @ 500 municipalities , many of which are far from the capital cities and lack amenities available in other parts of the country . Many of these areas are plagued with drug @-@ related violence , so the political parties have faced difficulties finding people interested in holding the post of mayor .

It was in Michoacán that Felipe Calderón launched the country 's first military @-@ led operation in the ongoing drug war , just ten days after he took office on 11 December 2006 . The military campaign spread to other states in Mexico , eventually including over 50 @, @ 000 federal agents . After years of past administrations taking a passive stance against the drug cartels , Calderón had decided it was time for the government to " flex its muscles . " Violence exploded in Michoacán and across the country , leaving a death toll of about 60 @, @ 000 (perhaps even more than 100 @, @ 000) in six years . Numerous journalists and mayors have been killed since the start of the drug war , and some members of the Mexican Armed Forces and the Federal police have been accused of human rights abuses and causing forced disappearances . The organized crime groups have diversified their criminal agendas , no longer focusing solely on drug trafficking ; many of them operate kidnapping rings and extortion and protection rackets , and engage in piracy , and human

trafficking . The cartels in Michoacán force the local population to pay for " protection " , spy , and report suspicious activities and law enforcement presence .

Calderón argued that if he had not acted , Mexico would have become a " narco @-@ state , " where the drug trafficking organizations impose law at their will . " I am sure that the Mexicans of tomorrow will remember these days as the moment when the country took the decision to defend itself , with all its force , against a voracious criminal phenomenon of translational dimensions , " Calderón said on 20 November 2012 at a ceremony for fallen soldiers . His successor , Enrique Peña Nieto , has pledged to continue the fight , but plans to adjust the strategy to reduce the level of violence .

= = = 2009 attacks = = =

In January 2008 , three months after Gorrostieta Salazar took office , she and her husband were travelling near the rural community of Las Mojarras when an automobile ran them off the road . In that incident , the gunmen only threatened Gorrostieta Salazar by shooting in the air and warning her to resign " before it was too late . " On 16 January 2009 , in the rural area of El Limón de Papatzindán , the couple was attacked by armed assailants and received minor injuries that did not prevent them from continuing their public lives . The next attack occurred on 15 October 2009 , when Gorrostieta Salazar was ambushed while driving through El Limón de Papatzindán with her husband . A group of armed men opened fire on Sánchez Chávez when he left the vehicle to make a phone call . Gorrostieta Salazar ran to protect her husband and was shot as well . Sánchez Chávez died that day from three gunshot wounds , but Gorrostieta Salazar survived because the gunmen believed she was dead .

A few months later , Gorrostieta Salazar announced that she was still willing to work and returned to her duties as mayor . By then , she contacted the leaders of the PRI to ask for protection , but she encountered difficulties , including unanswered phone calls .

= = = 2010 attack = = =

On 23 January 2010 , Gorrostieta Salazar was attacked by armed men in Ciudad Altamirano , Guerrero , while returning from a local event with four other people . Severely injured by bullet wounds in the abdomen , chest , and leg , she was taken to a local hospital . Also injured were the driver of the vehicle , who was shot twice ; Marbella Reyes Ortoño , head of the Institute of Women in Tiquicheo ; and Fanny Almazán Gómez , a journalist from El Sol de Morelia . In addition to the bullet wounds , Gorrostieta Salazar suffered further injuries when the vehicle crashed after the shooting . Her wounds left her in constant pain and she had to use a colostomy bag , but she refused to resign her post as mayor . She publicly displayed her wounds in photographs published in an issue of Contacto Ciudadano magazine , and repeated her statement that she would continue her work .

" I wanted to show you my wounded , mutilated , humiliated body because I am not ashamed of it , because it is the result of the misfortunes that have marked my life ... it is the living testimony that I am a whole and strong woman , who , despite my physical and mental wounds , continues standing . "

Gorrostieta Salazar left the PRI and joined the PRD in August 2010 , stating that the PRI had not supported her after the attacks . She ran for election to the National Congress with the PRD , but failed to get elected . At the end of her term as mayor , Gorrostieta Salazar retired from politics . She returned to private life , remarried , and dedicated her time to raise her three children : Malusi , José , and Deysi . Her police protection came to an end when her mayoral term expired in 2011 .

= = Assassination = =

On 12 November 2012 , Gorrostieta Salazar was driving her daughter to school in Morelia at around 8 : 30 a.m. when a vehicle ran them off the road . Two armed men descended from their

vehicle and forced her out of her car as onlookers watched . Gorrostieta Salazar pleaded with her abductors to let her daughter go unharmed , and then agreed to go with the kidnappers . The family of the former mayor initially thought it was a ransom kidnapping . After not hearing from Gorrostieta Salazar or her abductors for two days , they notified the police . On 15 November , police identified the body after farm workers from the rural community of San Juan Tarameo in Cuitzeo found the corpse on their way to work .

Post @-@ mortem reports indicated that she died of a traumatic brain injury , the result of severe blows to the head . The governor of Michoacán said that organized crime was undoubtedly involved . Gorrostieta Salazar was buried alongside her husband José Sánchez Chávez in a tomb at a local cemetery in Tiquicheo , her hometown .