

Global survivors respond to Pope's reversal on Rupnik case

Written by Ending Clergy Abuse, Sarah Pearson
Friday, 27 October 2023 12:31

<http://newiproggressive.com/images/stories/S5/clergy-sexual-abuse-s440.jpg>



Case shows why Zero Tolerance must be mandated by canon law.

Seattle, WA - After sustained pressure over the past year, the Pope announced earlier today that he is finally waiving the statute of limitations in the case against Rev. Marko Ivan Rupnik, a statute that he has previously stated [he “always” waives in cases of minors or “vulnerable adults.”](#)

ECA has long contested current Vatican policy that requires the Pope's intervention to waive the statute of limitations on an individual basis. Earlier this month, ECA released the text of our [newly proposed Zero Tolerance law](#), legislation that would mandate permanent removal from the priesthood for any cleric found guilty of abusing a child or vulnerable adult, as well as any bishop found to have institutionally concealed such abuse. Furthermore, this Zero Tolerance law exempts any instance of sexual abuse from a statute of limitations.

In our [latest press release](#), sent prior to the Pope's announcement, we questioned why Rupnik's victims were not considered by the Pope to be “vulnerable adults.” Many of these victims were under Rupnik's authority, and many of them were being spiritually advised by Rupnik. Rupnik is a celebrated and distinguished artist whose work is featured in Catholic churches across the world. Furthermore, he integrated the symbols and doctrinal teachings of Catholicism into the sexual, spiritual, and psychological abuse he inflicted on his victims. The Pope's stunning refusal to recognize the vulnerability of these women echoes a long pattern of the Vatican's declination to treat abuse of women as a crime that merits removal from ministry.

In response to criticism over his handling of the Rupnik case, Pope Francis repeatedly insisted

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that the case must go through normal court proceedings, saying, [“I had nothing to do with this.”](#) He said he wanted more transparency, acknowledging that this would be difficult in an institution that has, for centuries, handled abuse cases in private. There are an untold number of abuse cases around the world that are handled in secrecy because Church law and Pope Francis permit it.

The Pope has cited the trappings of Vatican bureaucracy to deflect criticism, and he is now using this deeply compromised bureaucracy, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, ultimately under the authority of Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernández, [a man who has repeatedly defended accused clerics](#), to oversee this case.

There were [two complete Church investigations of Rupnik over the past two years](#), one by the Jesuits and another by Bishop Libanori who was investigating the religious community Rupnik co-founded in Rome. Both of these investigations concluded that the multiple allegations against Rupnik were true.

The Pope's about-face today was surely compelled by the scathing public criticism he has received for his apparent complicity in this case. It evokes what he later called his “conversion moment” in the matter of Chilean bishop Juan Barros Madrid in 2018, when a public outcry forced him to change course. The Pope had made Barros bishop of a diocese despite public allegations by victims that Barros had witnessed their sexual abuse by Father Fernando Karadima. When challenged about Barros during his visit to Chile in January 2018, the Pope discredited the victims, [calling their accusations “calumny,”](#) and stating, [“Everything is slander” and “There is no evidence.”](#) His dismissal of the victims triggered public indignation, causing Francis to back down, acknowledge his errors, and eventually remove Barros and several other Chilean bishops from their diocesan posts. (Significantly, however, Barros remains a bishop.)

The Pope's reversal in the Rupnik case comes as [a 779-page Spanish report](#), commissioned by the Congress and carried out by Ombudsman Ángel Gabilondo, revealed that 1.13% of the population between 18 and 90 years old (the age range surveyed), totaling around 440,000 people, have suffered religious abuse. Of this figure, around 233,000 claim to have suffered abuse from a priest or religious, as opposed to the greater figure which includes abuse by lay people.

Rupnik's case is now in the hands of the Dicastery of the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF), the entity that permitted and facilitated this widespread abuse in Spain and around the world.

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Ending Clergy Abuse (ECA) is a worldwide organization of human rights' activists and survivors from over 21 countries and 5 continents who focus on children's and victims' rights to compel the Church to end clerical abuse, especially child sexual abuse, in order to protect children and to seek effective justice for victims. ECA demands the end of the Church's structural mechanism that allows abuse. Visit [ECA's Website](#) for more information.