

# 31 Bishops from Chile Offer Resignation to Pope Francis over Sex-Abuse Scandal



Rome: All 31 active bishops from Chile signed a document offering to resign after Pope Francis shamed them for ignoring or covering up sex abuse in the local churches. The Pope blamed the sex abuse on the fact that it was the practice of many bishops to send homosexual priests to teach at seminaries. The Pope himself has been implicated in the scandal because he appointed Juan Barros to the office of bishop over the objections of his victims. It is not expected that the Pope will accept the offer of resignation. -GEG

In the biggest shake-up yet in the Catholic Church's long-running sex abuse scandal, every active Chilean bishop offered to resign Friday over what Pope Francis said was their "grave negligence" in investigating abuse and protecting children.

The bishops announced at the end of an emergency Vatican summit that all 31 active bishops in Rome had signed a document offering to resign.

Francis can accept the resignations, reject them or delay a decision, and the bishops remain in place until he acts. But the symbolic significance of an entire national bishops' conference resigning en masse because they covered-up for pedophiles marked a historic moment in the decades-long saga.

"We want to ask forgiveness for the pain we caused victims, the pope, the people of God and our country for the grave

errors and omissions that we committed,” the bishops said in a statement.

They thanked victims for their “perseverance and courage,” for having continued to denounce crimes and cover-up by the church despite “the incomprehension and attacks from the same church community.”

It marked the first known time that an entire national bishops conference had offered to step down over a scandal, and laid bare the devastation the abuse crisis has caused the Catholic Church in Chile and beyond.

“They didn’t know how to protect the weakest, exposed them to abuse and then impeded justice,” said Jose Andres Murillo, one of those abused and one of the main whistleblowers in the case. “For this, they deserve only to go.”

Calls for mass resignations had mounted after details emerged of the contents of a 2,300-page Vatican report into the Chilean scandal leaked early Friday. Francis had cited the report in footnotes of a 10-page document that he handed over to each Chilean bishop at the start of the summit.

In those footnotes, Francis accused the bishops of destroying evidence of sex crimes, pressuring church investigators to minimize abuse accusations and showing “grave negligence” in protecting children from pedophile priests.

“No one can exempt himself and place the problem on the shoulders of the others,” Francis wrote in the document, which was published by Chilean T13 television and confirmed as accurate Friday by the Vatican.

In a statement in response, the Chilean bishops said the contents of the document were “absolutely deplorable” and showed an “unacceptable abuse of power and conscience,” as well as sexual abuse.

“We want to re-establish justice and contribute to the reparation of the damage we caused,” they said.

Francis had summoned the 34 bishops to Rome after admitting that he had made “grave errors in judgment” in the case of Bishop Juan Barros, who is accused by victims of Chilean priest, the Rev. Fernando Karadima, of witnessing and ignoring their abuse.

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