

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 28 September, 2023

## **Global clergy abuse survivors to Pope Francis: Fernández must go!**

**Group says “Fernández’s record of abuse cover-up and treatment of victims makes him unfit.”**

**Time has come for a lay person selected by survivor organizations to oversee clerical investigations**

**WHEN:** 11:00AM, 28 September, 2023

**WHERE:** Piazza Adriana, next to Castel Sant'Angelo

**WHO:** Global survivors of clergy sexual abuse and advocates, including a survivor from the La Plata archdiocese whose abuser was defended and protected by Cardinal-designate Victor Manuel Fernández

**WHAT:** Clergy abuse survivors and advocates representing 25 countries holding signs and calling on Pope Francis to remove Fernández from his position at the DDF and rescind his elevation to the position of cardinal

**WHY:**

Rome, Italy – Leaders of survivors and advocacy groups from around the world are demanding that Pope Francis replace Fernández as head of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) and rescind his elevation to the position of cardinal. “No bishop who has covered up child sex crimes and ignored and dismissed victims of clergy abuse in his diocese should be running the office that oversees, investigates, and prosecutes clergy sex offenders from around the world, or be made a cardinal,” says Julieta Añazco, a victim from the La Plata archdiocese which Fernández led from 2018 until his appointment to the DDF.

As incoming archbishop of La Plata, Fernández inherited some of the most severe sex abuse cases by clerics in Argentina, including horrific abuse of students at the Antonio Provolo Institute for Deaf and Hearing Impaired Children in La Plata, where more than two dozen children were allegedly sexually tortured at the hands of priests and other employees at the school. (The La Plata school’s director for years was the late Father Nicola Corradi, S.M., who was sentenced to 42 years in prison in 2019 for raping and sexually assaulting deaf children at the Provolo school in Mendoza.)

Pope Francis himself contributed to the cover-up of the crimes at the Provolo schools. He had been informed repeatedly that Provolo clerics previously accused of sexually assaulting children in Italy were working at the Provolo boarding schools for deaf children in Mendoza and La Plata. He was notified in 2013 and 2014 via letter, and in person in 2015, [according to the Washington Post](#). Yet he took no action against the accused clerics, and the abuse at the Mendoza school continued until 2016, when the school was closed. The La Plata school remains open today.

Investigating sexual abuse cases comprises 80 percent of the DDF's workload, [according to America magazine](#), and in Fernández's recent history as Archbishop of La Plata, there are three significant cases where he mishandled serious instances of sexual abuse. Ending Clergy Abuse (ECA) will present evidence from these cases demonstrating why Fernández is unfit to lead the DDF.

ECA leaders from around the world are in Rome for their yearly global assembly just before Pope Francis begins his Synod on Synodality. While in Rome, the group will conduct several events including a vigil for survivors and a second press conference on Monday, October 2nd regarding ECA's newly-proposed zero tolerance legislation. [The full schedule of events is available here.](#)

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September 28th, 2023

Pope Francis  
Apostolic Palace  
00120 Vatican City

Pope Francis,

**Subject: Urgent Appeal to Remove Archbishop Victor Manuel Fernández from Office and Halt His Cardinal Appointment**

Dear Pope Francis,

We are survivors of rape and sexual assault as children by priests of Argentina.

We are deeply troubled by the actions of Archbishop Fernández during his tenure as Archbishop of La Plata. Regrettably, this tenure has been marked by a series of grave missteps in handling cases of clergy sexual abuse. These cases, which are well-documented and corroborated, reveal a pattern of concealing and mishandling allegations, protecting abusive priests, and failing to provide justice to survivors.

We believe that the appointment of Archbishop Fernández as head of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith and the consideration of his elevation to the rank of cardinal send a profoundly troubling message to survivors and the faithful alike. These actions seem to condone the mishandling of abuse cases and disregard the pain and suffering endured by survivors.

We, the survivors, ask for justice, transparency, and accountability within the Church. We respectfully request the following:

1. Removal of Archbishop Victor Manuel Fernández: We urge you to remove Archbishop Fernández from his current position as head of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith. His track record suggests that he is not fit for a role of such significance in addressing issues of clergy sexual abuse.
2. Reconsideration of Cardinal Appointment: We request that you reconsider the appointment of Archbishop Fernández as a cardinal. Elevating him to this esteemed position would send a distressing message to survivors and compromise the credibility of the Church's commitment to addressing abuse.

With a hope for a swift and just resolution,

Julieta Añazco,  
Spokesperson, Iglesias sin Abusos



28 Septiembre, 2023

Papa Francisco  
Palacio Apostólico  
00120 Ciudad del Vaticano

Papa Francisco,

**Asunto: Llamado urgente para destituir al arzobispo Víctor Manuel Fernández y detener su nombramiento a cardenal.**

Estimado Papa Francisco,

Somos sobrevivientes de violación y abuso sexual cuando éramos niños por parte de sacerdotes argentinos.

Estamos profundamente preocupados por las acciones del Arzobispo Fernández durante su mandato como Arzobispo de La Plata. Lamentablemente, este mandato ha estado marcado por una serie de graves errores en el manejo de los casos de abuso sexual por parte del clero. Estos casos, que están bien documentados y corroborados, revelan un patrón de encubrimiento y mal manejo de las denuncias, de protección a los sacerdotes abusadores y de injusticia a los sobrevivientes.

Creemos que el nombramiento del arzobispo Fernández al frente del Dicasterio para la Doctrina de la Fe y la consideración de su elevación al rango de cardenal envían un mensaje profundamente preocupante tanto a los sobrevivientes como a los creyentes. Estas acciones parecen promover la mala gestión de los casos de abusos y menospreciar el dolor y el sufrimiento padecidos por los supervivientes.

Nosotros, los sobrevivientes, pedimos justicia, transparencia y responsabilidad dentro de la Iglesia. Respetuosamente solicitamos lo siguiente:

1. Le pedimos destituir al Arzobispo Victor Manuel Fernández de su actual cargo al frente del Dicasterio para la Doctrina de la Fe. Su trayectoria indica que no es apto para un cargo de tanta relevancia en el tratamiento de los problemas de abusos sexuales del clero.
2. Le pedimos que reconsidere el nombramiento del arzobispo Fernández como cardenal. Elevarlo a este estimado cargo enviaría un mensaje preocupante a los sobrevivientes y comprometería la credibilidad del compromiso de la Iglesia para abordar los abusos.

Con la esperanza de una resolución rápida y justa,

Julieta Añazco, Vocera, Iglesias sin Abusos



# **BISHOPACCOUNTABILITY.ORG**

## **Summaries of cases from BishopAccountability**

Scan QR codes to view

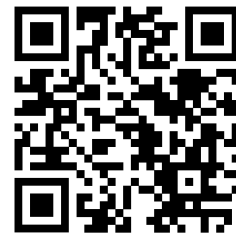
**Rev. Eduardo Lorenzo:**



**Padre Raúl Anatoly  
Sidders:**



**Padre Rubén Marchioni:**



**Excerpt from 2019 Letter from Julio C. Frutos to Archbishop Fernández:**

*“Your apostolic advice can greatly help to enrich those who, without being directly involved in this problem, observe it attentively. I have always asked myself with persistent concern, how do all those non-practicing or unbelievers, who lead an ethical life governed by the fundamental values of goodness, beauty, kindness, solidarity and respect, look at us. What will they think of us when they see us filtering out the gnat and yet swallowing the camel?”*

*I beg you to advise me, to correct me fraternally, to guide me so that I am not trapped in the foolish posture of the critics or in the reprehensible posture of the hypocrites. **Since you have arrived in the diocese, those of us affected by this problem have tried to talk to you about it, to tell you what we know and to listen to your guidance. We have asked several priests to convey this concern to you, because it is something that worries us, so I welcome this opportunity and this request, knowing that it will also apply to all those who would like to denounce situations of this kind in the future.***

*The victims of sexual abuse are people thrown into an existential despair. Depression, addiction and suicide attempts are some of their companions along the way. One of the great impediments they will find is the lack of credibility that we generally offer them. Not being believed is one of the main reasons for revictimization. On the other hand appears the claim of the accused and their good reputation, which we generally confirm far more easily and quickly. They are no longer just an abused person, now they are also liars and a harmful provocateur of the good reputation of valuable people. It is not uncommon for them to respond with silence and self-mutilation.*

*Since I keep my baptismal promise to die within Mother Church, I allow myself to make this endearing request for help - which no fool should mistake for an angry complaint: Tell me, Monsignor, your pastoral and paternal advice.”*

## **Extracto de Carta de 2019 de Julio C. Frutos al Arzobispo Fernández:**

*“Su consejo apostólico mucho puede colaborar a enriquecer también a aquéllos, que sin ser parte directa de este problema, lo observan con atención. Siempre me he preguntado con persistente inquietud, cómo nos miran todas aquellas personas no practicantes o increyentes, que llevan una vida ética regida por los valores fundamentales del bien, la belleza, la bondad, la solidaridad y el respeto. Qué pensarán de nosotros cuando nos ven filtrar el mosquito y tragar el camello.*

*Le ruego me aconseje, me corrija fraternalmente, me oriente para no quedar atrapado en la necia postura de los críticos ni en la censurable de los hipócritas. **Desde que Ud. ha llegado a la diócesis hemos intentado los afectados por este problema hablarle del mismo, contarle cuanto sabemos y escuchar su orientación. A varios sacerdotes les hemos pedido que le transmitan esta inquietud, porque es algo que nos preocupa, por eso celebro esta oportunidad y este pedido, sabiendo que aplicará además para todos aquellos que quisieran denunciar en el futuro situaciones de esta especie.***

*Las víctimas de abuso sexual son personas arrojadas a un pozo ciego existencial. Depresión, adicciones y tentativas de suicidio serán algunos de sus compañeros de camino. Uno de los grandes impedimentos que encontrarán para salir de ello, será la falta de credibilidad que le ofrecemos generalmente. No ser creídos es uno de los principales motivos de la revictimización. En tensión con ello aparece el reclamo de los acusados acerca de su buena fama, que generalmente confirmamos con mayor facilidad y rapidez. Ya no es solo un abusado, ahora es también un mentiroso y un dañino provocador de la buena fama de personas valiosas. No es raro que respondan con silencio y automutilación.*

*Como mantengo la promesa bautismal de morir dentro de la madre Iglesia, me permito hacerle este entrañable pedido de ayuda –que ningún imbécil debiera confundir con un airado reclamo-: Dígame Monseñor su consejo pastoral y paternal.”*