

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 1 October, 2023

Top Synod official says he will “be shot” by “conservative bishops” for advocating for Zero Tolerance law at Synod

Survivors and advocates to introduce newly-proposed Zero Tolerance legislation

Cardinal Hollerich of Luxembourg says Pope Francis can’t enact Zero Tolerance because, “the Curia” tells him “what to do”

WHEN: 11:00am, 2 October, 2023

WHERE: Foreign Press Club, Via dell'Umiltà, 83, 00187 Roma RM

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

WHAT: Clergy abuse survivors and advocates representing 25 countries on 5 continents illustrating why an official Zero Tolerance law is needed, a six-minute video of an impromptu encounter between Cardinal Hollerich and abuse survivors, photos of survivors from around the world, a presentation on ECA's draft of a new binding and universal Zero Tolerance law

WHY:

Rome, Italy – In an extraordinary impromptu encounter, Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, the Cardinal of Luxembourg and the relator general of the Pope's Synod on Synodality shared candid admissions with two survivors with the organization Ending Clergy Abuse (ECA) as to why Pope Francis has failed to enact zero tolerance for sexual abuse and cover-up. Cardinal Hollerich is regarded by some as a leading candidate for the papacy, and the revelations have raised critical questions about the Catholic Church's approach to abuse. [Both Cardinal Karol Wojtyla and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger](#) once held the positions of relators general prior to their papacies.

In early September, an abuse survivor presented Cardinal Hollerich with a copy of a [Zero Tolerance legislation](#) drafted by canon lawyers who are recognized experts on the issue of abuse within the Church. The legislation proposes the penalty of dismissal from the clerical state for both abusers and those who have covered up abuse. Cardinal Hollerich committed to personally reading the legislation, delivering it to Pope Francis on September 18th, and urging the Pope to seriously consider its contents.

However, on Wednesday, September 27th, two survivors from ECA, who were on a recorded Zoom call, encountered Cardinal Hollerich passing by on the street in Rome. This chance meeting led to a conversation that brought to light several concerning revelations which will be demonstrated in a video of the conversation presented at the press conference.

Despite repeated statements from Pope Francis emphasizing 'zero tolerance' within Church law and practice, ECA will underscore the stark reality that there is currently no binding Church law that mandates permanent removal from the priesthood for any act of sexual abuse or participation in its institutional concealment.

The group will discuss the Hollerich revelations along with current alarming cases of abuse from several countries including Colombia, [Italy](#), and [Canada](#). On Thursday, September 29th, ECA called on Pope Francis to remove newly-elevated Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernández from his role as head of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF). Eighty-percent of the DDF's workload, [according to America Magazine](#), consists of investigating sexual abuse cases from around the world. Among the cases that will be highlighted are several that Fernández covered up while Archbishop of La Plata. A victim of the notorious Argentine pedophile priest, [Rev. Eduardo Lorenzo](#), will share his experience of how Fernández not only protected, but actively supported and endorsed Lorenzo after credible allegations against him had surfaced.

ECA will demand that Cardinal Hollerich introduce the Zero Tolerance legislation at the convening of the Synod. The group also insists that discussion about sexual abuse during the Synod should be open to the media and the public.

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Ending Clergy Abuse (ECA) is a worldwide organization of human rights' activists who focus on children's and victims' rights joining in common cause 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.