News



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Jan. 15-18
Pope Francis visits Chile on the first part of a foreign trip before heading on to Peru.

During the visit, demonstrators appear at several of the pope's events to protest his 2015 appointment of Bishop Juan Barros Madrid, who survivors say was present in the 1980s and 90s as a priest to witness some of the actions of notorious abuser Fr. Fernando Karadima.

In an exchange with a group of journalists before one event, Francis calls the charges against Barros "calumny."

Jan. 20
Boston's Cardinal Sean O'Malley, a member of the Council of Cardinals and the head of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, releases a statement acknowledging that Francis' defense of Barros was "a source of great pain" for abuse survivors.

The cardinal says expressions of doubt about survivors' testimony "abandon those who have suffered reprehensible criminal violations of their human dignity."

Jan. 22
In a press conference on the way home to Rome from Chile, the pope again calls the charges against Barros "calumny." He repeatedly insists there is no evidence tying Barros to Karadima, despite public testimony of at least three abuse survivors.

Jan. 30
The Vatican announces that Francis has asked Maltese Archbishop Charles Scicluna, considered one of the church's foremost experts on the abuse crisis, to go to Chile and take survivors' testimony.

Feb. 17
Before heading to Chile, Scicluna meets Chilean abuse survivor Juan Carlos Cruz in New York. Cruz praises Scicluna's demeanor and says he acted with "openness and transparency."

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Feb. 22
Cardinal Francisco Errázuriz Ossa, the retired archbishop of the Chilean capital of Santiago and a member of the Council of Cardinals, blames poor media coverage of Francis' visit to Chile on Barros. In a letter obtained by NCR, he criticizes Barros for giving interviews during the visit and says the prelate "did not perceive the magnitude of the problem."

April 11
Francis writes a letter to Chile's bishops, admitting he made "serious mistakes" in his handling of the country's clergy sexual abuse crisis. The pope announces he will be meeting with Chilean abuse survivors in Rome and calls the bishops to come to the Vatican en masse to discuss next steps.

April 29-May 1
Francis has lengthy individual meetings and then a group encounter at the Vatican with three Chilean abuse survivors: Juan Carlos Cruz, Jose Andres Murillo, and James Hamilton. At a press conference May 2, the survivors say the pontiff was "attentive, receptive, and very empathetic" in the encounters.

Cruz says Francis told him: "I was part of the problem. I caused this and I apologize to you."

May 10
Chile's bishops announce they are coming to Rome and will meet with Francis May 14-17. They say Francis' meetings with the three victims "show us the path that the Chilean Church is called to follow."

May 17
At the end of the meetings between Francis and 34 Chilean bishops, the Vatican releases a letter from the pope to the prelates calling on them to build a "prophetic church" that places care for the suffering, especially survivors of sexual abuse, at its center.

May 18
The Chilean bishops in Rome announce they have submitted their resignations to Francis en masse and will await his decision for which of their dismissals he will accept.

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This story appears in the **Chilean bishops resign** feature series. View the full series.