News
Vatican



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Pope Francis has laicized two retired Chilean bishops, in what an Oct. 13 Vatican announcement said was "a consequence for demonstrated abuse of minors."

The statement said that both former Archbishop Francisco José Cox Huneeus and former Bishop Marco Antonio Órdenes Fernández will have no possibility for appeal.

News of the defrocking of the former prelates came hours after Francis had met at the apostolic palace with Chilean President Sebastián Piñera. In a brief statement summarizing their conversation, the Vatican said the two had discussed "the painful scourge of abuse of minors."

Cox, 84, is a former Vatican official and member of the Schonstatt Fathers who led the archdiocese of La Serena from 1990-1997. His institute had announced earlier this month that he had been accused of sexually abusing someone in 2004.

Órdenes, 53, led the diocese of Iquique from 2006-13, when he resigned after being accused of having a sexual relationship with at least one minor.

The Vatican statement said Francis had dismissed the two former bishops from the clerical state in accordance with the norms set forth in *Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela*, a motu proprio adopted by John Paul II in 2001 and updated by Benedict XVI

in 2010.

Kurt Martens, a canon lawyer at the Catholic University of America, said on Twitter shortly after the announcement that the invocation of the motu proprio signifies an "ex officio dismissal without any further process because of the gravity of the delict and the fact that the delict was committed."

Juan Carlos Cruz, a Chilean abuse survivor who was part who of a group that met Francis earlier in the year, tweeted that it was "a wonderful day for survivors."

Chile's Catholic Church has been rocked over past months with a series of revelations of abuse by priests. Francis made a visit to the country in Chile, during which he stoked controversy by defending his 2015 appointment of a bishop who at least three survivors said had been present as a priest to witness their abuse.

After returning home to the Vatican, Francis admitted making "serious mistakes" in his handling of abuse cases in Chile and has since accepted the resignations of seven bishops, including the one he had defended.

In September, the pontiff also defrocked notorious abuser Fernando Karadima, toughening an earlier sanction of a lifetime of prayer and penance.

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