

Press conference at the Stampa Estera in Rome, 17 of February 2020

My name is Matthias Katsch, a survivor of Child sexual abuse by two Jesuit priests at the Canisius-Kolleg in Berlin. I am the founder and managing director of Eckiger Tisch, an association advocating and counselling victims/survivors of CSA in the catholic Church. I am a member of the German Independent Commission into CSA, appointed by the wish of the German parliament. Today, I am speaking here as a survivor and as an member of Ending Clergy Abuse ECA, the association of survivors and human rights activists from around the globe. Thank you to bishopsaccountability for having me here.

A year ago we came here together, victims of sexual violence by clerics from thirty countries, to show the pope and the world that sexual violence by clerics is a global problem of the catholic church, not a problem of the global north, of the west, of the US or Europe.

Our motto was: zero tolerance! For priests and for bishops and provincials who covered up.

One year later our demands are still the same.

What has been done by the pope and the church could be summarized under:

Too little and too late. And still not enough.

We have been speaking for so many years now.

In Germany, the disclosure took place exactly ten years ago, the so called "Abuse scandal".

In the USA it is more than three decades, that survivors came forward.

And we are still demanding the truth about the crimes, help and compensation for the victims.

Thanks to the efforts of victims/survivors, things are getting going, slowly but steadily. To change the culture of abuse and cover up in the church in each and every country you need survivors who speak up and a public willing to listen to them.

Let's have a short look on Germany.

After the publication in autumn 2018 of the so-called MHG study, which had found indications of 1670 perpetrators and 3677 victims in the personal files of the dioceses, the bishops declared publicly that they needed help to investigate and clarify the past. One a half years later, the government and the church are still negotiating the way an investigation of the cases from the past can be done. Due to the strict statute of limitations, most cases are time-barred and can no longer be investigated under criminal law. In most cases, the offenders are not prosecuted. But at least we need to know, who did what, when and who covered it up.

For the first time, the Church in Germany has also declared that it recognises that it is itself responsible for the abuse and the system of cover-up and transfer of perpetrators. That is why it must now also pay compensation as an institution.

But after it seemed as if the bishops were willing to do so, they are now rowing back again, and yet they prefer to pay only a "recognition payment", which is highly symbolic. During the last ten years they offered up to 5000 Euros as "payments in recognition of the suffering".

So, the fight is not over in our countries. And in other countries it is going to start.

We will continue to demand:

Zero tolerance for offenders and their accomplices!

Independent Investigation of the crimes of the past! If the criminal system is not able to do so, we need truth and justice commissions!

And finally, we demand an adequate compensation for the suffering in the biographies and lives of so many victims! No payment can change the past. But it can help now and for the future to live on.

The Pope and all the Bishops are called upon to accept their own personal responsibility and their own contributory negligence when dealing with cases of abuse!

Religious communities pose a particular problem. Like the **Istituto Provolo**, which is the focus later this week, with its facilities in Verona, Italy and Mendoza, Argentina. You will learn about the cases of those most vulnerable men and women who have been abused by the same priests in Italy and in Argentina over a period of several decades. Their story is a pattern for the systematic failure of the Church to protect children and instead protect perpetrators. They are telling it today at the UN in Geneva.

These religious orders are directly under the Pope. They are theoretically monitored by a small authority here in the Vatican. In practice, they do whatever they want. And they share in the Vatican's state immunity. Their headquarters are here in Rome and their files are thus protected from secular justice, as are the files in the archives of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

These orders must be controlled. The Jesuits as well as the many hundreds of small institutes. Like the Society of Mary who is dedicated to the pastoral care

of deaf persons. And apparently had banned sign language. Who is really responsible for these small communities? How are their partly criminal activities controlled? This is a question that shall concern all civilized countries. And that is why Geneva and the UN is the right place to discuss it.

It is good that the Pontifical Secret has fallen. But access to the files for investigators and for victims must now also be granted, in Rome as worldwide.

During this week, we will tell the Pope and the Church:

Open the archives of the Vatican and religious orders to independent investigation!

And develop a plan for real compensation for victims in those countries where the legal systems do not allow access to the courts, as it is the case in countries like Germany where strict statues of limitations protect the Church and not the victims.

This crisis affects the whole Church. It will not end until all stories have been told and heard, all crimes have been solved and all victims have been compensated.

That is what we are working on. In our respective countries. And united in solidarity as ECA, a global justice project together with SNAP and bishopsaccountability.

We want it to end, the abuse, because it is not over, it goes on and on. Children and youth is still at risk.

And we want the demands of the victims finally be met.