



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ECA to Cardinals: No More Excuses – Survivors Demand Action Ahead of Conclave in Rome

April 30, 2025, Rome, Italy – As the College of Cardinals prepares to gather in Vatican City to elect the next Pope, representatives from Ending Clergy Abuse (ECA), a global coalition of survivors and advocates, will arrive in Rome ahead of the Conclave to deliver a clear, urgent message: the era of half-measures must end.

In an Open Letter to the College of Cardinals, ECA demands that the next Pope enshrine Zero Tolerance for sexual abuse in Canon Law, bringing an end to decades of evasion, secrecy, and institutional betrayal.

“We are not here for apologies. We are here for action. Survivors have carried the wounds of the Church’s failures long enough. The next Pope must choose justice over institution—or history will not forgive him,” said Evelyn Korkmaz, ECA Co-founder and survivor of St. Anne’s Residential School.

This call comes amidst ongoing revelations of sexual abuse, cover-ups, and the failure of the Catholic Church to take decisive action to protect vulnerable people worldwide.

“For too long, clergy who’ve served jail time or gone to treatment are quietly returned to active ministry,” stated Gemma Hickey, ECA President and clergy abuse survivor. “These clerics aren’t being rehabilitated; they’re being recycled. This is systemic corruption at the highest level. The Church’s failure to act forces survivors and parishioners to pay the price.”

ECA warns that the sexual abuse crisis is far from over—especially across the Global South, where survivors in countries such as the Philippines, Colombia, India, and across Africa remain vulnerable, silenced, and abandoned. Bishops continue to shield abusive priests while transferring them between dioceses, perpetuating cycles of abuse.

The group’s Open Letter outlines specific reforms necessary for real change:

- Mandatory laicization for clergy found guilty of abusing minors or vulnerable adults.
- Mandatory reporting to civil authorities, without exception.
- Global survivor-centred protocols, culturally and linguistically appropriate.
- Independent accountability mechanisms that are not controlled by diocesan authorities.

ECA emphasizes that “building on the reforms of Francis” is not enough—the next Pope must complete them. Many bishops have yet to implement even the minimum safeguarding standards set by *Vos Estis Lux Mundi*, and too often have blocked reforms to protect themselves while punishing critics. Survivors, laity, and the global Church deserve leadership rooted in transparency, courage, and justice—not more delay.

“The Church cannot walk humbly until it kneels before those it has wounded,” ECA’s letter states. “Let the next papacy be remembered not for what it refused to confront, but for the truth it chose to face—and the justice it had the courage to enact.”

The Vatican can no longer shield those responsible for decades of harm. As the world watches, ECA demands that the College of Cardinals elect a Pope who will take immediate, decisive action and restore integrity to the Church.

ECA representatives will be available for interviews with media during their time in Rome.

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