



MEDIA STATEMENT

Honouring a Life, Confronting a Legacy: ECA Global's Statement on Pope Francis

April 21, 2025

With deep respect and solemn reflection, Ending Clergy Abuse (ECA) Global extends its condolences on the passing of Pope Francis, who died this morning at the Vatican.

For many, Pope Francis was a symbol of hope and renewal within the Catholic Church. His words often pointed toward compassion, inclusion, and change. He opened doors to dialogue in ways his predecessors often did not. His focus on mercy, care for the poor, and environmental justice inspired many, both within and beyond the Church.

Yet as an international coalition dedicated to justice for survivors of clergy sexual abuse, ECA Global must acknowledge that his papacy fell short of delivering the decisive action needed to confront the Church's ongoing abuse crisis.

Like his two immediate predecessors, Pope Francis offered apologies and held private meetings with select survivors. But words without action ring hollow. Under his leadership, the Church failed to hold bishops accountable for their roles in enabling, concealing, and perpetuating abuse. Systemic change remained elusive. The resignation of a few prelates behind closed doors is no substitute for public accountability. His refusal to remove or discipline those complicit in cover-ups betrayed the Church's moral obligation to protect the vulnerable.

Survivors deserve more than symbolic gestures. They deserve safety, dignity, and truth.

It is no longer enough to acknowledge pain. The voices of survivors must be heard, believed, and placed at the centre of reform. Their lived experiences must shape the policies, practices, and cultural transformation required for genuine accountability and healing.

As the Church prepares to select its next leader, the path forward must be clear. The next pope must act where Pope Francis did not. He must implement a universal zero-tolerance policy—one that holds clergy fully accountable for abuse and its concealment. He must reject secrecy and complicity and place the protection of children and vulnerable adults at the heart of the Church's mission.

ECA Global remains steadfast in its commitment to supporting survivors. We will continue to advocate for a Church where truth, justice, and survivor dignity are not aspirational values, but foundational principles.

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