

Argentina ‘Dirty War’ Accusations Haunt Pope Francis

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This article originally published by the BBC in 2013 is of relevance to Pope Francis’ endorsement of the Vaccine Passport as well his posture on the violation of fundamental human rights.

“I see a lot of joy and celebration for Pope Francis, but I’m living his election with a lot of pain.”

These are the words of Graciela Yorio, the sister of Orlando Yorio – a priest who was kidnapped in May 1976 and tortured for five months during Argentina’s last military government.

Ms Yorio accuses the then-Father Jorge Mario Bergoglio of effectively delivering her brother and fellow priest Francisco Jalics into the hands of the military authorities by declining to endorse publicly their social work in the slums of Buenos Aires, which infuriated the junta at the time.

Their kidnapping took place during a period of massive state repression of left-wing activists, union leaders and social activists which became known as the “Dirty War”.

Orlando Yorio has since died. But, in a statement, Fr Jalics said on Friday he was “reconciled with the events and, for my part, consider them finished”.

The Vatican has strenuously denied Pope Francis was guilty of any wrongdoing.

“There has never been a credible, concrete accusation against him,” its spokesman, Fr Federico Lombardi, told reporters in Rome.

‘Stolen babies’

For Estela de la Cuadra, the election of Cardinal Bergoglio as Pope, was “awful, a barbarity”.

Her sister Elena was “disappeared” by the military in 1978 when five-months pregnant. Their father asked Fr Bergoglio for help in finding her.

“He gave my dad a handwritten note with the name of a bishop who could give us information on our missing relatives,” Ms de la Cuadra says.

“When my father met the bishop, he was informed that his granddaughter was ‘now with a good family’,” she adds.

In 2010, then-Cardinal Bergoglio was asked to testify in the trial over the “stolen babies” – children born to the regime’s opponents who were taken and handed over to be raised in suitable military families after their mothers were killed.

The cardinal said he had only known about that practice after democracy returned to Argentina in 1983.

Ms de la Cuadra believes the handwritten note contradicts this account, and testified under oath on the subject in May 2011.

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