

# *Pope strips of duties Chilean priest at center of sexual abuse scandal*

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Vatican City, September 29 (RHC)-- Pope Francis has removed from duty Father Fernando Karadima, the 88-year-old priest at the center of Chile's vast sexual abuse scandal. In a statement on Friday, the Vatican called the decision "exceptional" and said the Pope had done it "for the good of the Church."

Karadima had been ordered to live a life of prayer and penitence after he was found guilty of abusing teenage boys over many years in a Vatican investigation in 2011. Since June, seven Chilean bishops have stepped down following a probe into a purported cover-up of sexual abuse committed by Karadima.

The decree to defrock Karadima was signed on Thursday, the Vatican said, adding the pontiff was notified of being "reduced to the lay state" on Friday.

The Catholic Church worldwide is reeling from crises involving the sexual abuse of minors, deeply damaging confidence in the Holy See. The scandals have been the most serious in Chile, the United States, Australia and Ireland.

Pope Francis has formerly expressed "shame and sorrow" over the matter. Addressing an event in

Ireland, attended by some victims of such sexual abuses, the pontiff admitted that the Church had failed to address the “crimes.”

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