

Pope Francis I: Bergoglio Has Ties To A Dark Period For The Catholic Church

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Francis I along with the whole Argentine Catholic Church have faced criticism for their silence or complicity during the post-1976 military dictatorship — a failure for which the Church [apologized in 2012](#).

Known as the Dirty War, this period saw a brutal battle between the ruling military elite and leftist guerrilla fighters, in which up to 30,000 Argentinians were “disappeared” and others were raped or killed.

[Argentine journalist Horacio Verbitsky](#) chronicled how the Church and Bergoglio were involved in this dark era. [As described by Hugh O’Shaughnessy](#) of The Guardian in 2011:

[Verbitsky] recounts how the Argentine navy with the connivance of Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, now the Jesuit archbishop of Buenos Aires, hid from a visiting delegation of the Inter-American [Human Rights](#) Commission the dictatorship’s political prisoners. Bergoglio was hiding them in nothing less than his holiday home in an island called El Silencio in the River Plate. The most shaming thing for the church is that in such circumstances Bergoglio’s name was allowed to go forward in the ballot to chose the successor of John Paul II. What scandal would not have ensued if the first pope ever to be elected from the continent of America had been revealed as an accessory to murder and false imprisonment.

Bergoglio contended to writer Sergio Rubin that he hid these people to keep them from the violent military junta, not the Human Rights Commission — even as his Jesuit order and Church leaders publicly endorsed the dictatorship.

He later said the endorsement was one of [political pragmatism](#), which is understandable in the face of certain death, if not exactly righteous, according to the AP.

Bergoglio also faced criticism from human rights lawyer Myriam Bregman, who tried to bring the Catholic leader to court for allegedly turning over two priests to Argentine death squads — charges which others have denied.

In any case Bregman sees evidence in Bergoglio’s statements that [he knew of the dictatorship’s crimes](#). “The dictatorship could not have operated this way without this key support,” she said, according to the AP.

Certainly the waters here are a bit muddied. The history has many sides, as it often does when it's so far removed from such shocking tragedy and conflict. But it shouldn't be forgotten, even as the present is filled with white smoke and cheering crowds.

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