

ALLEGATION

Victims ignored: Rupnik's trial is yet another scandal

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'I have never asked for a public trial, nor for the Holy See to change its legal system. I have only asked for the minimum information necessary to guarantee the right to defence and cross-examination. Without these, there can be no justice.' So says lawyer

Laura Sgrò, who represents five of the women accusing Father Marko Ivan Rupnik of physical, psychological, and spiritual abuse. She was speaking to the Daily Compass following the [recent leaks and various reactions](#).

According to rumours, the charges of physical violence against the priest-artist have reportedly been dropped from the ongoing criminal trial in the Vatican. However, the subsequent statement from the Vatican Press Office asserts that reports 'regarding any decision by the judges' are 'absolutely unfounded'.

However, the problem does not only lie in any potential verdicts; the issue is that this is effectively a 'phantom' trial. Lawyer Sgrò explains it as follows: "It is a trial being conducted in total secrecy. Not only have the victims not been summoned, but my request to participate as legal counsel for the injured party has not even received a reply." Ms Sgrò says she has repeatedly tried to contact Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernández, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, who is responsible for this trial, as well as Monsignor John Joseph Kennedy, Secretary of the Disciplinary Section of the same Congregation, by telephone or email. 'I've always been fobbed off; nobody wants to speak to me.'

The lawyer representing the former nuns who have accused Rupnik emphasises that she does not want the trial to be publicised, but simply for 'the minimum necessary information to be shared to ensure justice'. 'How can the parties to the proceedings – both the prosecution and the defence – be safeguarded in a trial about which absolutely nothing is known?'

We too have tried to seek information directly from Matteo Bruni, director of the Vatican Press Office, regarding when the trial began, how it is being conducted and whether the names of the judges will be made public. We have not yet received a reply, but will add it here should it arrive.

In any case, although a canonical criminal trial differs from criminal proceedings in Italian courts, certain safeguards can still be expected. First and foremost, the victims must be heard. Secondly, they must know who the judges are who will pass judgement. 'There could be a conflict of interest,' Mr Sgrò continues, 'perhaps linked to past events or hidden animosities, and this would influence the judgement. How can a trial be credible when the victims do not even know the names of the judges? It is yet another form of violence being perpetrated against these women'.

This is also the thrust of the letter that lawyer Sgrò wrote to Cardinal Fernández

following the leak of information about the trial, in which she denounces 'further violence against my clients, whose wounds are still raw and have not even begun to heal'.

'My clients,' she continued in the letter, 'are deeply disheartened and distressed. They have never been informed of anything — not even through me — regarding this trial, about which all manner of rumours are circulating, and nothing is certain. My clients feel abandoned and betrayed. Once again, they are victims of a system that has never welcomed, protected or comforted them'.

This repeated violence against women, who have been manipulated, abused, and condemned to lives shattered by deep wounds, is the most repugnant aspect of this years-long farce, seemingly organised to let Father Rupnik and his protectors off the hook. For if there is one thing that must be made clear, it is that what Father Rupnik's defenders claim to be slander are in fact documented and established facts, yet they have never provided evidence to refute the reported circumstances.

There are not only the testimonies submitted to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (which was unable to proceed because the statute of limitations had expired), but also the fact that Rupnik was excommunicated in May 2020 for absolving his accomplice (a penalty lifted after a few weeks by Pope Francis). It was the Jesuits themselves who shed some light on the matter in the wake of the scandal, after years in which their superiors had consistently looked the other way. All of this is set out in the dossier submitted by the independent international commission known as the 'Referral Team' to the Jesuit superiors in February 2023. The Jesuit General Curia itself published a statement on 21 February 2023 entitled '[Towards a Recognition of the Truth](#)' , based on the commission's conclusions.

The statement explains that the acts attributed to Father Rupnik span a period of over 30 years, from the mid-1980s until 2018. Regarding the credibility of the victims, the statement says: 'Many of these people are unaware of one another, and the incidents recounted relate to different periods. These include the Loyola Community; individuals who claim to have been abused in conscience, spiritually, or psychologically; individuals who claim to have been sexually harassed during personal interactions with Father Rupnik; and individuals who were part of the Aletti Centre.' Therefore, the degree of credibility of the allegations or testimonies appears to be very high.'

In fact, on 26 March 2025, the Society of Jesus itself, through Father Johan Verschueren, the delegate for the Jesuits' interprovincial works, [wrote to all of Father Rupnik's victims](#)

. The letter states that 'it believes in the possibility of initiating a process of reparation and inner healing, provided that, at the same time, we too embark on a path of truth and acknowledgement'. The letter asks the victims to 'make known what they need now and how the Jesuits can meet these needs'.

However, this 'path of truth' is precisely what is being denied by a 'sham' trial that is adding scandal upon scandal. It is even becoming embarrassing for Pope Leo XIV.