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Press statement on a judicial process in Argentina

Following several reports in the media, we provide below the statement from the Information Office of Opus Dei in Argentina on a judicial investigation following the complaint of a group of women who had belonged to the Work.

10/01/2024

As of today (October 1st, 2024), the case is in its preliminary phase. The

prosecutor, following the investigation carried out on the basis of that complaint, has submitted the request to the judge for an enquiry to take place. If this request is granted by the judge, Opus Dei officials who may be called to give evidence will be able to give their version of events, so far absent in the process.

We reiterate our commitment to cooperate with the legal process to clarify the facts and to resolve the situation in a fair and transparent manner.

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

<https://opusdei.org/es-ar/article/el-opus-dei-niega-categoricamente-la-acusacion-de-trata-de-persona-y-considera-necesaria-la-investigacion-judicial-para-esclarecer-definitivamente-la-situacion/>

TRANSLATION

Opus Dei categorically denies the accusation of human trafficking and considers that a judicial investigation would be welcome to clarify the situation definitively

Statement of the Communications Office of Opus Dei in Argentina

September 28, 2024

In relation to the accusation known in the media in recent hours, referring to the personal situation of a group of women while they were part of the institution, **we categorically deny the accusations of human trafficking and labor exploitation** made by them against the Prelature through the figure of former Vicars who led the institution in Argentina during different periods between 1991 and 2015.

We see with sorrow and surprise that, having initiated the claim for inconsistencies in social security and

salary while they were part of Opus Dei, the accusation - as reported by the media - now refers to a person who claims to be a victim of “human trafficking” and “labor exploitation”. The impression is that this accusation is based on a misrepresentation of the formation received by some of the women in the group and the vocation freely chosen by the assistant numeraries of Opus Dei. This is a totally false accusation.

The testimonies of the women mix different stages of their lives as if they were one and the same reality, which obviously generates confusion:

On the one hand, they refer to the training their parents chose for them through a solidarity socio-educational initiative called ICES, inspired by values promoted by Opus Dei, which aimed to provide

education to help prevent school dropout and, at the same time, provide training for a trade, which for many people represented a fundamental opportunity to escape poverty. This non-profit initiative was approved and supervised by all relevant state authorities in Argentina for more than 40 years. Information about the initiative, study plans, official approvals and audits, testimonies of students who studied there and photos of the facilities are fully public and can be found at www.infoycontexto.com/en

On the other hand, the women refer to a second stage of their lives, when they freely chose to be members of Opus Dei following a spiritual vocation within the Catholic Church as assistant numeraries. Assistant numeraries are women of Opus Dei who, like all other members, aspire to love God and others and demonstrate this through their work

and daily lives. The work chosen by the assistant numeraries is the care of the people and the houses in which they live, within a family atmosphere that Opus Dei aims to provide. Both the Catholic Church and the Argentine State have recognized and approved the statutes of Opus Dei, and with them, this specific way of living the vocation in particular.

This choice of life requires, for those who choose it, to manifest their desire explicitly, on multiple occasions and in writing: every person who joins Opus Dei has to reaffirm their desire to be a member at least 8 times, during a period of time of at least 6 and a half years. On the other hand, there is no barrier to disassociate oneself from Opus Dei. It is also important to keep in mind that these people made their choice when they had different alternatives for a life path that had nothing to do

with Opus Dei. Without going any further, most of their companions at ICES were never part of Opus Dei and developed in various fields thanks to the formation they received there.

On the other hand, although the Prelature has not yet had access to the contents of the complaint, the accusations, according to the article, describe a precarious living situation and mistreatment that is also false. In addition to receiving, like any other citizen, a salary for their work and having private social security, the houses where they live, as all centers of Opus Dei, have a welcoming environment and facilities for rest, recreation, reading and study. They also have resources in addition to their salaries at their disposal to travel to visit their families or to help their families financially in case they need it; they are offered to participate in personal

development programs, also with international experiences; just to mention a few circumstances.

The Prelature has always respected the voice of those who have raised claims, and from the beginning of this conflict, its main interest has been to listen and establish a channel of dialogue that allows us to understand each experience.

Therefore, although it is painful to reach a judicial instance of this nature, **we believe that after more than three years of similar accusations made only in the media, the investigation is necessary to clarify the situation definitively.** At the same time, we reaffirm our commitment to collaborate fully with the courts to clarify the facts and resolve the situation in a fair and transparent manner.

Background of the conflict

As has been mentioned, some of these accusations have been made since 2021 only through the media, and not in the Justice system, which the Prelature has always maintained as the appropriate sphere for resolving the conflict and to which it has finally resorted. Nevertheless, Opus Dei has always respected the voice of women, and proof of this is the creation of multiple channels and tools for listening, dialogue and healing to which some of the women in the group have approached and have stated that they did not share the serious accusations that have been made, and even some of them have been involved and mentioned in media reports without their knowledge or authorization.

These women, on the other hand, have expressed pain in relation to personal situations of coexistence and concern about inconsistencies in pension contributions during some

periods of time when they were part of Opus Dei, mostly in the 70s and 80s. In the face of these specific situations, forgiveness has been asked for and reparations have been made. Today, the relationship with those women who have come forward is good.

We regret that we were not able to do the same with this other group of women who were once part of Opus Dei. As we have stated on many occasions, our greatest desire is to understand the situations they experienced and to collaborate to help resolve whatever is necessary.

You can [click here](#) for more background on the conflict.

You can [click here](#) to read the letter written by hundreds of assistant numeraries asking for respect for their choice of life.

Several assistant numeraries have expressed their desire to know what the houses and rooms they live in are like. To see them you can [click here](#).

You can [click here](#) to learn more about the life of the assistant numeraries.

APPENDIX

This is the interior of some of the residences in which Opus Dei assistant numeraries live:

House in Bella Vista, province of Buenos Aires.

House in Vicente López street, Buenos Aires.

House in Sánchez de Bustamante street, Buenos Aires

House in Conde street, Buenos Aires.

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