



# The Holy See

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APOSTOLIC LETTER  
ISSUED MOTU PROPRIO

BY THE SUPREME PONTIFF  
FRANCIS

## ON THE PROTECTION OF MINORS AND VULNERABLE PERSONS

The protection of minors and vulnerable persons is an integral part of the Gospel message that the Church and all its members are called to proclaim throughout the world. Christ himself, in fact, has entrusted us with the care and protection of the weakest and defenceless: “*whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me*” (Mt 18:5). Therefore, we all have the duty to welcome openheartedly minors and vulnerable persons and to create a safe environment for them, with their interests as a priority. This requires a continuous and profound conversion, in which personal holiness and moral commitment come together to promote the credibility of the Gospel proclamation and to renew the educational mission of the Church.

I want, therefore, to strengthen even more the institutional and regulatory framework to prevent and to counter abuses against minors and vulnerable persons so that in the Roman Curia and in Vatican City State:

- there exist a community respectful and mindful of the rights and the needs of minors and of vulnerable persons, as well as being vigilant in preventing any form of physical or psychological violence or abuse, abandonment, neglect, ill-treatment or exploitation that may occur either in interpersonal relationships or in shared spaces and facilities;
- everyone becomes ever more aware of the duty to report abuses to the competent Authorities and to cooperate with them in their prevention and opposition;
- all instances of abuse or ill-treatment of minors or of vulnerable persons are effectively

prosecuted in accordance with the law;

- the right to be welcomed, listened to and accompanied is recognized of those who claim to have suffered exploitation, sexual abuse or ill-treatment, and of their families;
- to victims and to their families appropriate pastoral care is given, as well as adequate spiritual, medical, psychological and legal support;
- the right to a fair and impartial trial, in compliance with the presumption of innocence, as well as the principles of legality and proportionality between the crime and the sentence, is guaranteed to the accused;
- those who are convicted of having abused a minor or a vulnerable person are removed from their duties and that, at the same time, they are offered adequate support for their psychological and spiritual rehabilitation, also in view of their social reintegration;
- everything possible is done to rehabilitate the good name of those who have been wrongly accused;
- adequate training is provided for the protection of minors and vulnerable persons.

Therefore, with the present Letter I decree that:

1. The competent judicial organs of Vatican City State exercise criminal jurisdiction also over the crimes referred to in articles 1 and 3 of Law No. CCXCVII, On the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Persons, of 26 March 2019, when committed by the subjects referred to in point 3 of the Motu Proprio "In Our Times", of 11 July 2013, on occasion of the exercise of their functions.
2. Without prejudice to the sacramental seal, the subjects referred to in point 3 of the Motu Proprio "In Our Times", of 11 July 2013, shall file a report without delay with the Promoter of Justice of the Tribunal of Vatican City State whenever, in the exercise of their functions, they know or have reasonable grounds to believe that a minor or a vulnerable person has suffered of one of the crimes referred to in Article 1 of Law No. CCXCVII, if the offence has been committed either:
  - i. in the territory of the State;
  - ii. to the detriment of citizens or residents in the State;
  - iii. on occasion of the exercise of their functions, by public officials of the State or by the subjects referred to in point 3 of the Motu Proprio "In Our Times", of 11 July 2013.
3. To the persons offended by the crimes referred to in Article 1 of Law No. CCXCVII will be

offered, through the Support Service that is managed by the Department of Health and Hygiene of the Governorate of Vatican City State, spiritual, medical and social assistance, including therapeutic and psychological emergency assistance, as well as useful information of a legal nature.

4. The Labour Office of the Apostolic See, in cooperation with the Support Service of the Department of Health and Hygiene, shall organize training programs for the staff of the Roman Curia and of the Institutions connected to the Holy See on the risks of exploitation, sexual abuse and ill-treatment of minors, as well as the ways to identify and prevent those offences and on the duty to report.

5. When selecting and hiring the staff of the Roman Curia and of the Institutions connected to the Holy See, as well as of those who offer voluntary service, the suitability of the candidates to interact with minors and vulnerable persons shall be ascertained.

6. Those Dicasteries of the Roman Curia and Institutions connected to the Holy See to which minors or vulnerable persons have access shall adopt, with the assistance of the Support service of the Department of Health and Hygiene, guidelines and good practices for their protection.

I establish that the present Apostolic Letter in the form of “*Motu Proprio*” is to be promulgated by its publication in “*L’Osservatore Romano*” and to be inserted subsequently in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*.

*I dispose that everything established herewith shall have immediate, full and lasting force, also abrogating all norms to the contrary, starting from 1 June 2019.*

*Given in Rome, at St. Peter’s, 26 March 2019, the seventh year of the Pontificate.*

**Francis**

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**Law no. CCXCVII on the protection of minors and vulnerable persons of Vatican City State**

**Guidelines on the protection of minors and vulnerable persons for the Vicariate of Vatican City**

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