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# The priest Justo José Ilarraz condemned for abusing seven seminarians



mously, a court gave him 25 years in prison, although the priest, for now, will serve the sentence in house ; the events occurred between 1984 and 1993, and for that reason the defense requested the prescription criminal action

: Telam

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**P**ARANÁ.- Sitting in the first row, the emotion broke when he heard what he expected. Or, as Fabián Schunk would say shortly after, with the fait accompli: "After so many nightmares, this is what I dreamed". He, who was one of the seven whistleblowers, was there when a penal court in the provincial capital sentenced priest Justo José Ilarraz to 25 years in prison for sexual abuse against adolescents who were in charge of the Archdiocesan Seminary of Our Lady of Cenacle, between 1984 and 1993.

The priest, 65, will serve the sentence in house arrest while the sentence is reviewed in higher instances. The grounds for the sentence handed down yesterday, after noon, by judges Alicia Vivian, Gustavo Pimentel and Carolina Castagno, will be announced on June 1.

Illarraz heard the ruling that sentenced him to the maximum penalty for this crime in the most absolute silence. He barely shook his head, denying what was revealed in the reading of the advance sentence, which also ordered the priest to wear an electronic ankle guard monitored by the police of Entre Ríos, in order to prevent him from escaping.

The defense of Illarraz made a prescription of the criminal action against him over time. However, the Justice of Entre Ríos ran out the instances confirming the idea of developing the trial, while it is expected that the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation firm the rejection of the prescription or, instead, make room for the request of the private defender of the religious , Jorge Muñoz.

This means that although the sentence handed down yesterday will be confirmed in the provincial appellate courts, everything could be reversed if the Court admits the statute of limitations.

The events occurred more than 25 years ago in the seminary where Illarraz had received his priestly education. In Our Lady of the Cenacle also operates a secondary school and a pre-seminary that the students of the middle level attend with a view to continue studying to be ordained as priests, as did the now condemned, in 1984.

At the time of committing the abuses, Illarraz was prefect of discipline of the students who were in the first and second year of the Catholic secondary school, in the so-called Minor Seminary. They were interns who had already decided to continue their studies and who hoped to be ordained. For some of the victims that moment was frustrated because they decided to leave the seminary forever; On the other hand, other abused children became priests.

Seven victims denounced Illarraz, but the Justice already determined that there were more minors attacked by who was, almost three decades ago, their religious tutor, according to LA NACION the prosecutor Juan Francisco Ramírez Montrull. The prosecutor maintained that the trial was "well-proven" the responsibility of Illarraz in

the crimes reported, but it was also established that there was concealment by the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

After knowing the sentence, Schunk told LA NACION that "justice was done" and that he hopes that now responsibilities can be established on the silencing of cases by the ecclesiastical hierarchy of Entre Ríos.

In that sense, he directed his criticisms to Cardinal Estanislao Karlic and the current archbishop of Paraná, Juan Alberto Puiggari, who learned about the cases of abuse at the time, but left them unpunished for years. "It makes me sad because they were also our parents, we left our parents in the field to get their hands [on the priests] and they turned a blind eye and left us in the hands of a guy who did what he wanted with us" , he maintained, in dialogue with this newspaper.

In 1995, Karlic, who at that time was archbishop of Paraná, ordered the execution of a diocesan trial in which fifty seminarians declared that they reported the abuses committed by Ilarraz. However, the case was without conviction and concluded with the request made to abused children to keep quiet, they said during the trial.

Justo José Ilarraz was not prevented from continuing to give Masses and to fulfill all of his religious tasks, although he had to leave Paraná. The then Archbishop Karlic sent him to the Vatican to study at the Pontifical Urbaniana University, where he graduated with a degree in Missiology, after presenting a thesis referring to children in the evangelical missions. He was then sent to Tucumán, where he was serving when the criminal investigation began, in 2012.

That was the whole penalty that Ilarraz received for the abuses reported in the Archdiocese. On the other hand, the Provincial Justice declared him the material author of seven acts promoting the corruption of minors aggravated by being in charge of education, and two of aggravated dishonest abuse for being in charge of education.

If the Court does not declare the criminal action prescribed, the priest can not be released before the age of 80.

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