

Argentine Cardinal Named in Kidnap Lawsuit

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March 25, 2013

VATICAN CITY — A human rights lawyer has filed a criminal complaint against an Argentine cardinal mentioned as a possible contender to become pope, accusing him of involvement in the 1976 kidnappings of two priests.

Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio's spokesman Saturday called the allegation "old slander."

The complaint filed in a court in the Argentine capital on Friday accused Bergoglio, the archbishop of Buenos Aires, of involvement in the abduction of two Jesuit priests by the military dictatorship, reported the newspaper Clarin. The complaint does not specify the nature of Bergoglio's alleged involvement.

Under Argentine law, an accusation can be filed with a very low threshold of evidence. A court then decides if there is cause to investigate and file charges.

The accusations against Bergoglio, 68, are detailed in a recent book by Argentine journalist Horacio Verbitsky.

In May 1976, priests Orlando Yorio and Francisco Jalics were kidnapped by the navy. They surfaced five months later, drugged and seminude, in a field.

At the time, Bergoglio was the superior in the Society of Jesus of Argentina.