

## **Table of Contents**

- [\*\*\*A court chastises PROTEX for fabricating victims of a church\*\*\*](#)
- [\*\*\*Update on the Buenos Aires Yoga School. 4. Where do we go from here?\*\*\*](#)

---

## **A court chastises PROTEX for fabricating victims of a church**

***The defendants were absolved and the judge recommended to investigate the "scandalous" abuses of the anti-trafficking agencies and psychologists.***

by Massimo Introvigne

[Bitter Winter](#) (06.02.2024) - There are horror movies and then there are "horror cults." In the [incredible case of the Buenos Aires Yoga School](#) (BAYS) the expression "secta del horror" was liberally used by the media. But it seems that in Argentina it is now a general category: an Evangelical church called Iglesia Tabernáculo Internacional (ITI) was also called "secta del horror" by the media.

What the cases of the BAYS, the ITI, and Cómo vivir por fe (How to Live by Faith), the Argentinian affiliate of the Australian movement Jesus Christians, have in common is the key role of a special prosecutorial office called PROTEX (Procuraduría para el Combate de la Trata y Explotación de Personas, Office of the Procurator for Combating the Trafficking and Exploitation of Persons). PROTEX raids with great fanfare and the presence of the media groups it accuses of being "cults" practicing "coercive persuasion" or "brainwashing" and "trafficking" their members, arrests their leaders, and "liberates" the "victims"—who unanimously deny being victims.

While the BAYS case [is still pending](#), the Jesus Christians were found not guilty of trafficking or any other crimes on November 28, 2022, by the Federal Criminal and Correctional Court of Sáenz Peña, with [an order severely criticizing PROTEX](#).

Even more severe for PROTEX, the other prosecutors, and the anti-cult "expert" psychologists who see "cults" and "trafficking" everywhere is the decision rendered on February 1, 2024, by the Court of Paraná in the case of the Iglesia Tabernaculo Internacional (ITI).

On September 1 and 2, 2022, a farm operated by ITI in El Redomón, in the Department of Concordia, and several private homes were raided at the instigation of PROTEX. The pastors of ITI, Sergio Gabriel Ziegler and his wife Mónica Viviana Mancinelli, were arrested together with two co-workers and later committed to trial, together with other six leaders of the movement who had not been arrested. It was announced that twelve "victims" who had been "imprisoned" in the El Redomón community, called ITI Jerusalem, by ["false pastors"](#) and compelled to work without salary, had been "liberated." As [one newspaper reported](#), "The event had an enormous media repercussion and some Buenos Aires media called the ITI Jerusalem community 'the cult of horror.'"

**[READ MORE](#)**

---

## Update on the Buenos Aires Yoga School. 4. Where do we go from here?

***With the decision of the Court of Appeals the case did not end. The defendants won an important battle. The "war" continues.***

*by Alessandro Amicarelli*

**Article 4 of 4. Read [article 1](#), [article 2](#) and [article 3](#).**



*The ball may be back in his court: Judge Ariel Lijo. Screenshot.*

[Bitter Winter](#) (30.12.2023) - On December 22, 2023, the prosecutors filed an appeal in cassation against the decision of the Court of Appeals.

Unless this appeal in cassation is accepted, the concrete consequence of the Court of Appeals' rulings presented in article 3 of this series will be the return of the case file back to the judge of first instance, Ariel Lijo, so that he may properly evaluate the evidence collected so far, with special reference to the psychiatric and psychological examinations of the alleged victims performed by experts of the Forensic Medical Corps of the Supreme Court. In addition, Judge Lijo was urged to re-examine the defense's plea of lack of action and the objections of a constitutional nature introduced by the defense.

These circumstances could lead to a re-evaluation of the indictments issued and of the procedural situation of the other defendants who provided statements and documentary

evidence and who have not yet received a response from the prosecution or by the judge. In the event of an unfavorable ruling for the defendants, the defense may appeal again to obtain a review by the higher court before reaching the elevation to trial.

### ***A chronology of recent events***

September 8, 2022. Judge Lijo pronounces nineteen indictments.

November 4, 2022. The Court of Appeals partially confirms 17 indictments (revoking some of the charges in 10 of them), finds lack of merit in the other two, orders the release of all detainees, and urges Judge Lijo to hear the alleged victims and especially to conduct psychological and psychiatric tests.

July 4, 2023. The expert examination of the alleged victims is concluded, with results signed in agreement by all the intervening experts of the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation and the experts on behalf of the parties (the experts on behalf of MPF add to their agreement the clause "We reserve the right to expand"). Judge Lijo schedules a hearing for the prosecutors to conclude the investigation.

July 7, 2023. The defense files an exception for lack of action (absence of crime). They also file a nullity action (asking for the annulment of the hearing of July 4).

August 7, 2023. The prosecutors present their request for partial elevation to trial.

August 15, 2023. The defense opposes the elevation to trial and offers new evidence.

The defense counsels present scientific and journalistic articles. They attach [a letter from twelve NGOs](#) expressing concern. They comment on the results of the forensic reports. They explain that the so-called "sleep cures" practiced by BAYS that prosecutors regarded as a sinister means of brainwashing are normal procedures and are even fashionable, with publications about it. They state that many other people who requested to be heard, as well as people who can provide key information such as clients of the companies under investigation, have not been called to testify. They present the written testimonies of more than fifty individuals; and they criticize in detail the arguments of the prosecution, questioning the veracity and coherence of the conclusions it presented.



*Thierry Valle, President of the United Nations ECOSOC-accredited CAP-LC, one of the organizations that signed the letter of the twelve NGOs expressing concern. CAP-LC also took the BAYS case [to the United Nations](#).*

August 17, 2023. The nine alleged victims file a brief opposing the elevation to trial. The prosecutors file a "supplementary report," prepared by their expert witnesses (DATIP), in which they argue that the nine women are under "coercive persuasion."

August 21 to 27, 2023. The nine alleged victims submit several briefs strongly criticizing DATIP's "supplementary report."

September 19, 2023. Judge Lijo signs the order of elevation to trial for the seventeen defendants. At the same time, he rejects the exception for lack of action and the nullity claim of the defense.

September 21 to 25, 2023. The defense counsels appeal the rejection of the exception for lack of action and the nullity claim. In addition, they appeal the elevation to trial order and ask for a declaration of unconstitutionality of article 352 criminal procedure code that establishes the prohibition to appeal an elevation to trial.

September 26, 2023. Judge Lijo passes the appeals for nullity claim and lack of action to Court of Appeals.

October 2, 2023. Judge Lijo rejects the appeal to elevation to trial and unconstitutionality of Article 352. The defense resubmits it in a complaint before Chamber 2 of the Court of Appeals.

December 7, 2023. The Court of Appeals rules the nullity of the decree closing the preliminary investigation and the consequent elevation to trial of defendants and sends the case back to Judge Lijo. In a dissenting opinion, Judge Farah states that he believes all the defendants should be acquitted and the case closed, while the other two judges argue that the issue of lack of crime cannot be dealt with until the validity or otherwise of the new elements submitted has been discussed.

December 22, 2023. The prosecutors file an appeal in cassation against the Court of Appeals decision of December 7.



*Canadian scholar Susan Palmer. From Facebook.*

## **Articles on the BAYS Case**

By [Susan Palmer](#): "[From Cults to 'Cobayes': New Religions as 'Guinea Pigs' for Testing New Laws. The Case of the Buenos Aires Yoga School.](#)"

By [Massimo Introvigne](#): "[The Great Cult Scare in Argentina and the Buenos Aires Yoga School.](#)"

Human rights analysis of the PROTEX-Salum case by Willy Fautré, [part 1](#) and [part 2](#).

"[Misusing Anti-Trafficking Laws](#) Against Spiritual Minorities: The Case of PROTEX in Argentina."

"Argentina: Government [Promotes the Pseudo-Scientific Theory of Brainwashing.](#)"

"Human Rights Abuses Against Buenos Aires Yoga School [Denounced at the United Nations.](#)"

---