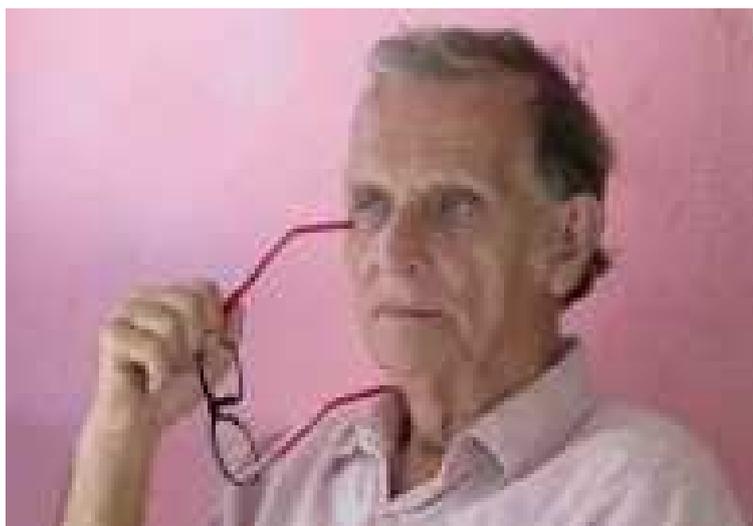


‘You know we are going to kill you’: Ex-priest’s chilling threat to lawyer

By Chris Barrett in the Sydney Morning Herald, July 14, 2021

Singapore: A defrocked Catholic priest accused of systematic child abuse in East Timor has been reported to police for allegedly threatening to kill the human rights lawyer representing the victims.

The claim against American-born Richard Daschbach was made in a statement released on Tuesday night by law firm JUS Juridico Social Consultoria.



Richard Daschbach has support in high places in East Timor. *Credit:AP*

“At around 11.15am [on Tuesday] inside the Oecusse District Court, the accused of the case of 14 counts of sexual abuse against children, one count of child pornography and domestic violence, ex-priest Mr Richard Daschbach threatened to kill Ms Barbara Oliveira, partner of JUS Juridico Social,” the firm said in the statement.

“This threat was made inside the court building, directly witnessed by one member of the national police. While Ms Oliveira was sitting and working in the waiting area of the court waiting for the conclusion of the hearing, Mr Daschbach left the defendant waiting room to go to the toilet.

“Upon his return, Mr Daschbach walked across the open area and stood right in front of her while she remained sitting, at a distance of approximately 1.5m to 2m, and clearly uttered in English, ‘Barbara, you know we are going to kill you’. After that, he went back to the defendant room.”

The incident was reported to police and because Oliveira is a Brazilian and Portuguese national, their embassies in Dili have also been informed about the alleged death threat, the statement said.

Miguel Faria, one of the lawyers defending the sacked priest, told Portuguese news agency Lusa his team “were not aware of the situation”.

Daschbach, 84, is facing charges of child pornography, domestic violence and 14 counts of alleged abuse of girls under 14 at a shelter he operated in the country between 1991 and 2018.

The Sydney Morning Herald and *The Age* last month [revealed a letter sent in 2018 by Daschbach to the Rome headquarters of the Society of the Divine Word](#), the church's largest missionary order, in which he agreed to comply with any measures it imposed, saying "the victims could be anyone from about 2012 back to 1991". The church expelled him soon afterwards.

His high-profile criminal trial in mostly Catholic East Timor has been held before three judges in the remote territory of Oecusse.

The trial has repeatedly been delayed because Daschbach, who has been under house arrest in the capital, has failed to show up on several occasions, citing the COVID-19 outbreak as a concern.



Former East Timor president Xanana Gusmão (right) offers a show of support for Daschbach outside court. *Credit:AP*

Supporters of the 17 victims being represented by JU,S Juridico Social Consultoria have been subjected to online intimidation as the case, which has divided south-east Asia's youngest nation, has made its way to court.

The public backing of Daschbach by former East Timor president Xanana Gusmao has been particularly controversial, as the independence hero supports the accused at court and earlier this year celebrated the defrocked priest's birthday by feeding him cake at his house.

With defenders of Daschbach now insisting that the gathering of forensic evidence from girls from the shelter was conducted under duress, Xanana has continued his defence of the ex-priest, accusing the prosecution of "great illegality, irregularity, immorality".

Xanana's three sons and Australian ex-wife Kirsty Sword-Gusmao in February wrote to the victims, expressing disappointment at the actions of the legendary political figure.

The latest development has prompted Sword-Gusmao to hit out on Facebook about the treatment of victims and their supporters.

"The culture of insulting, distrusting, threatening and blaming women is flourishing in Timor-Leste. How sad & shameful," she wrote.