

## OUTRAGE AT BORUC CAUTION

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SCOTLAND'S Catholics were furious yesterday after Celtic goalie Artur Boruc ended up with a criminal record for crossing himself.

And they have launched a campaign to pressurise the Executive to stop similar decisions in the future.

Boruc was given a formal caution after being accused of inciting violence and angering the Rangers support by making the gesture during an Old Firm match at Ibrox in February.

Yesterday, the Scottish Catholic Observer newspaper called on Catholics to petition the Executive over the move, which was said to have baffled Boruc.

Catholic Church spokesman Peter Kearney called the move "alarming".

He said: "It is worrying some spectators saw fit to complain but even more so that police felt it merited investigation.

"People would understand if someone was to incite religious hatred by attacking the symbol of someone's faith.

"But what we have here is people who are offended and annoyed by another person's religious gesture and are able to complain and have that person punished.

"This decision could lead us down a very intolerant road."

The newspaper petition calls on ministers "to recognise the problem arises not from the person carrying out an act of Christian prayer but in the prejudices of those who complain".

It concludes: "I call on the Executive to take steps to tackle the real problem and to ensure that the act of blessing yourself does not merit, in any circumstances, a police investigation or criminal proceedings."

Some fans told police they believed Boruc had deliberately antagonised them with the gesture as he took his place in goal at the start of the second half.

But university lecturer Dr Joe Bradley, editor of two books about Celtic, said: "Only when people like Artur Boruc can bless themselves wherever and whenever they want will Scotland's sectarian problem be on its way to being solved."

The caution, although it avoids a court case, still counts as a criminal record.

Neither Rangers nor Celtic would comment on the case last night.

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