

# International Humanist and Ethical Union

UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL: 13th Session (1 to 26 March 2011)

Speaker: IHEU Representative, Keith Porteous-Wood: Tuesday 15 March 2011

Agenda Item 4: Matters requiring the attention of the Council

## Child Abuse and the Holy See

Mr President

At both 12th and 13<sup>th</sup> sessions of the Council, we alleged that the Holy See had contravened several articles of [the Convention on the Rights of the Child] the CRC in relation to child abuse. Geoffrey Robertson QC's book, *The Case of the Pope* lists six<sup>1</sup>, including those we have previously noted.

He cites as reasons: "procedural deficiencies of Canon Law, the selfish desire to protect the Church from scandal by harbouring and trafficking paedophile priests, and the negligent supervision of bishops by the CDF office of the Holy See, headed for the previous two decades by Cardinal Ratzinger".

He believes that "The Holy See's grave and extensive breaches of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and its contempt for its reporting obligations over the past thirteen years, should ... justify its expulsion."

On 22 September 2009, the distinguished representative of the Holy See, in exercising their right of reply, did not deny any of our allegations, but claimed that a report, then twelve years overdue, was being "finalized as we speak". It still remains to be filed.

Since Robertson's book was published in 2010, Vatican letters to the Bishop of Tucson<sup>2</sup> and the Irish bishops<sup>3</sup> have emerged which confirm the Holy See's determination to keep wrong doing from the secular authorities.

Robertson concludes that "It is a serious reflection on the competence and resolve of the 'eighteen experts of high moral standing' who have been elected to the [Committee on the Rights of the Child] that they have done and said nothing about the Vatican's thirteen-year failure to deliver a report, during the period when widespread child abuse by its priests has been extensively publicized."

We commend to the Council our report on this matter [A/HRC/16/NGO/92]<sup>4</sup>

We again call upon the Human Rights Council and the [Committee on the Rights of the Child] CRC to hold the Holy See to account for:

- its breach of its obligations under the CRC;
- its disregard for its duty of care to the abused children;
- its systematic cover-up of thousands of cases of abuse; and
- its failure to adequately control those put in positions of trust with children.

Thank you, Sir.

[Words in square brackets omitted due to time constraints.]

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<sup>1</sup> Nos. 3(1), 6, 19(1), 34, 39 and 44

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.secularism.org.uk/uploads/rome-to-bishop-tucson.doc>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.secularism.org.uk/uploads/nuncio-to-irish-bishops.doc>

<sup>4</sup> A/HRC/16/NGO/92

<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G11/113/20/PDF/G1111320.pdf?OpenElement><http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G11/113/20/PDF/G1111320.pdf?OpenElement>