

Vatican accused of flouting UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

At the plenary session of the United Nations Human Rights Council on Tuesday 15 March 2011, Keith Porteous Wood of Britain's National Secular Society accused the Holy See of contravening its duties under the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child in relation to child abuse.

Mr Wood pointed to major contributory factors cited by Geoffrey Robertson QC in his book *The Case of the Pope*: "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".

Robertson asserted 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."

Mr Wood called attention to the fact that when he made similar accusations at the Council on 22 September 2009, the Papal Nuncio did not deny them, but had claimed that a report, then twelve years overdue, was being "finalized as we speak". It still remains to be filed.

As he also pointed out, since the book was published in 2010, Vatican letters to the [Bishop of Tucson](#) and the [Irish bishops](#) had been made public making the Holy See's determination to keep wrong doing from the secular authorities very clear.

He also drew the Council's attention to Robertson's conclusion 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."

Mr Wood also commended to the Council the [written statement](#) he had prepared on this matter [A/HRC/16/NGO/92] and concluded by calling again on the Human Rights Council and the Committee on the Rights of the Child 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.

Keith Porteous Wood was speaking as international representative of the [International Humanist and Ethical Union](#), the world umbrella group for secular and humanist organisations.

The representative of the Holy See did not exercise its right of reply to comment on, or even deny the accusations.

[Read a full transcript](#) (pdf)