

NSS draws international attention to UN report that berates USA on its lax approach to clerical child abuse

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The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has expressed deep concern to the US Government about its failure to properly deal with "sexual abuse committed by clerics and leading members of certain faith-based organizations and religious institutions on a massive and long-term scale amounting to sexual slavery or servitude of children".

Concerned that the failure of the US authorities to prosecute the sexual abuse, the UNCRC has urged them to investigate all cases of "sexual abuse of children whether single or on a massive and long-term scale, committed by clerics".

The condemnation (shown in full below) was made as part of a cyclical five yearly review of states by the committee, and followed evidence given by the National Secular Society focussing on the Catholic Church.

NSS executive director, Keith Porteous Wood, commented: "\$2 billion has been paid out to abuse victims in compensation by the Catholic Church in the US indicating a massive scale of abuse. Yet very few clerical perpetrators have been convicted and only one official has been convicted for facilitating the abuse. Hundreds, if not thousands, of clerics have wrongly escaped justice due to the continuing secrecy of the Church and the issue being almost ignored by law enforcers.

"That so many perpetrators have escaped scot-free is yet a further abuse of the victims whose whole lives have often been ruined as a result.

"Pope Benedict has been responsible since 1981 for the policing of the Church, and with it, child abuse, and many think, as I do, that no one is more culpable than he is. He has hushed up abuse accusations to protect clerics, the Church's reputation and funds. He has obstructed secular justice rather than encouraged it. We can only hope that his successor opens the secret files and treats victims with the respect they deserve.

"Prosecuting authorities have some very awkward questions to answer, and not just in the USA, and I hope they too take to heart the UN's stinging criticism, where they mention "inaction and/or corruption".

"I acknowledge that child abuse in religious institutions is not confined to the RC Church, but there is no doubt that it occurred within the RC church at a much greater level than any other religious institution."

[What the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child concluded](#) (Word doc):

35. The Committee is deeply concerned at information of sexual abuse committed by clerics and leading members of certain faith-based organizations and religious

institutions on a massive and long-term scale amounting to sexual slavery or servitude of children and about the lack of measures taken by the State party to properly investigate cases and prosecute those accused who are members of those organizations and institutions.

36. The Committee urges the State party to take all the necessary measures to investigate all cases of sexual abuse of children whether single or on a massive and long-term scale, committed by clerics, to issue clear instructions to all relevant authorities to actively prosecute those cases and to engage in a dialogue with faith-based organizations religious institutions and their leaders, in order to enlist their active and open collaboration to prevent, investigate and prosecute cases. The State party should also draw the attention of law enforcement authorities to the sanctions that may be imposed on them in case of inaction and/or corruption.

The NSS's involvement in this was reported around the world after the story was taken up by Reuters.

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