

# Catholic Church faces question from UN over handling of child abuse

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The Vatican will today be questioned about its record on child sexual violence by a UN Committee.

The Holy See will face questions over its compliance with the Convention on Rights of the Child, and will be expected to answer allegations that it enabled the sexual abuse of thousands of children by protecting paedophile priests at the expense of victims.

This is the first time the Holy See has been pressed on child sexual abuse by the UN.

In July the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) published a list of detailed questions over clerical child abuse for the Holy See to address before its examination before the Committee.

In its response, the Vatican failed to answer detailed questions insisting that it was "separate and distinct" from the Roman Catholic Church, and that it was not its practice to disclose information about the religious discipline of clergy unless requested by the authorities in the country where they were serving.

Victims' groups and the National Secular Society have [submitted reports](#) to the UNCRC detailing how the Holy See has violated the core principles of Convention. The NSS was invited along with abuse survivors' groups, on the basis of written submissions, to give oral evidence to the Committee's private session in June.

Keith Porteous Wood, National Secular Society executive director, who is attending the session in Geneva, commented: "We are all motivated by concern that children all over the world have suffered from sexual and other violence perpetrated by clerics who have been shielded from justice because of the Church's power and status.

"We hope the Committee will hold the Holy See to account for its continuing shielding of abuse perpetrators from justice. Pope Francis's reputation cannot survive unless he intervenes and instructs the worldwide Church to report suspected abusers to civil authorities and hand over the evidence it holds to assist prosecutions."

Today's session will take place between 9am and 12pm and a live webcast is available here: <http://www.treatybodywebcast.org/treaty-body-webcast-i/>

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