

Mexico blasted by UN Child Rights watchdog over child abuse in Catholic institutions

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The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has strongly criticised Mexico over "corroborated reports that hundreds of children have been sexually abused for years by clerics of the Catholic Church and other religious faiths".

The Committee is particularly concerned about "the general impunity which perpetrators have enjoyed so far" and "about the low number of investigations and prosecutions of the perpetrators as well as alleged complicity of state officials." It also notes the "lack of complaints mechanisms, services and compensation available to children".

Keith Porteous Wood, the National Secular Society's executive director, said that the Committee's [recommendations](#) to Mexico "could hardly have been more direct".

The Committee "strongly urges" Mexico to:

- "Take immediate measures to investigate and prosecute all members of the Roman Catholic clergy and other religious faiths involved in or accomplices of sexual abuse and exploitation of children, and ensure that those found guilty be provided with sanctions commensurate with the gravity of their crime;
- "Provide children victims of sexual abuse with all necessary services for their physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration, and adequately compensate them;
- "Ensure that specific measures taken to prevent sexual abuse by clerics become part of all policies related to violence against children and that empowered children learn how to protect themselves from sexual abuse and are aware of the mechanism they can refer to in case of such abuses;
- "Take concrete measures to raise awareness on this type of abuse in order to overcome social acceptance and taboo surrounding these crimes;
- "Collect disaggregated data related to cases of sexual abuse against children involving the Roman Catholic clergy and provide detailed information in its next report on the convictions and sentences pronounced."

Mr Porteous Wood added: "The Committee should be commended for making these points so strongly, especially given that, as far as can be established from the Committee's website, no specific representations were made to it about this matter by civil society organisations in Mexico.

"We hope that representations made to the Committee about child rape and other violence under the aegis of the Catholic Church worldwide by international abuse victim/survivor organisations, and ourselves, have helped to raise a general awareness of these issues.

"More important, though, is that these latest recommendations are taken seriously and acted upon. The Catholic Church centrally has set a bad example. The Holy See was the subject of [even more damning criticism in 2014](#) , which was reported [widely](#), but the Vatican was [dismissive](#) of it.

"There is room for rather more optimism over Mexico following the Committee's recommendations than the Holy See doing so."

In response to the Committee, the Government of Mexico has [recognised](#) that there are "many challenges" to "the rights of children and adolescents in the country", and stated that the Government will work to "provide care in a coordinated way in addressing these recommendations".

The Committee's first task in the next review in five years' time will be to check the progress made.

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