

Pope becomes more lenient on bishops over child abuse, again

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The National Secular Society has strongly criticised Pope Francis' call for bishops who moved paedophile priests between parishes to resign and warned that this does not go nearly far enough.

According to the [Associated Press](#), Pope Francis said aboard the papal plane back from Mexico that "any bishop who moves a suspected paedophile priest from parish to parish should resign".

He reportedly referred to child rape as "pederasty" and said that a bishop who "changes parish" for a priest when he "detects pederasty is reckless and the best thing he can do is present his resignation."

The National Secular Society has exhaustively studied the failure of the RC Church to deal adequately with child rape and other abuse in its ranks, including bringing the matter to the attention of the United Nations. The Society's executive director, Keith Porteous Wood, said that guilty bishops should face justice, and not just be told to resign as the Pope suggests.

"The Pope wants to leave it to bishops to resign of their own free choice, rather than forcing them to leave. The decision should not be in the hands of the individual bishop; few will resign of their own free will.

"Last year the Pope was taking a tougher line: he announced a [Tribunal](#) to judge such bishops. But even the Tribunal was unsatisfactory; it served only to provide a legitimate disciplinary mechanism for such bishops. Its ultimate punishment was derisory: defrocking. Instead, the Church should have required that such bishops be reported to prosecuting authorities and face imprisonment if convicted; some bishops in the United States have already been convicted."

In September 2015 a [report](#) drafted by the NSS into rape, sexual abuse and violence against minors by Catholic clerics was submitted to the UN Human Rights Council. Additionally, an [oral statement](#) the Society drafted was read out to the Council.

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