

Fugitive London priest arrested in Kosovo over child abuse allegations

Posted: Mon, 16th May 2016

A top Benedictine monk who has been accused of child abuse has been arrested after five years on the run.

Laurence Soper, now 72, former abbot of the Benedictine Ealing Abbey, was arrested in Kosovo on Wednesday 11 May. He faces serious allegations of child abuse allegedly carried out at St Benedict's school in Ealing, west London, where he taught between 1972 and 1984. The fee-paying Catholic school is attached to Ealing Abbey where Soper was abbot from 1991-2000.

In 2009, a former headteacher of St Benedict's school was jailed for eight years for abuse spanning 36 years. Both were named in a highly critical report into abuse at the School prepared by Lord Carlile QC.

Soper had been the subject of a European Arrest Warrant since 2012, following his failure to return to a police interview in London in 2011 in the expectation that he was about to be arrested.

By that stage, Soper had served for ten years as worldwide treasurer of the Benedictine Order in Rome and had been responsible for major reforms to the Order's finances. Before becoming a monk he had worked for Barclays Bank.

Neither Kosovo, nor Montenegro where he had reportedly previously been spotted, are part of the EU, so are not subject to the European Arrest Warrant obligations. Attempts are now being made to have him returned to the UK. He was living under an assumed name and appears to have been a lodger in a house and was not employed.

Keith Porteous Wood, Executive Director of the National Secular Society commented: "When Soper was bailed, investigators neither took a picture of him nor required him to surrender his passport. Could this have been simply because he was a cleric? Soper was able to return to the Vatican from outside the EU and empty his bank account there without the police being alerted; was this despite or because he was a high-profile figure in the Church? We hope investigators will establish the answers to these questions and whether Soper received any assistance to remain a fugitive for so long."

- [Share on What's App](#)
- [Share on Facebook](#)
- [Share on Twitter](#)
- [Share on Email](#)
- [Subscribe to RSS Feed](#)

Tags: [Abuse](#)

Related Campaigns

-

[End abuse in religious settings](#)

Religious privilege must not undermine safeguarding and justice.

[Read More](#)

Related Articles

[Experts speak out against religious abuse](#)

Public authorities failing to tackle abuse in religious settings, panellists say at NSS event. [Read More »](#)

[Report: CofE safeguarding “below standards” of secular institutions](#)

Most victims and survivors unsatisfied with safeguarding approaches, while safeguarding 'weaponised' to remove those "seen as a nuisance", report finds. [Read More »](#)

[Faith school banning parts of geography lessons, Ofsted finds](#)

Ofsted finds faith school prohibiting parts of lessons it judges incompatible with its religious beliefs. [Read More »](#)

[NSS to hold event on tackling abuse in religious communities](#)

Safeguarding experts in panel discussion in Manchester this March. [Read More »](#)

[Review: CofE leaders mainly to blame for sacking safeguarding body](#)

"Extreme time pressure" imposed chiefly by archbishop of Canterbury caused "serious design flaws" in safeguarding board, review finds [Read More »](#)