

International Humanist and Ethical Union Intervention

UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL: 13th Session (1 to 26 March 2010)

Speaker: IHEU Representative, Keith Porteous Wood: Tuesday 16 March 2010

Agenda Item 4: Matters requiring the attention of the Council

Child Abuse and the Holy See

Mr President

At the 12th session of the Council we noted contravention by the Holy See of several articles of [the Convention on the Rights of the Child] the CRC, and cited evidence of the part played by the Holy See in the cover up of [the long-running and ubiquitous problem of] child abuse by priests and servants of the Catholic Church.[1] But the distinguished delegate of the Holy See, in exercising their right of reply, conspicuously failed to deny our allegations, disingenuously attempting to point the finger of blame elsewhere.[2] He claimed that their report to the CRC, then being finalised would devote “a paragraph ... to child abuse by catholic clergy”. We note however that still, six months later, that report now 13 years overdue, has still yet to be filed.

But what a discourtesy to [this Council and to] the tens of thousands of child victims to suggest that any single paragraph could explain, far less excuse, decades of abuse in respect of which billions of dollars and euros in compensation have already been paid, and investigations in new countries are regularly being announced, [e.g. in Austria, Germany and the Netherlands.]

The claim by the representative of the Holy See that they “were putting their house in order” is not borne out by the facts. [In Ireland, the Papal authorities attempted to obstruct the Murphy Inquiry into the cover up of child abuse by the Dublin diocese,[3] and has refused to cooperate with an inquiry by the Irish Foreign Affairs Committee, refusing to respond to two letters from the Committee to the Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Giuseppe Leanza, inviting him to appear before it.][4]

To protect children and bring perpetrators to justice, we call on the Holy See:

1. to remove its reservation to the CRC to bring the territory of Vatican City state, to which it has instructed all abuse accusations are to be sent, under the jurisdiction of the CRC,
2. to open up its files and records to CRC and state investigators, and
3. to instruct all its representatives to cooperate with legal investigating authorities worldwide, something that they have signally failed to do in Ireland.

Thank you sir.

[1] [UN: IHEU calls the Vatican to account over child abuse](#)

[2] [Holy See responds to IHEU criticism](#)

[3] [Ahern Receives Dublin Archdiocese Report](#)

[4] [Decision of papal nuncio not to attend Dáil committee 'scandalous'](#)

Note: the words in [brackets] were included in the circulated statement but omitted from the intervention due to time constraints.