**UNCRC – FRANCE**

**NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY – FINAL SUBMISSION**

**FOR PRE-SESSION 7 FEBRUARY 2023**

We are grateful to the Committee for requesting the State Party to provide details of problems over clerical abuse along the lines suggested in our first submission. We have sought to bring the State’s omission of such details from the report to the attention of parliamentarians. So far, this has been the subject of Parliamentary Questions from Deputés [Bastien Lachaud](https://bastienlachaud.fr/2022/11/21/abus-sexuels-commis-par-des-membres-du-clerge/) and [Isabelle Santiago](https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-5048QE.htm)[[1]](#footnote-1).

Further to both our substantive submissions, there are unfortunately no improvements to report.

Further to claims about the Church’s poverty being a “justification” for the paltry sums offered, referred to in our supplementary submission paras 13 and 47:

A co-author of the supplementary submission, Federation Nationale Libre Pensée (FNLP), has demonstrated that the Church's claims to poverty, as an excuse for not paying reasonable reparations to victims, are entirely baseless.

It has researched the Church's wealth and recently published this in a book (ISBN 9782900931202, which will be sent on request). This has been endorsed by TV station France 2, which broadcast the research in a TV programme in January 2023.

FNLP concluded that in 2019 the assets of the dioceses of the Church (in billions of euros) included:

**Euros, billions**

Land and buildings (excluding places of worship) at cost, 3.0,
but with a market value likely to be 6.6

Investments 1.1

Cash 0.5

Total **8.2**

The Church omertà, that practically precludes disclosures of suspected abuse, continues seemingly impregnably, allowing the abuse to continue. A review of the media over the last year showed the word “omertà” being used in the context of abuse in the French Church 19 times. Evidence given to Child Rights Connect.

The Church has demonstrated as recently as October 2022 that its public announcements on abuse continue to be deceiving (per B7 of our supplementary report).

We are still not aware of any civil cases being brought against the Church for abuse.

In summary, we have not seen any development that invalidates any of the conclusions made in our supplementary report or in the first submission, especially its Question 2 on Article 434-3 (mandatory reporting).

1. Ms. Isabelle Santiago asked the Prime Minister about the lack of response from the France to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The report of Complement d'Enquête of Thursday, January 19, 2023 entitled "Victims of the Church: the impossible reparation" has created a stir in French society. On 6 November 2020, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child addressed the French government to ask it to submit a report by 30 October 2021 including clergy sexual violence against children. This request specifies what the report is to cover. It should specify "investigation, prosecution and punishment of cases of sexual abuse committed by members of the clergy, including information on statutes of limitations; reparations, including compensation and rehabilitation; and measures taken to protect children from sexual abuse by members of the clergy" The UN Committee therefore considers de facto that the French State cannot allow the Church to be judge and party in cases that affect public order and often criminal in nature, on an unprecedented scale. The CIASE report presented by Jean-Marc Sauvé on October 5, 2021, reported 330,000 victims of child crime between 1950 and 2020, or 13 children per day. These victims of sexual violence by the Church are full French citizens and the responsibility of the Government is engaged. The CIASE report characterized sexual violence committed by clergy representatives as "systemic," which precludes the many cases that continue to be revealed as a collection of individual deviations that should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. The Catholic Church, nor the compensation bodies it has set up (INIRR and CRR) can be considered legitimate to dispense justice that falls within the competence of the sovereign State. It can be seen that it was victims' initiatives that led to the initial conviction of Cardinal Philippe Barbarin, who was acquitted on appeal. The State has not conducted any investigations into alleged rapists and child molesters who are victims of clergy. To date, no response on this specific point - sexual abuse committed by the Church - has been given in the French State's response to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. However, the Convention between the United Nations and the States Parties obliges them to provide a precise and detailed response. To all questions asked, as is clearly stated in Article 44. she asked the Government whether she planned to reply to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child and therefore make a report on the subject public. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)