

Chile Reworks Laws on Child Sex Abuse Amid Church Scandals

Chilean President Sebastian Pinera signed into law on Thursday a bill to remove the statute of limitations on sex crimes involving children amid a sex abuse crisis that has rocked the country's Catholic Church and claimed more than 200 victims.

The law, which first was proposed in 2010, ends impunity in cases that would have previously had a statute of limitations that varied between five and 10 years, depending on the nature of the crime. The new law is not retroactive.

"Beginning today, the passing of time will never more be an accomplice to those who abuse our children, nor an ally of impunity," Pinera said.

The center-right Pinera revived the nearly decade-old bill last year, following a visit to the South American nation by the pope that brought to the surface a string of abuse allegations now being investigated by prosecutors.

Chile's Public Ministry says it is investigating more than 150 cases of sexual abuse or cover-up involving the Catholic Church.

The new law applies to crimes of rape, sexual abuse, the production of pornographic materials and prostitution involving children and adolescents. {eo}

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