

Scathing UN Report Demands Vatican Act Against Child Sex Abuse

The United Nations demanded on Wednesday that the Vatican “immediately remove” all clergy who are known or suspected child abusers and turn them over to civil authorities, in an unprecedented and scathing report.

The U.N. watchdog for children’s rights said the Holy See should also hand over its archives on sexual abuse of tens of thousands of children so that culprits, as well as “those who concealed their crimes,” could be held accountable.

The watchdog’s exceptionally blunt paper—the most far-reaching critique of the Church hierarchy by the world body—followed its public grilling of Vatican officials last month.

“The Committee is gravely concerned that the Holy See has not acknowledged the extent of the crimes committed, has not taken the necessary measures to address cases of child sexual abuse and to protect children, and has adopted policies and practices which have led to the continuation of the abuse by and the impunity of the perpetrators,” the report said.

The Vatican was expected to issue a statement on the report later on Wednesday.

The U.N. committee on the Rights of the Child said the Catholic Church had not yet taken measures to prevent a repeat of cases such as Ireland’s Magdalene laundries scandal, where girls were arbitrarily placed in conditions of forced labor.

It called for an internal investigation of the laundries and similar institutions so that those who were responsible could be prosecuted and that “full compensation be paid to the

victims and their families.”

A commission created by Pope Francis in December should investigate all cases of child sexual abuse “as well as the conduct of the Catholic hierarchy in dealing with them,” the report said.

Abusers had been moved from parish to parish or other countries “in an attempt to cover-up such crimes,” it added.

“Due to a code of silence imposed on all members of the clergy under penalty of excommunication, cases of child sexual abuse have hardly ever been reported to the law enforcement authorities in the countries where such crimes occurred,” the U.N. body said.

At a public session last month, the committee pushed Vatican delegates to reveal the scope of the decades-long sexual abuse of minors by Roman Catholic priests that Pope Francis called “the shame of the Church.”

The Holy See’s delegation, answering questions from an international rights panel for the first time since the scandals broke more than two decades ago, denied allegations of a Vatican cover-up and said it had set clear guidelines to protect children from predator priests.

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