

PRESS RELEASE

Holy See to be reviewed by UN Committee Against Torture

NGOs call on UN to consider rape and other forms of child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church as violations of the Convention Against Torture by the Holy See.

Geneva (Switzerland), 2 May 2014.

The UN Committee Against Torture (UNCAT) will review the Holy See for its adherence to the Convention Against Torture (CAT) on Monday 5 May 2014.

Rape and other sexual abuse of children have been rife in the Catholic Church for decades, if not centuries. NGOs, including Child Rights International Network (CRIN) and the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT), argue that rape and other sexual abuse of children committed by or with the acquiescence of Holy See officials amount to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and as such are a violation of CAT.

CRIN and OMCT presented their [joint alternative report](#) to the UNCAT committee members today (2 May) just prior to the Holy See's review on Monday, followed by a lunch briefing with other NGOs and survivors of sexual abuse committed by Catholic clerics.

CRIN and OMCT believe that, by acquiescing to rape and other forms of sexual abuse committed worldwide by Catholic clergy and others operating under the Holy See's authority, the Holy See has failed its duties to prevent torture and other acts of ill-treatment within its jurisdiction, thereby violating CAT.

Although the Holy See has started to recognise the seriousness and scale of the abuse, this has not resulted in clear action to ensure that allegations of child sexual abuse are reported publicly and investigated and prosecuted by law enforcement authorities.

During the private meeting with the Committee, CRIN and OMCT emphasised that the Holy See's failure to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate, prosecute and punish perpetrators has and continues to facilitate and enable Catholic clergy and others under its authority to commit acts of rape and other forms of sexual abuse with impunity.

As a final recommendation, CRIN and OMCT urged the Committee to call on the Holy See to:

- **Disclose** all information held by the Holy See on cases of rape and other forms of sexual abuse by clerics and others under its authority to the Committee and the

public, including the measures the Holy See has taken in response to these cases, while protecting the privacy of victims;

- Immediately **remove** all known and suspected child sexual abusers from service, **report** the matter to the relevant law enforcement authorities, and **cooperate** with such authorities in their investigation and prosecution;
- **Amend** the Canon Law in order for child sexual abuse, including rape, to be considered a crime and not a “delict against the moral”, and **repeal** all provisions which may impose an obligation of silence on victims and all those that become aware of such crimes;
- Establish clear rules, mechanisms and procedures for **mandatory reporting** of all suspected cases of rape and other forms of sexual abuse to law enforcement authorities, and ensure that all persons under the authority of the Holy See are made aware of their reporting obligations and of the fact that, in case of conflict, these obligations prevail over Canon Law provisions; and
- Create a publicly accessible **complaints procedure** and a **compensation scheme** for victims of sexual abuse, including rape, by clerics and others under the authority of the Holy See.

UNCAT’s review of the Holy See on 5 May comes during the Committee’s 52nd session, held in Geneva, Switzerland. All official documentation, including alternative reports by other NGOs, can be found on [UNCAT’s session page](#).

The UNCAT review comes shortly after another UN human rights body, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, [rebuked](#) the Holy See for its handling of the child sexual abuse scandal and its violation of children’s rights earlier this year.

The review will start at 10am (Geneva time) and can be followed live on the treaty body webcast: <http://www.treatybodywebcast.org>. NGOs will also be reporting from Geneva using Twitter - follow [#VaticanAccountability](#).

Other States under review during UNCAT’s 52nd session are: Cyprus, Lithuania, Montenegro, Sierra Leone, Thailand, Uruguay and Guinea (without a State report).

-ENDS-

For further information, please contact:

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Notes to editors

Child Rights International Network (CRIN) is a global children's rights advocacy network. Established in 1995, we press for rights - not charity - and campaign for a genuine shift in how governments and societies view and treat children. We are based in the UK, but link to nearly 3,000 organisations that between them work on children's rights in every country in the world and rely on our publications, research and information sharing. CRIN envisions a world in which every child enjoys all their human rights guaranteed by the United Nations, regional organisations and national governments. CRIN launched a campaign earlier this year to [end sexual violence in religious institutions](#).

The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), created in 1985 and based in Geneva, is today the main coalition of NGOs fighting against torture, summary executions, enforced disappearances and all other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. With 311 affiliated organisations in its SOS-Torture Network and many tens of thousands correspondents in every country, OMCT is the most important network of non-governmental organisations working for the protection and the promotion of human rights in the world.