

COMPLAINT TO U.N. FILED; BIAS AGAINST HOLY SEE NOTED

On May 15, Bill Donohue lodged a formal complaint with Ms. Navanethem Pillay, High Commissioner for the Human Rights Office of the U.N. in Geneva, Switzerland.

Donohue charged that Felice Gaer, Vice-Chairperson of the Committee Against Torture, has compromised her objectivity and thus has no legitimate role to play in policing the policies of U.N. member states, or states that have been awarded a Permanent Observer status.

He specifically charged Gaer with violating two sets of U.N. strictures governing the objectivity of committee members: the "Guidelines On the Independence and Impartiality of Members of the Human Rights Treaty Bodies," and the "Existing Rules and Regulations on Enhancing and Strengthening the Expertise and Independence of Treaty Body Members."

Both of these documents demand that U.N. committee members show independence and impartiality. "Any reasonable observer would conclude," Donohue said, "that Felice Gaer has violated these 'Guidelines' and 'Rules' by openly taking her directives from the Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR), an organization whose animus against the Catholic Church's teachings on sexuality is palpable. If CRR were just another abortion-rights entity, I would not be lodging a complaint. But its attack on Roman Catholicism is visceral."

Donohue cited a 2000 CRR report, "The Holy See at the United Nations: An Obstacle to Women's Reproductive Health," that seriously crossed the line: it concluded that "the Holy See uses its status at the UN [sic] to obstruct the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women throughout the world."

Donohue noted that Ms. Gaer's relationship with CRR is

incestuous and that she takes more than talking points from it—she cites its reports verbatim in her official U.N. capacity. He provided several examples. He also focused on her violation of the U.N. Charter. He demonstrated how Gaer abuses her authority by challenging the autonomy of the Holy See: She wants to force the Catholic Church to change its teachings on sexuality.

“If it were reversed,” Donohue said, “if the Holy See demanded that U.N. member states align its position on abortion with the teachings of the Catholic Catechism—howls of protest would be heard worldwide. It is just as outrageous when a U.N. committee member instructs the Holy See to get in line with her secular beliefs.”

Donohue also said that the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which issued a report in February, had violated its authority when it told the Holy See that it had to change Canon law on abortion.

To read Donohue’s letter in its entirety, see the section on Special Reports listed on the Catholic League’s website.