

U.N. REFUSES TO PUNISH SEX OFFENDERS

At the end of May, Bill Donohue wrote a letter to U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on the refusal of the United Nations to punish sexual abuse committed by its peacekeeping missions. He wants the U.N. to either implement its "zero tolerance" policy, adopted in 2004, or to stop all proceedings against the Holy See on this issue.

Below is the text of Donohue's letter.

May 21, 2015

His Excellency Ban Ki-moon

Secretary General of the United Nations

405 E. 42 St.

New York, New York 10017

Dear Your Excellency:

As president of the largest Catholic civil rights organization in the United States, I am appealing to you to do one of two things: a) either ensure that the United Nations' policy on "zero tolerance" against convicted sex abusers serving in peacekeeping missions is enforced immediately, or b) cease and desist from probing into alleged sexual abuse violations committed by those in the employ of the Holy See.

This duplicity can no longer be tolerated. When U.N. panels sit in judgment of the Holy See on these matters—while the U.N. itself does nothing to combat sexual abuse committed by those under its watch—it rubs all fair-minded people the wrong way; it is also the height of hypocrisy. Indeed, it is analogous to a corrupt judge overseeing a trial on corruption. Consider recent revelations about the U.N.'s failure to seriously address this issue.

In 2002, the American bishops adopted, and began enforcing, a “zero tolerance” policy on sexual abuse committed by Church employees; the Holy See has since implemented a similar policy. Two years later, the U.N. adopted a “zero tolerance” policy, but unlike the Catholic Church, it was never enforced. Worse, the conventional response has been to grant immunity to those accused of sexual offenses. I can only imagine how the U.N. would react if the Catholic Church decided to grant immunity to accused sex offenders.

In 2012, eight years after the U.N. adopted its “zero tolerance” policy, you promoted an “enhanced plan of action” to combat this problem, yet a special report by a U.N.-commissioned independent panel recently determined that a “culture of silence” prevails and that “impunity” rules.

It is more than laughable—it is obscene—that U.N. peacekeeping members who have been convicted of sexual abuse are not even fined! To be exact, this September the U.N. General Assembly will debate whether convicted sex offenders should lose their vacation pay!

This problem is not going away. Reports of women and children being sexually molested by U.N. peacekeeping forces continue to pour in from all over the world. For example, we know that well over 500 victims of sexual assault were recently treated in one year in the Central African Republic alone. How many others have suffered elsewhere?

To do the probing of these cases, the U.N. has authorized 168 civilian positions. But only 1.2 percent of the posts have been filled. Similarly, new ways for alleged victims to state their grievances have been announced, but there has been no follow through. Another program, a multilingual learning initiative for peacekeeping personnel, has been mandated to deal with sexual abuse, but not only has it not been implemented—the pilot program does not begin until May 2016.

When asked why the U.N. has failed to deliver on this issue, its spokesmen say it is difficult to ensure enforcement. No doubt it is. But would this be accepted as a legitimate response if offered by the Holy See? We all know the answer.

I speak from experience. I have read what officials from the U.N. Committee against Torture, and the Committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, have said about the Holy See. I have also replied to their reports. In particular, the May 2014 report by the Committee on Torture was a highly politicized and totally biased statement against the Holy See.

Let me repeat my appeal. Either move with dispatch to implement the “zero tolerance” policy that was adopted in 2004, or demand that U.N. officials of the aforementioned U.N committees stop with their inquiries into alleged wrongdoing by the Holy See. I hope you choose the former.

Sincerely,

William A. Donohue, Ph.D.
President