

U.N. REPORT ON HOLY SEE ISSUED

The U.N. Committee Against Torture's report on the Holy See was released a couple of weeks ago. For the most part, there is nothing in this report that merits criticism, though two matters must be addressed: there is a glaring inconsistency between the way the hearings were held and the concluding observations by this committee; and calls for the Holy See to encourage redress by religious orders for the "victims" of the Magdalene Laundries are unjust.

The report made no mention of abortion, canon law, or any Church teaching on sexuality, yet these subjects were grist for attacks on Church officials during the hearings. Why, then, was committee member Felice Gaer allowed to conduct what amounted to, at times, a show trial? If none of her highly politicized remarks were even tangentially addressed by the report, it calls into question her continued service to this committee. She should be asked to step down immediately.

Pressuring the Holy See to force four Irish religious orders to provide "restitution, compensation, [and] rehabilitation" for the so-called victims of the Magdalene Laundries is wholly unjust. Has anyone on the committee even bothered to read the authoritative "McAleese Report on the Magdalene Laundries"? Had they done so they would know why Bill Donohue refers to the "so-called" victims. The Irish body that examined this issue, chaired by Senator Martin McAleese, did a full statistical analysis of all available data; it also interviewed 118 women who lived in the asylums, along with many physicians who cared for these women.

Here is what the McAleese Report found: Not one woman said she was tortured while working in the Laundries, and there is no evidence that a single nun ever sexually abused anyone.

Conditions were harsh—they were harsh for many throughout Ireland at the time—but there is a profound difference between harsh conditions and torture.

The U.N. Committee on Torture issued a mostly balanced report, but it needs to do more to empty its proceedings of politics. Its animus against the Holy See must end.