



## Clergy Sex Victims File International Criminal Court Complaint Case Charges Vatican Officials with ‘Crimes Against Humanity’

*At The Hague, Survivors and Leading Human Rights Group Issue Ground-Breaking Request for the Assertion of Jurisdiction by an International Court over Church Officials for Rape, Sexual Violence, and Torture by Clergy*

*September 13, 2011* – A survivor-led support group for clergy sex abuse victims today formally urged the International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor to investigate the Vatican for crimes against humanity.

Leaders of SNAP, the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, together with their attorneys from the human rights organization the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), filed a lengthy and detailed complaint charging that Vatican officials tolerate and enable the systematic and widespread concealing of rape and child sex crimes throughout the world. Together with the complaint, they submitted more than 20,000 pages of supporting materials consisting of reports, policy papers, and evidence of the crimes by Catholic clergy committed against children and vulnerable adults.

SNAP members from Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and the U.S. traveled to The Hague to insist that the ICC take action and prosecute the Pope and three other high-ranking Vatican officials for their direct and superior responsibility for the crimes against humanity of rape and other sexual violence committed around the world.

“Crimes against tens of thousands of victims, most of them children, are being covered up by officials at the highest level of the Vatican. In this case, all roads really do lead to Rome,” said **CCR Senior Staff Attorney Pam Spees**. “These men operate with impunity and without accountability. The Vatican officials charged in this case are responsible for rape and other sexual violence and for the physical and psychological torture of victims around the world both through command responsibility and through direct cover up of crimes. They should be brought to trial like any other officials guilty of crimes against humanity.”

Said **SNAP President Barbara Blaine**, “SNAP wants to prevent even one more child from being raped or sexually assaulted by a priest and we hope that victims around the world will know today that they are not alone and that it is safe to speak up and report their abuse. We as victims are mobilizing across the globe, and every survivor is invited to join us.”

Said 21-year-old SNAP member **Megan Peterson**, who spoke publicly of her abuse for the first time last week, “It’s important that the Court understand that this is still happening and that they need to take this case seriously and do the right thing. I don’t want any more kids to go through what I went through.”

Clergy sex crimes have been perpetrated and concealed in nearly every country. In the United States alone, church authorities admit that nearly 6,000 priests have been publicly accused of molesting children over the past few decades. SNAP estimates that there are as many as 100,000 American victims of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, and that in other nations, where child-protection laws may not be as robust as in the United States, the number of victims is equally staggering. As many as 20,000 sexually abusive or violent predator priests are still working even after having been accused of a crime; often, these priests are simply shifted to areas where the Church has extreme power or influence, or to remote areas isolated from mechanisms of support, prevention, and accountability.

The jurisdiction of the ICC names rape, sexual violence assault, and torture as crimes against humanity. It also provides for individual criminal liability for those with command or superior responsibility over those who directly commit such crimes. These are the mechanisms through which **the complaint urges investigation and prosecution of Vatican officials for their roles in the rape, sexual assault, and torture of thousands of individuals around the world.** This could be the first time that an international court asserts jurisdiction over the Vatican for crimes committed by its agents worldwide.

SNAP and CCR are embarking on a 12-city tour throughout Europe to demand local diocese turn over relevant documents and encourage other victims of sexual abuse by clergy to come forward and provide additional evidence to add to the complaint. In addition to The Hague, they will visit Amsterdam on September 13; Brussels and Berlin on the 14<sup>th</sup>; Paris on the 15<sup>th</sup>; Vienna and London on the 16<sup>th</sup>; Dublin and Warsaw on the 18<sup>th</sup>; and Madrid on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Their travels will culminate in Rome on the 20<sup>th</sup>, where they will bring the case to the Vatican’s door.

SNAP is the world’s oldest and largest support group for clergy abuse victims. It has existed for 23 years and has more than 10,000 members. Despite the word “priest” in its title, it has members who were molested by religious figures of all denominations, including nuns, rabbis, bishops, and Protestant ministers. Visit [www.snapnetwork.org](http://www.snapnetwork.org).

The Center for Constitutional Rights is dedicated to advancing and protecting the rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Founded in 1966 by attorneys who represented civil rights movements in the South, CCR is a non-profit legal and educational organization committed to the creative use of law as a positive force for social change. Visit [www.ccrjustice.org](http://www.ccrjustice.org); follow@theCCR.

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