

## **Short statements by US clergy sex abuse victims with SNAP**

### Statement by SNAP President Barbara Blaine

We're taking this historic step today for one very simple reason: to protect innocent children and vulnerable adults. Across the globe, we believe hundreds of boys and girls are being sexually violated right now by Catholic priests, nuns, bishops, and seminarians. That widespread violence is being systematically concealed, as it has been for decades, by top officials of a callous, secretive, rigid, and powerful global hierarchy.

We know it may be tough for some to essentially equate clergy sex crimes and cover ups with other forms of violence that are addressed by the ICC, but violence, rape and torture take many forms. They can be done openly or covertly, explicitly ordered or subtly enabled. They can happen during peace or war, in the town square or behind closed doors, by officials in public or private institutions. But it's wrong to punish more obvious violence against thousands while ignoring less obvious violence against thousands.

### Statement by SNAP Director David Clohessy

We're here to protect the vulnerable. We do that by exposing wrongdoers, uncovering secrets, and deterring future cover ups and sexual violence by powerful clergy.

And we protect the vulnerable when we hold responsible those who enable hundreds or thousands of serial predators to keep inflicting devastating violence on innocent kids and adults.

We're concerned first about those who ARE being hurt. But we're also concerned about those who are suffering now because of childhood victimization by clergy. We believe this effort will give hope, courage and opportunity to victims across the world, most of whom will never have a chance to warn others about his or her perpetrator and stop that predator from molesting others.

We're no smarter than survivors anywhere else, but we have been speaking up and working for prevention, justice, healing and truth-telling for a long time. We have no corner on wisdom. We do, however, have considerable experience. And we've seen, time and time again, what does NOT protect kids or bring change: victims staying silent, families trusting bishops, police deferring to bishops, and people assuming that just exposing wrongdoing will stop wrongdoing, or just replacing older bishops with newer bishops will cause change, or that just paying financial settlements alone will bring reform. They won't.

Police, prosecutors and governmental authorities must step up if kids are to be safer in the church.

Regarding our prospects of success here;

Some may have trouble imagining top Catholic officials facing criminal charges. But we in SNAP had trouble, for years, imagining just how widespread this violence is and how far this cover up truly goes.

We had trouble imagining, just two years ago, that in just a few months' time, thousands and thousands of clergy sex victims in Europe would suddenly break decades of silent and step forward.

Almost everyone we spoke with for almost 15 years (1988-2002) had trouble with (and sometimes even laughed at) the notion of a nationwide US church child sex abuse policy. (We were repeatedly told "That can't happen – the church isn't structured that way. Each bishop is the lord of his own kingdom.")

In 2002, when we started pushing US bishops to post names of credibly accused child molesting clerics on their websites, again, we were sometimes laughed at. Almost everyone had trouble imagining this happening.

In 2002, when we started pushing a civil window bill in California, most had trouble imagining it passing and being upheld by the courts.

But all these have come to pass. There is a US national church abuse policy. (It's weak, vague and at best sporadically enforced, but it exists.) Twenty six US bishops have posted names of predators on their websites. (None of the New York area prelates, including Archbishop Timothy Dolan, have done so.) Two states have adopted window legislation, and enabled hundreds of victims to expose hundreds of dangerous predators. Our movement has always been guided by what will best protect kids, not what conventional wisdom considers politically safe or possible. That's what guides us now.

Statement by SNAP outreach director Barbara Dorris of St. Louis

For centuries, Catholic clerics have quietly committed horrific violence against vulnerable children and adults. They still do. And for centuries, Catholic bishops have quietly hidden and enabled this violence. They still do.

Somehow, this systematic rape, sodomy, violence and cover up must be addressed. Who better than the International Criminal Court?

Violence can be caused when generals clearly order soldiers to use weaponry to inflict pain on adults in plain view during wartime. It can also be caused when officials secretly enable employees to use their bodies to inflict pain on youngsters out of public sight during peacetime. Both types of violence are heinous and must be addressed. When either are widespread and systematic and cross national boundaries, high level secular authorities must act.

Ask yourself this: Outside of the US, can you recall even a single case in which a Catholic official gave a single document about a single child molesting cleric to a single prosecutor? Outside of Cardinal Bernard Law, can you name even a single Catholic official – from custodian to Cardinal – who has been clearly denounced, disciplined, demoted, or defrocked by the Vatican?

It's hard to believe, but it's true – almost no Catholic employee anywhere who endangers kids, conceals crimes, and helps predators, experiences even the slightest negative consequences for such immoral, reckless, and callous actions.

So secular authorities must act.

In a handful of Western nations, hundreds of brave victims have spoken up and helped inspire an avalanche of criticism of bishops. The result: tepid official church policy changes on paper that rarely lead to real behavior change. And in the majority of nations, there's not even this tiny step forward.

Changes within the church hierarchy are begrudging, belated and ineffective, so secular authorities must act. And individual police agencies and prosecutors in cities and counties and even countries across the globe just can't impact the largest and oldest – and perhaps the most powerful - enterprise on the planet.

So secular authorities must act.

Pope Benedict has spoken more often and more clearly about clergy sex crimes than his predecessor did. A few times, he's met with a few victims. Has this lead to any clear reform? No.

So secular authorities must act.

SNAP Midwest Director Peter Isely of Milwaukee

This is a systematic, criminal scandal. It requires a systematic, criminal remedy.

This violence is enabled by a private hierarchy with global reach. The remedy must involve secular prosecutors with global reach.

That's why we're formally asking the ICC prosecutor to investigate and then prosecute even a few of the prelates who are responsible for this continuing crisis.

Statement by DC area SNAP director Becky Ianni

Child sex crimes have been concealed, and are still being concealed, by high ranking Vatican officials. We feel that for children to truly be protected, those that commit or conceal these crimes must be held accountable. We believe that by filing the complaint today with the ICC we have taken a necessary step to hold those officials responsible for their actions and inactions that have allowed thousands of children to be sexually abused by clerics.

We hope that today's action will encourage other victims worldwide to come forward, speak up, and begin to heal. As a victim, myself, I hope that the filing of this complaint with the ICC will help prevent another child from being sexually abused as I was as a child.

Statement by New York City SNAP director Mary Caplan

In very few countries, very few clergy sex abuse victims can ever prosecute their perpetrators and thus break the cycle of violence by keeping a predator away from children. And in virtually no country can a clergy sex abuse victim ever hope to prosecute the bishop who shields or shielded their perpetrator - no matter how frequent or damaging his or her crimes may be.

That just has to change. We hope this initiative will help bring that change.

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