

Amnesty International chides Vatican for abuse

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VATICAN CITY (RNS) Amnesty International has criticized the Vatican for falling short of its commitments to protect children from sex abuse.

"The Holy See did not sufficiently comply with its international obligations relating to the protection of children," the human rights group said in its latest annual report, released on Friday (May 13).

"Increasing evidence of widespread child sexual abuse committed by members of the clergy over the past decades, and of the enduring failure of the Catholic Church to address these crimes properly, continued to emerge in various countries" during 2010, the report said.

This is first time the group has included the Vatican in its annual report, which assesses the state of human right in 157 countries. That change follows a wave of scandals over sexually abusive Catholic priests in Europe and Latin America last year.

Amnesty said the Vatican had failed in its obligations as a party to the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child, by "not removing alleged perpetrators from their posts pending proper investigations, not cooperating with judicial authorities to bring them to justice and not ensuring proper reparation to victims."

"Canon law does not include an obligation for church authorities to report cases to civil authorities for criminal investigation," the report noted.

According to a new Vatican directive published on Monday (May 16), Catholic bishops must report sex abuse of children by priests and other church employees to civil authorities, but only when required by local

law.

The same Vatican directive gave the world's Catholic bishops until May 2012 to prepare national policies on sex abuse, in areas including child protection, caring for victims and disciplining abusive priests.