

Vatican website hacked for church's 'crimes'

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VATICAN CITY (RNS) The secretive hackers group Anonymous targeted the Vatican website on Wednesday (March 7), cutting off access from users for several hours and disabling internal mail servers.

In a statement posted on several blogs in Italian, the group said the attack was a response to the Catholic Church's "doctrines," its "absurd and anachronistic precepts," and the "crimes" of the sexual abuse scandal and cover-up.

The Vatican's chief spokesman, the Rev. Federico Lombardi, confirmed that the attack against the Vatican website came from Anonymous. He said Vatican technicians were "actively working to restore the website's functionality."

The attack on the Vatican website, www.vatican.va, started in the early afternoon. Other websites hosted by the Vatican's internal servers, including those of the Vatican secretary of state and L'Osservatore Romano, the Vatican newspaper, were also disabled.

In its statement, Anonymous also cited the Vatican's "significant role in helping Nazi war criminals find refuge in foreign countries and evade international justice" among the reasons for the attack.

The group also accused the church of burning books of "immense historic value," of executing its critics, of interfering in Italian internal matters and of being responsible for the "enslavement of entire civilizations."

The statement stressed that the attack was "not against the Christian religion or the faithful around the world but against the corrupt Roman Apostolic Church."

The same group had threatened to bring down the Vatican website last August but the attack had apparently failed. The group then targeted the website of the 2011

World Youth Day in Madrid.