

# Pennsylvania report lists more than 300 'predator' priests



*Testimony from dozens of witnesses and half a million pages of internal church documents contained credible allegations against more than 300 predator priests* **JEWEL SAMAD (AFP/File)**

A sweeping grand jury report uncovered credible allegations Tuesday against more than 300 predator priests and identified over 1,000 victims of child sex abuse covered up for decades by the Catholic Church in Pennsylvania.

The report is thought to be the most comprehensive to date into abuse in the US church, but while prosecutors have filed charges against two priests, the vast majority of crimes happened too long ago to prosecute under current laws.

The report said testimony from dozens of witnesses and half a million pages of internal church documents contained credible allegations against more than 300 predator priests and more than 1,000 child victims were identifiable.

But the real number was “in the thousands,” the grand jury estimated following an exhaustive, two-year investigation, given those children whose records were

lost or who were afraid to come forward.

One cleric raped a seven-year-old girl in hospital after she had her tonsils out, the report said. Another child drank juice, only to wake up the next morning bleeding from his rectum and unable to remember what had happened.

The vast majority of victims were boys and many were pre-pubescent, some manipulated with alcohol or pornography, and some were raped and groped, the report summarized. Many of the priests are dead.

So far only two new priests are being charged with crimes that fall within the statute of limitations. One allegedly ejaculated in the mouth of a seven-year-old and the other assaulted two boys for years until 2010.

“The pattern was abuse, deny and cover up. The effect, not only victimized children, it served a legal purpose that church officials manipulated for their advantage,” Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro told reporters.

## **- ‘Hid it all’ -**

“As a direct consequence of the systematic cover-up by senior church officials almost every instance of child sexual abuse we found is too old to be prosecuted.”

The grand jury called for changes in the law that would scrap the statute of limitations for child sex abuse, give victims more time to file civil lawsuits and tighten legislation compelling people to report abuse they find out about.

“Despite some institutional reform, individual leaders of the church have largely escaped public accountability,” the report said.

“Priests were raping little boys and girls, and the men of God who were responsible for them not only did nothing; they hid it all. For decades.”

Between 5,700 and 10,000 Catholic priests have been accused of sexual abuse in the United States, but only a few hundred have been tried, convicted, and sentenced for their crimes, according to the watchdog Bishop Accountability.

Since the abuse crisis became public in the 2000’s, the US church has spent more than \$3 billion in settlements, according to Bishop Accountability.

The group has documented settlements for 5,679 alleged victims of Catholic clergy — only a third of 15,235 allegations that bishops say they have received through 2009. One estimate suggests up there were 100,000 US victims.

A grand jury investigation into the Pennsylvania diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, one of those omitted in Tuesday's report, revealed in 2016 that two bishops spent four decades covering up sexual abuse of hundreds of children.

The number of 300 predator priests detailed in Tuesday's report dwarfs the estimates of 150-250 in identified since 2002 in Boston, Massachusetts.

---

Source: <https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/international/americas/181794-180814-pennsylvania-report-lists-more-than-300-predator-priests>

[Disclaimer]