

HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

to the

COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

For the attention of the CRC – Italy Review, March 2026

2nd Justice Report on the “Italy Case”

Prepared by the Association *Rete L'ABUSO* – *Permanent Observatory*

Rapporteur

Francesco Zanardi, President

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Mr. Francesco Zanardi, in his capacity as President of the *Associazione Rete L'ABUSO* (Association of Survivors of Clergy Sexual Abuse)—established in 2010 by Italian survivors and currently the sole observatory in Italy providing publicly accessible data on sexual offences within religious institutions— and as Italian representative of Ending Clerical Abuse (ECA), respectfully submits the following report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The submission provides an outline of the measures announced by the Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI) and their implementation, and subsequently presents the findings of the Observatory, including the inconsistencies identified between official CEI declarations and the cases documented by Rete L'ABUSO.

1) Institutional Measures Announced by the Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI)

In 2022, the Italian Episcopal Conference—by then compelled by the progress achieved by other Episcopal Conferences across Europe and seeking to address, at least in appearance, Italy’s considerable delay—issued its own public statement on the situation.

The announcement was made by the newly elected President of the CEI, Cardinal Matteo Maria Zuppi, who indicated the intention to establish an investigative commission which, however, has not been instituted to date. In the same context, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith noted that 613 cases were known to the Church between 2010 and 2022. These cases have not been the subject of subsequent public reporting, and no additional information has been made available.

Subsequently, the initiative referred to by the **President of the Italian Episcopal Conference, Cardinal Zuppi**, as “**La via italiana**” (“**the Italian pathway**”) was introduced, together with the announcement that each diocese would establish “**Sportelli per le vittime**” —dedicated offices mandated to receive and register reports from individuals alleging abuse. To date, slightly more than half of all dioceses have implemented this measure, which in practice appears to channel reports toward Church structures rather than the Judicial Authorities. According to an assessment conducted by Rete L’ABUSO, the functioning of these diocesan offices may diverge from their stated purpose: the available evidence indicates that they provide limited practical support, tend to direct complainants back to ecclesiastical channels, and may operate in ways that prioritise institutional interests over the needs of those reporting abuse.

These structures operate as “listening centers,” where victims submit a report with the understanding that a canonical process could subsequently be initiated in relation to the abuse experienced.

Victims are generally not informed at the outset of the differences and potential incompatibilities between canonical procedures and State judicial processes. State proceedings are grounded in human rights law, whereas canonical processes are based on the norms of the Decalogue and address the matter primarily as an offence against God.

Within these diocesan structures, a formal statement is compiled which, in certain circumstances, can lead to the initiation of a preliminary inquiry by the Church; however, such an outcome is not guaranteed.

The individual’s statement is taken by a volunteer—often without specific professional qualifications—and subsequently reviewed by those responsible for the preliminary assessment. The resulting documentation is then placed in diocesan archives. While the Diocese retains full access to this material, individuals are not provided with a copy of the statement they have given and signed, nor are they informed of the purposes for which it may be used. The statement is

collected without an informed-consent procedure, and individuals are neither assisted by legal counsel nor afforded the safeguards of a protected interview—a procedure designed to ensure that statements are taken in a safe, supervised environment and may be used for judicial purposes without requiring the victim to repeat their testimony—as envisaged under the Lanzarote Convention.

In most of the cases examined by Rete L'ABUSO, the notification submitted to the diocesan office was followed by the temporary removal of the accused priest. Subsequently, however, the individual was, in most instances, reassigned to another parish within a relatively short period.

The cases of **Don Mario Parmigiani** and **Don Ciro Panigara**—who had previously been identified as a repeat offender within the Church—are among the most recent cases documented by Rete L'ABUSO. ([link 1](#) e [link 2](#)).

In some cases, at these diocesan offices, victims are presented with a ***“confidential settlement agreement”**—that is, an agreement between the parties subject to a confidentiality clause.

This arrangement generally entails the provision of a financial sum (typically approximately €25,000), described as a form of support rather than as compensation for the abuse suffered. Acceptance of this payment requires the individual to forgo the possibility of pursuing the matter before other authorities and to adhere to a confidentiality obligation regarding both the case and the persons involved.

This practice allows the Church to maintain confidentiality over the matter and prevents the case from entering the public domain, while the clerics concerned often remains assigned to the same parish without reassignment.

** **Note:** While such confidentiality-based agreements are legally permissible in Italy, it should be underscored that, in these situations, the agreement effectively serves to conceal both the offence and the identity of the offender.*

The Italian Episcopal Conference has also indicated that **cases reported through the diocesan offices will not be transmitted to the Italian Judicial Authorities**, as national legislation does not require such reporting.

It has further clarified that cases originating from either the Judicial Authorities or civil society organizations **will not be included in its annual reports**.

These positions reflect a clear divergence not only from the norms governing judicial and civil oversight, but also from the survivors themselves and from any form of structured engagement with them.

2) The 2nd National Report on Clergy Sexual Abuse in Italy (2000–2025)

a. Overview of the Report

On 24 October 2025, Rete L'ABUSO presented its second report on clergy sexual abuse in Italy, analyzing national data covering the period from 2000 to the present. In contrast to the previous edition, this report incorporates both national and regional data, recording the number of alleged offenders among clergy and associated lay personnel, as well as the number of survivors, including women, men, vulnerable adults, and persons with disabilities.

The report further quantifies the judicial status of the cases, indicating how many were never reported, how many were reported, their procedural stage, and how many have resulted in a final conviction. In addition to criminal proceedings, the report—based on information provided by survivors and available to the Association—identifies the number of canonical proceedings initiated and the number of those that have resulted in a canonical conviction.

The report also examines the extent to which survivors have effectively accessed the support publicly promoted by the Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI) through diocesan offices or other Church structures. According to the information collected, such support, when provided, is generally limited to spiritual assistance. ([Link 3](#) – Full document available for translation directly via Google Translate.)

In connection with the public release of the second report, and using the regional breakdown of data, Rete L'ABUSO also sought to assess the responsiveness of the network of **Regional Commissioners for the Rights of Children and Adolescents**. On 6 October, the Association transmitted an advance copy of the report to all regional ombudspersons. Only four of the twenty commissioners responded.

(Extracts) – 2nd Report on sexual Abuse by Clergy in Italy

(Data updated as of 1 October 2025)

This extract presents the data collected by the Association on cases of sexual abuse involving members of the Catholic clergy—and, where relevant, lay collaborators—from 2000 to 2025, classified according to their judicial status.

The number of cases known but **never reported to the Judicial Authorities** (“**undisclosed cases**”) currently amounts to **839**. There are also **6** cases involving self-confessed offenders and **61** cases that have become time-barred under the statute of limitations.

A total of 20 cases was concluded through plea agreements, and **8** cases were closed, almost all due to insufficient evidence or testimony. In addition, **9** individuals were identified as having prior convictions or repeat offending.

The number of cases formally reported to the Judicial Authorities is **46**, some of which date back several years and lack updated information on procedural progress. A total of **51** individuals are currently under investigation, including older cases for which no recent updates are available. With respect to judicial outcomes, the dataset includes **27** first-instance convictions, **14** second-instance convictions, **6** civil judgments, and **6** canonical convictions. Overall, out of the 1,250 cases recorded by the Observatory, the Italian Judicial Authorities have been able to secure **only 155 final convictions**, while in the remaining 1,095 cases, the complaint procedures available in Italy did not ensure survivors' access to justice or provide an effective framework for prevention (Figure 1 A) (Regional data available at the link provided [LINK 4](#))

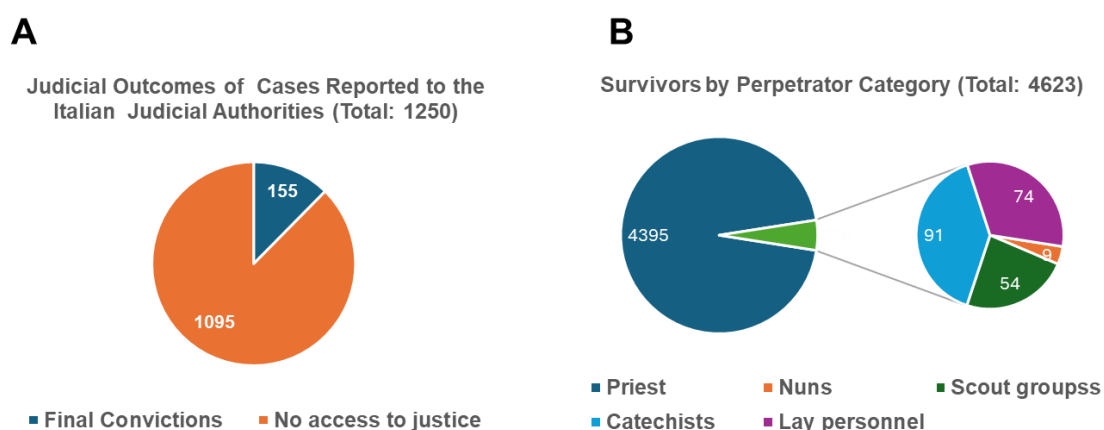


Figure 1: Judicial Outcomes of Recorded Cases (Panel A) and Survivor Distribution by Perpetrator Category (Panel B), Based on Data from the Observatory of the Association Rete L'ABUSO

According to the records of the Observatory, the 1,250 cases referenced above correspond to a total of 4,623 survivors known to Rete L'ABUSO. Of these, 4,395 were abused by priests, 9 by nuns, 54 within scout groups, 91 by catechists, and 74 by lay personnel. Among the 4,623 survivors, 515 are women and 4,108 are men; the group also includes 5 nuns, 11 persons with disabilities, and 156 vulnerable adults (Figure 1 B). In total, 4,451 survivors were under the age of 18 at the time the abuse occurred.

(A further regional breakdown of these data is available at the [link](#) provided.)

The Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI) is fully aware of these figures, to the point that its own public statements effectively corroborate the data collected by Rete L'ABUSO.

For the same period (2000–2025), the Association compiled all CEI declarations relating to the number of offenders identified in Italy:

- **25 May 2010** – Monsignor Mariano Crociata, Secretary-General of the CEI, reported that [100 canonical proceedings](#) had been initiated over the previous ten years. The number of survivors was not disclosed.
- **3 February 2022** – The Diocese of Bolzano stated that *another 100 cases* had been recorded within the diocese alone. The number of survivors was not disclosed.
- **28 May 2022** – The newly elected President of the CEI, Cardinal Matteo Maria Zuppi, announced at a press conference the launch of a Church commission of inquiry covering the period 2000–2022. On that occasion, he stated that [613 cases dating from 2010 onwards were already before the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith](#) (now the Dicastery). The number of survivors was not disclosed.
- **17 November 2022** – Pending the establishment of the announced commission, the [CEI released its first official report](#), documenting 68 cases for the two previous years and 89 survivors: 73 minors and 16 vulnerable adults (37 female and 52 male).
- **16 November 2023** – The [CEI published its second official report](#) (referring to 2022), recording 32 cases and 54 survivors: 25 minors and 29 vulnerable adults (44 female and 10 male).
- **20 January 2025** – The Diocese of [Bolzano released a second diocesan report](#), identifying an additional 67 cases and 75 survivors: 51 minors and 24 vulnerable adults (51 female and 24 male).
- **28 May 2025** – The CEI [issued its third official report](#), covering data for 2023 and 2024 collected through diocesan offices. It identified 69 cases and 115 survivors: 35 minors, 51 female and 64 males.

(The full dataset and detailed information are available at the [link](#) provided.)

By compiling the figures publicly released by the Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI) from 2000 to the present, a total of **1,049 cases involving priests** can be identified.

In the same period, and excluding cases involving associated lay personnel, Rete L'ABUSO has documented **1,106 cases**, only **57 more** than those acknowledged by the Church.

Due to the limited information contained in CEI statements—which do not specify the geographical distribution of cases, the number of survivors, the support provided to them, the current assignment of the accused clerics, or the measures adopted—Rete L'ABUSO has been able to

document part of the Church's response through survivor testimonies, media sources, and other available documentation.

With respect to canonical proceedings, among the **1,106 cases** recorded by the Association, **76 canonical procedures** were identified.

Of these:

- **17** resulted in a temporary *suspension a divinis*;
- **7** involved the **transfer of the priest** to another parish without sanctions.
- **18** resulted in **dismissal from the clerical state** or **voluntary resignation**.
- **5** involved the **death by suicide** of the priest.
- in the remaining **1,059 cases**, **no canonical procedure** appears to have been initiated.

None of these cases have ever been reported by the Church to the Italian Judicial Authorities. No objections have been raised by the Judicial Authorities in relation to CEI statements acknowledging **non-reporting** and **failure to prevent**, including the declaration that cases received through diocesan offices would **not** be transmitted to State authorities.

The Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors has recently commented on the performance of Episcopal Conferences worldwide, identifying the Italian Episcopal Conference as among the lowest performing in this area. ([Link 5](#))

3) Concluding Observations

The data presented above refer exclusively to cases involving members of the Catholic clergy and, in the Italian context, suggest the presence of a much broader national phenomenon/. The Association's focus on clergy-related cases reflects a structural gap: the complete absence of reliable national data, particularly from the Government, whose National Observatory under the Ministry for Equal Opportunities is currently unable to provide any meaningful figures.

The Association has therefore relied on the information available within its own archives—data that are unquestionably incomplete when compared to the actual magnitude of the problem in Italy, yet nonetheless sufficiently substantial to illustrate the seriousness of the situation.

The Association recalls to the Committee that, in several other Member States, independent commissions of inquiry have been established in response to fewer than one hundred reported cases within religious institutions. By contrast, even if the figures available in Italy were

conservatively multiplied tenfold, the country continues—systematically—to refrain from acknowledging the scope of the problem.

As becomes evident, the current situation in Italy is largely the result of several fundamental legislative gaps—*core provisions* that establish the basic framework for child protection and upon which the effectiveness of *secondary regulations and protective procedures* depends. In this context, most of these shortcomings are directly linked to the absence of a universal legal obligation for all citizens to report suspected child sexual abuse.

This legislative gap does not benefit the Church alone; it inevitably affects the wider population as well, undermining the enforcement of critical laws such as Act No. 172/2012 (ratifying the Lanzarote Convention) and Act No. 69/2019 (“Codice Rosso”).

Within the Italian context, the Catholic Church has structured its internal procedures so as to manage, autonomously, the offences committed by its own ministers—acting, in this regard, entirely “within the limits of the law.”

The fact that the Italian Episcopal Conference has publicly stated that it “will not transmit to the Italian authorities the names of the cases reported to its own listening centers,” without eliciting any significant reaction from State institutions, is, in our view, sufficiently indicative of the seriousness of the situation and of the extent to which such conduct is implicitly legitimized, as though it were entirely “normal.”

This dynamic is mirrored within civil society, particularly in the volunteer sector, which in many respects shares structural and operational similarities with the Church. Unlike the clergy—whose members number approximately 31,000—volunteer organizations involve an estimated 4.7 million Italian citizens in daily activities. One can only hope that the proportion of offenders in the secular sphere does not resemble that reported for the clergy in this document.

Further exacerbating this situation is the legislative gap concerning the “anti-pedophilia certificate,” an issue already highlighted in our previous report and addressed by this Committee in its recommendations. Specifically, the Committee urged Italy to “amend the legislation implementing the Lanzarote Convention to ensure that it does not exclude the voluntary sector, including religious personnel of the Catholic Church, from its prevention and protection mechanisms” ([CRC/C/ITA/CO/5-6](#), para. 21(h)).

The preventive value of the “anti-pedophilia certificate” is severely weakened by the absence of a universal duty to report, meaning it identifies only the very few already convicted offenders. This

inevitably directs those known cases toward sectors—such as volunteer organizations—where no reporting obligations exist and oversight is limited. As in the Church, internal protective structures can place children at risk. Unsurprisingly, almost no cases are publicly reported in these settings, and the few that do emerge are even fewer than those registered within the clergy. This reflects once again the absence of a *foundational legal requirement* already highlighted in our previous report and addressed by this Committee, which recommended “making it mandatory for everyone, including religious personnel of the Catholic Church, to report any suspected case of violence against minors to the competent State authorities”.

([CRC/C/ITA/CO/5-6](#), para. 21(g)).

Instead, the current situation is one in which clergy members not only remain unpunished—leaving thousands of citizens without access to justice—but, with the tacit consent of State institutions, effectively manage and administer the “justice” offered to those who were victimized by the institution itself.

With reference to [CRC/C/ITA/CO/5-6](#) (para. 21), we observe that none of the measures recommended by the Committee appear to have been implemented or even substantively considered by the State Party.

Among the most serious regressions, we draw attention to the **Valditara draft law** aimed at prohibiting sex and affective education in schools, which is currently pending governmental approval. ([link 6](#) – [link 7](#))

The Association expresses to the Committee its deep concern regarding the serious regression that has occurred in Italy since the State Party’s last review.

The underlying cause of this regression must be sought in the systematic inertia of Italian institutions, beginning with those that should serve as the principal guarantors of the rights of children and adolescents. As demonstrated in connection with the Association’s 2nd Report which concerned these bodies directly, only 4 out of 20 responded.

The Association has undertaken several formal actions, including those addressed to the Italian Government—the formal notice of non-compliance submitted in February 2018 ([link 8](#)) and the formal parliamentary inquiry of November 2018 ([link 9](#))—as well as our prior submission to this Committee (CRC) in November 2018 ([link 10](#)). All of these actions remained unanswered or without meaningful follow-up from the relevant institutions.

A clear sign of the dysfunctions within the legislative and judicial system is the exceptionally low number of final convictions—155 out of the 1,106 cases documented by the Rete L'ABUSO Observatory.

This was already evident during the 23–24 February 2019 sessions before this Committee, when—upon being asked to describe the preventive mechanisms available in the country—the Italian Delegation replied instead by listing the penalties and aggravating circumstances applicable to offenders. In other words, measures that apply only *after* the crime has been committed.

At present, the only preventive tool formally in place is the “anti-pedophilia certificate,” which, as noted earlier, is significantly undermined by existing legislative gaps.

These concerns were formally submitted by the Association to the Office of the Prosecutor General of the Republic in April 2023 ([link 11](#)), which never replied and did not take steps—even though the offences in question are prosecutable *ex officio*—to acquire the names of the more than 400 alleged offenders reported at the time.

The matter was also brought before the European Parliament through a dedicated petition (Petition UE[337]_signed). Although a response was received, it was limited in scope and has not led to any concrete action to date ([link 12](#)).

4) Recommendations

The Association respectfully recommends that the Committee urge the State Party to:

1. **Extend the legal obligation to report**—currently applicable only to public officials—to *all* citizens. This measure is essential for effective prevention as well as for the proper functioning of existing instruments, including the repeatedly cited “anti-pedophilia certificate.” Such an extension would also alleviate the burden currently placed exclusively on bishops who, invoking Article 4 of the Additional Protocol to the Lateran Pacts, routinely refrain from reporting cases to the Italian judicial authorities. This reform would remain fully consistent with the Concordat.
2. **Extend the scope of the “anti-pedophilia certificate”** to all personnel—without exception—who work, even occasionally, in contact with children.
3. **Introduce age-appropriate preventive education** at all levels starting from primary school, enabling children to recognize potential danger, avoid it, and report concerns to trusted adults.

4. **Establish formal cooperation and reporting protocols** with law enforcement authorities, accessible to all civil-society organizations (NGOs) and listening centers that request them. This would allow for a capillary monitoring system across the territory and grant such entities the capacity to follow and oversee the progress of reports for safeguarding purposes.
5. **Quantify comprehensively the prevalence of child sexual abuse across the State Party's territory**, including cases handled by diocesan and non-diocesan centers within the Catholic Church.
6. **Establish an independent commission of inquiry** into offences committed within the Catholic Church, guaranteeing full independence from both the Church and the Italian State, which has been non-compliant for decades.
7. **Ensure that the State provides support to individuals who are officially recognized as victims**, including evaluating, based on severity, forms of assistance such as disability pensions - extending eligibility to conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder, which in Italy is currently not recognized as disability) or comparable support mechanisms.
8. **Ensure the effectiveness of the Authorities for Protection of Children and Adolescents**, as well as the newly introduced role of Victims' Ombudsperson—which currently exists in only 4 of Italy's 20 regions.
9. Ensure that diocesan listening centers—which function as the initial point of access to ecclesiastical proceedings, and whose decisions, although not equivalent to those of the State justice system, nonetheless affect individuals within the State's territory and may expose victims to renewed trauma—comply fully with national data-protection legislation, apply the protected-hearing procedures required under the Lanzarote Convention (Law No. 172/2012), and provide all necessary safeguards for the psychological and physical protection of victims.

Rapporteur

Francesco Zanardi