



Miguel Hurtado, who has campaigned against impunity since disclosing his own account of being abused at a monastery in northeastern Spain, poses for a picture in front of a Spanish parliament in Madrid, Spain, Tuesday, Feb. 1, 2022. (AP Photo/Manu Fernandez)

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BARCELONA — Spain's prime minister wants to task the nation's ombudsman with the country's first official investigation into the depth of sexual abuse committed by Roman Catholic clergy.

The decision by Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, head of Spain's Socialist Party, was reported Sunday by the Spanish newspaper El País and confirmed by the government to The Associated Press.

The proposal of ombudsman Ángel Gabilondo to head the investigation comes days after Spanish lawmakers took the first step toward [opening a parliamentary inquiry](#) into the issue of sexual abuse in the church.

The body representing Spain's bishops has rejected opening up a comprehensive investigation. Instead, it encourages victims to report their allegations to offices it has set up in each of the country's dioceses. Critics say that's not enough to give a full accounting of the abuse.

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The final go-ahead for a parliamentary committee depends on a vote later this month. If the plan wins parliamentary backing, Gabilondo would be charged with compiling a report based on the findings of an independent investigative committee, according to El País.

Gabilondo, 72, was named ombudsman in November. A professor of philosophy, he was Spain's education minister from 2009-11 for a Socialist-led government. He is widely respected across Spain's political spectrum.

"The victims can not be silenced," Sánchez wrote on Twitter later Sunday. "It is time to heal our wound and prevent it from happening again. Committed to not letting the abuses committed in Church go unpunished."