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Anne Barrett Doyle, Co-Director of BishopAccountability.org, a United States-based watchdog, speaks at a news conference in Manila on Jan.29, 2025 where they launched an online database on more than 80 Roman Catholic priests who have been accused of sexually abusing minors in the Philippines. (AP/Joeal Calupitan)

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Manila, Philippines — January 29, 2025

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A United States-based watchdog on Wednesday launched an online database on more than 80 Roman Catholic priests who have been accused of sexually abusing minors in the Philippines and said the silence of Filipino bishops on the crimes amounted to a cover-up.

The Philippines is the third-largest Roman Catholic nation in the world, and public discussions of [sexual assaults](#) by members of the clergy, who are revered especially in rural regions, has long been generally muted.

None of the 82 members of the clergy, including seven bishops, who have been included in the new online database on clergy sexual abuses by the group [BishopAccountability.org](#) had been convicted in any Philippine court.

The database featured their faces, names and details of their alleged sexual assaults on minors, some of which dated back more than two decades ago. The nonprofit said that it had also set up such online databases on Catholic clergy abuses in the U.S., Argentina, Chile and Ireland.

Anne Barrett Doyle, a director of BishopAccountability.org, said that the long silence of bishops in the Philippines encouraged such sexual assaults by members of the clergy. She asked Philippine prosecutors to investigate church officials, who failed to report abuses.

"Philippine bishops feel entitled to their silence. They feel entitled to withhold information about sexual violence toward minors. They feel entitled to defend accused priests," Doyle said at a news conference in Manila.

"What we hope to achieve is raise awareness," she said. "Secrecy only benefits the perpetrators. Secrecy equals complicity."

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Cardinal Pablo Virgilio David, a Philippine church leader, said that the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines has set up an office to safeguard minors and vulnerable adults and report complaints to the Vatican.

"Our mandate from Rome is to take the issue of accountability very seriously, especially those related to alleged abuse cases involving priests," David said,

without elaborating.

"The external mechanisms that have forced accountability by Catholic bishops elsewhere — litigation by victims, probes of church entities by prosecutors, inquiries by government commissions and substantial investigations by local news media — have occurred little or not at all in the world's third largest Catholic country," BishopAccountability.org said of the Philippines.

Some of the members of the clergy included in the database have been cleared of charges and allowed to return to church work and ministry, regaining close access to potential victims, the nonprofit, which has been tracking the sexual abuse crisis haunting the Roman Catholic Church since the group's founding in 2003, said with alarm.

The names of priests and other clerics included in the database were collected from news reports, publicly filed court documents and church pronouncements, the group said, and added that the list of 82 clerics linked to sexual abuses in the Philippines may just be "the tip of the iceberg."

Gemma Hickey, a victim of clergy sexual abuse who spoke at the news conference in Manila, said that victims suffer long after they have been assaulted.

"It's survivors that serve a life sentence. Many of the priests who have abused us get to carry on with their lives. They don't face jail time. Some of them retire, move on with their lives, move on even to other careers and escape under the radar," Hickey said.

"But survivors are trapped in a prison of memory," Hickey said.