

Study reveals 10,000 minors sexually abused in German protestant churches

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Berlin, January 26 (RHC)-- A study into the number of victims of sexual abuse in the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD), estimates that the number of minors who fell victim may be as high as 9,355, much higher than previously thought.

Published on Thursday, the 871-page report which was commissioned in 2020 by the EKD comprises the study into sexual abuse of children and young people in the EKD since the end of World War II, making it the first such study.

According to the study, at least 9,355 children and young individuals have experienced sexual abuse since 1946, which was committed by nearly 3,500 perpetrators, with approximately one-third of them being members of the clergy. According to the report's findings, it is concluded that males accounted for approximately 64.7% of victims and 99.6% of perpetrators.

The instances of abuse varied from unwarranted physical contact during sports lessons to sexual penetration. Furthermore, the report highlights that around three-quarters of the perpetrators were married when they committed their initial offenses. The figure based on the available evidence was just "the tip of the tip of the iceberg", author Martin Wazlawik said at a press conference.

Bishop Kirsten Fehrs, acting president of the Council of the Protestant Church of Germany, while accepting the high figures said the report demonstrates that they should take responsibility, and take the necessary measures to prevent such crimes in the future.

"As the Protestant Church and our social welfare organization Diakonie, we take responsibility for the acts of violence committed by our employees and volunteers," she said at a news conference in Hannover.

"The first thing to do is to say clearly: As an institution, we have also been guilty of countless crimes against countless people. And I can only wholeheartedly apologize to those who have been hurt in this way," she added.

The spokesperson of the victims, Detlev Zander, who himself is a victim of sexual violence in a children's home, said that the report only constitutes of the confirmed cases, which were on the record, as the researchers didn't have access to all personal files in all 20 state churches.

"Every state church counts differently," he said, claiming that the federal structure of the Protestant Church hinders investigations into sexual abuse and demands a more uniform system.

In 2018, the German Bishops' Conference commissioned a similar study which found that 1,670 Catholic clergymen had perpetrated various forms of sexual assault against 3,677 minors between the years 1946 and 2014.

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