



Activists fighting child abuse stage a protest near the home of a former Catholic priest suspected of sexually assaulting dozens of children, in Etretchy, outside Paris, Wednesday, Sept 16, 2026. Placards read from the left: '330,000 victims of child sexual abuse, never again' and Delfosse, the church knew'. (AP Photo/Thibault Camus)

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About 2,000 people who reported being sexually abused by priests or other church representatives have sought reparations from a French independent body created to address decades of abuse, the organization said Tuesday as it prepares to end its five-year mission.

The Independent National Authority for Recognition and Reparation, or INIRR, said its work extended beyond financial compensation to include psychological support.

INIRR's report comes ahead of Pope Leo XIV's four-day visit to France, beginning Friday, during which he is expected to meet privately with seven survivors of sexual abuse by priests and other Catholic personnel.

France's Catholic bishops' conference agreed to provide reparations after a 2021 report estimated some 330,000 children were sexually abused over 70 years by priests or other church-related figures in France. The report described a "systemic" cover-up by church officials and urged the French Catholic Church to respect the rule of law in France.

Here's a look at the independent reparations program, by the numbers:

1,184 decisions

Over 1,184 decisions granting financial or other reparations from the church have formally been made by the INIRR.

Hundreds of other cases are still awaiting a decision. Some 183 people reached out to the independent body this year.

The INIRR closed to new submissions on Aug. 31, after completing its scheduled mandate, but is still accompanying victims until the end of next year.

It is to be replaced by another body, meant to be permanent and focusing on restorative justice, long-term guidance and support for victims of sexual violence within the church.

1 letter

After completing the process, survivors receive a "letter of recognition" that formally acknowledges the sexual abuse and details the financial compensation.

"The letter was a shockwave for me," said Cécile Reneaume, 34, who received reparations from INIRR after she was abused as a young child by the leader of a Catholic community, who has since died.

"I was expecting a very small amount of financial compensation — that's how I had imagined it. But when I read the letter, it said: 'The church acknowledges these specific failings'," she described.

"It meant that the little girl who once had been unable to speak was finally believed. It gave weight and credibility to what happened to me as a child," Reneaume said.

The Associated Press generally doesn't identify victims of sexual assault or abuse unless they come forward publicly or give their consent to be identified.

36,892 euros

Survivors who went through the process were awarded an average of 36,892 euros (\$42,186) each.

Once the INIRR approves the financial compensation, the case is sent to a special fund financed by the church for payment.

"My first reaction was violent," said Eric, 55, who didn't want his last name to be public, when he was informed of the amount. "I felt anger, disbelief. Am I worth this?"

Eric was raped by a priest when he was between ages 8 and 14.

"It took me time to understand that it wasn't me who was being assessed, nor was it about putting a price on what I had suffered, because you can't put a price on a childhood," he said.

The compensation is intended to financially support the healing process.

56 years on average

People reaching out to INIRR last year were aged 56 on average, about two-thirds were men and one-third were women.

Among them, Philippe Gomes was 49 in 2023 when a session of therapeutic hypnosis helped him remember he had been a victim of sexual abuse by two priests from age 7 to 12. Survivors may experience complete or partial loss of memory due to the traumatic events.

"I reached out to the INIRR and that was a real shock, because the first thing I was told was: 'I believe you,'" Gomes said.

Gomes said the therapy he is undergoing has helped him say he was raped without crying.

"I'm not ashamed, I'm not the one who should be ashamed," he said.

Reparations also may include nonfinancial support. Requests have included help for victims to write down their stories, organizing meetings with local church representatives or installing a plaque in memory of victims.

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