

Notice: Undefined index: et_header_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

Notice: Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

Notice: Undefined index: et_header_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1215

Notice: Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1215

Notice: Undefined index: et_template in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1216

BELGIUM: Case dismissed in favour of Jehovah's Witnesses (Le Soir)

Case dismissed in favour of Jehovah's Witnesses prosecuted for not reporting of sexual abuse

Translation of *Le Soir* article French-English by HRWF

Le Soir (22.10.2021) – <https://bit.ly/31EunFR> – After three years of investigation, the Brussels council chamber has dismissed the case in favour of the non-profit association Jehovah's Witnesses, in the context of an investigation for

not reporting sexual abuse. In 2018, the federal public prosecutor's office had opened an investigation after several former members of Jehovah's Witnesses had claimed to have been victims of sexual abuse within this community. They had spoken about the holding of so-called internal trials, generally favourable to the alleged perpetrators.

"The case was indeed dismissed," the federal prosecutor's office explained. "As a reminder, the investigation concerned the organised non-disclosure of sexual abuse by Jehovah's Witnesses. It is possible that there were facts, but if so, they took place in the intra-family sphere. These facts cannot therefore be attributed to the Jehovah's Witnesses association.

"The criminal investigation was opened following allegations made in the media by the CIAOSN (Centre for Information and Advice on Harmful Sectarian Organisations, editor's note) that Jehovah's Witnesses would not report accusations of sexual abuse of children to the police, (...) the Council Chamber concluded that the CIAOSN's unilateral statements were not supported by any other element of investigation", the Christian congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses reacted.

Asked to respond, the CIAOSN would not comment on a court decision but assured that "the identity of all those who testified is firmly protected" in the event that the congregation seeks to identify them. In parallel to this action, on 18 June, the Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses of Belgium launched a civil action for defamation against the Belgian Ministry of Justice, responsible for the CIAOSN. A first hearing is scheduled on 5 May 2022. It should be noted that the order of the Council Chamber does not question the quality of the witnesses but raises a lack of evidence.

Translation French-English by HRWF

Photo: Palais de Justice in Brussels. Credits.

Further reading about FORB in Belgium on HRWF website

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Notice: Undefined index: et_template in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1269