NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Irish religious don't want to renegotiate

Cian Molloy Catholic News Service | May. 26, 2009

The executive summary of a report by Ireland's Commission to Inquire Into Child Abuse (CNS photo/Cathal McNaughton, Reuters)

DUBLIN, Ireland -- The 18 Irish religious congregations implicated in the abuse of children in their care say they do not wish to renegotiate a controversial deal in which they received indemnity from being sued by victims in exchange for contributing to a victim's compensation fund.

The deal made as one of the final acts of an outgoing government in 2002 has proved increasingly controversial, partly because the overall compensation paid out has increased by hundreds of millions of euros, so that the religious orders are only paying about 10 percent of the compensation paid to victims of decades of abuse.

"Rather than reopening the terms of the agreement reached with government in 2002, we reiterate our commitment to working with those who suffered enormously while in our care. We must find the best and most appropriate ways of directly assisting them. We will meet again in the coming days to explore the detail of our responses," said a statement issued May 25.

Speaking on Ireland's RTE Radio May 26, Ursuline Sister Marianne O'Connor, director general of the Conference of Religious of Ireland, said the decision by the 18 congregations was "a way of looking at things somewhat differently. They are determined that they will meet all responsibilities. They want to deal directly with the former residents. They want to look at new and creative ways of doing that. The deal is closed; the deal was made in good faith. Let us leave it to one side."

If the orders increased their contribution to the compensation fund, O'Connor asked: "What would happen to that money? It would go just to reimburse the government, it would not find its way directly to the former residents, who are the people that the 18 congregations want to directly help."

Under the terms of the 2002 deal, the 18 religious congregations that ran government schools where abuse occurred over decades agreed to pay 128 million euros ($179 million). That included 41.1 million euros in cash, 10 million euros for counseling services and 76.8 million euros from the transfer of real estate to the government.

Not only has the market value of the real estate fallen dramatically as a consequence of the global economic downturn, but much of the property identified has not been transferred to state ownership and is unlikely to be transferred any time soon. This is because in many cases the real estate is not owned by the religious orders themselves, but by trusts managed by the orders, or the properties have covenants attached limiting the purpose for which the real estate may be used.

Among those calling on the religious orders to renegotiate the deal with the government were Cardinal Sean Brady of Armagh, Northern Ireland, president of the Irish bishops' conference, and Dublin Archbishop Diarmuid Martin.

Brady told RTE Radio that the orders' response "should be centered on the needs of those who have survived; if that entails revisiting the agreement with [the] government, then so be it."

Writing in *The Irish Times* May 25, before representatives of religious congregations met to discuss their next actions, Martin told them, "The facts are now clear, and you have to take notice and make some new gesture of recognition.

"Whatever happens with regards to renegotiating that agreement, you cannot just leave things as they are," the archbishop wrote. "There are many ways in which substantial financial investment in supporting survivors and their families can be brought about, perhaps in creative ways which would once again redeem your own charism as educators of the poor. In many ways it is your last chance to render honor to charismatic founders and to so many good members of your congregations who feel tarnished."

A report released May 20 by the Commission to Inquire Into Child Abuse said a climate of fear created by pervasive, excessive and arbitrary punishment permeated most of Ireland's residential care institutions for children and all those run for boys.

These residential institutions, funded by the state but often run by Catholic religious orders, included schools, orphanages, hospitals, children's homes or any other institutions where children were in the care of nonfamily members.

Before the end of the summer, Archbishop Martin said another independent commission report is to be published detailing how allegations of abuse by Dublin archdiocesan priests were handled by church and civil authorities.

The archbishop warned in *The Irish Times*: "It will not be easy reading. The steps that have been taken to put in place good child-safeguarding norms will never wipe away the suffering of those who were abused. Let the truth, however, come out."

The Next Step FORWARD [1]

DONATE NOW [1]

Enjoy this article?
Help support more like it by **donating today!** [1]

Source URL (retrieved on *09/01/2015 - 09:48*): http://ncronline.org/news/accountability/irish-religious-dont-want-renegotiate

Links:
[1] http://ncrnews.org/webathon/donate/article-end