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Judge: LA archdiocese must reveal names in personnel file release

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The Archdiocese of Los Angeles must reveal the names of personnel included in about 30,000 of pages of files that will be released with information related to allegations of child sexual abuse by church employees, a Superior Court judge ruled Monday.

Judge Emilie Elias reversed a previous ruling by a retired federal judge, who, acting as a mediator in a settlement between the archdiocese and those who claimed they were sexually abused, said that material to be released should have names redacted to prevent the documents' use to "embarrass or ridicule the church."

The 2007 settlement for $660 million covered more than 500 people who made claims about being sexually abused by priests and other church personnel. Some of the priests who had claims against them sued to keep their names from being released, saying it violated their privacy rights.

During a hearing Monday on a request by media organizations to have the names be released, Elias asked an attorney for the archdiocese, "Don't you think the public has a right to know ... what was going on in their own church?" reported The Associated Press and the *Los Angeles Times*, both of which joined in seeking the release of names with the documents.

The Archdiocese of Los Angeles said in a brief statement that Elias had revised the previous judge's order "acknowledging that much of the information in question has already been made public by the archdiocese in the 2004 'Report to the People of God' and updates released in the subsequent proffers."

The statement said the archdiocese would abide by the judge's decision. "We are now working with all parties involved to facilitate the release of the documents as promptly as possible."

The AP reported that the archdiocesan attorney, Michael Hennigan, was unsure how long it would take to produce the documents without redactions. He also said that Cardinal Roger Mahony, who retired in 2011 after 25 years as archbishop of Los Angeles, has no objections to his name appearing in the released documents.

The judge and attorneys for the archdiocese and for alleged victims of abuse were to continue to work out details of release of the records, which include psychiatric reports, reports of abuse and letters to the Vatican.

Retired U.S. District Court Judge Dickran Tevrizian, who served as mediator in arriving at the 2007 settlement, ordered that files containing information about child sexual abuse be released and that the names be edited, or redacted, so the names of victims and church employees who were not accused of crimes or who were accused of just one charge of sexual abuse would not be revealed.

The Tidings, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, reported before the Monday hearing that the archdiocese intended to release the documents as early as Jan. 14.

Attorneys for the archdiocese said at a Dec. 10 hearing before Elias that there were about 69 files that were believed to meet the criteria for release, according to *The Tidings*. Attorneys for the plaintiffs suing for the release questioned the number of files and the amount of material being redacted. Elias ordered the two sides to go through the edited documents together and get back to her with a list of disputed material.

At a Dec. 27 hearing, Elias granted the request of the *Los Angeles Times* and AP to intervene in court to argue against redactions.

According to AP, Elias said she considered the privacy rights of priests and other personnel mentioned in the documents in balance with the public's interest in knowing details of the sexual abuse cases. She stipulated that some names could be redacted still, such as those of people who played no major role in the cases.

The *Times* reported that the news organizations claimed in court filings that redactions would "deny the public information that is necessary to fully understand the church's knowledge about the serial molestation of children by priests over a period of decades."

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