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Dutch foundation gets dozens of sexual abuse reports from Jehovah's Witnesses

By Janene Pieters on November 28, 2017 - 16:20



swing. Picture: Wikimedia Commons/SSgt Caroline Hayworth

Reclaimed Voices, a foundation set up in the Netherlands to denounce sexual abuse by Jehovah's Witnesses, received 46 reports of abuse in just a week's time. The number of reports is shocking, Frank Huiting, one of the founders and himself a victim of sexual abuse in a closed Jehovah's Witnesses community as a child, said to broadcaster NOS.

The foundation was launched just over a week ago, based on Huiting's own experiences. He was abused from the time he was seven year's old. When Huiting told his parents, they decided not to report it to the police. An elder in the community advised against it. "Then there will be headlines in the newspaper and we don't want that."

According to the Reclaimed Voices initiators, victims within the closed Jehovah's Witnesses community are not heard and perpetrators are left to continue unchecked. Over the past week, foundation employees heard stories from a number of people who were abused by Jehovah's Witnesses. "The fact that so many reports have come in actually says enough. There are at least hundreds of cases in the Netherlands that should actually come out", Huiting said, according to NOS. He added that so many victims are too afraid to come forward.

The main purpose of Reclaimed Voices is to be a listening ear. The employees urge victims to speak out, and hope that they also report the abuse. "People walked around with this secret for years. And the fact that they are coming out, can be a relief for them. That was also my experience. We also want to advise them to seek professional help. Also outside the religious community, for example with a social worker, psychologist or general practitioner", Huiting said.

The foundation aims to collect as man reports of sexual abuse as possible and present them to the board of Jehovah's Witnesses Netherlands and the Dutch government. "We want to get the government to investigate these abuses. And not to start a fight, but really to focus on the victim."

Earlier this year Dutch newspaper Trouw spoke to a number of people who were sexually abused as children in the Jehovah's Witnesses community. One victim [described the religious society as a "paradise for pedophiles"](#).

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