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Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt answers questions from reporters during a news conference on Oct. 11, 2022, in Topeka, Kan. The Kansas Bureau of Investigation says a lengthy investigation into sexual abuse by Catholic priests in the state has not led to any charges, according to the report released by Schmidt on Friday, Jan 6, 2023. (AP Photo/John Hanna, File)

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Topeka, Kan. â?? January 9, 2023

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The Kansas Bureau of Investigation said Jan. 6 that it has distributed 30 charging affidavits to prosecutors as part of its investigation into sexual abuse by Catholic priests but, so far, no charges have been filed.

Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt released the KBI's report concluding an investigation of the state's four Roman Catholic dioceses in Wichita, Salina, Dodge City and Kansas City, Kansas.

The bureau said it would continue to investigate clergy associated with the Society of Saint Pius X, a breakaway Catholic group with a large branch in St. Marys.

A summary of the report said a six-member task force had interviewed 137 victims of abuse, initiated 125 criminal cases and distributed 30 affidavits to prosecutors for charging consideration.

Investigators identified 188 clergy members suspected of committing various criminal acts from records that stretched to the 1950s.

Michael McDonnell, a spokesperson for the international Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, said that while the numbers of alleged abuses before 1990 are not surprising, the numbers after that are "still questionable" because many victims likely have not come forward.

"The Catholic Church will consistently say this is a thing of the past. We always say it's a thing very much of the present and very much a thing of the future," McDonnell said.

As of Jan. 6, no prosecutor had filed charges, primarily because of laws that limit how long authorities have to pursue certain cases, the KBI said.

McDonnell said it's "the Catholic Church playbook" to run out the clock on potential criminal charges and then be cooperative.

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"Well, what we want to know is who was complicit?" McDonnell said, adding that abusers were allowed "to continue their careers in transfer upon transfer upon transfer only to go on to abuse more children?"

The executive director of the Kansas Catholic Conference said each of the four Kansas dioceses was reviewing the report. Schmidt directed the KBI to begin the investigation at the request of Kansas City Archdiocese Archbishop Joseph Naumann.

The investigators found several cases that lacked probable cause to present to prosecutors. In nearly all the cases where affidavits were filed, the statute of limitations had expired or the priest was dead, according to the report.

That prompted SNAP to call on Kansas legislators to both eliminate the statute of limitations for filing lawsuits over alleged abuse and to add clergy to the list of people required by law to report suspected child abuse to authorities. Lawmakers convene Jan. 9 for their annual session.

"This report is yet another signal flare that legislative change is needed in order to support survivors and protect children," the group said in a statement.

In a letter accompanying the report, KBI Director Kirk Thompson praised the victims who came forward to report their abuse to investigators.

"It is our deepest and most sincere hope these victims find a way to continue to survive and heal," Thompson wrote. "And for those victims who are still traumatized who did not report, it is our hope they find the strength to seek help."

The report was released on the final full day in office for Schmidt, who unsuccessfully ran for Kansas governor last year. Thompson plans to retire from the KBI on Jan. 10.