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Priest is cleared of child rape charges

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The Irish Columban priest, Father Shay Cullen (56), an internationally-known advocate of children's rights and founder of the Preda Foundation in Olongapo city, Philippines, has been cleared of the charge of child rape by the Office of the Public Prosecutor in the city.

Dismissing the complaint against Father Cullen, the prosecutor, Mr Oscar M. Lasam, said in his resolution: "We honestly believe that no probable cause exists against the respondent for the crime charged."

Father Cullen said the charge brought against him had been most serious and unjust and was one of many coming from a paedophile ring in retaliation for supplying evidence to prosecute paedophiles.

"In retaliation they tried to frame us many times but have consistently failed." Father Cullen was accused after evidence uncovered by him linked a man to the alleged sexual abuse of a minor.

There are 43 sexually-abused children being cared for in the Preda centre by professional therapists and social workers and many more in the community. Father Cullen added: "These foreign bar owners run establishments that are fronts for child prostitution with the connivance of local politicians and we are determined to close them down and save these sexually exploited children. No wonder we have made enemies."

A spokesman for the Columban Order in Dublin said last night they were pleased at the decision.

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