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[World](#) **US cardinal accused of molesting woman**



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Mahony has been cardinal in Los Angeles since 1991

The head of the largest Roman Catholic diocese in the United States has revealed that he has been accused of sexual misconduct with a teenage schoolgirl.

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Cardinal Roger Mahony of Los Angeles strongly denies the allegations, which were made last month, but relate to an incident more than 30 years ago.

He said he had asked for investigations by both police and the church.

The cardinal is believed to be the most senior sitting American church official to be accused of sexual misconduct, in a series of scandals over the past few months.

Priests in several states have been removed since the trial earlier this year of defrocked Boston priest John Geoghan, who was sentenced to prison for child molestation.

“My personal integrity demands that I refute this”

Cardinal Mahony

The Church is facing mounting criticism following allegations that it covered up cases of abuse for decades.

'Hurtful allegations'

The latest accusation of sexual abuse was made by a woman in Fresno who told church officials there last month of the alleged assault.

She said she had been knocked unconscious in an incident at a

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Catholic high school in 1970 when Cardinal Mahony was a priest in Fresno. She alleged that when she came to, Father Mahony was hovering over her.

"I know people are not going to believe it, but it happened to me," she said.

In a statement late on Friday, Cardinal Mahoney said his personal integrity demanded that he refute the charges.

"Such allegations are hurtful and troubling to me. Yet I continue to pray fervently for those who make them," he said.

The Los Angeles diocese, which numbers five million Catholics, has opened an investigation into the case and interviewed the woman complainant.

A police investigation is also under way, according to the Los Angeles Times.

LA police have said they are investigating reports that the diocese removed six to 12 priests accused of sexual abuse in cases dating back up to 10 years.

Suicide

In another development, a Catholic priest accused of sexually molesting a girl two decades ago has been found dead after apparently committing suicide.

In Ohio, the body of 48-year-old Father Don Rooney was discovered slumped in his car in a shopping centre car park in Cleveland on Thursday with a gunshot wound to the head, police said.

A suicide note was reported to have been found nearby.

The allegations, which came to light after the unnamed woman contacted church leaders, have not been fully investigated or substantiated.

The alarm was raised after Rooney failed to appear at a meeting with local church officials.



The scandal has rocked the Catholic Church

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Rooney was due to discuss abuse allegations with church officials