

# Gabriela wants Bishop Pueblos to surrender priest accused of rape



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A women's rights group on Tuesday urged Catholic Bishop Juan de Dios Pueblos of Butuan City in Agusan del Norte to do something about the priest who was accused of raping an 18-year-old woman and has supposedly sought refuge in the bishop's residence.

Gabriela secretary-general Lana Linaban said in a Tuesday statement that Pueblos "practically condoned" the alleged act of Fr. Raul Cabonce against a female domestic helper when he transferred the priest to another church. Last Thursday, an 18-year-old woman [filed a case](#) against Cabonce for raping her earlier this year.

"Clearly, Bishop Pueblos' actions are in violation of both the state's criminal laws and the law of the Church," said Linaban.

According to Gabriela, Pueblos publicly admitted to taking Cabonce in his custody after a case was filed against the priest. Cabonce had earlier [denied the allegations](#).

## A serious offense

"What Bishop Pueblos clearly needs to do is surrender Father Cabonce to state authorities so he can face up to the criminal cases filed against him, and immediately start the accused priest's trial under the Church Tribunal," Linaban added.

The alleged victim, who was a scholar of Cabonce's in exchange of her services as a domestic helper in his parish, alleged that the priest molested and consequently raped her in February and March this year at the Saint Anne Parish in the town of Tubay.

The girl, who is known only as Leah, is now under Gabriela's custody. The group helped her file charges of rape, acts of lasciviousness and child abuse against the priest.

"Beyond the fact that Leah's case puts an enormous effect on the Church, rape —more so against a minor — is a serious offense that neither Church nor State should cover up and deny justice where it is due. For Leah and many other girl and women victims of rape in this country and elsewhere, justice should know no age, stature or religion," Linaban said. —

**BC/VS, GMA News**

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