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Archdiocese threatens to sue over sex claim



ucanews.com staff, Manila

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Archbishop Leonardo Legaspi of Caceres

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A Philippine archdiocese has threatened to sue for defamation over accusations that one of its priests sexually assaulted a teenage boy. "The accused priest and the Archdiocese of Caceres vehemently deny the said accusation," Leonardo Legaspi of the [Archdiocese of Caceres](#), south of Manila, said. "We are saddened by the fact that this false and malicious accusation is being made at the time when our priests are having their annual clergy retreat," he added. An archdiocesan investigation found that a

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complaint filed against Monsignor Peter Berina for allegedly molesting the boy was based on allegation that the perpetrator used a car with a similar number plate to the priest's. Monsignor Berina's driver, however, admitted that he used the priest's car without permission when he entered a motel with a female companion on the date and time of the alleged sexual assault. The driver said Monsignor Berina was nowhere near the motel. "Apparently, Monsignor Berina is innocent and the accusation against him is false and fabricated," said Archbishop Legaspi in a statement. The archbishop called on the faithful "to be cautious and discerning, and ultimately take the side of the truth." Related reports [Priests urged to behave prudently amid scandals](#) [Cardinal vows to end clergy sex abuse](#)

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