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NEWS

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Agusan Norte Catholic priest denies charges of rape

Published July 6, 2011 8:47am

BUTUAN CITY — The Catholic priest in Agusan del Norte accused of raping a 17-year-old working student in Tubay town denied on Tuesday the allegations, saying his detractors should investigate first the family background of the girl. In a radio interview, Fr. Raul Cabonce, the parish priest of Tubay, said "I categorically deny allegations of rape hurled against me... please check the background of the family of the victim first before judging me." The alleged victim, who was working in Cabonce's convent in exchange for her studies, claimed the priest raped her in February and March this year. Interviewed by Bombo Radyo, Cabonce insisted his detractors made up the accusations against him. *"Buhat-buhat ni nila [detractors] ang mga alegasyon batok nako... wa ko mang-rape,"* he said. Women's group Gabriela-Caraga Region chapter, together with the Missionary Sisters of Mary, is helping the victim in making known her complaint. Last Tuesday morning, Gabriela confirmed in a broadcast on dxBC the girl's complaint. The girl and her family are now in the protective custody of Gabriela, said the group's secretary general Atel Hijos. In interviews on Friday and Saturday on dxBR Bombo Radyo Butuan, the victim explained how she was raped (<http://www.gmanews.tv/story/225105/regions/17-year-old-girl-in-agusan-norte-accuses-catholic-priest-of-rape>) by Cabonce on February 3 and on March 14. She alleged that on Feb. 3, Cabonce ordered her to massage him and then the priest requested for oral sex. The victim said that after she refused to give in to the request, Cabonce raped her. Moreover, the victim said that on March 14, Cabonce called her again and ordered her to massage him. Again, the priest raped her. She claimed that in September last year, she told her parents that the suspect had begun to caress her and touch her private parts. She said her mother advised her then to take care of herself as it was unwise to stop her studies in the middle of the school year just to avoid the priest, who earlier offered to send her to school if she would agree to work at his convent in Tubay. "We are still on the process of preparing two counts of rape and one count of acts of lasciviousness criminal cases against Fr. Cabonce," Gabriela's Hijos said. Fr. Raul Cabonce in an interview on Bombo Radyo Butuan on Tuesday alleged the

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sisters of the victim were all victims of rape and that people of Las Nieves town, where used to be parish priest before transferring to Tubay, knew the background of the victim's family. Cabonce, however, did not elaborate on the matter. **â€” Ben Serrano/LBG, GMA News**

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