Ex-cop faces trial for raping children

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A former officer with the police’s child protection unit in the southern French city of Marseille will face trial on Monday for allegedly raping and sexually abusing Filipino street children.  
  
The 46-year-old ex-policeman, who has been in custody for four years, was arrested after the head of a youth shelter reported that a 17-year-old resident, a rape victim, had been receiving inappropriate late-night messages from the lead officer on his case.  
  
Marseille prosecutors launched an investigation and raided the policeman’s home in June 2021, where they seized thousands of child pornography images.  
  
The probe led them to the Philippines, where the man travelled each year as head of the French branch of a charity helping street children in the capital, Manila.  
  
Two Filipino orphan boys, aged 12 and 15, told investigators the man had paid the equivalent of a few dozen euros (dollars) in exchange for sex on a piece of wasteland and then at his apartment.  
  
“This was a Machiavellian scheme — an unprecedented modus operandi in which someone presents themselves as an ambassador for child protection,” said Celine Astolfe, lawyer for France’s Foundation for Childhood, a plaintiff at the trial.  
  
Four other child protection charities are also plaintiffs.  
  
The criminal trial, held in the southern city of Aix-en-Provence, is due to conclude on Thursday.