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Criminal Investigation of Former Papal Nuncio Moves to Next Stage (2597)

Jozef Wesolowski, the former nuncio to the Dominican Republic, remains under house arrest at the Vatican.

BY CNA/EWTN NEWS 12/04/2014 Comments (7)

VATICAN CITY — The Vatican's press officer provided an update on the trial of laicized former nuncio Jozef Wesolowski, saying that the case is moving forward, and the first stages of investigation and questioning have begun.

"Regarding the situation of Msgr. Wesolowski, I can say that the judiciary of the state of Vatican City, continuing investigations, made a first interrogation of the accused, of which others will follow," Father Federico Lombardi said in a Dec. 2 statement.

Wesolowski, 66, was laicized earlier this year, after being accused of having paid for sex with minors while nuncio to the Dominican Republic. In September, he was placed under house arrest, rather than being jailed in Vatican City's prison, due to poor health.

In his statement, Father Lombardi explained that because the deadline for the former nuncio's preventive custody has passed, and due to his poor health, Wesolowski is authorized to have "a certain freedom of movement," but must remain within the Vatican city state and have limited external communication.

The Vatican spokesman also revealed that professor Gian Piero Milano, promoter of justice for the Vatican City State Tribunal, met with Francisco Dominguez Brito, the Dominican Republic's attorney general.

Brito requested the meeting during a trip to Europe for contacts in Poland and in the Vatican, Father Lombardi said, noting that the meeting comes "in the context of international cooperation at a level of investigative bodies for proceedings against Msgr. Wesolowski and to the investigation under way."

The meeting between Milano and Brito "was useful for both parties, given the complexity of the investigation and the possibility of an international "rogatory" (formal letter of request for judicial assistance) by the Vatican to acquire further information."

Brito met with Pope Francis Dec. 3 and said that the Pope had emphasized that the truth must prevail, according to The Associated Press.

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Jozef Wesolowski, former nuncio to the Dominican Republic

— CNA file photo

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Wesolowski's house arrest is linked to the opening of a criminal trial being held against him in Vatican City. He was summoned by a Vatican prosecutor and informed of the criminal charges he faces.

In June 2014, Vatican officials ruled that Wesolowski was guilty of accusations that arose in late 2013 stating the former nuncio had engaged in sexual misconduct, which had previously led him to resign from the position of nuncio to the Dominican Republic on Aug. 21, 2013.

After the printing of the original accusations, a 13-year-old boy came forward with further allegations that Wesolowski had solicited him for sexual favors in exchange for money.

The nuncio was then taken into protective custody by Dominican Republic officials.

After the guilty verdict, the Vatican ruled that Wesolowski would be laicized, a serious canonical penalty that renders one unable to celebrate the sacraments.

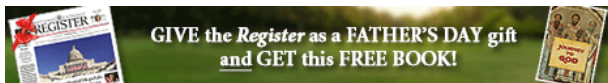
Though there is no extradition treaty between the Vatican and the Dominican Republic, Vatican officials expressed their willingness to hand over Wesolowski to civil authorities in the Dominican Republic.

In August 2014, Father Lombardi clarified that, as the nuncio had been removed from his post, he no longer has diplomatic immunity.

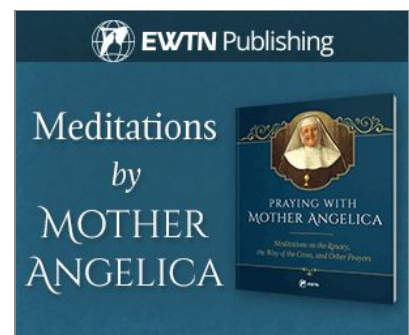
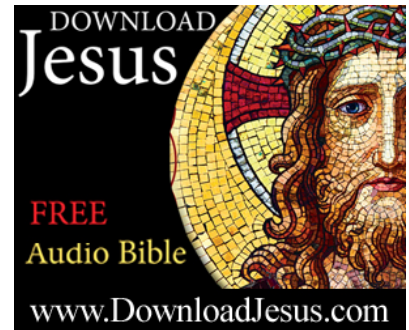
Father Lombardi stressed that the Vatican, "from the very first moments that this case was made known to them, moved without delay and correctly in light of the fact that former nuncio Wesolowski held the position of a diplomatic representative of the Holy See," particularly in recalling the former nuncio to Rome for canonical trial.

He added that the recall of Wesolowski to the Vatican for trial "demonstrates the full and direct undertaking of the Holy See's responsibility even in such a serious and delicate case," saying that the case is one that Pope Francis "wishes to address justly and rigorously."

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