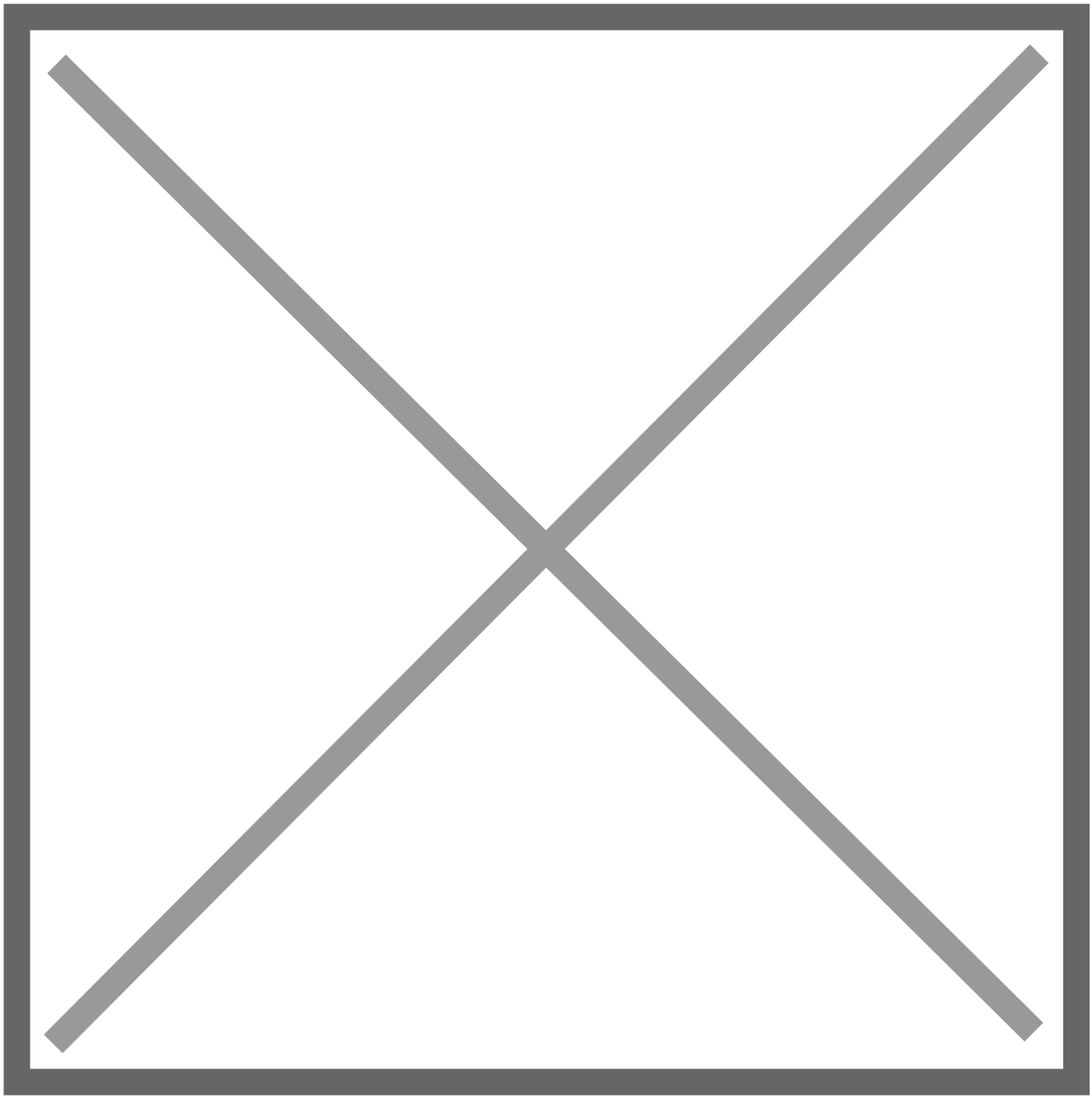
Vatican
News



An LGBTQ flag is seen in this illustration photo. (CNS photo/Denis Balibouse, Reuters)

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Milan, Italy — June 22, 2021
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The Vatican has formally opposed a proposed Italian law expanding anti-discrimination protections to the LGBT community, a leading Italian newspaper reported Tuesday. Activists immediately denounced the move as "unprecedented" Vatican meddling in Italy's legislative process.

The Vatican foreign minister, Archbishop Paul Gallagher, sent a letter last week to the Italian ambassador to the Holy See saying the proposed law violates Italy’s diplomatic agreement with the Vatican and seeking changes, the Milan-based daily Corriere della Sera reported.

Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni confirmed that a diplomatic communication had been sent on June 17 but did not elaborate.

According to Corriere, the Vatican's objections include parts of the law that would require schools as well as Catholic schools to organize activities on a day designated nationally to fight homophobia and transphobia.

Italian politicians and advocacy groups reacted strongly to what they saw as an attempt to derail the Zan Law, named for the Democratic Party lawmaker and gay rights activist Alessandro Zan. In the past, the Vatican has objected to Italian laws legalizing abortion and divorce and backed unsuccessful referendums after the fact to try to repeal them.

The proposed law adds women and people who are gay, transgender or have disabilities to the classes of those protected under a law banning discrimination and punishing hate crimes. It was approved by the lower house last November, but remains stalled in a Senate commission by objections from Italy’s right wing.

"We support the Zan law, and naturally we are open to dialogue,"’ on any legal issues, Democratic Party leader Enrico Letta told RAI state radio Tuesday. But he said his party wants to see the law enacted, calling it "a law of civilization."

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An atheist group in Italy protested the Vatican’s actions, saying they "violated the independence and the sovereignty of the Republic."

"The government has the political and moral obligation to not only just resist pressure but to unilaterally denounce this unprecedented interference in state affairs,’" the secretary of the Union of Atheists and Agnostic Rationalists, Roberto Grendene, said in a statement.

A gay-rights group, Gay Party for LGBT+ Rights, called on Premier Mario Draghi's government to reject the Vatican’s interference "and improve the law so that it truly has, at its heart, the fight against homophobia and transphobia."

"We find worrying the Vatican meddling in the law against homophobia," said the group’s spokesman, Fabrizio Marrazzo.

Marrazzo said Gay Pride Parades in Milan and Rome on Saturday would send a clear message from the streets on the topic "and defend the laicity of the state."