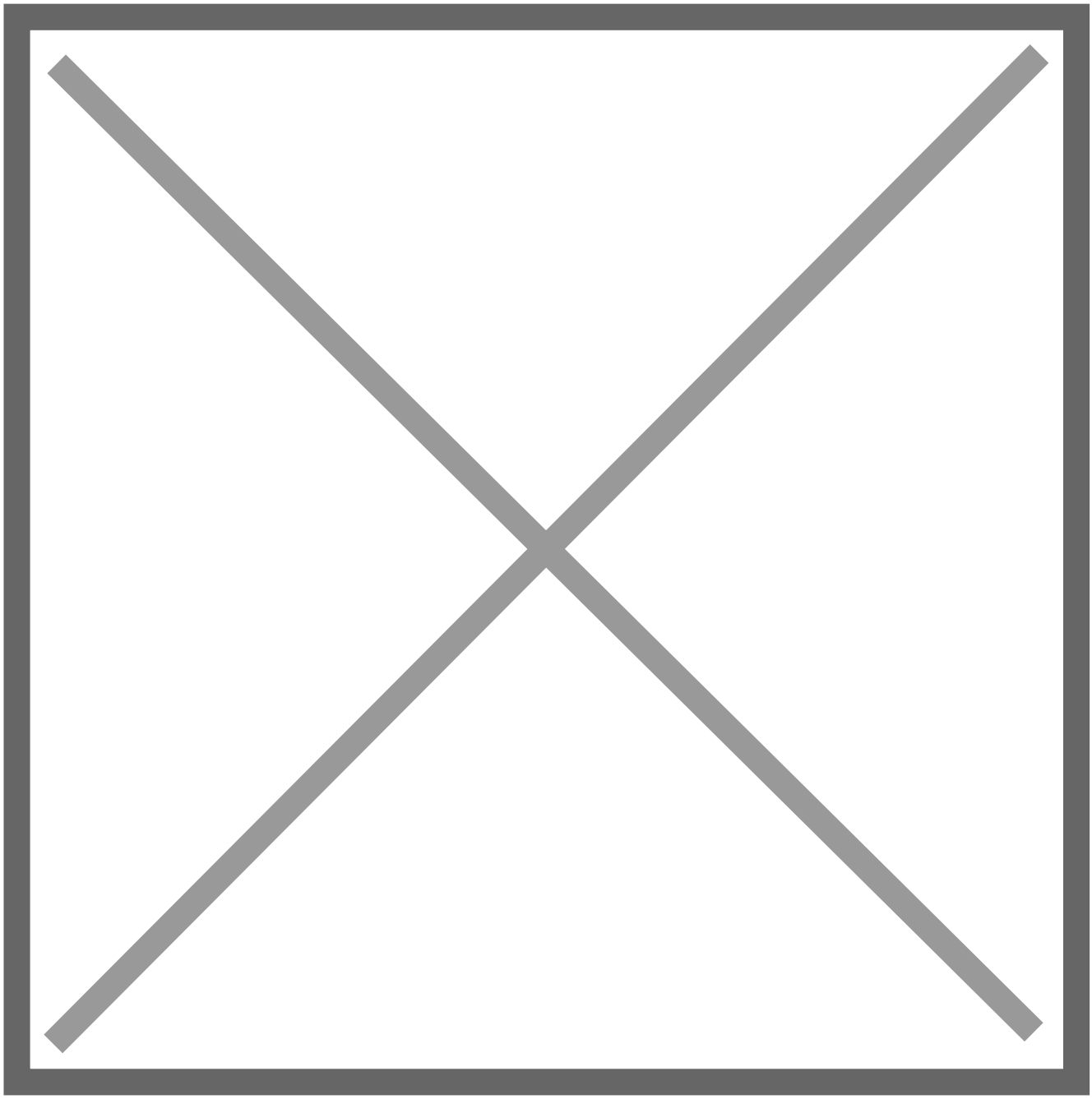
Vatican
News



Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, speaks at the United Nations in New York in this Sept. 27, 2019, file photo. (CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz)

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Milan, Italy — June 25, 2021
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The Vatican's Secretary of State attempted to tamp down controversy June 24 over a Vatican diplomatic communication to Italy, saying the Holy See was not trying to block passage of a law that would extend additional protections from discrimination to the LGBT community.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican’s No. 2, told Vatican News that he personally approved the diplomatic communication, which was intended to express concerns over the proposed Italian legislation. The Vatican is against any "attitude or gesture of intolerance or hatred toward people motivated by sexual orientations," he added.

The chief concern, Parolin said, is that "vagaries" in the text of the proposed law could expose anyone expressing an opinion about "any possible distinction between man and woman" to prosecution.

The letter, which has been published by Italian media, claims specifically that the law would violate a landmark treaty establishing diplomatic ties between Italy and the Vatican by putting at risk the right of Roman Catholics to freely express themselves. It cited as an example a clause that would require Catholic schools, along with their public counterparts, to run activities on a designated day against homophobia and transphobia.

The law would add women, gay people, trans people and people with disabilities, to those protected by a law banning discrimination and punishing hate crimes. The lower house of parliament passed the legislation in November, but it has been stalled in the Senate by right-wing concerns that it would limit freedom of expression.

Right-wing leader Matteo Salvini, for example, has complained that anyone saying that a family is formed with a man and a woman would be exposed to possible prosecution.

Backers of the law have dismissed such concerns, saying that the threshold for prosecution is inciting hatred or violence against the protected classes.

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Premier Mario Draghi on Wednesday rebuffed the Vatican’s attempt at influencing the legislative process, telling parliament: "Italy is a secular state."

But the controversy has ignited outrage over Vatican meddling, with many calling for the cancellation of the so-called Lateran Treaty, originally established under fascism and revised in the 1980s, establishing diplomatic ties between the Vatican and predominantly Roman Catholic Italy.

LGBT activists have vowed to transform Gay Pride events in Rome and Milan on Saturday into protests against what they say is the Vatican's unprecedented interference in the Italian legislative process.

In decades past, the Vatican objected to Italian laws legalizing abortion and divorce and backed unsuccessful referendums after the fact to try to repeal them.