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A marble statue depicts a naked man and two smaller men wrapped in snakes

The statue of Laocoön and His Sons is seen in the Vatican Museums in this file photo from Nov. 21, 2007. The sculpture was the target of an August 2022 protest to draw attention to climate change. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)



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The Vatican's criminal court ordered two climate activists to pay more than $30,000 in damages after they glued themselves to an ancient sculpture in the Vatican Museums to draw attention to the effects of climate change.

The activists, Guido Viero, 62, and Ester Goffi, 26, were tried at the Vatican for an August 2022 protest in which they glued their hands to the base of the statue of Laocoön and His Sons, a sculpture believed to date back to the first century B.C.

Found guilty June 12, the Vatican judges sentenced them to jointly pay 28,148 euros (about $30,270) in damages.

They also were sentenced to nine months in prison, but the sentence was suspended if they commit no further crimes in the Vatican in the next five years. Viero and Goffi also were ordered to pay a fine of 1,620 euro ($1,740) each while a third activist, who filmed the protest, was ordered to pay a 120 euro ($130) fine; the fines also were suspended, but all three were ordered to pay court fees for the trial.

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The two activists held up a banner that read "No Gas and No Coal" during the protest and showed the logo of the Last Generation environmental group, which organizes civil disobedience protests.

The Associated Press reported that during the trial's first hearing May 24 Viero expressed that the protest was meant to draw media attention to the urgency of acting against climate change and that he was not ashamed of his actions since he was fighting for the survival of future generations.

Goffi, who holds two degrees in art conservation, said she had consulted with restoration professionals to ensure they would not damage the priceless sculpture, but the head of the Vatican Museum's marble restoration laboratory said that the corrosive adhesive used to glue the activists' hands to the sculpture resulted in permanent, exterior damage to its base, which has since been covered.