Vatican

Vatican News



People hold pictures of missing girl Emanuela Orlandi during a sit-in in St.Peter's Square as Pope Francis, at the window of his studio in background, recites the Angelus noon prayer, at the Vatican, Sunday, June 25, 2023. The pope in his speech remembered the 40th anniversary of the disappearance of Emanuela Orlandi, the 15-year-old daughter of a lay employee of the Holy See, that vanished June 22, 1983, after leaving her family's Vatican City apartment to go to a music lesson in Rome. (AP Photo/Andrew Medichini)

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Rome — June 28, 2023

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Italy’s Parliament is poised to open a bicameral commission of inquiry into the disappearance of the teenage daughter of a Vatican employee, the third new investigation launched in the four decades since Emanuela Orlandi vanished on the streets of Rome.

The Senate’s Constitutional Affairs Committee on June 27 unanimously approved setting up the inquest, and full Senate approval is now expected. The Chamber of Deputies, the Italian Parliament's lower house, gave its go ahead earlier.

Separately, Vatican and Rome prosecutors both recently reopened their investigations in the case.

Orlandi vanished 40 years ago last week, on June 22, 1983, after leaving her family’s Vatican City apartment to go to a music lesson in Rome. Her father was a lay employee of the Holy See. Theories over the years have linked her disappearance at age 15 to everything from the plot to kill St. John Paul II, a financial scandal involving the Vatican bank and Rome’s criminal underworld.

The family and their supporters marked the anniversary with a protest and a march to St. Peter's Square on June 25, calling for the truth about what happened to Orlandi to finally emerge. Pope Francis observed the passage of time during his Sunday noon blessing, issuing a rare papal acknowledgment of the family’s enduring pain.

"These days mark the 40th anniversary of the disappearance of Emanuela Orlandi," Francis said from his studio overlooking St. Peter's Square to Orlandi's supporters below. "I wish on this occasion to express once again my closeness to the family, especially to the mother, and to assure them of my prayers."

The lawyer for the Orlandi family, Laura Sgro, applauded June 27’s Senate committee action as a good sign and called for speedy approval by the full Senate.

"The search for truth and justice belongs to all people of good will, and today the Senate showed it wants clarity and transparency on the Emanuela case," she said.

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Sgro earlier praised Francis’ decision to speak publicly about the case and to express his solidarity with the family.

"A taboo has fallen," she said. "It wasn’t a given, and we are grateful to Pope Francis for this gesture."

Popular interest in the case was renewed last year with the four-part Netflix documentary "Vatican Girl," which explored the various scenarios suspected in Orlandi's disappearance. The documentary included new testimony from a friend who said Orlandi told her a week before she vanished that a high-ranking Vatican cleric had made sexual advances toward her.

After the documentary aired and with the 40th anniversary of her disappearance nearing, Orlandi’s family, with backing from some Italian lawmakers, pressed for a parliamentary commission of inquiry.

The Vatican prosecutor recently revealed that he had uncovered while delving into the cold case files new leads "worthy of further investigation." The prosecutor urged the lawmakers to butt out and let law enforcement do its work, but both houses of Parliament nevertheless pressed ahead with their own inquest.

The parliamentary inquiry will look into the disappearances of other young women around the same time as Orlandi went missing. The Italian Constitution allows lawmakers and senators to conduct investigations "on matters of public interest."

They used such inquests in the past to dig deeply into unresolved Mafia crimes and terrorist attacks. The inquiries are not meant to replace police investigations, but participating members of the Italian Parliament have the same powers and restrictions as members of law enforcement.