Vatican
Vatican News
An older white man wearing a suit shakes Pope Francis' hand in a room with white patterned

Pope Francis greets Libero Milone, then the Vatican's auditor general, at the Vatican April 1, 2016. Milone and his deputy sought damages from the Vatican, claiming they were forced to resign after discovering irregularities and corruption. (CNS photo/L'Osservatore Romano via Reuters)



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Vatican City — January 25, 2024
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The Vatican has ruled against its former auditor general, Libero Milone, who sued the Vatican after claiming that he and his deputy, Ferruccio Panicco, were forced to

resign from their positions without just cause in 2017.

The pair's request for 9.29 million euros ($10.1 million) in damages from the Vatican for the termination of their contracts and its detrimental impact on their reputations was denied in a ruling issued by a Vatican tribunal Jan. 25. They were ordered to pay more than 100,000 euros (about $109,000) in restitution to the Vatican.

Panicco died due to complications from a tumor in June 2023, but his estate continued the case against the Vatican and remained liable to pay the fees imposed by the court.

Milone was hired in June 2015 to be the first auditor general of a new office responsible for auditing the books of any Vatican office and would report directly to the pope. After his resignation in 2017, he publicly stated that he was forced to resign because of a campaign launched against him by opponents of Pope Francis' financial reforms.

The Vatican press office responded to the comments by saying that Milone, "going outside his competencies, illegally hired an external company to undertake investigative activities about the private lives of representatives of the Holy See."

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According to the court ruling issued late Jan. 24, Milone claimed that Cardinal Angelo Becciu, then an official in the Vatican Secretariat of State, informed him that he was under investigation for gathering confidential information about members of the Roman Curia for blackmail purposes. He said a search order was carried out against him by the Vatican gendarmes and among the documents found in his office was a document related to Becciu's pension contributions, which was provided to Milone by an outside computer recovery specialist and judged to be outside the purview of the auditor general. Milone then said that he and his deputy were both "forced to resign" in the face of threats made by Vatican police.

Milone told Reuters in 2017 that he contacted an external company because he suspected his computer had been tampered with, and that the company found that his computer had been the target of unauthorized access and that spyware had been installed on his secretary's computer.

The Vatican ruling said the Secretariat of State was not culpable for the claims presented by Milone and Panicco and that Becciu was not acting in his official capacity when speaking about or involved in the termination. It added that the attention surrounding the termination which Milone said ruined his reputation was primarily caused by his own engagement with the media.

In a separate Vatican case pending appeal, Becciu was sentenced to five years and six months in prison for his involvement in an investment deal that eventually cost the Vatican as much as $200 million.