News



Ruben Garcia, director of Annunciation House, attends a march in downtown El Paso, Texas, Jan. 7, 2023, to demand an end to the immigration policy called "Title 42" and to support the rights of migrants coming to the border. Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton's office said May 8, 2024, it filed an application for a temporary injunction against Annunciation House, accusing it of "systemic criminal conduct in Texas," including facilitating illegal border crossings or concealing "illegally present aliens from law enforcement." Annunciation House's lawyer said those are false allegations. (OSV News/Paul Ratje, Reuters)

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El Paso, Texas — May 10, 2024
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Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton revived his attempt to shut down El Paso's Annunciation House, a Catholic nonprofit serving migrants, just a couple of months after his previous effort was blocked by a state judge.

Paxton's office said May 8 it filed an application for a temporary injunction against Annunciation House, accusing it of "systemic criminal conduct in Texas," including facilitating illegal border crossings or concealing "illegally present aliens from law enforcement."

Annunciation House's lawyer said those are false allegations.

In a statement, Paxton said, "Any NGO facilitating the unlawful entry of illegal aliens into Texas is undermining the rule of law and potentially jeopardizing the safety and wellbeing of our citizens."

"All NGOs who are complicit in Joe Biden's illegal immigration catastrophe and think they are above the law should consider themselves on notice," he added.

Paxton's effort to shut down Annunciation House comes as some Republican lawmakers have grown increasingly hostile toward nongovernmental organizations, including Catholic ones, that provide resources such as food and shelter to migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Paxton previously filed suit in February in an attempt to shut down Annunciation House, accusing it of "human smuggling," in a move that was denounced by Catholic immigration advocates, including El Paso Bishop Mark J. Seitz. In March, District Judge Francisco Dominguez in El Paso issued an order blocking Paxton's subpoena of Annunciation House, finding both that Paxton's effort seemed politically motivated and that it must go through appropriate due process in

the state court system.

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Jerome Wesevich, a lawyer for Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, which is representing Annunciation House, called Paxton's latest effort "all heat and no light."

"The Court set forth an orderly process for deciding this case, and Annunciation House intends to follow that process so that Annunciation House and other non-profits have a clear statement of their rights and responsibilities when the Attorney General serves them with subpoenas," Wesevich said in a statement.

In its press statement, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid said Paxton "accompanied his filing today with a vicious press release restating the false accusations he made against Annunciation House in early February."

"What matters here is what the Court does, not what the Attorney General says," Wesevich said. "While the Attorney General drums up attention to his false claims, Annunciation House continues to serve refugees as the law allows and as the Gospel commands."

Spokespersons for the Diocese of El Paso and Annunciation House did not immediately respond to OSV News' requests for comment.

Annunciation House operates several shelters in the El Paso area, helping migrants and refugees with food, housing and other assistance, as well as providing information about how to fill out the required legal documents to seek asylum in the U.S.