Vatican
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Italian Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, then apostolic nuncio to the United States, is seen at tl

Italian Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, then apostolic nuncio to the United States, is seen at the Vatican in a Oct. 20, 2011, file photo. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)



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The disgraced former papal nuncio to the United States, Italian Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, announced that he has been charged with schism by the Vatican's doctrinal office, after a six-year rogue period in which he called for Pope Francis to resign and labeled him a "false prophet."

On June 20, the archbishop posted on his own website a two-page decree from the Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith ordering him to appear for a trial regarding "public statements that show a denial of points necessary for the preservation of communion with the Catholic Church."

The decree is dated June 11 and is signed by Msgr. John Kennedy, secretary of the doctrinal office's disciplinary section, requesting that Viganò present himself on June 20 at 15:30 to formally receive the accusation and evidence against him.

In 2018, Viganò penned an 11-page letter alleging a widespread Vatican cover-up of allegations against ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick and called on Francis to resign. Since then, many of the claims he alleged have been discredited, but the Italian archbishop has become something of a hero to some right-wing Catholics for his support of former U.S. President Donald Trump, opposition to the COVID-19 vaccines, spreading of Q-Anon conspiracy theories, and his outright rejection of the Second Vatican Council.

While many mainstream Catholics have dismissed the former Vatican diplomat, he has continued to use his website and social media to promote his radicalized views, with his posts being shared by high-profile individuals such as Trump and being widely promoted within certain pockets of the U.S. Catholic Church.

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In the weeks following Viganò's 2018 attack against Francis, many bishops' conferences around the globe issued statements specifically denouncing the former nuncio. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops did not and more than two dozen U.S. bishops issued statements of support for Viganò at the time.

In October 2021, Cardinal Marc Ouellet, the then-head of the Vatican's Congregation for Bishops, penned a fiery response to Viganò charging him with carrying out a "political frame job" and labeling his actions as "extremely immoral."

More recently, in 2022, Italy's military chaplain, Archbishop Santo Marciano, published an open letter to Viganò condemning his spread of conspiracy theories.

In his June 20 blog post, Viganò said he considered the charges brought against him to be an "honor," adding that Vatican II is a "moral and liturgical cancer of which the Bergoglian 'synodal church' is a necessary metastasis."

A representative from the Vatican's doctrinal office did not immediately respond to NCR's request for comment. The decree states that if Viganò remains unresponsive through June 28, he will be sentenced in absentia.

According to the church's Code of Canon Law, the charge of schism is punishable by excommunication.

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