Vatican
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A crucifix is seen near a paper-covered mosaic of Father Marko Rupnik July 23, 2024, in the Luminous Mysteries Chapel at the St. John Paul II National Shrine in Washington. (OSV News/Mihoko Owada)

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Vatican City — June 11, 2025
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In a quiet but powerful move, Vatican News has begun removing artwork by Fr. Marko Rupnik — the once-renowned mosaicist now accused of abusing over two dozen women — from its website. His mosaics, long used to mark major feast days online, were recently replaced or left blank — a shift many survivors say is long overdue.

The removed mosaics include one for the June 9 memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, and one that illustrated the feast of the Assumption Aug. 15.

"I can't tell you how hopeful of a sign it is for me," said Weronika, whose name was changed and who is a victim of abuse by a Polish Dominican priest.

"I saw it immediately and simply felt relieved," she told OSV News, adding: "you don't even know how much this gesture means to me. That the victims' pain was heard at last."

Since the allegations were revealed, calls to remove the priest's artwork have grown, including from victims who said the mosaics were a painful reminder of the abuse they suffered. One victim, identified as Sr. Samuelle, recounted that she was abused by Rupnik while installing one of his mosaics.

A number of shrines that featured his work have taken steps to either cover or limit the public display and use of Rupnik's mosaics since the abuse revelations were made public. The St. John Paul II National Shrine in Washington as well as the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary in the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes, France, opted to cover or partially cover the mosaics out of respect for his victims.

OSV News asked the Vatican's Press Office whether removing Rupnik's art from Vatican News is a coordinated effort and is awaiting an answer.

Mosaics to be or not to be?

In June 2024, on the final day of the Catholic Media Conference in Atlanta, the prefect of the Vatican's Dicastery for Communication addressed questions posed by America's Colleen Dulle and OSV News about the dicastery's regular practice of posting art by Rupnik on the Vatican News website and social media, especially to illustrate church feast days.

"As Christian(s), we are asked not to judge," Paolo Ruffini said to a room full of communications professionals after giving an address at the CMC June 21, 2024. He explained that while the process of a Vatican investigation into Rupnik is still ongoing, "an anticipation of a decision is something that is not, in our opinion, is not good."

"There are things we don't understand," he said. Ruffini also added they "did not put in any new photos" of Rupnik's art, but rather have been using what they had. "We didn't decide what was not on our charge to decide," he said.

Removing Rupnik's art from public space "is not a Christian response," Ruffini said. "We are not talking about abuse of minors," Ruffini said at the CMC. "We are talking (about) a story that we don't know."

"I don't think we have to throw stones thinking that this is the way of healing," the prefect added.

"Do you think that if I put away a photo of an art (away) from … our website, I will be more close to the victims? Do you think so?" he pressed journalists at the end of his answer. When an answer was given in the affirmative, Ruffini responded: "I think you're wrong."

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Five days later, in a separate June 26 communication, Cardinal Seán O'Malley of Boston, president of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, told the dicasteries of the Vatican Curia that Rupnik is currently under Vatican investigation and entitled to the presumption of innocence.

However, he made clear that "pastoral prudence would prevent displaying artwork in a way that could imply either exoneration or a subtle defense" of a person alleged to have committed abuse, "or indicate indifference to the pain and suffering of so many

victims of abuse."

Fr. Rupnik's case investigated for over 500 days

Rupnik, a former Jesuit, was briefly excommunicated by the church in 2020 for absolving an Italian novice with whom he had sex. The excommunication was lifted after he repented.

The Jesuits disclosed in December 2022 that it had suspended the Slovenian artist after allegations of abuse had surfaced. In June 2023, Rupnik was expelled from the Jesuits for refusing to obey restrictions imposed upon him related to the sexual, spiritual and psychological abuse of some two dozen women and at least one man over the course of 30 years.

Despite the credibility of the accusations and his dismissal from the Jesuits, the Diocese of Koper in the priest's native Slovenia announced it had incardinated Rupnik in its diocese.

After the diocese confirmed in October 2023 that the priest had been there since August, the Vatican announced that Pope Francis had lifted the statute of limitations, allowing the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith to proceed in its investigation and eventual case.

In a statement published in October 2023, the Vatican said the decision was made after "the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors brought to the pope's attention that there were serious problems in the handling of the Father Marko Rupnik case and lack of outreach to victims."

The canonical process of Rupnik is ongoing. "The sentence is expected in the not too distant future," a source told OSV News in March.

Meanwhile, the retired bishop of the Diocese of Koper, where Rupnik was incardinated in August 2023, told OSV News in February that the priest "continues his work all over the world."

Rupnik's case is one of the most urgent cases on the table for the new pope to handle in canonical terms, abuse experts say.

Jesuit Fr. Hans Zollner, director of the Institute of Anthropology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, and a top expert on the abuse crisis, told OSV News

upon the election of Pope Leo XIV: "I do hope that, as soon as possible, we will have a verdict. Many of us are looking forward to hearing about that, because it has been a very long time, especially for those who have brought forward the allegations — so that finally there will be clarity about this," Zollner said.

For any pope, he added, the issue of abuse is critical, as it becomes "a question of the credibility of our existence and our message."