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Vatican says gay opponents are victims, too

by Francis X. Rocca by Religion News Service

VATICAN CITY -- A Vatican official told a United Nations body March 22 that people who openly object to homosexual behavior are at risk of losing their human rights when they are prosecuted or stigmatized for their beliefs.

"People are being attacked for taking positions that do not support sexual behavior between people of the same sex," said Archbishop Silvano M. Tomasi, the Vatican's representative to the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva.

"When they express their moral beliefs or beliefs about human nature, which may also be expressions of religious convictions, or state opinions about scientific claims, they are stigmatized, and worse—they are vilified, and prosecuted," Tomasi said.

"The truth is, these attacks are violations of fundamental human rights, and cannot be justified under any circumstances."

In his statement, Tomasi said the Vatican "condemn(ed) all violence that is targeted against people because of their sexual feelings and thoughts, or sexual behaviors." The Vatican also rejects all legal discrimination "based just on the person's feelings and thoughts, including sexual thoughts and feelings."

But the Vatican envoy said that there is an international "consensus between societies that certain kinds of sexual behaviors must be forbidden by law," citing pedophilia and incest as examples.

In 2008, the Vatican's delegation to the U.N. General Assembly called for an "end to all criminal penalties" against "homosexual persons," but voted against a proposed U.N. gay rights declaration that it called vague and excessively far-reaching.

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