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The Vatican in 2018 bought this building at 60 Sloane Avenue in the Chelsea neighborhood in London as an investment after first owning a partial stake in the property. The entrance to the building is pictured in 2012. (CNS photo/courtesy Marcin Mazur)

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Italy's supreme court has faulted prosecutors for withholding evidence benefiting the key suspect in the Vatican's fraud and embezzlement trial in a parallel case in the Italian courts.

The Court of Cassation ordered the Tribunal of Review to consider that evidence before deciding whether to uphold an international arrest warrant for Gianluigi Torzi, a London-based Italian broker who is wanted in both Italy and the Vatican for alleged financial crimes.

The Cassation [annulled the warrant in October](#) but the reasons for the decision were only released on Saturday. The court agreed with Torzi's lawyers that Italian prosecutors had failed to turn over his defense evidence to the judge who initially authorized the arrest warrant in March.

When Torzi's lawyers appealed the warrant to the Tribunal of Review, the appeals judges should have considered whether Torzi's missing defense materials provided a "decisive" weight in his favor, the Cassation judges wrote. The Tribunal of Review upheld the arrest warrant in June without making that evaluation.

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The case in Italy was launched after Vatican prosecutors had already been investigating Torzi for his role in the Vatican's bungled 350 million-euro investment in a London residential property. Vatican prosecutors have accused Torzi of trying to extort the Vatican of 15 million euros to turn over full ownership of the property. Torzi says the case is the fruit of misunderstandings.

The Vatican tribunal indicted him in July, but his status in the trial has been in limbo because of the extradition proceedings between Italy and Britain and the legitimacy of the Italian arrest warrant that launched them. The Vatican doesn't have an extradition treaty with Britain.

In a statement Saturday, Torzi's lawyer, Marco Franco, said the ruling appears to allow the Tribunal for Review the space “to make a new, comprehensive evaluation” of the case. He said Torzi hoped for a “more serene attitude by prosecutors toward the search for truth without being deprived of his freedom.”

The Vatican case has been [beset by procedural errors by Vatican prosecutors](#) that resulted in the voiding of several of the charges. Defense lawyers say the errors have deprived their clients of their rights; the Holy See [insists those rights are being respected](#).

While Vatican prosecutors have [scored some wins](#), there have been other rulings outside the Vatican that have faulted both the conduct of Vatican prosecutors and Italian prosecutors acting on their behalf. They include rulings that have voided the legitimacy of Vatican-ordered searches in Italy and [the Vatican-requested arrest and detention of another Italian suspect](#).

In addition, a British court ruled last year that Vatican prosecutors made [“appalling” misrepresentations and omissions](#) in their request to seize Torzi’s assets, and ordered the money released.

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