



Pope Francis puts on a skull cap he was just presented with as he walks by a placard in Italian reading : "Today is my birthday", at the end of his weekly general audience in the Paul VI Hall at the Vatican, Wednesday, Feb. 02, 2022. (AP Photo/Gregorio Borgia)

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ROME — An Italian appeals court has definitively annulled the arrest warrant for the prime suspect in the Vatican's big fraud and embezzlement trial, signaling an end to extradition procedures in Britain, his legal team said Wednesday.

The decision by Rome's Tribunal of Review is a blow to Italian prosecutors but also Vatican prosecutors, who had been trying to bring Gianluigi Torzi back to Italy to eventually stand trial in the Vatican for his role in the Holy See's [costly London real estate deal](#).

The Vatican doesn't have an extradition treaty with Britain. But the city state's prosecutors had provided evidence to their Italian counterparts who launched their own investigation into Torzi's finances, alleging tax evasion, money laundering and other alleged crimes, and [sought his arrest on an international warrant](#) to stand trial in Italy.

The London-based Torzi denies wrongdoing in both the Italian and Vatican cases, which will nevertheless proceed in his absence.

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The case in Italy was launched after Vatican prosecutors had already been investigating Torzi for his role in the Holy See'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.

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.

Italy's highest court, the Court of Cassation, had annulled the warrant in October and sent the case back to the Tribunal for Review after Torzi's lawyers appealed. In its sentence released last month, the Cassation found that [Italian prosecutors hadn't provided full documentation](#) beneficial to Torzi's defense when the judge was deciding whether to issue the warrant. After evaluating that missing evidence, the Review Tribunal annulled the warrant, said a statement from Torzi's lawyers Marco Franco and Ambra Giovene.

"Finally justice has been done concerning an arrest warrant that had no juridical or logical sense," the statement said.

They said they would now fight both the Italian and the Vatican cases "with the necessary serenity."

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