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Dominican official to investigate claims of sexual abuse against nuncio

Ezra Fieser Catholic News Service | Sep. 4, 2013
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The Dominican Republic's top prosecutor said Wednesday he plans to investigate claims of sexual abuse allegedly committed by the apostolic nuncio to the Dominican Republic, just a day after the Vatican confirmed its own investigation into the allegations.

Archbishop Jozef Wesolowski, appointed as nuncio in 2008, was removed from the post Aug. 21. A Dominican bishop confirmed in early September that the dismissal was due to the sexual abuse scandal unfolding in the Caribbean country.

Days after Wesolowski's removal, a television news program aired allegations that he had paid for sex with minors and was connected to a Polish priest accused of sexually assaulting at least 14 underage boys.

The program, Nuria, claimed Wesolowski regularly visited Santo Domingo's historic center, where he allegedly drank alcohol and paid for sex with underage boys in an abandoned monument nearby.

Attorney General Francisco Dominguez Brito said he plans to open an investigation, although it was unclear if he had legal jurisdiction over the case since it involves a diplomatic representative.

These are "serious allegations which involve children and adolescents who appear to have been abused, violating both their physical and psychological integrity," Dominguez said in a statement. "I can ensure that the prosecution is not going to cease."

Dominguez said prosecutors are already investigating the priest, Fr. Alberto Gil Nojache, and have interviewed two of the alleged victims. Gil was suspended from active ministry in May.

Neither Wesolowski nor Gil could be reached for comment.

Dominguez's announcement followed news that the Vatican had previously opened its own investigation into the matter.

Initially, the Vatican did not state why Wesolowski, 65, had been removed from his position. But the Vatican spokesman, Jesuit Fr. Federico Lombardi told Spanish news agency EFE on Tuesday that the Vatican had been investigating claims of Wesolowski's ties to sexual abuse.

Wesolowski arrived in the country in January 2008 and also served as apostolic delegate to neighboring Puerto Rico. He drew praise from Cardinal Nicolas Lopez Rodriguez of Santo Domingo, who called him a "great friend and promoter of peace" as recently as Aug. 27.

The cardinal's press office said it had no comment on the claims against Wesolowski and that Lopez had no immediate plans to make a statement on the situation.

Msgr. Agripino Nunez Collado, rector of Mother and Teacher Pontifical Catholic University in Santiago, however, called for Wesolowski to be investigated and prosecuted.

"When there are these types of situations, justice must be done," Nunez told members of the press. "A person can have his weaknesses ... but these abuses, with minors, with boys, this is unforgiveable."

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