



Poland's Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki speaks as he take parts in a joint press conference with Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, after a meeting in the Prime Minister's Office, in Copenhagen, Denmark, Thursday Feb. 23, 2023. (Liselotte Sabroe/Ritzau Scanpix via AP)

by The Associated Press

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Poland's prime minister on March 8 stepped in to defend the good name of St. John Paul II, a "great fellow-countryman," following claims that he knew of sex abuse of minors by priests under his authority while archbishop in Poland and sought to conceal it.

The report aired this week on TVN24 struck at a highly respected figure in the predominantly Roman Catholic country. It provoked a mixed response, especially as some of the documentation it quoted came from the files of the communist-era secret security service that had been seeking to compromise the church.

Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, a Catholic, said in a video statement posted on his social media that proof cited against the late pontiff is "very dubious." He also claimed the issue was raised by circles that want to wage a "cultural war" against Poles and turn their lives upside down.

Karol Wojtyla served as archbishop of Krakow, southern Poland, from 1964 to 1978, when he became Pope John Paul II. He died in 2005 and was declared a saint in 2014 following a fast-tracked process.

Morawiecki, whose right-wing government has close ties with Poland's Catholic church, stressed the late pope's role in democratic change in his native country in the 1980s that also inspired other nations in then communist-controlled Central and Eastern Europe.

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"The list of John Paul's II merits for the world and for Poland is inexhaustible," Morawiecki said.

"I stand in the defense of our pope because I know that we owe John Paul II a lot as a nation. Perhaps we owe him everything," Morawiecki said.

His video included quotes from the pontiff's speeches and also a photo of Morawiecki's father, communist-era dissident Kornel Morawiecki, meeting John Paul II.

Poland's governing Law and Justice party is seeking to have parliament adopt a resolution this week in the former pope's defense.

In the report aired late March 6, TVN24 named three priests whom the future pope had moved among parishes or sent to a cloister during the 1970s, including one who was sent to Austria, after they were accused of abusing minors.