Vatican Responds to Criticism of Pope's Anti-Condom Remarks

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After AIDS activists decried Pope Benedict XVI's criticism of condoms while on a trip to Cameroon last month—during which he said that condom distribution "aggravates the problems" of the global epidemic, the Vatican issued a statement on April 17 in his defense, The Associated Press reports.

The statement said that Benedict's remarks were taken out of context by reporters and have been "used by some groups with a clear intent to intimidate, as if to dissuade the pope from expressing himself on certain themes of obvious moral relevance and from teaching the church's doctrine."

Dissenters include the Belgian Parliament, which passed a resolution on April 2 calling Benedict's comments "unacceptable" and demanding that the country formally protest his anti-condom stance. The resolution prompted the Vatican to respond diplomatically.

"The Vatican is responding to this protest in a measured and balanced way, but also firmly and clearly," said a Vatican spokesman, the Reverend Federico Lombardi. "We are making it clear that the pope and the church won't be intimidated by these criticisms or by media campaigns and will continue to staunchly support Catholic positions on moral issues."

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