

Polish officials investigate report that ex-nuns threaten suicide

WARSAW, Poland – Polish justice officials have ordered an investigation after a national newspaper claimed a group of defrocked Catholic nuns threatened to commit mass suicide.

“At this moment, we’ve no firm basis for thinking anyone is being incited to suicide,” Marek Wozniak, a deputy district prosecutor from Lublin, told Poland’s Catholic information agency, KAI, June 21. “But we want to interview the nuns and their families, especially people who were recently inside the convent.”

Tensions surfaced in 2005 after Sister Jadwiga Ligocka, the former mother superior of the Sisters of the Family of Bethany, claimed to have “private inspirations from the Holy Spirit.” The Vatican dismissed the superior, but she and 60 nuns and novices occupied the order’s Kazimierz convent.

Last October, a decree from the Vatican Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life expelled the nuns from the order.

Meanwhile, a local court has ordered the nuns to leave the convent, which had gas and electricity supplies cut in March. The court is expected to authorize their expulsion by bailiffs in early July.

On June 16, Poland’s Fakt daily published a letter by one of the former nuns indicating the group faced a “time of trial, of passing from darkness to light, from captivity to freedom.” The paper’s editors said in a June 21 statement they had been unable to authenticate the letter.

A Lublin police spokesman, Janusz Wojtowicz, told KAI that officials had tried to establish whether similar letters had been received by other nuns’ families.

Polish Interior Minister Janusz Kaczmarek confirmed he had discussed the situation with the country’s police chief and was trying to “avoid a possible tragedy.”