Vatican clears Canadian cardinal accused of sexual assault

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Iranians pay last respects to An inquiry ordered by Pope Francis into an allegation of sexual assault against a Canadian cardinal has found no evidence of wrongdoing, the Vatican said Tuesday.  
  
  
  
Cardinal Gerald Lacroix, the 66-year-old archbishop of Quebec and a member of the pope’s C9 advisory council, had been accused of sexually assaulting a teenage girl in the 1980s.  
  
“In the light of the facts examined by the judge, the report does not permit to identify any actions that amount to misconduct or abuse on the part of Cardinal Gerald C. Lacroix,” the Vatican said in a statement.  
  
“Consequently, no further canonical procedure is foreseen.”  
  
  
  
The claims against Lacroix date back to 1987 and 1988, when the alleged victim was 17, and are part of a class action suit against more than 100 priests in the archdiocese.  
  
Lacroix, Quebec’s archbishop since 2011 and a cardinal since 2014, denies the allegations.  
  
In January he said he would pause his duties until the situation is cleared up, but he attended a Council of Cardinals meeting at the Vatican last month.  
  
The pope, 87, had asked retired judge Andre Denis in February to assess the facts in the case and establish if there was enough evidence to warrant a canonical — or Church — trial.  
  
  
  
Denis has previously studied thousands of sexual misconduct allegations against the Church dating back to the 1940s, and authored a report that confirmed or substantiated dozens of claims.  
  
His report into Lacroix was concluded on May 6 and delivered to the pope in the days that followed, the Vatican said in its statement, which was translated into English and French, Canada’s two official languages.  
  
The Vatican said Pope Francis thanked Denis for carrying out his probe within the timeframe requested and acting “with impartiality in the context of the class action lawsuit brought against the Archdiocese of Quebec”.