

Italy's Silvio Berlusconi Barred from Public Office for Two Years



Rome, October 21 (RHC)-- An Italian court has ruled that former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, who was found guilty of tax evasion, should be barred from holding public office for two years.

The Milan court issued the verdict on Saturday for the scandal-tainted former prime minister as part of a tax fraud ruling. However, since the billionaire tycoon is currently a senator, the decision will have no immediate effect. Berlusconi's expulsion from the Senate will depend on a separate vote in the upper house of parliament, which is expected to take place in November.

Italy's Supreme Court convicted Berlusconi on August 1st of tax evasion in a final ruling, and sentenced him to one year of community service or house arrest, making it the first definitive conviction against him after dozens of trials during almost 20 years of political career.

On October 2nd, Berlusconi was forced to abandon his bid to topple Prime Minister Enrico Letta after more than 40 of his lawmakers said they would defy him and instead vote in support of the coalition government.

The confidence vote for the coalition government came after Berlusconi ordered his five ministers on September 28th to resign from the government in a dispute over his fraud conviction.

The 77-year-old former prime minister is currently appealing against other convictions, including solicitation of an underage prostitute, abuse of office and leaking a confidential police wiretap to damage a political rival.

Berlusconi, who served as Italy's prime minister from 1994 to 2011, resigned in November 2011, after coming under fire for mishandling the Italian economy.

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