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### EUROPE

# *In Turkey, Pope Francis Advocates Dialogue in Battling ‘Fanaticism’*

By SEBNEM ARSUNOV. 28, 2014



Pope Francis visited the mausoleum of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, modern Turkey’s founder, in the capital city of Ankara on Friday. CreditStoyan Nenov/Reuters

ISTANBUL — In his first visit as pope to a predominantly Muslim country, [Pope Francis](#) said in [Turkey](#) on Friday that interreligious dialogue, more than just military action, was required to combat the “fanaticism and fundamentalism” that threaten Christians and other religious minorities along the country’s southern border.

“Fanaticism and fundamentalism, as well as irrational fears, which foster misunderstanding and discrimination, need to be countered by the solidarity of all believers,” the pope said in televised remarks at President [Recep Tayyip Erdogan](#)’s official residence in Ankara.

Francis called for the people and governments of the Middle East to “reverse the trend” of violent conflict, and the 77-year-old pope said military action was not enough to suppress extremism.



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*Pope Francis Starts 3-Day Turkey Visit*

### **Pope Francis Starts 3-Day Turkey Visit**

Pope Francis thanked Turkey for being a “witness” and helping refugees as he visited the country to strengthen ties with Muslim leaders.

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An American-led coalition is carrying out assaults against the militants of the Islamic State, also known as [ISIS](#) or [ISIL](#), on [Turkey](#)’s southern borders with Iraq and Syria. Turkey has agreed to join the American-led coalition against the Islamic State but has resisted a full-fledged commitment until safe areas and a no-fly zone could be established along its borders to help contain another possible influx of refugees. Turkey has taken in at least 1.6 million so far.

The pope praised the country’s generosity in sheltering refugees, including Christians and Yazidis, and said it was the moral obligation of the international community to assist the government of Turkey in helping them. At a meeting later in the day with Mehmet Gormez, Turkey’s top cleric, at the government’s religious affairs directorate, the pope called on people of all faiths to protect the human rights of others.

“I wish to express my appreciation for everything that the Turkish people, Muslims and Christians alike, are doing to help the hundreds of thousands of people who

are fleeing their countries due to conflicts,” the pope said. “This is a clear example of how we can work together to serve others,” he added.

Throughout the day, the pope emphasized the need to focus on commonalities of faith and the value of learning from religious differences to [repair relations between Christians and Muslims](#).

The papacy has had a tarnished image among Muslims in Turkey since 2006, when Francis’ predecessor, [Benedict XVI](#), quoted a Byzantine emperor who called Islam “evil and inhuman.”

Mr. Erdogan praised the pope and said his visit was an opportunity for Christians and Muslims to join forces against racism and Islamophobia.

“We sadly witness Muslims being associated with terror in the Western world, and in the Muslim world, we regret violent attitudes toward Christians,” the president said.

Francis addressed a group of Turkish officials at [Mr. Erdogan’s new, \\$600 million presidential palace](#). The pope’s soft voice echoed in the grandiose setting, which was in contrast to the pope’s image as a humble man of the people.

In a letter this month, a group of Turkish architects asked Francis to avoid the palace, which was built on protected forest land in defiance of rulings by several courts that the development was illegal. The [Vatican](#) dismissed the request and said the pope would be received wherever the government welcomed him.

The pope’s request to be picked up from the airport in a Fiat Albea, an Italian car manufactured in Turkey, was turned down for security reasons. Instead, a luxury Volkswagen ferried Francis to the mausoleum of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, who founded the secular Turkish Republic, where the pope laid a wreath.

Francis will travel to Istanbul on Saturday, where he will be the official guest of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the Orthodox Christian leader.

About 2,700 police officers in Ankara and 7,000 security officers in Istanbul are on duty to ensure the safety of the pope during his stay. It was a Turkish nationalist, Mehmet Ali Agca, who shot Pope John Paul II in St. Peter’s Square in Rome in 1981.

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