

# origins

CNS documentary service

## Albania Visit: Meeting With Civil Authorities

### Pope Francis

*Killing in the name of God is sacrilege, and religious leaders must denounce the use of faith to justify violence and oppression, Pope Francis said during a one-day visit to Albania. In a world "where an authentic religious spirit is being perverted and where religious differences are being distorted," Albania is an "inspiring example" to everyone that peaceful coexistence is possible, Pope Francis told Albania President Bujar Nishani and other dignitaries upon his arrival in the country Sept. 21. No one should "consider themselves to be the 'armor' of God while planning and carrying out acts of violence and oppression," the pope said. The pope told reporters on*

*"May no one use religion as a pretext for actions against human dignity and against the fundamental rights of every man and woman."*

*the papal plane he chose to visit the Balkan nation because the peaceful collaboration between its Muslim-majority population and minority Catholic and Orthodox communities "is a beautiful sign for the world." He said it sends a signal to the world that religion, far from causing division, is the very foundation of freedom and brotherhood. In his meeting with civil authorities at the presidential palace in the capital Tirana, the pope called the country a "land of heroes" and a "land of martyrs," whose people stood firm in the face of oppression and persecution. The country endured decades of communist rule that suppressed all religion. The pope spoke in Italian; a Vatican translation of his speech follows, copyright © 2014 by Libreria Editrice Vaticana.*

I am very happy to be here with you in this noble land of Albania, a land of heroes who sacrificed their lives for the independence of the nation and a land of martyrs who witnessed to their faith in difficult times of persecution. I am grateful for the invitation to visit your country, called "the Land of the Eagles," and for your warm welcome.

Almost a quarter of a century has passed since Albania re-embarked upon the arduous but rewarding path of freedom. This experience has allowed Albanian society to take up the process of material and spiritual reconstruction, to foster an increase of enthusiasm and initiatives, and to create a spirit of cooperation and exchange with

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