

Pope says 'demagogic' populism does not help peace



Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi (R) welcoming Pope Francis at the presidential palace in Cairo

Cairo
Pope Francis denounced "demagogic populism" yesterday and insisted that violence profanes God's name, in a wide-ranging speech as he visited Egypt to push for tolerance.
 "Peace alone... is holy and no act of violence can be


perpetrated in the name of God, for it would profane his name," the Catholic pontiff told a Muslim-Christian conference in Cairo.
 Francis is in Egypt on a 27-hour visit to push for dialogue with Muslims and support the country's embattled Christian minority

that has suffered a series of jihadist attacks.
 In his speech, Francis said peace was not helped by "demagogic forms of populism... on the rise".
 It is "essential", he added, to block "the flow of money and weapons destined to those who provoke violence".

Francis landed in Cairo earlier on Friday and met President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and Ahmed al-Tayeb, the grand imam of the prestigious Islamic Al-Azhar institution.
 He will later visit a church that was bombed in December.


That attack was followed by twin church bombings in April that killed 45 people, in the deadliest assault in recent memory on Egypt's Coptic Christian minority.
 Security is extremely tight with the country under a state of emergency following the

church bombings which were claimed by the Islamic State group.
 On Saturday, the pontiff will preside over a mass for Egypt's small Catholic community, estimated to number around 272,000 people spread across various rites.



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Pope Francis visits Egypt in wake of attacks

The pontiff's visit, intended to build on inter-faith dialogue with Muslim leaders, comes at a time of acute fear and uncertainty for Egypt's Christian community following a spate of terrorist attacks



Apr 28-29: Pope Francis meets President **Abdel Fattah al-Sisi**, **Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb**, Grand Imam of al-Azhar – world's most influential centre of Sunni Islamic theology – and **Pope Tawadros II**, head of Coptic Orthodox Church



Muslim Around 90%

Population 81 million

Christian Around 10%

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

Feb 2017: Dozens of Coptic Christian families flee northern Sinai after number of killings by suspected Islamist militants

Apr 9, 2017: Suicide bombers kill 45 people at two churches in Tanta and Alexandria on Palm Sunday. So-called **Islamic State (IS)** militants claim responsibility

Dec 11, 2016: Bombing at chapel adjacent to Cairo's main Coptic cathedral kills 28 people. IS claims attack

Apr 18, 2017: One police officer killed and three others injured after IS militants attack checkpoint near **St Catherine's Monastery** – one of world's oldest Christian monasteries

Sources: Vatican, Wire agencies Pictures: Getty Images © GRAPHIC NEWS