

Pope Francis Describes Muslims and Christians as 'Brothers and Sisters'



Bangui, December 1 (RHC)-- Pope Francis says Muslims and Christians are 'brothers and sisters' during a visit to the only remaining Muslim neighborhood in Central African Republic's capital, Bangui.

The leader of the Catholic church said on Monday during a visit to the Central Mosque of Bangui: "Christians and Muslims are brothers and sisters and must behave as such." And he added: "Christians and Muslims and members of traditional religions have lived peacefully for many years. Together, we say no to hatred, to vengeance and violence especially that committed in the name of a religion or God."

The Pope's visit to the mosque marked the highlight of his three-nation African tour, with previous stops being in Kenya and Uganda. The chief imam at the mosque, Tidiani Moussa Naibi, thanked the pontiff for his visit, which he said was "a symbol which we all understand."

Sectarian violence by the majority Christian militia, fueled by politico-economic factors, has driven away many Muslims from the CAR to neighboring countries. Today, the capital that once had 122,000 Muslims has only around 15,000, according to Human Rights Watch.

In the Central African Republic, throughout the early months of 2014, mobs attacked Muslims in the streets, even decapitating and dismembering them and setting their corpses ablaze. Tens of thousands of Muslim civilians fled to neighboring Chad and Cameroon.

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