

In Cuba, Pope Warns Against Ideology

BY NICOLE WINFIELD
Associated Press

HAVANA — Pope Francis met with Fidel Castro on Sunday after urging thousands of Cubans to serve one another and not an ideology, delivering a subtle jab at the communist system during a Mass celebrated under the gaze of an image of Che Guevara in Havana's iconic Revolution Plaza.

The Vatican described the 40-minute meeting at Castro's residence as informal and familial, with an exchange of books and discussion about big issues facing humanity, including Francis' recent encyclical on the environment and the global economic system.

A photo provided by Alex Castro, Fidel's son and official photographer, showed the 89-year-old former president and Francis looking into each other's eyes as they shook hands, the pope in his white vestments and Castro in a white button-down shirt and Adidas sweat top. Castro appeared to be gripping another, unidentified man for support.

The meeting brought together the leader who shaped Cuba for the last half of the 20th century and Latin America's first pope, who many Cubans credit with opening a path to the future by mediating the warming diplomatic relations between their country and the United States. After his Cuba visit, the pope flies to Washington for his first ever trip to the U.S.

Since the pope's historic mediation, Presidents Barack Obama and Raul Castro have reopened embassies in each other's countries, held a personal meeting, had at least two phone calls and launched a process aimed at normalizing ties in fields ranging from trade to tourism to telecommunications.

Francis called on both Fidel and Raul Castro after celebrating Mass in Havana's main plaza on his first full day in Cuba. Believers and non-believers alike streamed into the square before dawn, and they erupted in cheers when the pope spun through the crowd in his open-sided popemobile. Francis didn't disappoint, winding his way slowly through the masses and stopping to kiss children held up to him.

At one point, Francis was approached by a man who grabbed onto the popemobile and appeared to be speaking emotionally to the pontiff, who touched him on his hand



Pope Francis blesses a Cuban child as he arrives to celebrate Sunday Mass at the Plaza de la Revolucion in Havana, Cuba, Sunday.

AL DIAZ/MIAMI HERALD/TNS

and head before he was pulled away by security agents. Later video showed what appeared to be the same man throwing leaflets in the air, and backers of a Cuban dissident group said on Twitter he was a member of the political opposition.

The head of the opposition group Ladies in White said 22 of the 24 members of her group who wanted to attend Mass were prevented from going by Cuban security agents. Two other well-known Cuban dissidents said agents detained them after the Vatican invited them to the pope's vespers service at the Cathedral of Havana.

Marta Beatriz Roque and Miriam Leiva, both longtime dissidents, received invitations from the office of the papal ambassador in Havana to attend the service but said they were arrested as they tried to travel to the cathedral.

Roque says she was also invited by the Vatican to meet Pope Francis at the ambassador's residence shortly after the pontiff's arrival Saturday, but she was also detained at that time then released before being held again Sunday afternoon.

"They told me that I didn't have a credential and that I couldn't go to the pope's event that was taking place there in the Plaza of the Cathedral," Roque said.

Vatican spokesman Federico Lombardi said some dissidents were called and invited to events where they would receive a greeting from

the pope, although not in a formal meeting. He said the dissidents never showed up but he could not confirm that it was because they were arrested.

While most Cubans are nominally Catholic, fewer than 10 percent practice their faith and Cuba is the least Catholic country in Latin America.

The crowd at Mass was not as big as when St. John Paul II became the first pope to visit the island in 1998, but it drew many people who seemed to genuinely want to be there and listen to Francis' message. "This is very important for us," said Mauren Gomez, who traveled some 155 miles from Villa Clara to Havana by bus, spending her time reciting the Rosary.

In his homily delivered under the gaze of a metal portrait of revolutionary fighter Che Guevara, Francis urged Cubans to care for one another out of a sense of service, not ideology. He encouraged them to refrain from judging each other by "looking to one side or the other to see what our neighbor is doing or not doing."

"Whoever wishes to be great must serve others, not be served by others," he said. "Service is never ideological, for we do not serve ideas, we serve people."

Many Cubans complain about the rigidity of Cuba's system in which nearly every aspect of life is controlled by the government, from cultural institutions to block-level neighborhood watch

committees. While the system has softened in recent years, Cubans can be excluded or lose benefits if they are perceived as being disloyal or unfaithful to the principles of the revolution.

Cubans are also increasingly concerned about growing inequality on the island, in which those with access to foreign capital live lives of relative luxury while others can barely feed themselves, generating jealousy and division within families and society at large.

"Being a Christian entails promoting the dignity of our brothers and sisters, fighting for it, living for it," Francis told the crowd. "That is why Christians are constantly called to set aside their own wishes and desires, their pursuit of power, and to look instead to those who are most vulnerable."

Maria Regla González, a teacher, said she appreciated Francis' message of reconciliation and unity for all Cubans, saying the pope was particularly able to convey it given he is Latin American and speaks their language.

"This is a crucial moment, and the pope's support for us is very important," she said. "He made a call for unity, and that's what we want."

Unlike the 2012 visit of Pope Benedict XVI, when Fidel Castro peppered the German theologian with questions, the former president's meeting with Francis was more of a conversation, papal spokesman the Rev. Federico Lombardi said.

Syrians And Iraqis Find Relief In Europe

MYTILENE, Greece (AP) — Among the tens of thousands fleeing war and despair in the Middle East, one group feels a special relief in reaching Europe: those who have escaped areas ruled by Islamic State extremists and the harsh scrutiny of their religious police.

These refugees tell of how a Western-style haircut, a pair of jeans or a simple interaction with the opposite sex can lead to punishment by the Hisba, the branch of enforcers carrying out a brutal interpretation of Islamic Shariah law.

More than 175,000 Syrians and nearly 10,000 Iraqis have made the dangerous sea journey to Greece this year, part of a massive influx fueled in part by Syria's civil war, now in its fifth year. Many are fleeing the onslaught from President Bashar Assad's military against opposition-held cities, particularly the terror and often random destruction inflicted by its barrel bombs.

But some are trying to escape a different type of fear that took hold in the ruined landscape of the Islamic State's self-declared "caliphate" across parts of Syria and Iraq.

Ahmed, who owned a women's shoe store in the Syrian city of Raqqa, told of being berated every few days by members of the Hisba because he was waiting on female customers. His wife or sister should do that, they insisted, while also forbidding him from hiring women not related to him.

Kerry: US To Accept 85K Refugees In '16

BERLIN (AP) — Scrambling to address a growing Syrian refugee crisis, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry announced Sunday that the United States would significantly increase the number of worldwide migrants it takes in over the next two years, though not by nearly the amount many activists and former officials have urged.

The U.S. will accept 85,000 refugees from around the world next year, up from 70,000, and that total would rise to 100,000 in 2017, Kerry said at news conference with German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier after they discussed the mass migration of Syrians fleeing their civil war.

Many, though not all, of the additional refugees would be Syrian, American officials have said. Others would come from strife-torn areas of Africa. The White House had previously announced it intended to take in 10,000 additional Syrian refugees over the next year.

Asked why the U.S. couldn't take more, Kerry cited post-Sept. 11 screening requirements and a lack of money made available by Congress.

"We're doing what we know we can manage immediately," he said, adding that the U.S. cannot take shortcuts on security checks.

Concerns Cloud Chinese Leader Xi's Visit

BEIJING (AP) — As Chinese President Xi Jinping makes his first state visit to Washington this week, the outlook for relations is decidedly murkier than when he hosted President Barack Obama at their last summit less than a year ago.

Tensions are rising over allegations of Beijing-directed cyberattacks on the U.S. and China's moves to assert its South China Sea territorial claims. Much of the American public sees China as an economic threat and criticisms are rising over a sweeping crackdown on civil rights.

"U.S. suspicions regarding Chinese intentions are growing," said Aaron L. Friedberg, professor of politics and international affairs at Princeton University.

"The atmosphere surrounding this summit may be more negative than any in the post-Tiananmen period," Friedberg said, referring to China's bloody crackdown on pro-democracy protesters in 1989 that marked the nadir in relations.

At the same time, belief in China's inexorable rise has been shaken by a stock market plunge and an economic slowdown that have sent shockwaves through global markets. And last month's catastrophic chemical warehouse explosion in a city just east of Beijing that killed 173 people have also underscored concerns about corruption and incompetence, increasing doubts about the viability of China's model of authoritarian governance.

Left-Wing Syriza Wins Greek Election

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — A jubilant Alexis Tsipras vowed to continue fighting for his country's pride and to quickly form a coalition government after his left-wing Syriza party comfortably won Greece's third national vote this year on Sunday.

The result was a resounding success for Tsipras' high-risk gamble when he resigned as prime minister last month and triggered an early election, barely seven months into his four-year term, in order to face down an internal Syriza rebellion over his policy U-turn to accept painful austerity measures in return for Greece's third international bailout.

With more than 80 percent of the vote counted, Syriza stood at 35.5 percent of the vote and 145 seats in the 300-member parliament, followed by the conservative New Democracy with 28.3 percent and 75 seats and the Nazi-inspired Golden Dawn in third place with 7 percent and 18 seats. ww

Carson: Muslim Shouldn't Be Elected President

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican presidential candidate Ben Carson says Islam is antithetical to the Constitution, and he doesn't believe that a Muslim should be elected president.

Carson, a devout Christian, says a president's faith should matter to voters if it runs counter to the values and principles of America.

Responding to a question during an interview broadcast Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press," he described the Islamic faith as inconsistent with the Constitution.

"I would not advocate that we put a Muslim in charge of this nation," Carson said. "I absolutely would not agree with that."

He did not specify in what way Islam ran counter to constitutional principles.

Carson's comments drew strong criticism from the country's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization, the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

"To me this really means he is not qualified to be president of the United States," said the group's spokesman, Ibrahim Hooper. "You cannot hold these kinds of views and at the same time say you will represent all Americans, of all faiths and backgrounds."

Carson's comments came amid lingering fallout over Republican Donald Trump's refusal last week to take issue with a man during a campaign event who wrongly called President Barack Obama a Muslim and said Muslims are "a problem in this country."

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Dr. Willman completed her residency in pediatrics at the University of Missouri in Columbia and received her medical degree from the Sanford School of Medicine at the University of South Dakota. She completed her undergraduate work at Augustana College in Sioux Falls. Dr. Willman will join Yankton Medical Clinic, P.C. September 22, 2015. She specializes in pediatric care for newborns and children up to 18 years and has expertise in caring for premature babies, providing support for parents and children to develop healthy lifestyles, and cares for acute and chronic illnesses in children. Part of her practice is the evaluation and care for physical and emotional development, including ADHD.

She is a Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Dr. Willman and her husband, Dave, are the parents of two children and reside in Yankton.

Dr. Willman will begin seeing patients at the Yankton Medical Clinic, P.C. September 22, 2015.



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