



Pope Francis in Occupied Palestine

For three days in May, Pope Francis paid a visit to Jordan, Palestine and Israel. In the homeland of Jesus Christ, Christians are a discriminated minority. Every time the Pope goes on a state visit, he wears two hats on his head: First, he is the religious leader of Catholics around the world and secondly, he is head of the Vatican City State. Besides his religious program there is always an

official one that is brokered between the two political parties.

Because Pope Francis wanted to visit Jordan and the Palestinian people, he avoided to land in Tel Aviv. He flew directly by helicopter from Amman to occupied Bethlehem where he said Mass in attendance of the Palestinian political and religious dignitaries. On his way to Jerusalem, he stopped at the "Apartheid Wall" for a short prayer. With his right hand and his forehead he touched the wall. This symbolic gesture is worth a thousand words and made Netanyahu furious.

Already, the Israeli government was extremely dissatisfied with the papal itinerary and tried to save what could be saved. The Pope had to see Israel's President Shimon Peres who is considered by most Israelis as an icon of hypocrisy. He is loved by the Israeli voters so much that he has never won an election. Of course, Pope Francis had also meet Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who probably dragged him to the grave of Theodor Herzl.

How could allow Vatican diplomacy Pope Francis to make such a political Faupax? Not even the heads of state visit Herzl's grave and lay down a wreath in his honor. "It is not the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Paris", as Uri Avnery rightly mentioned. Herzl is not only considered the spiritus rector of the State of Israel but also of its racist Zionist ideology. By his visit, Pope Francis has not only paid tribute to this racist ideology but has devalued his grand spiritual gesture toward the Palestinians. Was Pope Francis ill advised by his religiously naïve acolytes or was his visit done with intent? That each head of state has to visit Yad Vashem, is needless to say.

Pope Francis should have skipped his visit to Israel in the first place,¹ which would have been a strong symbolic gesture. According to its teachings, the Catholic Church cannot recognize an occupation regime. The social doctrine of the Catholic Church legitimizes resistance against any occupation and oppression that has been going on for 47 years. Besides religious rhetoric, Pope Francis should have talked about legitimate resistance against Israel's occupation in Palestine. Why didn't he say to Netanyahu: "Mister Netanyahu, tear down this wall."

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First published here², here³ and here⁴.

¹ <http://between-the-lines-ludwig-watzal.blogspot.de/2014/05/should-pope-francis-skip-israel.html>

² http://mwcnews.net/focus/analysis/41451-pope-francis-visit-to-palestine.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+mwcnews%2FXrew+%28MWC+News+Alert%29

³ <http://www.countercurrents.org/watzal030614.htm>

⁴ <http://www.eurasiareview.com/03062014-pope-francis-visited-palestine-oped/>