

Trump Sides With ISIS Supporters in Middle East Sectarian War

Dan Wright
[Shadowproof](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Udz9b5BThnw>

In a speech that contradicted numerous public statements, [President Donald Trump](#) praised the rulers of Saudi Arabia and other gulf state autocracies for fighting [Islamic](#) terrorism in his first foreign trip as president. Despite irrefutable evidence (that [he himself previously referenced](#)) that the [Kingdom of Saudi Arabia](#) is the primary source of support for [Sunni](#) jihadist terrorist groups such as [Al Qaeda](#) and ISIS, Trump celebrated the Saudi government's commitment to combating Islamic extremism.

Beyond support for terrorism, Trump had slammed Saudi Arabia in the past for wanting to ["enslave women and kill gays."](#) But, in another reversal, Trump characterized the country as a wonderful place to live, [saying](#), "I have always heard about the splendor of your country and the kindness of your people, but words do not do justice to the grandeur of this sacred place."

While some of the complete rhetorical flip-flops could arguably be attributed to diplomatic niceties, the actual substance of President Trump's speech addressing the Islamic world was both absurd and dangerous.

Trump not only praised one of [Al Qaeda and ISIS' chief backers](#) as a leader in the fight against Islamic extremism, he essentially blamed Iran and [Shiite Islam](#) for the instability in the [Middle East](#). He even praised the government of Bahrain

whose Sunni minority government has been engaging in a [brutal crackdown](#) of the Shiite majority post-Arab Spring.

His condemnation of Iran as an authoritarian regime was particularly hollow, given the audience was made up of autocrats working to suppress domestic democratic movements and Iran had [successfully conducted an election](#) two days earlier. While it was by no means an open or substantially fair process, the Iranian people did get to offer a limited voice in deciding their future—an influence not granted in the slightest by the other governments represented in the room, especially the Saudis who rule under literal feudalism.

Putting aside the hypocrisy of the moral claims, President Trump blew a major opportunity to address one of the leading causes of Sunni jihadist extremism today: the export of [Wahhabist/Salafist ideology](#) by the Saudis to the rest of the world. That poison helped inspire both Al Qaeda and ISIS as well as the wealthy gulf state officials who fund them.

Rather than confront the roots of the terrorism that has savaged the U.S. and Europe, Trump praised its benefactors and took a side in a sectarian war that continues to rip apart the Middle East. The position is fundamentally counterproductive if your primary concern is American security.

The strategy is not good for America, but it is good for Saudi Arabia and [Israel](#). Trump's first foreign trip included a visit to Israel and the Vatican as well as Saudi Arabia. According to Israeli Education Minister Naftali Bennett, he spoke with Trump about his proposal for a ["right wing peace"](#) across the region, which relies on the Sunni gulf states allying with Israel against Shiite Iran and its allies, such as the government of Syria and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

President Trump ran on getting the [United States](#) out of the Middle East and away from [stupid wars](#). But his actions and rhetoric so far as president indicate he is ready to double-

down on dumb.

[Trump's Speech to the Muslim World](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Udz9b5BThnw>

[Melania Trump reveals she is Catholic: The First Lady shares her faith with the world after meeting the Pope as the first Catholic to live in White House since JFK](#)

[Daily Mail](#)

When

[Melania Trump](#) recited The Lord's Prayer before a Melbourne, [Florida](#) presidential rally in February, the Internet went hog wild.

Now we know one reason why the first lady began with 'Let us pray' and '[Our Father who art in heaven](#)' when she introduced

the president that evening: She's a practicing [Roman Catholic](#).

Her spokeswoman Stephanie Grisham confirmed that to DailyMail.com on Wednesday, hours after [Pope Francis](#) blessed a rosary for her at the Vatican.

The last Catholics to live in the White House were [John F. Kennedy](#) and his wife Jackie. Melania and her son Barron will move to [1600 Pennsylvania](#) Avenue over the summer.

Mrs. Trump did more than just show up for a [Papal audience](#).

She spent time in prayer at the Vatican-affiliated Bambino Gesù (Baby Jesus) Hospital, and laid flowers at the feet of a statue of the Madonna.

She also prayed in the hospital chapel and read to a young Greek boy in need of a donor heart – holding his hand in the Intensive Care Unit while camera shutters snapped.

The almighty may have heard her.

'Upon landing in Belgium, I learned a young boy and his family who had been waiting for a heart transplant was informed that the hospital has found a donor,' she said in a statement.

'I read a book and held hands with this special little one just a few hours ago, and now my own heart is filled with joy over this news.'

The first lady later tweeted about the development with the hashtags '#Blessings' and '#Faith.'

In another tweet, she sent 'blessings to all' after her Papal audience.

Mrs. Trump told Pope Francis at the Vatican that she was looking forward to going to the hospital 'for the bambinos.' She later called the visit 'very moving.'

'To spend time speaking to and coloring with children who have

such a positive spirit despite illness was an amazing gift,' she said.

'The time I spent with the little ones in the Intensive Care Unit is something I will never forget, and I will pray for each of them daily.'

It's unclear when Mrs. Trump became a Catholic. The president is a life-long Presbyterian, and they were married in a Florida Episcopal church.

Growing up as the daughter of a Communist Party member in rural Slovenia, her family maintained the outward appearances of being atheists, according to people in her childhood village of Sevnica who [spoke to DailyMail.com](#) in late 2015.

Accordingly, Melania and her sister were not baptized and did not make their First Holy Communion with other children their age.

It's still not clear when Mrs. Trump was baptized into the Catholic faith. Grisham did not immediately respond to a question about that detail.

But the Trumps have been in a reflective religious mood since arriving in Saudi Arabia last Saturday. That frame of mind persisted throughout their time in Israel.

The president addressed 55 world leaders from Arab and other Muslim-majority nations in Riyadh, imploring them to be part of 'a coalition of nations who share the aim of stamping out extremism and providing our children a hopeful future that does honor to God.'

In Jerusalem he visited the famed Western Wall, slipping a written prayer between the centuries-old stones as custom permits.

He 'marveled at the monument to God's presence and man's perseverance,' he said Tuesday in a speech at the Israel

Museum.

'I was humbled to place my hand upon the wall and to pray in that holy space for wisdom from God,' Trump told an audience of Jewish officials.

'This city, like no other place in the world, reveals the longing of the human heart – to know and worship God.'

Trump issued a proclamation on Wednesday calling for a national 'day of prayer for permanent peace' on May 29, the upcoming Memorial Day holiday.

'On this ceremonious day, we remember the fallen, we pray for a lasting peace among nations, and we honor these guardians of our inalienable rights,' he said.

'I designate the hour beginning in each locality at 11:00 a.m. of that day as a time when people might unite in prayer. I urge the press, radio, television, and all other information media to cooperate in this observance,' Trump added.

[Donald Trump, Pope Francis Meet, Vow to Fight for 'Life, Freedom of Worship'](#)

[The Christian Post](#)

President [Donald Trump](#) and [Roman Catholic Church](#) leader [Pope Francis](#) met on Wednesday at the [Vatican](#) where they spoke for 30 minutes in private, and vowed to fight together for life, peace, and freedom of worship.

“Honor of a lifetime to meet His Holiness Pope Francis. I leave the Vatican more determined than ever to pursue PEACE in our world,” Trump posted on [Twitter](#) following the meeting.

[BBC News](#) reported that the two world leaders held a 30-minute private meeting, with the Vatican later explaining that they talked about their shared commitment to “life, freedom of worship, and conscience,” and expressed hope that they can collaborate “in service to the people in the fields of healthcare, education and assistance to migrants.”

They also reportedly talked about the “promotion of peace in the world through political negotiation and interreligious dialogue,” along with the need to protect Christian communities in the [Middle East](#), which are suffering at the hands of [Islamic extremists](#).

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“It is my desire that you become an olive tree to construct peace,” Francis said, to which Trump replied: “We can use some peace.”

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Francis and Trump [have clashed](#) on some issues in the past, such as the president’s vow during the 2016 election campaign to build a massive wall at the Mexican border in order to keep illegal immigrants and traffickers out of the country.

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[Reuters](#) reported that he later told reporters about how meeting the pope went: “Great. He is something. He is really good.”

Trump’s visit to the the Vatican is part of a nine-day foreign tour, which has already seen him deliver speeches in Saudi Arabia and Jerusalem.

[‘I won’t forget what you said,’ Trump tells pope after meeting at Vatican](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YVCm1-toVFg>

Gerald O’Connell

[America Magazine](#)

President Donald Trump and Pope Francis, two leaders with contrasting styles and differing worldviews, met at the

Vatican City on Wednesday, setting aside their previous clashes to broadcast a tone of peace for an audience around the globe.

Mr. Trump, midway through his grueling nine-day maiden international journey, called upon the pontiff at the Vatican early Wednesday where the two had a private 30-minute meeting laden with religious symbolism and ancient protocol. While this is the normal length of time for such face-to-face meetings with heads of states it was perhaps shorter than many had expected for this first encounter between the two world leaders.

According to a summary provided by the Holy See, the pope and president talked, among other things, about “the promotion of peace through negotiation and inter-religious dialogue, with special reference to the Middle East and the protection of Christian communities.”

In their private conversation and in a subsequent one with two of the pope’s top advisors—Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the secretary of state, and Archbishop Paul Gallagher, secretary for relations with states, a Vatican statement said the two leaders discussed their “joint commitment in favor of life, and freedom of worship and conscience” and expressed the hope for “serene collaboration between the State and the Catholic Church in the United States, engaged in service to the people in the fields of healthcare, education and assistance to immigrants.”

Surprisingly, the summary included no mention about “care for our common home” or climate change, but that does not mean the issue was not addressed in the two conversations that lasted a total of 80 minutes.

The president, accompanied by his wife and several aides, had arrived at the Vatican just after 8 a.m. local time. The president greeted Francis in Sala del Tronetto, the room of

the little throne, on the second floor of Apostolic Palace Wednesday morning.

The visit began with a handshake between the two men. Mr. Trump could be heard thanking the pope and saying it was “a great honor” to be there. They then posed for photographs and then sat down at the papal desk, the pope unsmiling, as their private meeting began.

The audience started in a somewhat tense manner, with both looking rather serious and conscious of its importance, but it ended in a much relaxed, warmer and friendly way, with many smiles and some jokes. Significantly, as he bade Pope Francis farewell, Mr. Trump said, “Thank you, thank you, I won’t forget what you said!”

At the end of their private conversation, Mr. Trump presented his delegation, which included his wife, Melania, his daughter Ivanka and her husband Jared Kushner, the national security advisor, Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster, and Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson. After receiving the entire delegation, Pope Francis escorted him to a table in the center of the room for the traditional exchange of gifts.

Mr. Trump began the gift exchange telling Francis, “This is a gift for you. These are the books of Martin Luther King. I think you will enjoy them. I hope you do.”

Pope Francis looking clearly pleased responded, “Thank you, thank you very much!”

The first pope from the Americas, for his part, gave the U.S. president a medallion of the Olive branch of peace as he does to many heads of state and explained its significance, saying, “It’s our hope that you may become an olive tree for peace.”

“We could use peace!” Mr. Trump responded.

Francis then gave the president the three main documents of his pontificate: "The Joy of the Gospel," which is his programmatic document; the encyclical "Laudato Si'," which highlights the urgent need to combat climate change; and "The Joy of Love," his post-synod exhortation on the family. He explained that these are documents that he wrote for Catholics and that they relate to "the family, the joy of the Gospel and the care of our common home—the environment." He also gave Mr. Trump a copy of his Message for the World Day of Peace 2017, which focuses on the politics of non-violence, and said, "I signed it personally for you."

After exchanging gifts, the pope led the president back to their original positions under the magnificent painting of the Resurrection of Jesus, by the famous Italian artist Perugino, for a final photo-op. And before the delegation departed he gave a gift to each one starting with the president.

When he came to Melania, he said with a smile, "Do you give him *potizza* to eat?" *Potizza* is a traditional rich Slovenian cake given for dessert which Francis likes.

Mr. Trump laughed and commented, "Delicious!"

After Melania, the pope then greeted Ivanka Kushner and her husband, Jared, in what seemed like a family gathering, as the president and his wife looked on.

His predecessor, Barack Obama, had a private audience with Francis at the Vatican in 2014 that lasted 50 minutes. But the timing on Wednesday was tight as Francis had his weekly Wednesday general audience, the thousands of pilgrims on hand forced Trump's motorcade to enter Vatican City from a side entrance rather than the grand entrance through St. Peter's Square.

Mr. Trump is the 13th incumbent president of the United States to meet a reigning pope in the Vatican since Woodrow Wilson visited Pope Benedict XV on Jan. 4, 1919. Four popes have

visited the United States in that same period, starting with Paul VI on Oct. 4, 1965. Francis went there from Sept. 22 to 23, 2015. This was the 30th meeting between a U.S. president and a pope over the past 100 years.

The content of their private conversation has not been revealed. This is normal, as Francis explained on the flight back from Cairo at the end of April. When a reporter asked what he had discussed in his private conversation with the Egyptian president, the pope replied, "Generally when I am with a head of state in private dialogue, that remains private, unless, by agreement, we say 'let's say on this point, we'll make it public.'"

The same is true today. Pope Francis will not reveal what has been said, unless he and the president have jointly agreed to make a specific point or points known.

After the papal audience, a Vatican official accompanied the president and his top advisors, Mr. McMaster, Secretary Tillerson and Mr. Kushner, for private talks with two of the pope's most trusted senior collaborators: the Italian-born secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, who is Francis' right-hand man, and the secretary for relations with states, Archbishop Paul Gallagher, the first Englishman ever to hold that post. They talked together behind closed doors for 50 minutes, suggesting they went into the issues in considerable depth.

During that time, Vatican officials treated the first lady to a guided tour of the Pauline chapel and Sala Regia, and once the president had concluded his conversation at the Secretariat of State, they escorted him, Mrs. Trump and the U.S. delegation for a guided tour of the Sistine Chapel and St. Peter's Basilica. This was an unusual honor, one rarely given to heads of state, but one that will surely have pleased the president.

Following that tour, the presidential motorcade left the Vatican for the Quirinale to meet the Italian president, Sergio Mattarella, and then drove to the Villa Taverna, the residence of the Italian ambassador, where he had lunch with Italy's prime minister, Paolo Gentiloni. The first lady drove to the Bambino Gesù, the largest pediatric hospital and research center in Europe, financially supported by the Vatican, which stands next to the North American College where future priests for the United States are trained.

Ivanka Trump drove to the Sant'Egidio international lay community's headquarters in Trastevere, where she met some women victims of human trafficking.

The meeting between pope and president, which concluded Mr. Trump's tour of the world's largest monotheistic religions, provided powerful imagery to Catholic voters back in the United States. The two collided head-on early last year, when Francis was sharply critical of Mr. Trump's campaign pledge to build an impenetrable wall on the Mexican border and his declaration that the United States should turn away Muslim immigrants and refugees.

Mr. Trump arrived in Rome Tuesday evening, his motorcade closing a busy Italian highway just after rush hour and prompting hundreds of onlookers to briefly step out of their gridlocked cars to gawk at the fleet of armored vehicles. He spent the night at the U.S. ambassador to Italy's residence.

In recent days, Pope Francis and Mr. Trump have been in agreement on a need for Muslim leaders to do more against extremists in their own communities. But there are few other areas where their views align.

The president's prior anti-Muslim rhetoric—including his musing that Islam "hates" the West—is the antithesis of what the pope has been preaching about a need for dialogue with Muslims. Pope Francis also differs sharply with Mr. Trump on

the need to combat climate change and economic inequality.

Mr. Trump's visit to the Eternal City comes after two stops in the Middle East where he visited the cradles of Islam and Judaism. In Saudi Arabia, he addressed dozens of Arab leaders and urged them to fight extremists at home and isolate Iran, which he depicted as menace to the region. And in Israel, Mr. Trump reaffirmed his commitment to strong ties with the nation's longtime ally and urged both the Israelis and the Palestinians to begin the process of reaching a peace deal. No details or timetable have yet to be established for negotiations.

But while Mr. Trump received extravagantly warm welcomes in Riyadh and Jerusalem, the reception could grow much cooler now that he's reached Europe, site of widespread protests after his election. Climate change activists projected the words "Planet Earth First" on the massive dome of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Tuesday night and protests are expected Wednesday in Rome and later in the week when Mr. Trump travels to Brussels for a NATO meeting and Sicily for a G7 gathering.

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[Optimism in the Vatican on the eve of Trump’s visit to Pope Francis](#)

Gerald O’Connell

[America Magazine](#)

President [Donald J. Trump](#) and [Pope Francis](#) are scheduled to meet for the first time at 8:30 a.m., Rome time, on Wednesday,

May 24. Vatican officials contacted by **America**, who spoke on condition of anonymity, consider the meeting of the utmost importance given the role of the [United States](#) in the world. They expressed happiness that the leader of the globe's main superpower decided to visit the pope on his first foreign trip, and they seemed quietly confident that the meeting will go well.

"It will be good. It's going to be their first encounter, and the hope is that it will start a good relationship, open a channel of communication between the two sides, and send a message to the Catholic Church in the United States," a senior Vatican official told **America**.

After the traditional handshake and photo-op, the pope will escort the president into his private library and the two leaders will then sit facing each other across the table where Francis has spoken with many of the world's leaders over these past four years, including [U.S. President Barack Obama](#) on March 27, 2014.

"Much can happen when the pope and the president are together in private," a close associate of the pontiff told **America**. He dismissed the notion that it would be a contentious encounter. "Francis will have prayed earnestly for God's guidance before meeting the President. The Holy Spirit will help him," that same source stated.

Nobody **America** spoke to thought it would in any way resemble the encounter suggested by a Jeff Danziger cartoon that depicts President Trump telling Francis, "It's a deal. You take care of the poor and I will take care of the rich."

The private conversation between the pope and the president, with the aid of translators, is expected to last somewhere between 30 minutes and one hour. (President Obama's private talk with Francis lasted 52 minutes.) "It is a short time to get to know each other, but a lot of it is chemistry,"

according to a Vatican source who knows well how such audiences go.

Pope Francis has a gift that assists him greatly whenever he meets a person for the first time: a profound perception Father Angel Rossi, an Argentine Jesuit who knows him well, called “cardiognosis: the gift of knowing people’s hearts.” Father Rossi described it as “an intuitive intelligence” because “with very little information, he knows you...and you cannot hide things from him.” When he meets someone for the first time, Francis observes closely, listens attentively and seeks to go beyond what the person says to grasp what is in his or her heart.

“Francis is the most gracious person I have ever met,” a senior European diplomat told me recently. He and other sources concur that the Argentine pope will be extremely gracious with President Trump, will encourage him to speak freely, and will listen attentively to all he has to say and, while doing so, will be on the lookout for openings that can lead to common ground.

On the eve of his visit, [President Trump nominated Callista Gingrich](#), wife of former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, to be the new U.S. ambassador to the Holy See.

The media in the United States reports that when he comes to the Vatican, Mr. Trump wants to talk about human trafficking and religious liberty. President Obama had those same topics on his agenda when he first met Francis, but we now know that they went far beyond them to discuss other very important issues, including the possibility of a U.S.-Cuba rapprochement. Something similar could happen this time.

The U.S. president decided to begin his nine-day first foreign trip with visits to religious centers of Islam ([Saudi Arabia](#)), Judaism (Israel) and Christianity (the Vatican), and will conclude it by going to the [European Union](#) headquarters in

Brussels and the G7 meeting in Taormina, Italy.

Mr. Trump's arrival at the Vatican will happen directly after his private talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and [Palestinian President](#) Mahmoud Abbas. He is meeting with both leaders in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, respectively, to discuss finding a lasting peace solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict. It seems highly likely that this issue will be the starting point for his conversations with the pope and senior Vatican officials who have long been desirous to reach that same goal.

Another probable point for discussion is the question of combating and overcoming terrorism, particularly after the president's moderate speech to leaders from 55 [Muslim-majority countries](#) in Riyadh on May 21. During this speech, he emphasized that the United States is not at war with Islam, describing it as "one of the world's great faiths." He also took the side of the Saudis and others against Iran, while at the same time calling on the religious leaders present at the meeting to join "in the battle between evil and good" and increase their efforts "to drive out" extremists from their midst.

In addition to these crucial matters, sources expect Pope Francis and senior Vatican officials to discuss with the president questions on world peace, migration, climate change and the protection of the environment. The crises in Syria and Venezuela are also likely to appear on the agenda.

President Trump will be accompanied by a sizable delegation when he visits the Vatican and while the full list of names has not yet been disclosed, sources say it will include his wife, Melania; his daughter Ivanka with her husband Jared Kushner; the national security advisor, Lt. Gen. [H.R. McMaster](#); and Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson. Francis will greet them individually after his private conversation with the president has ended, and before the traditional

exchange of gifts.

After bidding farewell to the pope, President Trump, accompanied by some of his top advisors, will be escorted for private talks with two of Francis' chief advisors: the secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, and the secretary for relations with states, Archbishop Paul Gallagher.

The first lady, on the other hand, will visit the Bambino Gesù, the largest pediatric hospital and research center in Europe, which is supported by the Vatican and often referred to as "the pope's hospital." Ivanka Trump will visit the Sant'Egidio lay community to participate in a discussion on human trafficking.

The Vatican has gone out of its way to accommodate President Trump by arranging for him, at very short notice, to have a private audience with the pope at 8:30 on a Wednesday morning. Normally, Francis holds a public audience in St. Peter's Square at 10:00 a.m. every Wednesday; before that, at 9:30 a.m., he drives among the faithful in the square. This time, however, the Vatican has announced that the public audience will begin a half-hour later, at 10:30 a.m. That is two hours after Trump arrives in the Vatican, thus allowing plenty of time for his conversations with the pope and his top advisors.

Given that there are normally tens of thousands of pilgrims in St. Peter's Square for the Wednesday public audience, the Vatican and the U.S. organizers of the visit have agreed that President Trump will not enter the Vatican city-state under the Arch of the Bells that is on the left hand side of St. Peter's Square. Instead his motorcade will pass through the Porta del Perugino, near the Domus Santa Marta where Francis resides, and drive behind St. Peter's Basilica to the Cortile di San Damaso, where he will be saluted by a platoon of Swiss Guards and then escorted to the Second Loggia of the Apostolic Palace for his audience with the pope.