



VETERANS FOR A
STRONG AMERICA

Catholic Veteran to Pope Francis:
Security is not un-Christian, it's a Human Right

Sioux Falls, SD – Today, Pope Francis made remarks asserting that Americans who want to secure the nation's border are engaging in un-Christian behavior. As a practicing Catholic, with children in Catholic schools, I find the Pope's comments to be needlessly inflammatory and very misguided.

I am a combat veteran who served in active combat in Iraq from late 2003 through early 2005. While there, I prayed before the Virgin Mary in the home of a terrified Iraqi Catholic woman with her and local Catholics. On the day I took personal leave, due to the birth of my daughter, the Catholic church in Karada was bombed by Islamic terrorists. Today, the persecution continues as ISIS sells Catholic women prisoners of war into slavery or rapes them as is permissible in their warped interpretation of their own religion.

As horrifying as the religious persecution of Catholics at the hands of Islamic extremists is, the atrocities don't stop there. In San Bernardino, Islamic extremists infiltrated a position of trust within the local government for employment, and killed 14 innocents. In August 2014 ISIS planned to attack the U.S. with car bombs or other vehicle borne improvised explosive devices (VBIED) from a camp in the Mexican border city of Ciudad Juarez. In July 2015 it was reported that Mexican drug cartels were smuggling foreigners from countries with terrorist links into a small Texas rural town near El Paso. The terror in our country continues long after the evil and inexcusable acts of September 11, 2001. Most recently, Texas law enforcement agency officials say border security organizations have apprehended several members of known Islamist terrorist organizations crossing the southern border in recent years.

Americans have a right to security – a human right. The Catholic Church decried Nazism and violence against Jews and Catholics during the reign of Pope Pius XII. Would Pope Francis have Americans do less to secure our borders against violent extremists today? Even with Pope Pius XII's admonitions, the church was accused of appeasement. Appeasing aggressors today will not have a more favorable outcome than it did 70 years ago.

Open borders are dangerous. The other things I witnessed in Iraq were the culture of violence against women, lack of rights for women, and institutionalization of pedophilia that accompanies radical Islamic extremism. All women and children are the most prevalent victims of violent terrorists acting out in the name of Islam. Is Pope Francis at all concerned about the thousands of sexual assaults and rapes of European women at the hands of radical Muslim men? Is the new standard of Christianity to allow the mass rape of women because of open borders? Just today, we learned that a 15 year old boy in Iraq was beheaded for listening to western music - that is not a Christian value either.

Catholics in America, and all Americans, have a human right to safety and security at home, without being maligned by their own religious leaders.

Joel Arends is chairman of Veterans for a Strong America and a veteran of the war in Iraq.