

## Pope Francis defends Muslims and blasts 'Islam is NOT terrorism'

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**POPE Francis said** it was wrong to identify Islam with terrorism and that social injustice and idolatry of money were among the prime causes of terrorism.

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Speaking aboard the plane taking him back to Rome after a five-day trip to Poland, he said: **"I think it is not right to identify Islam with terrorism"**.

**"It is not right and it is not true."**

**Francis was responding** to a question about the killing on July 26 of an 85-year-old Roman Catholic priest by knife-wielding attackers who burst into a church service in western France, forced the priest to his knees and slit his throat.

The attack was claimed by ISIS.

**He said:** "I think that in nearly all religions there is always a small fundamentalist group."

**He then added:** "We have them," referring to Catholicism.

**The Pope continued:** "I don't like to talk about Islamic violence because every day when I look at the papers I see violence here in Italy - someone **killing his girlfriend**, someone **killing his mother-in-law**. These are baptised Catholics.

**"If I speak of Islamic violence, I have to speak of Catholic violence. Not all Muslims are violent."**

**He said** there were various causes of terrorism.

**The Pope said:** "I know it dangerous to say this but **terrorism grows when there is no other option** and when money is made and it, instead of the person, is put at the centre of the world economy.

**"That is the first form of terrorism. That is a basic terrorism against all humanity. Let's talk about that."**

When he started the trip last week, **Francis said** the killing of the priest and a string of string of other attacks were proof the **"world is at war"** but that it was **not caused by religion**.

**He told reporters** on the plane that **lack of economic opportunities for young people in Europe was also to blame for terrorism**.

**He said:** "I ask myself how many young people that we Europeans have left devoid of ideals, who do not have work. Then they turn to drugs and alcohol or enlist in ISIS."

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