

Sant'Egidio promotes Catholic-Shiite dialogue

Groups join forces in condemning religious extremism and terrorism

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Photo: Vatican Radio

A coalition of Catholic and Shiite Muslim leaders strongly condemned terrorist acts by radical Islamic groups like Boko Haram and the Islamic State.

“Religious leaders who legitimize violence are neither religious, nor are they being leaders,” said Maytham Al-Salman, head of an interfaith center in Bahrain, reported Crux. “Those who promote diversity, acceptance of others, love and mercy, are the true religious leaders.”

Al-Salman said Islam has been hijacked by radical groups that use scripture to justify terrorism and human rights violations.

His remarks were released March 24 following a Rome summit organized by the Community of Sant’Egidio, a Catholic movement that specializes in conflict resolution and ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue, as well as the Iraq-based Al-Khoei Foundation. Its purpose was to consider the “responsibility of the faithful in a plural world toward peace.”

"In the global world religions live together, they are challenged in a very complex situation of neighborliness," said Sant'Egidio founder Andrea Riccardi.

Riccardi said that dialogue between Catholics and Shiites "is a very difficult path, but it is an important path, a path between two very different religions that are going through a difficult moment, living the challenge of martyrdom, of persecution, of lack of religious freedom in some parts of the world."

"These are worlds that must meet, that are different but that also have a great respect for each other."

French Cardinal Jean Louis Tauran, president of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue who participated in the summit, condemned what he called an "unscrupulous instrumentalization" of humanity's innate religious sense.

