Pope Francis warns of rising fascist forces around the world

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Vatican City, November 19 (RHC)-- Pope Francis has issued a warning against the rise of fascist forces worldwide that remind him of the Nazis of the 20th Century as he also railed against corporate crimes and announced consideration of adding “sins against ecology” to the church’s official teachings.

During a speech at the Vatican before the 20th World Congress of the International Association of Penal Law, a network of justice system and criminology experts from around the world, the leader of the Catholic Church said worrying developments both in the political arena and from the world of business remind him of dark episodes from humanity’s past, including Adolf Hitler’s Third Reich.

“It is not coincidental that at times there is a resurgence of symbols typical of Nazism,” Francis said as he decried the “culture of waste and hate” represented by contemporary politicians who spew derogatory and racists attacks against homosexuals, gypsies, Jewish people, and others. “I must confess to you,” he continued, “that when I hear a speech (by) someone responsible for order or for a government, I think of speeches by Hitler in 1934, 1936.”

The Pope also highlighted environmental degradation and said the church was considering adding crimes against nature and the environment to the catechism—the official text of church doctrine and teachings.

“We have to introduce, we are thinking about it, in the catechism of the Catholic Church, the sin

against ecology, the sin against our common home, because it's a duty," he said. Francis has been championed by climate activists for using his position to preach about the urgent need for humanity to recognize the dangers of human-caused global warming and calling on other world leaders—and the estimated 1.2 billion Catholics in the world—to act boldly to address the crisis.

Crimes against the environment, said the Pope, should be seen as "crimes against peace, which should be recognized by the international community." Francis also spoke of the crimes of big business, many of which receive too little attention and often go unpunished.

"One frequent omission of penal law," Francis told the criminal experts at the conference, "is the insufficient attention the crimes of the powerful receive, especially the large-scale delinquency of corporations."

In his speech, Francis condemned global corporations that are responsible for "countries' over-indebtedness and the plunder of our planet's natural resources." He said that their activities have the "gravity of crimes against humanity," especially when they lead to hunger, poverty and the eradication of indigenous peoples.

Such acts of "ecocide" must not go unpunished, said the pope, who in October concluded a synod of bishops to discuss the Amazon region and the safeguarding of the environment. "The principle of profit maximization, isolated from any other consideration, leads to a model of exclusion which violently attacks those who now suffer its social and economic costs, while future generations are condemned to pay the environmental costs," Francis said.

"The first thing lawyers should ask themselves today is what they can do with their knowledge to counter this phenomenon," he said, "which puts democratic institutions and the development of humanity itself at risk."
Edited by Ed Newman