

Pope Benedict meets with Iraqi Prime Minister

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Pope Benedict XVI met Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki on Friday at the papal residence outside Rome, where the two discussed a number of challenges facing Iraq and the need for interreligious dialogue, the Vatican said.

The talks took place at Castel Gandolfo, on Lake Albano just southeast of Rome, and covered fundamental aspects of the situation in Iraq, the Vatican said.

A particular importance was given to the topic of the numerous Iraqi refugees, inside and outside the country, who need assistance, a statement said.

The pope condemned the violence and the meeting reiterated the need for interreligious dialogue as a means to religious comprehension and to civil disobedience.

During the meeting the hope was expressed that Iraq can find its way to peace and to development through dialogue and collaboration of all ethnic and religious groups, including minorities, the Vatican statement said.

Al-Maliki also invited the pope to visit Iraq, the Vatican said.

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