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Statement by the Director of the Holy See Press Office, Matteo Bruni, regarding the visit of Pope Francis' visit to the Grand Ayatollah Al-Sistani

Statement by the Director of the Press Office

regarding the visit of Pope Francis to Grand Ayatollah Al-Sistani in Najaf

This morning, in Najaf, the Holy Father met Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali al-Husayni al-Sistani. During the courtesy visit, which lasted about forty five minutes, the Holy Father stressed the importance of cooperation and friendship between religious communities for contributing – through the cultivation of mutual respect and dialogue – to the good of Iraq, the region and the entire human family.

The meeting was an occasion for the Pope to thank Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani for speaking up – together with the Shiite community – in defence of those most vulnerable and persecuted amid the violence and great hardships of recent years, and for affirming the sacredness of human life and the importance of the unity of the Iraqi people.

In taking leave of the Grand Ayatollah, the Holy Father stated that he continues to pray that God, the Creator of all, will grant a future of peace and fraternity for the beloved land of Iraq, for the Middle East and for the whole world.