

Pope Francis is wrong on Falklands, says David Cameron

Written by Ian Traynor
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Pope Francis, a former archbishop of Buenos Aires, previously described the Falkland Islands as "Argentinian soil." (Photo by L'Osservatore Romano/Getty Images)

The Guardian

Less than 48 hours into the world's first Latin American papacy, David Cameron took issue in public with Pope Francis last Friday, quipping that the "white smoke over the Falklands was pretty clear" and dismissing the pontiff's explicit claims backing Argentinian ownership of the South Atlantic islands.

As archbishop of Buenos Aires, the new pope had frequently laid claim to Argentinian dominion over the Falklands, describing them as part of Argentina's homeland.

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He had presided over religious ceremonies commemorating his countrymen's servicemen who died in the 1982 war following the junta's invasion of the islands.

"I don't agree with him, respectfully, obviously," Cameron said when asked about Pope Francis's views on the Falklands.

In a referendum last week in the Falklands a total of three voted not to remain under the British, the tiniest minority among more than 1,500 who said the islands should remain a Crown overseas territory.

"There was a pretty extraordinarily clear referendum in the Falkland Islands," said the prime minister, "and I think that is a message to everyone in the world that the people of these islands have chosen very clearly the future they want and that choice should be respected by everyone."

On the 30th anniversary of the war last year at a mass in Buenos Aires, the archbishop had said that the Argentinian forces who died following the invasion "went out to defend their mother, the homeland, to reclaim what is theirs."

He described the British re-conquest under the Thatcher government as "usurpation."