

Vatican suggests Israel breaks law in some responses to terrorism: Holy See will not oppose only Palestinian acts

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The Vatican, in a sharp retort to Israeli criticism of Pope Benedict XVI, said it could not protest every act of Palestinian terrorism because Israel's responses are "not always compatible with the norms of international law."

The unusually pointed statement issued by the Vatican on July 28 follows Israeli criticism that the pope ignored Israel when mentioning terrorist attacks in London, Egypt, Iraq and Turkey four days earlier.

Israel summoned the Holy See's ambassador to Israel to lodge a formal complaint, but the Vatican statement called the complaints "groundless." The Vatican appeared to take particular offense at suggestions that the late Pope John Paul II had been silent on the issue.

The public war of words between the Vatican and Jerusalem has threatened to sour the new pope's overtures to Jews, as well as John Paul's long legacy of unprecedented good relations with them. Under John Paul the Vatican established formal diplomatic relations with Israel in 1994.

The Vatican statement also warned Israel against trying to influence the Holy See's international diplomacy. "Just as the Israeli government understandably does not allow its pronouncements to be dictated by others, neither can the Holy See accept lessons and directives from any other authority concerning the orientation and contents of its own declarations," it said. *-RNS*