

Vatican hails end of Gadhafi regime

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VATICAN CITY (RNS) The Vatican called the death of Libya's longtime leader Col. Moammar Gadhafi the end of a "harsh and oppressive regime," and pledged to work with the country's new government.

Gadhafi, 69, was shot by rebels on Thursday (Oct. 20) near his native city of Sirte, and video images of his dead body appeared almost immediately on the Internet.

"It is hoped now that the Libyan people might be spared further violence due to a spirit of revenge, and that the new leaders can undertake as soon as possible efforts necessary for bringing peace and rebuilding in a spirit of solidarity," the Holy See Press Office said in a statement.

The Vatican said it is ready to work with the country's National Transitional Council, now that it is "acting effectively as the government in Tripoli."

It added that Libya's "small Catholic community" is ready to assist in rebuilding, "especially in the charitable and health fields."

During the civil war that ended Gadhafi's nearly 42 years in power, the Catholic bishop of Tripoli, Giovanni Innocenzo Martinelli, vociferously opposed the NATO airstrikes in support of the rebel forces.

"Gadhafi is a Bedouin: You can't change his mind by bombing him," Martinelli told an interviewer this summer. "You cannot crush the Bedouin."