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A group of people with suitcases gather outside white buses. Some women wear headscarves

People fleeing clashes between the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces and the army gather at the bus station in Khartoum, Sudan, April 19, 2023. (OSV News photo/El-Tayeb Siddig, Reuters)

Carol Glatz

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Vatican City — April 24, 2023
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Pope Francis has appealed for an end to violence in Sudan and a return to dialogue.

"I invite everyone to pray for our Sudanese brothers and sisters," he said after reciting the midday "Regina Coeli" prayer with about 30,000 people gathered in St. Peter's Square April 23.

The pope had already expressed his concern about Sudan after the midday prayer April 16; fighting between forces loyal to two different generals has led to the deaths of hundreds of civilians since April 13. The power struggle has brought violence, shootings and bombings to the capital Khartoum and elsewhere. Electricity, internet and access to food and water have been cut off for many of the people.

Francis said April 23, "Unfortunately, the situation in Sudan remains grave, and therefore I renew my appeal for an end to the violence as soon as possible and for a return to the path of dialogue."

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The UN refugee agency, UNHCR, reported April 20 that between 10,000 and 20,000 people had fled Sudan's western Darfur region in the previous few days and sought refuge in neighboring Chad, which already hosts more than 370,000 Sudanese refugees.

"The majority of those arriving are women and children, who are currently sheltering out in the open," it said in a press release.

"The initial most pressing needs are water, food, shelter, health care, child protection and prevention of gender-based violence. Due to the violence experienced by those crossing the border, psychosocial support is also among our top priorities," it added.