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People hold up a sign saying, "Peace," as they join Pope Francis for the midday recitation of the "Regina Coeli" prayer in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican May 21, 2023. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

Carol Glatz

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Pope Francis has appealed for a cease-fire in Sudan and for the international community to help promote dialogue.

"It is sad, but, a month after the outbreak of violence in Sudan, the situation continues to be serious," he said after reciting the midday "Regina Coeli" prayer with about 25,000 people gathered in St. Peter's Square May 21.

The pope has been expressing his concern about Sudan after the midday prayer for weeks; fighting between forces loyal to two different generals has led to the deaths of hundreds of civilians and the displacement of hundreds of thousands more since April 15.

Several humanitarian cease-fire agreements have been reached by the two sides engaged in the power struggle, but the fighting has continued.

Francis said May 21, "While encouraging the partial agreements reached so far, I renew my heartfelt appeal for the laying down of weapons, and I ask the international community to spare no effort to make dialogue prevail and to alleviate the suffering of the people."

Food and fuel prices have skyrocketed and access to basic necessities has been cut off for many of the people.

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The humanitarian emergency also has spilled onto neighboring countries such as Chad, South Sudan and Egypt, where people have been fleeing to seek safety, according to the U.N. refugee agency, UNHCR, May 12.

The UNHCR reported, "Without a resolution to the crisis, many hundreds of thousands more people will be forced to flee in search of safety and basic assistance. UNHCR and its partners estimate that the number of refugees and returnees could reach 860,000 by October."

After praying the "Regina Coeli," the pope also asked people to continue to "be near the beleaguered Ukrainian people."