Vatican
Vatican News
A group of people hold a long banner that says "Fermiamo il massacro" and "Comitato Ferma

Members of an Italian anti-war coalition formed after the Russian invasion of Ukraine hold up a sign saying, "Let's stop the massacre," as they join Pope Francis for the recitation of the Angelus prayer in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Nov. 5, 2023. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)



by Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Vatican City — November 6, 2023
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

The wars being fought in Gaza, Ukraine and other parts of the world are destroying the future of the children who live in those nations, Pope Francis said.

Speaking about the conflict in Palestine and Israel after praying the Angelus in St. Peter's Square Nov. 5, the pope asked the world to "think of the children" who suffer as a result of war.

For "all the children affected by this war, as well as in Ukraine and in other conflicts: this is how their future is being killed," he said.

Francis noted that many children are among the hostages taken into Gaza by Hamas during its attack on Israel Oct. 7. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Oct. 30 that more than 200 hostages were being held in Gaza, including 33 children.

"May they return to their families," the pope said. "May the hostages be freed immediately."

He asked that "avenues be pursued so that an escalation of the conflict might be absolutely avoided," and "so that the wounded can be rescued, and help might get to the population of Gaza where the humanitarian situation is extremely serious." The Gaza Health Ministry estimates that more than 10,000 people have been killed and nearly 25,000 wounded in Israel's war against Hamas.

Advertisement

"I continue to think about the serious situation in Palestine and in Israel where many, many people have lost their lives," the pope said. "In God's name, I beg you to stop: Cease fire!"

Later Nov. 5, Francis spoke by phone with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, the Vatican press office confirmed.

Raisi's office posted a statement on its website saying the president thanked Francis for his call for a cease-fire and, "considering his position in the West," asked him to "play a role in correctly explaining the position of the oppressor and the oppressed."

The Iranian government statement made no mention of the Hamas attack on Israel Oct. 7, but focused only on Israel's response in laying siege to Gaza.

Vatican News noted that Francis also spoke by phone to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas Nov. 2, with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan Oct. 26 and with U.S. President Joe Biden Oct. 22.

After the Angelus prayer, Francis also expressed his closeness to the people of Nepal, where a Nov. 3 earthquake killed some 150 people, as well as to Afghan refugees in Pakistan who are facing mass deportation.