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Pope Francis holds a sheet of paper and speaks into a microphone

Pope Francis speaks to people gathered to pray the Angelus in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Nov 12, 2023. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)



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World leaders must ensure that humanitarian aid reaches the people affected by the ongoing wars in Gaza and Sudan, Pope Francis said.

"In Gaza, let the wounded be rescued immediately, let civilians be protected, let far more humanitarian aid be allowed to reach that stricken population," he said after praying the Angelus in St. Peter's Square Nov. 12. "May the hostages be freed, including the elderly and children."

Hamas militants held 239 Israeli hostages in Gaza as of Nov. 12. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Nov. 11 that a cease-fire in Gaza would be possible only after a release of all the hostages.

Yet the next day the pope publicly asked that "the weapons be stopped."

"They will never lead to peace," he said. "And may the conflict not widen. Enough! Enough, brothers!"

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"Every human being -- Christian, Jewish, Muslim -- of any people or religion, every human being is sacred, is precious in the eyes of God and has the right to live in peace," the pope added, asking people to "pray and work tirelessly so that the sense of humanity may prevail over hardness of heart."

He also appealed to leaders to support access to humanitarian aid in Sudan, where a civil conflict that began in April has led to the deaths of more than 9,000 people and displaced 5.6 million. The pope asked Sudanese leaders to "work in search of peaceful solutions" with the help of the international community.

"I am close to the sufferings of those dear populations of Sudan," he said. "Let us not forget these brothers and sisters of ours who are in distress."

Noting the many Ukrainian flags waved by visitors in St. Peter's Square, the pope greeted a group of pilgrims celebrating 400 years since the martyrdom of St. Josaphat -- a Basilian monk born in Ukraine -- and asked that people not forget "tormented Ukraine."