

Palestinians pray at Noble Sanctuary in Jerusalem’s Old City May 18. (CNS/Ammar Awad, Reuters)

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The respect religions have for the dignity and value of human life should help them convince their followers that "war must be rejected and peace cherished," leaders of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue said in a message to Muslims around the world.

"Dear Muslim brothers and sisters, let us join in extinguishing the fires of hatred, violence and war, and instead light the gentle candle of peace, drawing upon resources for peace that are present in our rich human and religious traditions," said the message for the month of Ramadan, which began March 10 in many countries.

Cardinal Miguel Ángel Ayuso, dicastery prefect, and Msgr. Indunil Janakaratne Kankanamalage, secretary, did not mention specific places of war in their letter, which was released March 15, although Muslim communities in Gaza, Sudan, Yemen, Ukraine and other places are fasting for the month under the shadow of violence.

"The growing number of conflicts in these days, ranging from military combat to armed clashes of varying intensity involving states, criminal organizations, armed gangs and civilians, has become truly alarming," the Vatican officials wrote.

The causes of the conflicts vary, they said, but while "part of our human family suffers grievously from the devastating effects of the use of these arms in warfare, others cynically rejoice in the great economic profit deriving from this immoral commerce," they wrote. "Pope Francis has described this as dipping a morsel of bread in the blood of our brother."

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But people have resources to promote peace and religious faith builds on that, they said.

"The desire for peace and security is profoundly rooted in the soul of every person of good will, since no one can fail to see the tragic effects of war in the loss of human lives, the toll of serious injury and the throngs of orphans and widows,"
the message said. "The destruction of infrastructure and property makes life hopelessly difficult, if not impossible. Sometimes hundreds of thousands of people

are displaced in their own country or forced to flee to other countries as refugees."

Building on their teachings about human dignity, the Vatican officials said, religious leaders need to form consciences "to respect the absolute value of the life of each person and his or her right to physical integrity, security and a dignified life."

Doing so, they said, will "contribute to the condemnation and rejection of war, any war and all wars."

All people of good will and, especially all believers, must condemn and reject war, they said. "Every war is fratricide, useless, senseless and dark. In war, everyone loses. Once again, in the words of Pope Francis: 'No war is holy, only peace is holy.'"