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Workers carry out operations April 4, 2024, at the site where a building collapsed following a 7.4 magnitude earthquake near
Hualien, Taiwan. At least nine people died when the quake struck April 3, and more than 1,000 people were injured. According to the BBC, rescuers were working to reach more than 600 stranded people, while dozens of people were still reported missing. (OSV News/Carlos Garcia Rawlins, Reuters)

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Pope Francis expressed his closeness to and solidarity with all those affected by a deadly earthquake in Taiwan.

His prayers were with all those who had died, "the injured and all those displaced, as well as for the emergency personnel engaged in recovery efforts," said a telegram sent April 4 to Bishop John Baptist Lee Keh-mien of Hsinchu, president of the Chinese regional bishops' conference of Taiwan.

The telegram, written on the pope's behalf, was signed by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state.

Taiwanese officials said at least nine people were killed and 1,067 injured after an earthquake with a magnitude of 7.4 struck the island of Taiwan April 3 around 8 a.m. local time. Multiple aftershocks, including a 6.4 magnitude tremor, followed with more expected to hit in the coming days.

About 200 people were trapped in road tunnels, mines and other collapsed infrastructure and thousands of homes were cut off from water.

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Speaking to AsiaNews, a news agency run by the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions, Bishop Philip Huang Chao-ming of Hualien said the "violent tremors caused disasters in several counties and cities, particularly in Hualien, which suffered the most damage."

"As the aftershocks continue, parish priests, pastoral committees and parishioners are urged to continue to remain vigilant, pay attention to safety, stay away from buildings and seek refuge in open spaces. We remain here to pay attention to the

needs and assist in the organizational work in a timely manner," the bishop wrote in a message posted on the diocese's website.

Francis was "deeply saddened" to learn of the loss of life and damage caused by the earthquake and "he assures everyone affected by this disaster of his heartfelt solidarity and spiritual closeness," the telegram said. He also invoked "upon all the divine blessings of consolation and strength."