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Catholic church leaders in the Middle East condemned a second wave of explosions of hand-held devices across Lebanon and in the capital, Beirut, apparently targeting the Iran-backed Hezbollah militant group.

Observers said the coordinated assault followed a similar operation on Sept. 17 that blew up thousands of pagers belonging to Hezbollah members.

Lebanese Cardinal Bechara Rai, patriarch of the Maronite Catholic Church, expressed deep sorrow over the critical developments in a Sept. 18 statement issued by Lebanon's Maronite Patriarchate's Secretariat.

According to Lebanon's National News Agency, "Cardinal Rai voiced his profound pain over the catastrophe affecting nearly 3,000 Lebanese citizens, some of whom have died and others who remain in critical condition following an Israeli attack involving the detonation of pager devices."

Apparently, the second day witnessed walkie-talkie radios, motorbike radios and security locks, along with other devices suspected to be detonated by Israel.

The patriarch "condemned the use of communication devices as tools for indiscriminate killing and denounced all forms of aggression against both Lebanese and Palestinian peoples, especially civilians," the NNA reported.

A New York Times reporter attending one of the funerals of the victims wrote: "There was chaos everywhere as a loudspeaker called for people to remove the batteries from their phones."

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The BBC reported that some of the blasts erupted during funerals for some of the dozen people the health ministry reported to be killed when thousands of Hezbollah members' pagers exploded in the first strike.

Hezbollah blamed Israel for the explosions and has vowed to avenge the deaths. Israel declined to comment on the claim.

Rai also prayed for the souls of the deceased, extended his condolences to their families, and wished for the speedy recovery of those injured.

Father Rifat Bader, director of the Catholic Center for Studies and Media in Jordan, expressed concern for the mounting loss of lives as the impact of Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip broadens.

"We will need an acute psychological treatment soon after the war for all the people who were there," Bader told OSV News.

"The main thing we are asking for is a cease-fire," he said. "A cease-fire will be key for the treatment and the healing of the people who are injured in their bodies, but of course in their spirits and psychological well-being."

Rai called for a comprehensive and just peace to take hold in the Middle East.