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Pope Leo XIV and Israeli President Isaac Herzog meet in the library of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican Sept. 4, 2025. (CNS/Vatican Media)

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The "whole situation" in the Middle East "is very serious," Pope Leo XIV told reporters after Israel launched an attack on Hamas leaders in Qatar.

"In these moments, there is very serious news of an Israeli attack against some Hamas leaders, but in Qatar," the pope said Sept. 9. Qatar, in the Persian Gulf, has been trying to mediate an end to the war between Israel and Hamas. The country's capital is Doha.

"The whole situation is very serious," the pope told the reporters who were waiting for him as he left Castel Gandolfo to return to the Vatican.

Danny Danon, the Israeli ambassador to the United Nations, posted on X: "The precise strike in Doha targeted senior Hamas leaders who planned the October 7 massacre and celebrated while our citizens were abducted. I commend our security forces for this courageous and precise operation. There is no hiding place for terrorists, and we will continue to pursue them everywhere."

But António Guterres, U.N. secretary-general, told a news conference in New York, "We are just learning about the Israeli attacks in Qatar, a country that has been playing a very positive role to achieve a ceasefire and the release of all hostages."

"I condemn this fragrant violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Qatar," Guterres said.

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Leo also told reporters gathered outside the Villa Barberini in Castel Gandolfo that he had just tried to phone Holy Family Parish in Gaza City, the only Latin-rite Catholic Church in Gaza.

"I just tried to call the pastor, but I have no news," the pope said. Israeli planes dropped leaflets on Gaza City in the morning, warning of a new attack on the city and encouraging civilians to evacuate.

Priests at both the compounds of the Greek Orthodox St. Porphyrius Church and Holy Family Church previously refused to evacuate since they were providing refuge for hundreds of civilians, including the elderly and children, who have nowhere else to go.

Both church compounds have been damaged by Israeli forces — St. Porphyrius in October 2023, and Holy Family in December 2023 and in July of this year. Israel's military said the strikes were unintentional.

"We need to pray a lot," Leo said.