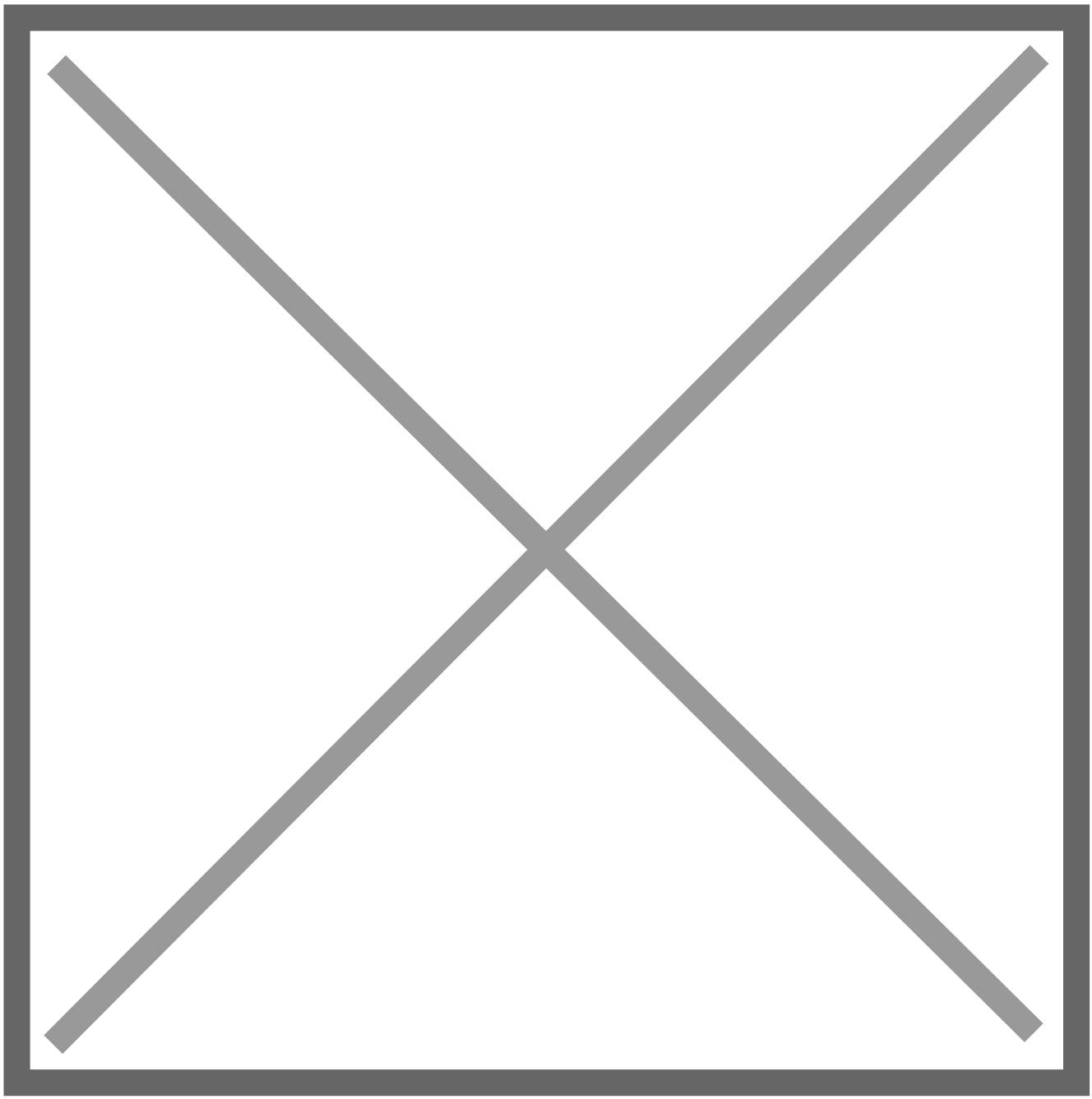
News



Members of the Spanish Civil Guard work along with other emergency personnel Jan. 19, 2026, next to one of two high-speed trains that were involved in a deadly derailment in Cordoba, Spain, near Adamuz. Spanish police said at least 39 people are confirmed dead and dozens injured late Jan. 18. (OSV News/Reuters/Susana Vera)

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ADAMUZ, Spain — January 20, 2026
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Pope Leo XIV expressed his condolences to the families of victims of a devastating accident in which two high-speed trains collided in southern Spain's Andalucia region.

In a telegram sent Jan. 19 on the pope's behalf to Archbishop Luis Javier Argüello García of Valladolid, president of the Spanish bishops' conference, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, said Leo was "deeply saddened to learn the painful news of the train accident in Adamuz" and offered "prayers for the eternal rest of the deceased."

"His Holiness conveys his heartfelt condolences to the families of the deceased, together with his expressions of comfort, spiritual closeness, and wishes for the speedy recovery of the injured," Parolin wrote.

Invoking the intercession of Our Lady of the Pillar, patroness of Spain, the pope encouraged rescue teams "to persevere in their efforts of relief and assistance."

According to the Spanish newspaper El País, Spanish officials said 39 people died after a high-speed train traveling from Malaga to Madrid derailed in the evening Jan. 18 and fell onto another track, where it collided with a train heading in the opposite direction toward the southern Spanish town of Huelva.

The tragic collision occurred in Adamuz, a town in the southern province of Córdoba.

As of Jan. 19, 48 people remain hospitalized, 12 of whom were in critical condition, El País reported.

In a tweet posted to his X account, Spanish Transportation Minister Óscar Puente warned that the number of fatalities may continue to rise and expressed his gratitude to rescue teams working through the night.

Speaking to journalists at the accident site, Puente said the cause was unknown and that it was "extremely strange," since the derailment occurred on a straight track renovated in May.

King Felipe, along with his wife and daughter, Queen Leticia and Princess Leonor, who were in Athens for the funeral of the king's aunt, Princess Irene of Greece, expressed his "devastation and concern" and said he would travel to Adamuz as soon as possible.

"I understand the desperation of the families and those injured who have suffered this accident, and we are all truly worried. We hope they will recover as soon as possible," he told journalists in the Greek capital.

The king, who is Catholic, also expressed his gratitude to the residents of Adamuz, who went out of their way to help survivors.

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Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez tweeted his condolences to the victims' families, acknowledging that the accident was a cause of "profound sorrow for our country."

"No words can alleviate such immense suffering, but I want them to know that the entire country stands with them in this extremely difficult moment," Sanchez wrote.

Catholic officials in the country also reacted to news of the accident, including Cardinal José Cobo of Madrid, who expressed his sorrow and offered prayers for "the eternal rest of the victims, for the recovery of the injured, for their families, and for those who dedicate themselves to assistance efforts."

Auxiliary Bishop Francisco César García Magán of Toledo, secretary general of the Spanish bishops' conference, wrote that he was "devastated" by the train accident and prayed for the victims and their families and for the quick recovery of those hospitalized.

"I join in the grief of their families. I ask that they find consolation and strength in the Lord in these moments of such great suffering," he wrote Jan. 18 on X.

The pastor and parishioners of St. Andrew's Church in Adamuz, where the accident occurred, immediately mobilized and opened the church's facilities to help those rescued.

According to the Diocese of Córdoba, the volunteers at the church received passengers from the train, providing them with food, drink and shelter. Parishioners and residents in Adamuz brought food and supplies for those arriving.

In an interview with the Catalan radio station, Ràdio Estel, Fr. Rafael Prados Godoy, pastor of St. Andrew's, said that an hour before train passengers arrived, locals were already bringing supplies to the church.

"There were people coming down with a bottle of water in their hand. There were others coming down with blankets, without knowing if it was needed or not because, of course, it comes from the heart; to help with whatever one can, with whatever one has," he said.

Prados told Ràdio Estel that immediately after the accident, he received a call from Bishop Jesús Fernández González of Córdoba, who offered condolences and informed him that he would visit the parish Jan. 19.

He also said the Diocese of Córdoba, as well as the local Caritas office, has offered to assist the parish with any supplies and resources needed in relief efforts.

Speaking to Ràdio Estel, Fernández said he visited family members who are "awaiting news of their loved ones from whom they still have received no word."

"The situation, as you can imagine, is one of enormous sadness in that place and throughout the town," the bishop said. "It is a small town that has suffered this tremendous misfortune, which is making us suffer and wait with anxiety to see if the rescue efforts conclude," the bishop said.

Asked how he has accompanied those anxiously awaiting news about their families, Fernández said he is approaching it "in a very simple way because in these situations, words are almost unnecessary."

"I had the opportunity to sit with a person who has a missing relative. It was a family traveling in the first car, the most affected, with five family members. Four of them are known to be hospitalized: some of the children are in serious condition, and another person is missing," he recalled.

"I was able to speak with that person with tears in their eyes, and above all, (offer) a hug, a hug of closeness, which I believe is what consoles the most in these moments," the bishop noted.

Fernández told Ràdio Estel that tragedies like these are a reminder "that we are truly fragile" and that "we must always have trust in providence."

"Even in these cases, we have seen how the Lord has moved hearts; charity and solidarity have overflowed, and we have that joy and that hope that love heals wounds and that the Lord gives eternal life to our deceased as well," the bishop said.