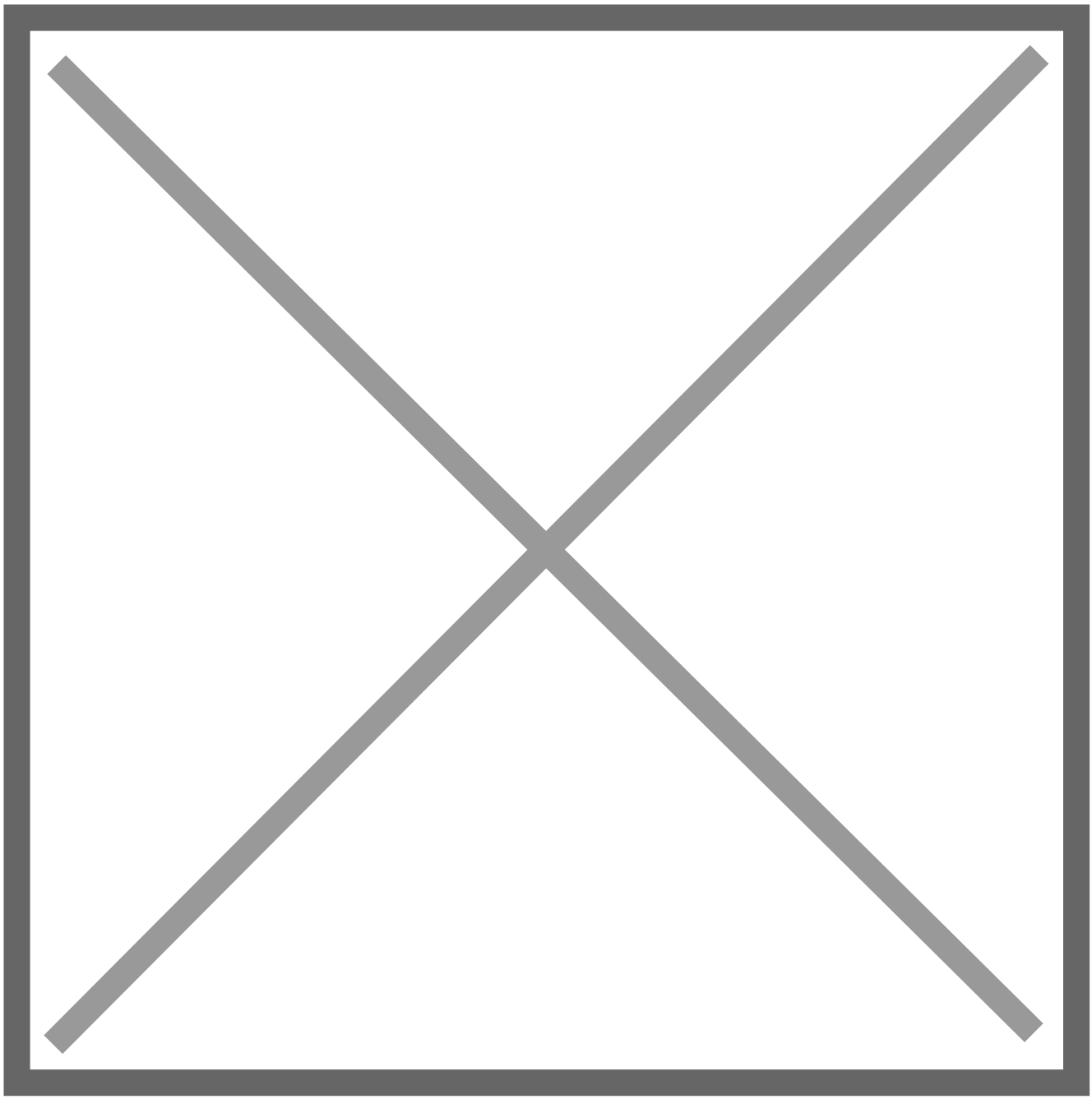
News



Smoke rises following an explosion in Tehran, Iran, March 1, 2026, after Israel and the U.S. launched strikes on Iran. (OSV News/West Asia News Agency via Reuters/Majid Asgaripour)

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As the United States and Israel continued their campaign against Iran and the newest war continued to spread across the Middle East, bishops and Christian leaders appealed for peace before the conflict escalates any further, with the Catholic Church's humanitarian giant Caritas saying it "unequivocally" condemns the attacks which would "destabilize" the region.

In a statement published Feb. 28, Italian Bishop Paolo Martinelli, apostolic vicar of Southern Arabia, which includes the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Yemen, expressed his "concern" about the situation and called on the faithful "to remain calm and serene, while at the same time carefully follow all the instructions given by our civil authorities."

"Most of all, it is a time for all of us to remain united in prayer for peace. I invite you all to pray the rosary every day for peace and reconciliation. During all Holy Masses, let us pray for peace and the security of all people in this region," he wrote.

The U.S.-Israeli-led strikes began in the early morning hours Feb. 28, targeting senior Iranian leaders, resulting in the death of Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Iran responded with retaliatory airstrikes against Israel and U.S. military assets in the region, including in Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Kuwait.

In a March 1 interview with The New York Times, President Donald Trump said the U.S. military operation would last "four to five weeks."

"It won't be difficult," Trump told The New York Times. "We have tremendous amounts of ammunition. You know, we have ammunition stored all over the world in different countries."

Pope Leo XIV said he was following developments in the region "with profound concern" and called for an end to the conflict before it becomes "an irreparable abyss."

"Stability and peace are not built through mutual threats, nor with weapons that sow destruction, pain, and death, but only through reasonable, authentic, and responsible dialogue," the pope said during his Sunday Angelus address March 1.

The pope expanded on his appeal for peace during his visit to the Roman parish of the Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the afternoon.

Speaking off-the-cuff with children and young people of the parish, the pope said he was "deeply concerned about what's happening in the world: especially yesterday, today, and for who knows how many more days, in the Middle East."

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"War, again!" he exclaimed. "We too must be heralds of the message of peace, the peace of Jesus, the peace that God wants for everyone. So we must pray a lot for peace and seek ways to live in unity and always reject the temptation to harm others. Violence is never the right choice. And we must always choose good."

Echoing the pope's concerns, Caritas Internationalis, the Vatican-based confederation of Catholic relief agencies around the world, said it "unequivocally condemns the US and Israel's attacks on Iran" which it said would only further destabilize the region.

"These acts of war increase the tension, violence and instability in the region, jeopardising prospects of peace, and constitute grave violations of human dignity, the rule of law, and international law, including the UN Charter and International Humanitarian Law, which protects civilians and non-combatants in conflict," Caritas said in a statement published March 1.

"In this moment of rapidly escalating regional tension, Caritas urges all parties to step back from the brink immediately and diffuse the situation, to refrain from further military action, and to uphold their obligation to protect civilians without exception," the organization said.

Citing the pope's words on the conflict, Caritas said that "justice, restraint, and the primacy of human life must guide national leaders' every decision in this critical moment."

"The international community must act swiftly to prevent further loss of innocent life and to ensure accountability, protection, and a genuine path toward peace," the statement said.

The Argentine bishops' conference also weighed in on the conflict, saying the images of the devastation in the Middle East were "shocking."

"These realities pain us deeply and remind us that violence is never a way to resolve conflicts and only brings destruction," the bishops said in a Feb. 28 message signed by Archbishop Daniel Colombo of Mendoza, president of the Argentine bishops' conference, and Auxiliary Bishop Raúl Pizarro of San Isidro, the conference's secretary general.

"As Christians, we feel challenged to embody the Word of Jesus: 'Blessed are the peacemakers.' Our commitment to peace becomes fervent and persevering prayer, imploring the good God for the cessation of all conflict and the silencing of weapons in favor of dialogue," the bishops said.

The Argentine bishops urged all Catholics in the country "pray fervently for peace in the world" and that, in "every Eucharist, as well as in every personal and communal prayer, raise a trusting plea for the establishment of a lasting peace."

"May Mary, Queen of Peace, intercede for our wounded world and make us artisans of peace," the bishops said.

This story appears in the **War in Iran** feature series. View the full series.