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Pope Leo XIV greets people in Piazza della Liberta in Castel Gandolfo near Rome Aug. 16, 202

Pope Leo XIV greets people in Piazza della Liberta in Castel Gandolfo near Rome Aug. 16, 2026. After leading the Angelus prayer, the pope decried the violence in the West Bank and called on the international community to "work toward advancing the two-state solution." (OSV News/Vatican Media/Simone Risoluti)

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Warning against increased violence in the West Bank, Pope Leo XIV urged world leaders to decisively pursue an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel.

"I renew my appeal for an end to the ongoing violence against the Palestinian civilian population in the West Bank, and I urgently call on the international community to work toward advancing the two-state solution, for a just and lasting peace," the pope said Aug. 16 after praying the Angelus with pilgrims gathered outside the papal residence in Castel Gandolfo.

The pope's appeal came amid reports of violent attacks by Israeli settlers, including in Taybeh, one of the last remaining Christian villages in the West Bank.

According to a report by Reuters, Israel's military closed access to Taybeh from non-residents due to attacks on Palestinians by Israeli settlers.

Although Israel said the military's presence was to protect Palestinian residents, a U.N. inquiry released in June accused the country's armed forces of enabling settler violence in the West Bank.

Israeli authorities, the report stated, "have consistently acknowledged settler violence as a problem, while promoting structural conditions that enable it," including settlement expansions, infrastructure, protection of settlers and reinforcing "the widespread impunity for attacks."

In an interview with Vatican News published Aug. 10, Fr. Bashar Fawadleh, parish priest of Christ the Redeemer Church in Taybeh, said the continued violence by settlers was "a deliberate strategy of harassment designed to create a climate of fear and pressure Palestinian families into leaving their land."

Lamenting that Christians in Taybeh "feel forgotten," Fawadleh urged Catholics to "speak out about the situation here" and "to talk about these Christian brothers and sisters who are living in terror."

The priest urged Leo "to intervene for this last Christian village in the West Bank, so that these settler attacks cease and the occupation of our land stops. We simply want to live in peace, with justice and dignity."

Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, visited Taybeh Aug. 15 and celebrated Mass on the Feast of the Assumption at Christ the Redeemer Church, where he reassured the Catholic Church's commitment to the village.

"We will continue to do everything within our power to preserve the ecclesial presence here, at every level throughout the Holy Land," Pizzaballa said.

The cardinal encouraged Christians to learn from Mary and to not to fall into despair "because this situation can contaminate our hearts."

"But we want to remain a community that gives birth to life, without giving up or abandoning our rights, our right to life. So be courageous. Do not be afraid," he said.

Leo's call for a two-state solution echoed the appeal he made to members of the Vatican diplomatic corps early this year.

"The Holy See is especially attentive to any diplomatic initiative that seeks to guarantee to the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip a future of lasting peace and justice in their own land, as well as to the entire Palestinian people and the entire Israeli people," the pope said Jan. 9.

"In particular, the two-state solution remains the institutional perspective for meeting the legitimate aspirations for both peoples; yet sadly, there has been an increase in violence in the West Bank against the Palestinian civilian population, which has the right to live in peace in its own land," he said.

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