



Pope Leo XIV speaks with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun during a private meeting at the Vatican Aug. 20, 2026. (OSV News/Vatican Media/Simone Risoluti)



by Justin McLellan

Vatican Correspondent

[View Author Profile](#)

jmclellan@ncronline.org

Follow on Twitter at [@m/McLellan Js](https://twitter.com/McLellan Js)

[Join the Conversation](#)

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. [Learn more](#)

Rome — August 20, 2026

[Share on Bluesky](#)[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)

The Vatican said it has "serious concerns" over the implementation of a U.S.-brokered agreement centered on disarming the Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah in southern Lebanon and removing Israeli troops from the region.

In an unusually direct [communiqué](#) following Pope Leo XIV's 30-minute meeting with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun on Thursday, Aug. 20, the Vatican said Aoun's subsequent meetings with Vatican diplomatic officials "focused primarily on the Trilateral Framework Agreement, signed by the United States, Israel, and Lebanon."

"The Holy See, while welcoming the signing of the document, expressed serious concerns about the difficulties being encountered in its implementation and pledged its support for efforts toward that end," the Vatican stated.

The [agreement](#), signed in June, provided for the creation of initial "pilot zones" among the large swaths of southern Lebanon currently occupied by the Israeli military, which would yield its control to the Lebanese Armed Forces.

Opponents of the deal criticized a lack of a fixed timetable for the Israeli withdrawal, and Israel has [refused](#) to expand the area of its withdrawal in subsequent talks with Lebanon.

A month prior to the deal's signing, Reuters [reported](#) that Israel had rendered about a fifth of Lebanon's territory uninhabitable for its residents through military occupation and evacuation orders that began with a ground invasion of the country's southern region in March.

Advertisement

Following Thursday's meeting at the Vatican, the Lebanese president's office published a [statement](#) that said Aoun, a Maronite Christian, had thanked Leo "for all his efforts to support Lebanon in achieving its demands to end the Israeli occupation

and attacks on its territory."

"President Aoun also called on the Holy Father and the Holy See to support Lebanon in achieving a complete Israeli withdrawal from occupied Lebanese territory, paving the way for the reconstruction of what Israel has destroyed and the return of displaced persons to their lands and villages," the statement said.

The Lebanese president is also scheduled to meet with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni on Friday while in Rome.

Leo [visited Lebanon](#) as part of his first international trip as pope last December, during which he [called](#) for the entire Middle East region to "change course" and "reject the mindset of revenge and violence."

The National Catholic Reporter's Rome Bureau is made possible in part by the generosity of Joan and Bob McGrath.