



Demonstrators show a placard as they gather with priests from various countries, members of the 'Priests Against Genocide' network, who carry a shroud bearing the names of 300 Palestinian and Lebanese children whom organizers say were killed by the Israeli military after ceasefires were declared, during a demonstration near St. Peter's Square at the Vatican, Tuesday, Sept. 22, 2026. (AP Photo/Gregorio Borgia)

by The Associated Press

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Some 150 Catholic priests and friars, a bishop and nuns from around the world marched to the Vatican and prayed Tuesday in front of St. Peter's Basilica to call for an end to what they called the "genocide" in Gaza.

The protesters carried a banner down the main boulevard leading to the Vatican bearing the names of 300 children who died during Israel's war in Gaza and southern Lebanon.

The marchers didn't enter Vatican territory and had an Italian police escort.

The "Priests Against Genocide" network was born in August 2025 and currently includes over 2,500 priests and bishops from five continents, organizers said. Among those marching Tuesday was the bishop of Manfredonia, Italy, Franco Moscone.

After praying near the Vatican, the protesters moved to the Palestinian and Lebanese embassies, and then onto the Rome headquarters of Italian defense manufacturer Leonardo SpA. It was a significantly larger turnout than the march the group held last year.

A number of experts, including those commissioned by a U.N. body, have said Israel's war in the Gaza Strip amounted to genocide, and Pope Francis once called for an investigation to determine if a genocide had taken place. The accusation has been vehemently denied by Israel, which says it tries to avoid harming civilians and has blamed their deaths on Hamas because the militants operated in densely populated areas.

Israel launched its offensive in Gaza in response to Hamas attacks that killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, on Oct. 7, 2023. Gaza health officials say over 73,000 Palestinians have died. They do not give a breakdown between civilians and militants, but say women and children make up nearly half of the dead.

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