



Pope Leo XIV holds up the book of the Gospel as he celebrates a mass in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, Thursday, Oct.8, 2026, for the annual opening of the academic year at pontifical universities, joining Rome's 22 pontifical institutions and numerous others worldwide. (AP/Gregorio Borgia)

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Pope Leo XIV on Oct. 10 declared capital punishment "inadmissible" as he marked the World Day Against the Death Penalty and his native United States announced plans to [livestream an execution](#) by firing squad.

In a post on X, the American pope quoted the revised [Catholic teaching on capital punishment](#) ushered in by Pope Francis that the death penalty attacks the inherent dignity of a human being.

"The common good can be safeguarded and the requirements of justice can be met without recourse to capital punishment," read the post under Leo's official handle, @Pontifex. "Effective systems of detention have been developed that protect citizens while at the same time do not completely deprive those who are guilty of the possibility of redemption."

The post ended with the hashtag #NoDeathPenalty.

The U.S. Department of Defense announced Oct. 8 that the firing squad execution of Nidal Malik Hasan, convicted of a 2009 shooting at the Fort Hood military base, will be livestreamed. Hasan, scheduled to be executed at Fort Hood on Dec. 3, was convicted of killing 13 people and wounding 32 others.

Leo didn't refer specifically to the planned execution, or the Sept. 30 [botched lethal injection in Tennessee](#) that has revived debate over the death penalty in the United States. Oct. 10 is World Day Against the Death Penalty, and it is common for the pope's official social media accounts to post messages marking such commemorations.

But Leo's post came just hours after his top deputy, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican secretary of state, said explicitly that the planned U.S. public execution was "unacceptable."

Francis in 2018 amended official Catholic teaching to declare capital punishment "inadmissible" in all circumstances.

Previously, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the official compendium of church teaching, said the church didn't exclude recourse to capital punishment "if this is the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against the unjust aggressor."

Past popes had upheld that position, though St. John Paul II began urging an end to the practice and stressed that guilty people were just as deserving of dignity as innocent ones.

Like Francis before him, Leo has made visiting prisons a key part of his papal travel in a bid to give a message of hope to inmates and underscore their inherent dignity, that God loves them and that there is always a chance for redemption.

"If any of you fear being abandoned by everyone, know that God will never abandon you, and that the church will stand by your side," [Leo told inmates](#) at the notorious Bata prison in Equatorial Guinea during his visit in April. Leo is to visit a prison in Buenos Aires during his upcoming tour through Latin America.

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Speaking specifically about the United States, Parolin said the planned livestreamed execution was "truly incomprehensible" and "unacceptable to turn death into a spectacle."

"The Church's position is one of total opposition to the death penalty; it is incompatible with human dignity and serves as no deterrent," Parolin said in comments carried by Vatican News. "It is truly incomprehensible that anyone would want to use this system today — I don't know for what purpose. It is certainly unacceptable to turn death into a spectacle; even if the person is guilty, of course, there are other methods."

The head of the U.S. bishops conference, Archbishop Paul Coakley, expressed "shock" and "great sorrow" at the Pentagon's plans.

"In no way can Hasan's actions be condoned but this decision is a barbaric promotion of a culture of death and must be reconsidered," he said in a statement Oct. 9. "The public execution even of one who has done grave harm will only further undermine the moral fabric of our nation and be a blight on the conscience of its people."

Read this next: [Pete Hegseth would like you to watch a public execution](#)