

Pope asks cardinals to send message of support to suffering Ukrainians

Cindy Wooden Catholic News Service | Feb. 21, 2014

A day after at least 75 people were reported killed in clashes between police and protesters in Ukraine's capital, Pope Francis asked the College of Cardinals to send a message of support to the two Ukrainian cardinals who are suffering because their people are.

"I want to send a greeting, not just in my name, but in the name of all, to the Ukrainian cardinals -- Cardinal (Marian) Jaworski, archbishop emeritus of Lviv, and Cardinal (Lubomyr) Husar, major archbishop emeritus of Kiev -- who are suffering very much these days because of the many difficulties in their homeland," the pope told the cardinals Friday at the beginning of a meeting to discuss the family. Neither of the Ukrainian cardinals was in Rome for the meeting.

According to news reports, with the help of Russian and European mediators, an agreement to end the protests and bloodshed was reached early that morning.

The massive death toll was preceded by a night of violent confrontations Tuesday and Wednesday, which left more than two dozen people dead. Pope Francis and Ukrainian church leaders had called Wednesday for an end to all violence and a serious commitment to dialogue for the good of Ukraine.

"With a troubled heart I am following what is happening in Kiev," Pope Francis said at the end of his weekly general audience Wednesday.

"I assure the Ukrainian people of my closeness and I pray for the victims of the violence, for their families and for the injured," he said.

"I call on all sides to stop every violent action and seek agreement and peace," he added.

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