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Pope Leo XIV talks to visitors and pilgrims during his weekly general audience in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican Aug. 27, 2025. He ended the audience with a strong appeal for an end to the fighting in Gaza. (CNS/Lola Gomez)

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Vatican City — August 27, 2025

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Pope Leo XIV appealed to Israel and Hamas to stop the violence that has caused "so much terror, destruction and death."

"I plead for all hostages to be freed, a permanent ceasefire to be reached, the safe entry of humanitarian aid to be facilitated and humanitarian law to be fully respected," the pope said at the end of his weekly general audience Aug. 27.

Without naming Israel, Leo specified that he was calling for full observance of "the duty to protect civilians and the prohibitions against collective punishment, the indiscriminate use of force and the forced displacement of populations."

The pope said he endorsed the statement made Aug. 26 by Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, and Patriarch Theophilos III, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, calling for an end to "this spiral of violence, to put an end to the war and to give priority to the common good."

The two patriarchs, who both have parishes in Gaza City sheltering the displaced, said, "It seems that the Israeli government's announcement that 'the gates of hell will open' is indeed taking on tragic forms" as the Israeli military campaign against Hamas intensified.

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Local media reported that Israel wants civilians in Gaza City, including the hundreds of people in the Greek Orthodox compound of St. Porphyrius and the Catholic Holy Family compound, to evacuate to southern Gaza.

But "among those who have sought shelter within the walls of the compounds, many are weakened and malnourished due to the hardships of the last months," the patriarchs wrote. "Leaving Gaza City and trying to flee to the south would be nothing less than a death sentence. For this reason, the clergy and nuns have decided to remain and continue to care for all those who will be in the compounds."

Praying for the conversion of hearts and for peace, the patriarchs said, "There has been enough devastation, in the (Palestinian) territories and in people's lives. There is no reason to justify keeping civilians as prisoners and hostages in dramatic conditions. It is now time for the healing of the long-suffering families on all sides."

Pope Leo ended the audience asking that "Mary, queen of peace, source of consolation and hope," would intercede "to obtain reconciliation and peace in that land so dear to all."