

# Pope calls for end to 'cruel,' 'senseless' war in Ukraine

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Pope Francis renewed his call for an end to the war in Ukraine and strongly denounced the conflict as a barbaric act used by those in power at the cost of innocent lives.

“We need to reject war, a place of death where fathers and mothers bury their children, where men kill their brothers and sisters without even having seen them, where the powerful decide and the poor die,” the pope told pilgrims gathered in St. Peter’s Square March 27 for his Sunday Angelus address.

The consequences of war, he added, especially the displacement of children, “not only devastate the present, but future of society as well.”

“I read that from the beginning of the aggression in Ukraine, one of every two children has been displaced from their country. This means destroying the future, causing dramatic trauma in the smallest and most innocent among us. This is the bestiality of war – a barbarous and sacrilegious act,” the pope said.

According to UNICEF, Russia’s war against Ukraine – now entering its second month – has displaced an estimated 4.3 million children, which is more than half of Ukraine’s estimated 7.5 million children.

“The war has caused one of the fastest large-scale displacements of children since World War II,” said Catherine Russell, UNICEF executive director, in a statement March 24. “This is a grim milestone that could have lasting consequences for generations to come.”

Warning of the “danger of self-destruction,” the pope said that war “should not be something that is inevitable” and that humanity “should not accustom ourselves to war.”

He also urged political leaders to dedicate their efforts to not only ending the war in Ukraine but “to abolish war, to erase it from human history before it erases human history.”

“I renew my appeal. Enough. Stop it. Silence the weapons. Move seriously toward peace,” the pope said before leading pilgrims in praying the Hail Mary.

The day after the March 25 consecration of Russia and Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Pope Francis met with Cardinal Konrad Krajewski, the papal almoner, and blessed an ambulance he was donating to the Ukrainian city of Lviv, which has seen an influx of refugees escaping violence from the eastern side of the country. Cardinal Krajewski left the Vatican March 26 to drive the ambulance to Lviv.