

Pope: End of bloodshed in Ivory Coast, Libya

Carol Glatz Catholic News Service | Apr. 6, 2011

VATICAN CITY -- Pope Benedict XVI appealed for an end to the bloodshed in Ivory Coast and Libya, saying hatred and violence never led to victory.

He called for all sides involved in the separate conflicts to end the fighting and start talks.

"I continue to follow with great apprehension the dramatic events the dear people of Ivory Coast and Libya are experiencing," he said at the end of his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square April 6.

The pope said his prayers are with all those affected by the conflicts.

"Violence and hatred are always a failure! For this reason I am making a new and urgent appeal to all sides involved to begin working for peace and dialogue and prevent further bloodshed," he said.

The pope also expressed his hopes that Cardinal Peter Turkson, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, would soon be able to enter Ivory Coast.

The pope had sent the Ghanaian cardinal as his personal envoy to show his solidarity with the people affected by the conflict and to offer support for efforts for peace and reconciliation.

However, as of April 6, Cardinal Turkson had been stuck in Accra, Ghana, for four days, unable to get a flight into Ivory Coast since fighting in its largest city, Abidjan, had closed the airport.

News reports early April 6 said that forces supporting President-elect Alassane Ouattara launched a final assault on the residence of outgoing President Laurent Gbagbo, who has refused to leave office after Ouattara was declared the winner of elections in November.

The fighting stopped a day earlier when Gbagbo announced he was ready to negotiate his departure. Hours later, Gbagbo reversed course, leading to the renewed fighting.

City residents were still barricaded in their homes -- many of them without water and dwindling food supplies -- according to news reports and aid agencies.

In Libya, a NATO-led coalition has been launching airstrikes on ground targets and maintaining a no-fly zone to protect civilians from attacks by forces loyal to Moammar Gadhafi.

However, the bishop in Libya's capital, Tripoli, has been highly critical of the West's military response to the crisis, saying civilians have been killed as a consequence of buildings being hit or collapsing from the airstrikes.