

"Absolute" Respect for Life Needed in Mideast

Pope Urges Halt to Wave of Violence in the "Land of Jesus"

VATICAN CITY, MARCH 2, 2008 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- The only way to find peace in the Middle East is by showing respect for human life, even the life of the enemy, says Benedict XVI.

The Pope affirmed this today after leading the midday Angelus in St. Peter's Square. He again appealed for peace between Israelis and Palestinians, as a new wave of violence has plagued the Gaza Strip in recent days.

"I renew my pressing invitation to Israeli and Palestinian officials, that this spiral of violence be stopped, unilaterally, without conditions," the Holy Father said. "Only by showing an absolute respect for human life, even that of the enemy, can one hope to provide a future of peace and coexistence for the young generations of those peoples who both have their roots in the Holy Land."

"I invite the whole Church to lift up supplications to the Almighty for peace in the land of Jesus and to show attentive and active solidarity with both populations, Israeli and Palestinian," he said at the conclusion of his message.

According to information acquired by international agencies from Palestinian medical sources, since the morning of Feb. 27 more than 100 Palestinians -- both Hamas militants and a large number of civilians -- have been killed and more than 150 wounded by Israeli fire in Gaza.