

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE MEMBERS OF THE
DIPLOMATIC CORPS ACCREDITED TO THE HOLY SEE**

Sala Regia

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[Link](#)

[...] It is with this confidence that I wish to look to the year ahead. I continue to be hopeful that the conflict in Syria will finally come to an end. Concern for that beloved people, and a desire to avert the worsening of violence, moved me last September to call for a day of fasting and prayer. Through you I heartily thank all those in your countries – public authorities and people of good will – who joined in this initiative. What is presently needed is a renewed political will to end the conflict. In this regard, I express my hope that the Geneva 2 Conference, to be held on 22 January, will mark the beginning of the desired peace process. At the same time, full respect for humanitarian law remains essential. It is unacceptable that unarmed civilians, especially children, become targets. I also encourage all parties to promote and ensure in every way possible the provision of urgently-needed aid to much of the population, without overlooking the praiseworthy effort of those countries – especially Lebanon and Jordan – which have generously welcomed to their territory numerous refugees from Syria. [...]

[...] In other parts of Africa as well, Christians are called to give witness to God's love and mercy. We must never cease to do good, even when it is difficult and demanding, and when we endure acts of intolerance if not genuine persecution. In vast areas of Nigeria violence persists, and much innocent blood continues to be spilt. I think above all of the Central African Republic, where much suffering has been caused as a result of the country's tensions, which have frequently led to devastation and death. As I assure you of my prayers for the victims and the many refugees, forced to live in dire poverty, I express my hope that the concern of the international community will help to bring an end to violence, a return to the rule of law and guaranteed access to humanitarian aid, also in the remotest parts of the country. For her part, the Catholic Church will continue to assure her presence and cooperation, working generously to help people in every possible way and, above all, to rebuild a climate of reconciliation and of peace among all groups in society. Reconciliation and peace are likewise fundamental priorities in other parts of Africa. I think in particular of Mali, where we nonetheless note the promising restoration of the country's democratic structures, and of South Sudan, where, on the contrary, political instability has lately led to many deaths and a new humanitarian crisis. [...]

[...] Peace is also threatened by every denial of human dignity, firstly the lack of access to adequate nutrition. We cannot be indifferent to those suffering from hunger, especially children, when we think of how much food is wasted every day in many parts of the world immersed in what I have often termed "the throwaway culture". Unfortunately, what is thrown away is not only food and dispensable objects, but often human beings themselves, who are discarded as "unnecessary". For example, it is frightful even to think there are children, victims of abortion, who will never see the light of day; children being used as soldiers, abused and killed in

armed conflicts; and children being bought and sold in that terrible form of modern slavery which is human trafficking, which is a crime against humanity.

Nor can we be unmoved by the tragedies which have forced so many people to flee from famine, violence and oppression, particularly in the Horn of Africa and in the Great Lakes Region. Many of these are living as fugitives or refugees in camps where they are no longer seen as persons but as nameless statistics. Others, in the hope of a better life, have undertaken perilous journeys which not infrequently end in tragedy. I think in particular of the many migrants from Latin America bound for the United States, but above all of all those from Africa and the Middle East who seek refuge in Europe.

Still vivid in my memory is the brief visit I made to Lampedusa last July, to pray for the numerous victims of the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean. Sadly, there is a general indifference in the face of these tragedies, which is a dramatic sign of the loss of that "sense of responsibility for our brothers and sisters",^[3] on which every civil society is based. On that occasion I was also able to observe the hospitality and dedication shown by so many people. It is my hope that the Italian people, whom I regard with affection, not least for the common roots which unite us, will renew their praiseworthy commitment of solidarity towards the weakest and most vulnerable, and, with generous and coordinated efforts by citizens and institutions, overcome present difficulties and regain their long-standing climate of constructive social creativity. [...]