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New appeal by the Pope for an end to the tragedy of child soldiers in Africa and for the victims of violence in Pakistan and Iraq

“Unfortunately, news continues to reach us of violent and brutal clashes in the Central Kasai region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I feel great grief for the victims, especially for the many children torn from their families and from school to be used as soldiers”, said the Pope after today’s Angelus prayer. “Child soldiers are a tragedy. I assure my closeness and prayer to the religious and humanitarian personnel who work in this difficult region, and I renew my heartfelt appeal to the conscience and responsibility of the international community, so that it may take appropriate and timely measures to help these brothers and sisters of ours. Let us pray for them and for all the populations that in other parts of Africa and in the world suffer as a result of violence and war. I think, in particular, of the dear populations of Pakistan and Iraq, afflicted by cruel terrorist acts in recent days. Let us pray for the victims, the wounded and their families. Let us pray ardently that every heart hardened by hatred may be converted to peace, according to God’s will. Let us pray a moment in silence”.

Francis went on to greet the families, associations, parish groups and individual pilgrims from all over the world, and in particular students from Armagh, Ireland; faithful from the diocese of Asidonia-Jerez, Cádiz and Madrid, Spain; the Guanelliano youth movement and the faithful of Castelnuovo di Prato, Modena and Viterbo, Italy. He concluded by asking those present to pray for him, wishing them a good Sunday and a good lunch.