

Pope neither condemns, endorses Libya attacks

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VATICAN CITY (RNS) Pope Benedict XVI voiced "fear and trepidation" about the "disturbing news coming from Libya" in a carefully worded statement that neither endorsed nor condemned U.S. and European attacks against Libyan dictator Col. Moammar Gadhafi.

Benedict made his statement on Sunday (March 20), following his weekly recitation of the Angelus prayer in St. Peter's Square, saying he was praying "for those involved in the dramatic situation" in Libya.

The pope also made an "urgent appeal to all political and military leaders, that they take to heart, above all, the safety and security of the citizenry and ensure access to humanitarian relief."

"I ask God that a horizon of peace and harmony may arise as soon as possible on Libya and the entire region of North Africa," Benedict said.

The Vatican strongly opposed the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, in part because that invasion lacked the authorization of a United Nations resolution. But the Vatican has not taken a position on the attacks on Gadhafi, which were approved last week by the U.N. Security Council, responding to the longtime Libyan leader's use of violence against civilians in his efforts to put down a rebellion.