



Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, signs the Declaration on Human Fraternity during the World Meeting on Human Fraternity in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican June 10, 2023. (CNS/Lola Gomez)

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The shooting of Slovakia's prime minister and the intensified Russian attacks on northeastern Ukraine are signs of a generalized increase in violence and a lack of a real commitment to dialogue and peace, said the Vatican secretary of state.

However, Cardinal Pietro Parolin told reporters May 15 that the Vatican would be present in Bürgenstock, Switzerland, June 15-16 for an international summit organized to work toward peace in Ukraine.

"The big problem is to find spaces for dialogue, spaces for negotiation, which for the moment we do not see. On the contrary, it seems that the will is to continue fighting," Vatican News quoted Parolin telling reporters on the sidelines of an event at the Italian embassy to the Holy See.

Although the cardinal did not say who would represent the Vatican at the peace summit, he said the Vatican would be there as an observer and, "above all, focused on the humanitarian aspects of this peace plan."

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The cardinal also was asked if Pope Francis' public appeal May 12 for a comprehensive prisoner swap between Russia and Ukraine had yielded any results.

"There has been an exchange of lists" by Russia and Ukraine, the cardinal said, but "I don't know if that has been matched by concrete action."

While the process may be slow, he said, at least "there is this dialogue" at the level of prisoner exchanges.

The cardinal met the journalists a few hours after Slovakian Prime Minister Robert Fico was shot five times by an assailant in the town of Handlova; after emergency surgery, he was in serious but stable condition, the BBC reported early May 16.

"We are really concerned about what is happening; it seems that there are no limits anymore," the cardinal said, according to Vatican News. "Really all this leads to increasing violence; relations are becoming more and more violent and there are fewer and fewer hopes of building peaceful relations."