

Pope Francis condemns Iraq's 'harsh' crackdown on protesters

02/12/2019 19:26 by admin

Francis, who has said he wants to visit Iraq next year, told tens of thousands of people in St. Peter's Square that he was praying for the dead and wounded and invoking God for peace in the country.

“I am following the situation in Iraq with concern. It is with pain that I have learned of the protest demonstrations of the past days that were met with a harsh response, causing tens of victims,” Pope Francis said.

Vatican City: Pope Francis on Sunday criticised Iraq’s crackdown on anti-government protests, which have led to the deaths of more than 400 people since they erupted in Baghdad and other cities in October.

“I am following the situation in Iraq with concern. It is with pain that I have learned of the protest demonstrations of the past days that were met with a harsh response, causing tens of victims,” Francis said at his weekly Sunday blessing and message.

Iraqi security forces have used live ammunition, tear gas and stun grenades against protesters and last week saw some of the bloodiest incidents since the demonstrations began, with scores of people killed particularly in the southern cities of Nassiriya and Najaf.

Francis, who has said he wants to visit Iraq next year, told tens of thousands of people in St. Peter’s Square that he was praying for the dead and wounded and invoking God for peace in the country.

The unrest, which has killed mostly demonstrators, amounts to the biggest challenge for Iraq since Islamic State insurgents seized vast swathes of Iraqi and Syrian territory in 2014.

It pits mostly young, disaffected Shi’ite protesters against a Shi’ite-dominated government backed by Iran and accused of squandering Iraq’s oil wealth while infrastructure and living standards deteriorate.

- Reuters