

Pope Francis leaves hospital after five weeks of treatment and returns to Vatican

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Pope calls for an immediate end to the Israeli bombardment of Gaza as he arrives home at the Vatican Pope Francis gestures during his first public appearance in five weeks at the Gemelli hospital in Rome, Italy, on March 23, 2025 [Guglielmo Mangiapane/Reuters]

Vatican City, March 23 (RHC)-- Pope Francis has arrived home at the Vatican after leaving the Gemelli University Hospital in Rome, shortly after making his first public appearance following a five-week hospitalization for a life-threatening bout of pneumonia.

The 88-year-old, who was admitted on February 14 after a bout of bronchitis worsened, greeted his well-wishers on Sunday from a balcony of Gemelli hospital before his discharge.

A car carrying Francis left the hospital shortly after noon and was accompanied through Rome by a convoy of police vehicles.

Using a wheelchair, as he has for several years, the pope smiled, waved, and made a sign of a thumbs up at a group of well-wishers gathered outside below. The pope, whose face looked swollen, appeared only for a few moments.

Francis spoke briefly, with a feeble voice, to thank an elderly woman among the crowd below who had brought yellow flowers.

As he was being discharged, the Vatican released the Pope's Angelus prayer calling for an "immediate" end to Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip, and for the resumption of dialogue for the release of captives and a "definitive ceasefire."

"I am saddened by the resumption of the intense Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip, with so many deaths and injuries," Francis wrote. "I ask that the weapons be silenced immediately and that the courage be found to resume dialogue so that all the hostages can be freed and a definitive ceasefire reached."

"The humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip is once again very serious and requires the urgent commitment of the conflicting parties and the international community," he added.

Francis had only been seen by the public once before during his hospital stay, in a photo the Vatican released last week, showing the pontiff at prayer in a hospital chapel.

In the moments before the pontiff's appearance on Sunday, the crowd of hundreds of well-wishers called out for the Pope, chanting "Francis, Francis, Francis."

On Saturday, one of the doctors treating him said the head of the Roman Catholic Church would be discharged from hospital on Sunday and would need two months of rest at the Vatican.

[SOURCE: RUSSIA TODAY / RT]

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