

# Pope says doesn't fear Trump

Has 'moral duty to speak out' against war

● US president railed against Leo's comments calling for peace in the Middle East

● Trump had called the pontiff "WEAK on Crime, and terrible for Foreign Policy"

● Trump later doubled down on criticisms, saying there was "nothing to apologise for"

AFP | Algiers, Algeria

Pope Leo XIV said yesterday he had "a moral duty" to speak out against war and didn't "fear" President Donald Trump while the US leader criticised his calls for an end to the conflict in the Middle East.

Before taking off from Rome headed to Algiers for a papal visit, the pontiff came under fire from Trump.

The US president railed against Leo's recent comments calling for peace in the Middle East, which is grappling with the war triggered by a joint Israel-US attack on Iran in late February.

Trump later doubled down on criticisms, saying there was "nothing to apologise for".

"Pope Leo said things that are wrong," Trump said. "He was very much against what I'm doing with regard to Iran, and you cannot have a nuclear Iran."

The pope had told reporters



Pope Leo XIV leaves the Basilica of Our Lady of Africa after a meeting with the Algerian Community, in Algiers

aboard the papal plane before arriving in Algiers that he had "no intention to debate with" Trump, adding that he was "not a politician".

"What I am saying is that the mission of the Church is very clear," he said. "The Gospel says... blessed are the peacemakers. I believe that the Church has a moral duty to speak out very clearly against war and in favour of peace and reconciliation."

The pope added: "I have no fear, neither of the Trump administration, nor speaking out loudly about the message of the Gospel."

Earlier, the US president had said Leo was "toying with a country (Iran) that wants a nu-

clear weapon", adding that he was "not a big fan of Pope Leo".

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni condemned Trump's criticism of Pope Leo XIV's comments as "unacceptable", saying "it is right and normal for (Leo) to call for peace and to condemn all forms of war".

## 'Forgiveness'

In his first speech in Algiers, Leo paid tribute to victims of the country's 1954-1962 war of independence from France and called for "forgiveness".

The remarks came amid heightened tensions between Algeria and France, and followed a meeting days ago with French President Emmanuel Macron at

the Vatican.

"In this place, let us remember that God desires peace for every nation," he said at the Algerian Martyrs Memorial in the capital.

Leo's two-day visit to Algeria was infused with personal significance for the pope. Algeria was the home of Saint Augustine (354-430), whose spiritual legacy permeates Leo's pontificate.

The influential Christian theologian laid the foundations for the 13th-century Augustinian order to which Leo belongs, one based on communal living and service.

In his very first speech as pope, Leo presented himself as a "son" of Augustine, whose writings he often quotes.

The pope called his trip to Algeria "a very precious opportunity" to promote "peace and reconciliation with respect and consideration for all peoples".

He had also criticised as "unacceptable" Trump's threats against civilians in Iran and he had also previously criticised the administration's "inhuman" treatment of migrants.

Trump had called the pontiff "WEAK on Crime, and terrible for Foreign Policy", suggesting that cardinals only elected Leo pope in May 2025 because he was American.

Trump also posted an AI-generated image seemingly depicting himself as Jesus Christ, later deleting it.

Speaking during his flight, Leo said: "We're not politicians, we're not looking to make foreign policy as he calls it with the same perspective that he might understand it."

## Ancient Roman city

The papal visit to Africa takes in Algeria, Cameroon, Angola and Equatorial Guinea, and will cover more than 18,000 kilometres (11,000 miles) between April 13 and 23.

On Monday, Leo visited the Great Mosque of Algiers -- home to the world's highest minaret -- and the Basilica of Our Lady of Africa, overlooking the Bay of Algiers.

On Tuesday, he will visit the northeastern city of Annaba -- formerly the ancient Roman city of Hippo -- the one-time home of the saint whose autobiographical "Confessions" is a seminal work within the Christian tradition.

Leo plans to pray privately in the chapel dedicated to 19 priests and nuns murdered during Algeria's 1992-2002 civil war.

The pope will not, however, visit the Tibhirine monastery, whose monks were kidnapped and murdered in 1996 in an event still shrouded in mystery.

Although Algeria's constitution guarantees freedom of worship, subject to conditions, human rights groups say the repression of religious minorities is continuing.

Three human rights groups called on Leo last week to push the issue during his visit.



The name "Leo" has historically been associated with strong and reform-minded leaders in the Catholic Church--most notably Pope Leo XIII, whose teachings on social justice and workers' rights still influence modern doctrine. This makes the use of "Pope Leo XIV" particularly striking, as it evokes a legacy of authority and reform despite no such pope ever existing.

## Pro-EU Magyar vows 'new era' in Hungary after ousting Orban in vote

AFP | Budapest, Hungary

Hungarian pro-EU prime minister-elect Peter Magyar pledged yesterday to usher in a "new era" after defeating long-time nationalist leader Viktor Orban in elections seen as a blow to hard-right populism.

Orban, a self-described "thorn" in the European Union's side who was backed by US President Donald Trump and maintained close ties to Moscow, was ousted in Sunday's ballot after 16 years in power.

Hungarians fed up with corruption handed conservative former government insider Magyar a decisive victory, with a two-thirds majority in parliament. The vote saw a record turnout.

Magyar, 45, said he would do "everything in our power" to ensure the "beginning of a new era", adding Hungarians "didn't vote for a mere change of government, but for a complete regime change."

In power since 2010, Orban has transformed the central European country of 9.5 million people into a model of "illiberal democracy", making wide-ranging reforms that restricted civil rights and the independence of the judiciary, media and academia.

In that, he frequently clashed with Brussels, which has frozen



Peter Magyar, election winner and leader of the pro-European conservative TISZA party, delivers a press conference at the HUNGEXPO Congress and Exhibition Center in Budapest, Hungary,

billions of euros in funds over rule-of-law concerns.

## 'No time to waste'

Magyar said he was "willing to take on" reforms, including anti-graft measures, to seek to unlock the funds.

He urged President Tamas Sulyok, an Orban ally, to convene parliament "as soon as possible".

The president has 30 days, or until May 12, to do so.

Sulyok on Facebook said he had invited the leaders of parliamentary parties to a meeting on Wednesday.

"Our country has no time to waste. Hungary is in trouble in every respect. It has been plundered, looted, betrayed, indebted and ruined," Magyar told reporters.

Many EU leaders welcomed Magyar's win, while the Kremlin said Moscow hoped for "prag-

matic" relations with Hungary's new government and China -- which Orban also courted -- congratulated Magyar.

Magyar thanked both Moscow and Beijing for "being open to pragmatic cooperation, just as Hungary is."

Orban, 62, conceded defeat on Sunday, saying the message was "painful but unambiguous".

Magyar was a supporter of Orban for years before emerging

as his most serious challenger.

He stepped into frontline politics just two years ago, promising to fight corruption and offering better public services.

He garnered support against a backdrop of economic stagnation and despite an electoral system skewed in favour of Orban's Fidesz.

Ahead of the vote, US Vice President JD Vance, one of the most fervent supporters of far-right parties in Europe, visited Hungary last week to attend a rally with Orban.

His boss, Trump, had promised to back Hungary with the

United States' "economic might" if Orban's party won.

## 'Weight lifted off'

The election "could mark a real turning point for Donald Trump's culture war in Europe", said Pawel Zerka, senior policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations.

It gave "confidence (to) pro-European forces across the continent" and meant that association with Trump's culture war was now becoming "more of a liability than an asset", he said.

Orban, who repeatedly blocked EU moves to help Ukraine fight Russia's invasion, made Ukraine a central campaign issue, portraying Kyiv as "hostile" to Hungary.

Like Orban, Magyar opposes sending EU military aid to Ukraine or offering Ukraine a fast-track route to join the 27-nation bloc.

He reiterated that stance on Monday, saying: "We are talking about a country at war. It is completely out of the question for the European Union to admit a country at war."

On election night, jubilant supporters poured into the streets to celebrate in the capital, Budapest.

"At long last it feels so good to be Hungarian. It's like a weight lifted off our shoulders," Csilla Bekesi, 25, told AFP.

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