

Beat: Vips

Pope condemns Bangladesh slave labor; as death toll hits 411

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USPA News - Pope Francis on Wednesday condemned as "slave labor" the poor conditions for thousands of people who worked at a Bangladeshi factory that collapsed last week. He made the comments as rescue workers continued to recover additional bodies from the site.

The deadly accident occurred at around 9 a.m. local time on April 24 when an eight-story factory building in Savar, located on the outskirts of the capital Dhaka, collapsed. It is believed between 3,000 and 4,500 people were working in the building, from which five clothing factories were operating. On Wednesday, during a private mass at his residence to mark May Day, Pope Francis strongly condemned the working conditions at the collapsed factory. "Not paying a just [wage], not providing work, focusing exclusively on the balance books, on financial statements, only looking at making personal profit. That goes against God," he said, as quoted by Vatican Radio. The pontiff said he had been particularly struck by a headline that said the workers at the Savar factory were being paid only 38 euros (\$50) a month. "This was the payment of these people who have died. And this is called slave labor!" he said. "How many brothers and sisters throughout the world are in this situation because of these economic, social, and political attitudes?" The pope's comments came as recovery work continued at the site of Bangladesh's worst-ever industrial disaster. Local officials said they recovered 19 more bodies on Wednesday, raising the overall death toll to 411. At least 149 people are confirmed to be missing, but the actual figure is believed to be higher. A total of 2,437 people were rescued from the site, but hopes of finding more survivors came to a brutal end on Sunday night. A woman who had survived under the rubble for more than 110 hours was in the process of being rescued when sparks from saws caused clothes to catch fire, killing the last known survivor. Last week's collapse happened just a day after factory workers discovered a large crack in the building and left their work, but the owner claimed it was safe and warned workers that they would not be paid if they did not return to work. Local authorities had ordered the owner to shut down until details about the building's condition were known, but police orders to evacuate were not followed.

Article online:

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