

World & Nation

Florida protests focus attention on jailed activist

NC News and local reports

Tallahassee, Fla. — Hundreds of pro-lifers from across the United States marched at the Florida state capitol, buried 782 fetuses and were arrested for picketing an abortion clinic in a series of anti-abortion actions in Tallahassee August 4-6.

The demonstrators linked their activities to efforts to free Joan Andrews, an anti-abortion activist serving five years in a Florida prison for sabotaging equipment at an abortion clinic in Pensacola two years ago.

Andrews, who was sentenced in September, 1986, has served almost 29 days out of every 30-day period of her sentence in solitary confinement for refusing to cooperate with prison officials. Because of the severity of her sentence, and a collection of her letters published in book form, she has become a celebrity in the pro-life movement.

In the abortion clinic demonstration August 6, 133 demonstrators — including Kathleen Cusack of Rochester — were arrested for trespassing. Two of them were also charged with resisting arrest. The charges were later dropped against all of the protesters, some of whom spent five days in jail.

The day before the clinic demonstration, about 300 people held a rally at the capitol as some of the group met with state officials to seek clemency for Andrews. Following the rally, the demonstrators went to Calvary Presbyterian Church several miles away for an ecumenical funeral service for 782 aborted babies. After the service the fetuses were buried in six small caskets at Roselawn Cemetery.

The fetuses, retrieved from pathology laboratories in the Midwest, were brought to Florida for burial by a group led by Monica Migliorino of Citizens for Life in Milwaukee. She told the group that the last corporal work of mercy, burial of the dead, was "the first act of kindness these babies have received." She said that to "end the holocaust of abortion, our love must be great (because) abortion is a harvest of hate."

The Rev. Robert Evans, pastor of Calvary Presbyterian Church, said in his homily at the funeral service that "most of you have never attended the funeral of a victim of violent death, but that has changed ... Abortion is murder."

Demonstrators began their three days of anti-abortion activities with a rally the evening of August 4. The next morning, about 300 pro-

testers met at the Tallahassee civic center and marched to the capitol four blocks away, where some of them met with Brian Ballard, director of operations for Governor Bob Martinez, while others protesters protested at offices of members of his cabinet.

Ballard, in a letter read to the group following his meeting with their representatives, said Martinez, "shares your view that the killing of unborn babies should be halted." He said the governor has called for a clemency hearing for Andrews to give a full public airing to the facts surrounding her case.

Because Martinez did not receive the necessary approval of at least three of his seven cabinet members, however, he could not convene a clemency hearing, Ballard said. He said the governor will not decide on the merits of Andrews' case without such a hearing. Ballard's letter clearly did not satisfy the demonstrators, who were seeking a commitment to release the imprisoned woman. A number of demonstrators shouted their disapproval after the letter was read.

The August 6 demonstration, one of a series around the country dubbed Operation Rescue, was coordinated by Amnesty America and was directed against North Florida Women's Health and Counseling Services, one of two abortion clinics in Tallahassee. Demonstrators linked arms outside the clinic, blocking both its entrances, until they were arrested and removed from the scene.

Cusack, who went to Florida to protest Andrews' imprisonment, said she had not originally intended to be arrested. "I guess it was being there and seeing the burial of the children and reading (Andrews') letters that changed my mind," she said "I felt I couldn't say that I wouldn't participate."

Ed Martin of the Florida Pro-life Action Network, one of the clinic protest organizers, said many of the arrested were detained over the August 6-7 weekend because they refused to post the required bond, first set at \$100 and later reduced to \$50. The last demonstrators were not released until August 11.

Cusack reported that from the outset, guards and prison officials tried to intimidate the protesters. "They said that they would strip search us, and that we were going to be transferred to a prison where we would be attacked by the prisoners — and the guards wouldn't be able to help us," she said. "They said we could avoid jail if we bailed out."



UPI/NC News

Anti-abortion protesters stage a sit-in at the Florida Capital August 5 to demand freedom for Joan Andrews, a pro-life activist convicted of vandalizing an abortion clinic in Pensacola.

Several of the women Cusack had been arrested with did post bond, but most chose to remain in the holding area where they were being held. Sunday, August 7, guards separated from the group all those who had asked for any medical attention — even if only for an aspirin — put them in handcuffs and leg irons, and took them to the jail, Cusack said. Among those forced to wear leg irons was a woman with a fractured foot, she noted.

By Sunday night, 42 of the women had posted bond. The remaining 24 women, including Cusack, were transferred to the Leon County Jail. They were placed in a cell block so crowded that a number of women had to sleep on mats in the narrow corridor just outside the cells, she said. The toilet area in the block had standing water on the floor.

Meanwhile all religious articles — including Bibles and rosaries — were taken from the protesters, Cusack said. Martin likewise reported that a priest among those arrested, Father Robert A. Pearson of the Diocese of Trenton, N.J., wanted to celebrate Mass for the detainees but was denied access to the religious

articles he needed for the service.

Guards continued to harass the women, Cusack noted, telling them that the men had already posted bond — which they hadn't — keeping them confined to the overcrowded cell block area, denying them guaranteed phone privileges and threatening to hold them under those conditions for up to 60 days.

Despite the conditions, Cusack described the experience as "far and away the most deeply religious experience I've had in my life. I never saw the face of evil more clearly than I saw when I was in jail."

One woman had managed to smuggle in a rosary. Another woman sang religious hymns to keep the others' spirits up. In addition, some of the regular prisoners on the cell block — a number of whom claimed that prison officials had caused them to have miscarriages through harsh or negligent treatment — "said they were grateful for what we were doing," Cusack reported.

By Wednesday, August 10, Cusack and nine other prisoners remained in jail. The 10 were released that night when they agreed to a deal proposed by prison officials. In return for paying \$100 in administration costs and leaving together, the women were told that all charges against the 133 protesters would be dropped. The last of the men were released Thursday morning.

At a press conference following their release, the protesters described the conditions in the prison, and announced that they were going to demand a federal investigation, Cusack said.

"We all felt a great sense of peace," Cusack noted. "We really feel we won a victory because we were willing to stay. I don't know if it will have any impact for Joan Andrews, but I don't think anyone there doubts that a victory was won."

Cusack attributed her own willingness and that of the other protesters to face arrest to the example of Andrews.

"I feel Joan Andrews is really the person who has taken the impetus to lay her life down for the unborn," Cusack declared. "She has inspired others to face arrest."

"The whole experience convinced me that abortion is such an enormous, intrinsic evil and it is so deeply rooted in our society that the only way for people to fight it is to lay down their lives like Joan (Andrews)," she concluded. "That's never been so clear in my life."

Arrests continue in Atlanta abortion demonstrations



NC News

A protester is arrested during an August 4 demonstration outside the Feminists Women's Health Center in Atlanta.

Atlanta (NC) — Eighty-one more abortion protesters were jailed in Atlanta August 12-13, bringing to 436 the number arrested since protests at Atlanta abortion clinics began July 19 during the Democratic National Convention.

The most recent arrests — 26 on August 12 and 55 on August 13 — were made at the Atlanta SurgiCenter, a clinic in Atlanta licensed to perform abortions.

Nearly all of the demonstrators arrested in the first wave of protests during the convention originally identified themselves to police only as "Baby Jane Doe" or "Baby John Doe." Almost half of the 436 arrested remained in jail August 15 because they refused to give their real names. Only those who identified themselves were released on \$500 bond or on personal recognizance.

Archbishop Eugene A. Marino of Atlanta visited the original detainees July 30, and issued a statement August 1 supporting their goals. During the July 30 visit, he met with the detainees in four groups, two of men and two of women, and led them in singing, "Let There Be Peace on Earth." He also met separately with the lone Catholic priest

among those arrested, Father Edwin Arentsen of the Diocese of Belleville, Ill.

Some protesters and observers have estimated that about one-fourth to one-third of those arrested are Catholics. The majority are believed to be evangelical Protestants.

Fulton County Jail authorities originally had refused to let Father John S. Adamski, pastor of the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Atlanta, celebrate Mass for the Catholic inmates, citing rules prohibiting alcoholic beverages on the premises. By August 14, an agreement between jail and archdiocesan officials had been worked out so that Sunday Mass might be celebrated. But as a result of an August 14 jail disturbance unrelated to the abortion protest, inmates were not allowed to leave their cells and Father Adamski was unable to celebrate Mass.

Operation Rescue selected the city of the Democratic National Convention for its protests to draw attention to abortion on demand across the nation. The Democratic Party platform and Democratic presidential candidate Michael S. Dukakis are opposed to legal restrictions limiting abortion.



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