

# Plan could end battle over Polish convent

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The Vatican broke its silence on the controversial Carmelite convent at Auschwitz, urging the convent's relocation and offering to help fund construction of the new complex to house the nuns. A Vatican official said the move was made to "speed up" the healing of a bitter dispute between Catholics and Jews over the presence of the nuns at the former Nazi death camp in Poland.

The statement, released Sept. 19 amid mounting pressure on the Vatican to take action in the controversy, was drawn up by the Commission for Religious Relations With the Jews and was signed by the commission president, Cardinal Johannes Willebrands.

It endorsed a 1987 Catholic-Jewish agreement to establish an interfaith center as the new site for the convent and said the Holy See remains "convinced that such a center will contribute significantly to the development of good relations between Christians and Jews."

In August, Cardinal Jozef Glemp, the primate of Poland, said the Polish church could not afford to build the center, which he estimated would cost at least \$2 million. Cardinal Glemp said that was one reason the 1987 agreement to move the convent should be re-negotiated.

Delays in the transfer of the nuns had led to Jewish criticism worldwide, and Cardinal Glemp's remarks touched off more

controversy.

Last week, the official Polish news agency, PAP, reported that a West German Jewish millionaire had reached an agreement with Cardinal Glemp to end the convent dispute.

The agency quoted a spokesman for the cardinal as saying that "a concept of a satisfactory solution to the conflict concerning the Catholic convent at Auschwitz" resulted from a meeting with Cardinal Glemp and Zygmunt Nissenbaum, a Polish-born millionaire who lives in West Germany.

PAP indicated that Nissenbaum had agreed to help build a prayer center near Auschwitz to which the Carmelite convent could be moved. Cardinal Glemp had said construction of the center was impossible under Poland's current economic situation.

Now, PAP reports that through the arrangement with Nissenbaum, "Work on the matter will be continued by a special team that will deal with the concrete implementation of the building of the center for information, education, meetings and prayer at Auschwitz." Nissenbaum is a survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto and of a Nazi death camp. He is president of the Nissenbaum Foundation, which restores Jewish cemeteries and synagogues in Poland.



CNS photo from KNA  
The controversial Carmelite convent is located in an old camp theater just outside the walls of the Nazi World War II death camp at Auschwitz.

## Shamir says anti-Semitism 'imbued' in Poles

JERUSALEM (CNS) — Israel's Polish-born prime minister, Yitzhak Shamir, said in remarks published Sept. 8 that Poles are "deeply imbued" with anti-Semitism.

"They suck it in with their mother's milk. This is something that is deeply imbued in their tradition, their mentality, like their keeping of kosher," the Israeli leader said in an interview with the *Jerusalem Post*. The article focused

on the Carmelite convent near the Auschwitz death camp.

The prime minister's remarks were the latest salvo in a battle of words between Jewish and Catholic leaders here.

Shamir was accused of harboring a deep-seated hatred of Jews, originating in his family in the 1930s. Most of his family was killed in the Nazi Holocaust.

# Diocese tells court turning off ventilator not suicide

By Gretchen Keiser  
Catholic News Service

ATLANTA — A brief by the Archdiocese of Atlanta — filed before a judge ruled that a paralyzed man could shut off the machine keeping him alive — stated that his act would not be the same as suicide.

Larry James McAfee had asked the court to allow him to throw the switch on his machine because he no longer enjoyed life.

McAfee's request to the court was unusual in that most so-called "right-to-die" cases have involved comatose patients or those who cannot make their wishes known to the court.

The archdiocese's friend-of-the-court brief, submitted at the court's request, said that the use of a ventilator in McAfee's case was an "extraordinary means of preserving life."

Morally that means the Catholic church believes the patient is free either to continue to use the ventilator or to decide to discontinue it, "even though such interruption will end in death," the archdiocesan brief said.

Fulton County Superior Court Judge Edward Johnson ruled Sept. 6 that McAfee was a rational, competent, intelligent adult capable of deciding whether to use a specially designed switch to turn off the machine.

Johnson made the ruling after a 45-minute bedside hearing at which five of McAfee's family members and two friends testified that the former civil engineer said

he wished to die.

McAfee, 33, was paralyzed from the neck down May 5, 1985, in a motorcycle accident. Since then he has been unable to breathe on his own.

He planned to be moved from a nursing home in Alabama to an apartment in the Atlanta area where he would shut off the ventilator. McAfee did not say when he would do that.

The church's brief said that "the archdiocese neither opposes nor advocates Mr. McAfee's petition, but is of the opinion that granting his request would not be assisting in suicide or undermining the state's and the Roman Catholic church's interest in preserving life."

Church teaching has traditionally held that ordinary treatments must be provided to dying patients, but that treatments that are extraordinary are not required.

## Salvadoran leader OKs church observers at talks

By Mike Tangeman  
Catholic News Service

MEXICO CITY — In a last-minute change of position, Salvadoran President Alfredo Cristiani has agreed to a demand by guerrillas of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front to allow Catholic Church officials to participate as observers in preliminary peace talks.

At a press conference in Mexico City, representatives of the guerrilla front, known by its Spanish initials as the FMLN,

In its presentation of church teaching, the archdiocesan brief drew on the 1980 *Declaration on Euthanasia* issued by the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith with the approval of Pope John Paul II.

The brief used definitions of moral theologian Daniel Cronin, stating that "ordinary means" are those "commonly used in given circumstances, which this individual in his present physical, psychological and economic condition can reasonably employ with definite hope of proportionate benefit."

On the other hand, "extraordinary means" of treatment are defined as "those not commonly used in given circumstances, or those means in common use which this individual in his present physical, psychological and economic condition cannot reasonably employ, or if he can,

will not give him hope of proportionate benefit."

In McAfee's case, the brief said, the use of a ventilator clearly constitutes an extraordinary means of preserving life. It cited McAfee's testimony that he "receives no enjoyment out of life," that his continued treatment by ventilator prolongs his emotional pain and suffering, that he is dependent upon public funds and has no economic resources of his own, that his condition is irreversible and that he is "still in a lot of pain."

Father Stephen Churchwell, a canon lawyer who assisted in drafting the brief's section on church law, said the "decision to no longer use the ventilator, while it might lead to death, is not the equivalent of suicide. Nature is taking its course. It is the treatment that is maintaining life. If the treatment is ended, then life will end."

repeated their insistence on the need for a mediator in the negotiations. They said the ideal person would be Archbishop Arturo Rivera Damas of San Salvador.

Mario Lopez, a member of the FMLN's Political-Diplomatic Commission, issued a public appeal to Archbishop Rivera Damas "to come to Mexico as soon as possible" in case his services were needed as a mediator.

But, Cristiani publicly rejected mediation by Archbishop Rivera Damas. He responded by naming five members of a government commission he said would meet with FMLN representatives in Mexico City for what he termed "preparatory" talks in order "to get the dialogue process started."

In a compromise solution to what appeared to be the last obstacle to the talks, Cristiani said Sept. 9 that he had agreed to have church officials participate as "observers," though not as mediators, in the first round of preliminary talks in Mexico, scheduled to begin Sept. 13.

On Sept. 10, Auxiliary Bishop Gregorio Rosa Chavez traveled to Mexico City to prepare for his role as an observer in the two days of negotiations. News reports from El Salvador said Archbishop Rivera

Damas was unable to participate because he was on a three-week visit to several European countries.

An FMLN spokesman in Mexico City said the rebels accept Bishop Rosa Chavez's observer status for the first round of talks, but that they might hold out for formal church mediation of any further negotiations.

Ana Guadalupe Martinez, another member of the FMLN Political-Diplomatic Commission, noted the importance the guerrillas place on Archbishop Rivera Damas' mediation and said during the Sept. 7 press conference that it "is a necessity, even an operative one" that the archbishop be present.

"Our information is that it is (ex-Army Maj. Roberto) D'Aubuisson who is behind all this," Lopez said during a telephone interview.

D'Aubuisson, leader of the ARENA bloc in the Salvadoran congress and a founder of the ultra-right party, has been singled out by church and human-rights groups as having links to right-wing death squads. He is also believed by human-rights groups to be the man responsible for the March 1980 murder of Archbishop Oscar A. Romero of San Salvador.

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