

Lebanese Christians rush to bury dead during truce

BEIRUT, Lebanon (CNS) — Against a background of sniper fire and fears that a cease-fire would break down at any minute, Lebanese frantically buried victims of recent Christian fighting.

Reuters, the British news agency, reported "pathetic scenes" Feb. 8, as traumatized civilians in the worst-hit areas of east Beirut staggered from shelters for the first time in nine days, begging for food and water.

Some were defanged, many were haggard. There were scuffles as groups fought over bread after crossing into Muslim west Beirut to find food, the news agency reported. Rotting corpses were still trapped in debris in some districts. Reporters saw four charred bodies in a car blitzed by gunfire in Ashrafiyeh neighborhood.

Anger against the leaders of rival Christian factions, Army Gen. Michael Aoun and Lebanese Forces chief Samir Geagea, appeared widespread.

"I wish both would go to hell," one middle-aged man shouted.

The events occurred as Christian mediators announced that Aoun and Geagea agreed to stabilize a two-day-old

cease-fire after fighting left more than 350 people dead and 1,300 wounded. The announcement followed reports that Muslim militiamen had begun building up their forces in mountains southeast of Beirut. At the northern front line, a woman in her 20s was stopped by soldiers when she walked determinedly to journalists at an army checkpoint and declared: "I don't want Aoun or Geagea. I have lost my husband."

Christians seeking safety flooded across to the Muslim sector, most carrying just a few belongings. "It is the first time I have seen daylight for a week. I need milk for my babies," said Georgette Hanna, from the Ain Roummaneh neighborhood.

Reuters reported that the saddest scenes were in cemeteries such as Mar Meter in Ashrafiyeh. With sniper fire echoing in the distance, burial rites were curtailed as bodies were hurriedly lowered into the ground.

Funeral processions were banned. Priests read brief prayers, rushing to complete the services before fighting resumed.

Aoun, whose troops scored a major victory Feb. 6 when they captured the Lebanese Forces' barracks at Dbayeh, nor-



A Christian woman looks out a car window as she flees east Beirut, Lebanon, with her family Feb. 7. The rear window was shattered earlier by sniper fire.

th of Beirut, toured army positions, congratulating his men.

The general wore a bulletproof vest for his rare venture from his headquarters bunker. Geagea, responding to peace appeals from Pope John Paul II, pledged to use his powers "to stop these agonizing events."

Official sources said Syrian-backed President Elias Hrawi in west Beirut had examined the possibility of intervening to quell the inter-Christian war. For such an intervention, the sources said, Hrawi would want the backing of international powers and a public appeal from Christian political and religious leaders.

Financial problems force Operation Rescue to close headquarters

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Randall Terry, executive director of Binghamton, N.Y.-based Operation Rescue, said Jan. 31 that his group would close its headquarters because of financial problems.

Terry said, however, that some 125 local Operation Rescue units throughout the country would continue their efforts in trying to shut down abortion clinics.

Terry, a born-again Christian, made the remarks at a religious broadcasters meeting

in Washington one day after he was released from a Georgia prison. Terry was serving a two-year term for refusing to pay a fine stemming from a conviction in a rescue protest. His release came after an anonymous benefactor paid the fine and a fee.

He said that Operation Rescue was brought to "the brink of bankruptcy" by a \$50,000 fine imposed as the result of a suit brought by the National Organization for

Women. The organization is in debt for \$70,000.




Terry, 30, and his wife, Cindy, have four children, three of them foster children. They live outside Binghamton.

According to Michael J. McMonagle of Philadelphia, who is executive director of the Pro-Life Coalition of Southeast Pennsylvania, national headquarters for Operation Rescue are to be restructured and moved to Black Mountain, N.C., within a

month. He said Terry would remain in Binghamton.

Archbishop Eugene A. Marino of Atlanta visited with Terry Oct. 24 at the Fulton County work farm in Alpharetta, Ga., where he was serving a two-year term for refusing to pay two \$500 fines.

Terry had been convicted of criminal trespass and unlawful assembly outside an Atlanta abortion clinic in July, 1988, during the Democratic National Convention.

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