

AP/Wide World Photos
U.S. Marines secure the area around the U.S. Embassy in Monrovia, Liberia, after arriving August 5 to evacuate civilians.

Hospital evacuated as war threatens patients

MONROVIA, Liberia (CNS) — Doctors evacuated St. Joseph's Catholic Hospital in Monrovia Aug. 11, after rebel fighters in Liberia's civil war threatened to seize patients linked with beleaguered President Samuel Doe.

A makeshift convoy of about 30 vehicles carrying badly wounded patients left the hospital, which is just behind rebel lines and about three-and-a-half miles from the center of Monrovia.

The hospital was one of two left open in the Liberian capital.

Doctors said they were pulling out for fear of shelling by government troops battling the forces of rebel leader Charles Taylor in the suburb of Sinkor.

"That's the official reason," said a dentist who left the hospital Aug. 10 to take diplomatic refuge. "But the real reason is that the rebels threatened us."

Heavy automatic gunfire and artillery duels raged around the hospital complex for days, as the rebels pushed toward the city center.

The hospital had a strict open-door policy of treating anyone needing medical help, irrespective of politics or tribe — a

principle that brought harassment from both sides as the battle lines shifted.

The civil war has become largely a tribal conflict pitting Doe's Krahn people and the Mandingo Moslem trading community against the Mano and Gio peoples backing the rebels.

The dentist told the British news agency Reuters that about 20 rebels went to the hospital Aug. 10, soon after they won control of the area, in search of a former politician they knew was being treated there.

The dentist, who asked not to be identified, said hospital staff refused to release the politician.

Several wounded government soldiers, as well as Krahn and Mandingo civilians, were among about 80 patients remaining at the hospital.

The patients also included survivors of a massacre in a nearby Lutheran church two weeks earlier when Krahn soldiers opened fire on 600 Manos and Gios, most of them women and children.

Witnesses said Doe's troops took dozens of Manos and Gios from the hospital when the area was in army hands.

Knights tackle life issues at meeting in San Antonio

SAN ANTONIO (CNS) — The Knights of Columbus spent much of their Aug. 7-9 convention here talking — and being talked to — about life issues.



And much of that talk centered on the upcoming pro-life public-relations campaign to be launched by the U.S. bishops with funds donated by the Knights.

In an Aug. 9 address to the Knights, Monsignor Robert Lynch, general secretary of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops-U.S. Catholic Conference, called abortion "the equivalent of a moral civil war."

Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York, in remarks delivered Aug. 7, compared the bishops' hiring of a PR firm for the campaign to the invention of the printing press.

Until the printing press was invented by Johann Gutenberg in 1454, Bibles were not available to the general population. "What if the church had said 'no' to the use of the printing press?" Cardinal O'Connor asked.

NCCB-USCC spokesman Father Kenneth Doyle told Catholic News Service Aug. 10 that the "open-ended" campaign will cost "in the neighborhood of" \$3 million, which the Knights pledged shortly after Cardinal O'Connor announced in April that the bishops' intended to launch the campaign.

The Knights also pledged \$1 million worth of in-kind services for the campaign,

and passed a resolution during the convention to explore the possibility of collecting voluntary contributions from individual Knights of Columbus councils.

Cardinal O'Connor also raised the issue of Knights who have "given scandal" because of their stance in favor of abortion rights.

He advised that Knights first pray, fast and "call upon the Holy Spirit." Then they should "meet with their brother Knight who has given scandal ... asking him could he not see a way to cease" his abortion rights position.

"If not," Cardinal O'Connor added, Knights should ask the pro-choice member if he could "see his way to charitably, quietly, withdraw from the organization."

In two separate resolutions, the Knights wrestled with the question of members who support abortion rights. The issue had surfaced at state conventions from Knights who wanted to oust prominent politicians favoring abortion rights.

One resolution, affecting non-Knights, bans all abortion-rights supporters, "especially public officials," from being invited to any Knights event, renting a Knights facility, or being given any office or honor from the Catholic fraternal organization.

The other resolution said the Knights would "continue to take its guidance from the bishops on ... the ecclesial meaning of the criteria for membership in the Knights of Columbus, including the determination of who is or who is not a practicing Catholic."

American Bar Association votes for neutrality stance on abortion

CHICAGO (CNS) — Following the advice of participants in its annual convention, the American Bar Association's House of Delegates voted 200-188 Aug. 8 to reject the abortion-rights policy it adopted in February and to take a neutral stance on the issue.

ABA members attending the convention in Chicago had voted 885-837 two days earlier to recommend that the House of Delegates retract its resolution supporting abortion on demand. The resolution had been approved last winter by a 238-106 vote.

Rochester attorney Anthony Palermo, who introduced the neutrality proposal, said he hoped the vote would put an end to the matter, adding that it "would be a grave mistake if we kept dominating each

meeting with this issue."

Palermo told the House of Delegates that it was "inappropriate for the ABA to become an advocate in this debate" and that members' dues should not be used to support abortion.

John Curtin Jr. of Boston, the new ABA president, said the previous policy threatened "to drive a wedge" into the membership.

As a result of the House of Delegates position taken in February, some 1,500 members had quit the ABA, with an annual loss to the association of about \$300,000.

Members of the ABA's Board of Governors voted 21-9 Aug. 2 to recommend that the House of Delegates reconsider its February vote.

More than \$70,000 had been raised by a

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"NERVE DEAFNESS"

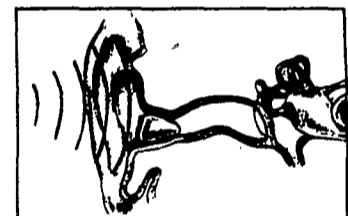
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