

# Arab-Americans have torn feelings over clash

By Bill Pritchard  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Arab-Americans, both Catholic and Muslim, expressed frustration and torn feelings over the U.S. response to Iraq's takeover of tiny, oil-rich Kuwait and the powerful Arab state's alleged threat to Saudi Arabia.

In telephone interviews with Catholic News Service they wondered why their government reacted so strongly and swiftly to Saddam Hussein's invasion of its tiny neighbor, yet raised no similar fuss over Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon or its occupation of Gaza and the West Bank.

At the same time, they emphasized they are citizens of the United States and loyal to their country. They said they hope for a peaceful ending to the U.S.-Iraq face-off.

They also said that while many Arabs might not approve of Iraqi president Saddam Hussein's action or like him personally, Iraq has the welcome image of a strong Arab state to a people who for decades have felt powerless to control their own destiny in the face of Western interests.

Kuwait, on the other hand, was unpopular, some said. It was considered a selfish nation run by an autocratic family installed by Britain and spoiled by its oil wealth. One Arab-American called it a "Disneyland" held together only by money.

They said Hussein might not have the stature of Gamal Abdel Nasser — the late Egyptian leader who personified the dream of pan-Arab unity — but he is the only leader of the region who has thus far ap-



AP/Wide World Photos  
**Army Specialist Mark McBride of Grand Rapids, Mich., prays during an Aug. 13 service at First Assembly of God church in Clarksville, Tenn. McBride is a member of the 101st Airborne Division, which was awaiting deployment to Saudi Arabia.**

proached that rank in the view of average Arabs.

Hussein and Iraq are also seen as standing alone against Iran for eight bloody years, and are respected for it. Iran, although Muslim, is not an Arab country. There has been an historic enmity between the Iranians and the Arab world.

Arabs in the Middle East feel that the West's only interest is in their oil, not in promoting Arab independence or economic development, according to those interviewed by CNS.

Sam Yono, head of the Chaldean Federation of Michigan, said the U.S. might have acted "too fast" to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

Although there was a general feeling that Hussein would make a try for his wealthy little neighbor on the Persian Gulf, Yono said, it seemed unlikely that he would try to invade Saudi Arabia.

The Chaldeans are Iraqi Christian, mostly Eastern-rite Catholics. Detroit has one of the largest Chaldean-American communities in the United States.

Yono said that when he was still living in Iraq "there always was a feeling that Kuwait was part of Iraq." That it would be annexed was certain, he said, but the hope was for a "peaceful takeover."

Yono said he hopes for a peaceful settlement between his native land and his adopted country. He said he is waiting to see some high-level negotiating toward that end.

George Irani, an author and scholar of Middle East issues, said that the standoff at the Saudi-Iraqi border ripples throughout the culture, psychology and history of the Arab world.

Irani, a Lebanese-American who teaches at Indiana's Franklin College, listed as of central importance these factors:

- Efforts since the 1950s by Arabs to control their own resources.

- A history of political and economic domination by outside powers going back hundreds of years.

- A thus-far-frustrated dream of a unified Arab world.

- A region made up not of Western-style states, but of a "conglomeration of tribes who have come to power thanks mainly to their connections with former colonial powers."

- A view of Israel as "an external body imposed upon the Arabs" as a channel of continued control from the West.

Palestinian-American Bashar Masri said he and many others saw Iraq as "defending the Arab world against Iran for the past eight years."

He said that many Palestinians had a positive view of Hussein as the builder of a strong nation who shared the wealth with his people and other Arab states.

Hussein is a power in the region and "we want a power on our side," said Masri, a Muslim married to a Catholic.

But Masri said thought it was "very bad of Saddam" to annex Kuwait as he did.

On the other hand, he said, President Bush has "exaggerated the situation tremendously."

"I'm definitely not in support of having troops there," Masri said.

But how could Bush have dealt better with events? "That's a hard question to answer," Masri said.

For Suad Cano, a Chaldean Catholic, the situation in her ancestral land is very difficult to deal with emotionally "as a Christian, as a Catholic, as an Arab."

The West should have more respect for the Middle East, and not "in terms of petro-dollars," Cano said.

And rather than mount a massive military response to the Iraqi action, she said, the West "should deal with it more on a dialogue ... a peaceful basis."

## Pro-life directors attend meeting with consultants

By Carl Eifert  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Some 150 diocesan pro-life coordinators gathered in San Francisco in mid-August for their annual meeting and to hear a presentation by public-relations experts hired by the U.S. bishops to promote the Catholic position on abortion.

Although at least \$3 million is to be spent on the effort, Vincentian Father John Gouldrick, executive director of the bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities, said "campaign" was the wrong word to use.

Father Gouldrick spoke to Catholic News Service in a phone interview Aug. 14 just before an impromptu press conference to dispel erroneous reports that 200 bishops were meeting secretly to get their first look at the public relations effort.

No bishops were attending the meeting, he said, other than Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York, chairman of the bishops' pro-life committee, who celebrated an opening Mass and gave the keynote address.

Diocesan directors have been holding closed meetings for about 15 years, Father Gouldrick said, and the news media had "never taken interest before."

"No major announcement will come out of this" meeting, he said.

No text of Cardinal O'Connor's remarks was available, Father Gouldrick said. But he said the purpose of the cardinal's talk was "to support people working in the field and to encourage them to continue education on the issue" of respect for human life at all stages.

Cardinal O'Connor encouraged the diocesan directors "to unity" and told them that "prayer was fundamental to the church's pro-life mission," he said.

Father Gouldrick said the directors met privately so that they could raise questions and deliberate without having to think what they said might be "broadcast call over the

country by the media."

He said proposals were being developed by the public-relations firm of Hill and Knowlton using survey data developed by the Wirthlin Group, a politically connected polling firm.

"Anything that's done will have to be in conjunction with the Committee on Pro-Life Activities. The bishops have to review it and that hasn't been done," he said.

"We're seeking consultation from professionals on how we can better communicate our message" of respect for life, he said.

Work being done by the two firms would be "part of our public information program outlined in the Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities of 1985," Father Gouldrick said. "This is a way of strengthening our public-information program."

He added that "campaign" was always the wrong word.

Representatives from Wirthlin and from Hill and Knowlton attended the meeting to make a presentation to the diocesan directors, he said, as they had for state Catholic conference directors who met recently in Sun River, Ore.

Father Gouldrick said the presentation included some of the firms' research findings, including those showing that most people who label themselves "pro-choice" on abortion "really move into pro-life" when questioned.

Such people say "no" to using abortion for sex selection, career reasons or avoiding single parenthood, he said.

The researchers also found misperceptions about abortion, he said. One finding was that some 30 percent of people believe abortions number fewer than 100,000 a year, when in reality some 4,000 are performed daily or more than 1.5 million annually.

Most people believe, too, that rape accounts for many abortions, when actually the figure is less than 1 percent.

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