

Scholars debate contrasts of religions in war

By Teresa Coyle
Catholic News Service

ST. LOUIS — It is difficult to justify war under the theologies of the Christian, Jewish or Muslim religious traditions, according to scholars of the three faiths who participated in a recent inter-religious conference in St. Louis.

While speakers at the Jan. 22-23 conference generally agreed on principles regarding the conditions and limits of a just war, they also found differences — notably in the larger role religious faith has in the Islamic conception of a just war.

They also noted a more explicit emphasis on environmental concerns in Muslim and Jewish traditions than in the Christian tradition.

Although non-Muslims tend to think of the Islamic *jihad* , or "struggle," only in terms of a "holy war," Islamic specialist Mumtaz Ahmad of Hampton University in Virginia stressed that war is only one form of the struggle to obey the will of Allah.

For the *jihad* of war, he said, three conditions must be met in Islamic thought: Its cause must be just, it must be initiated by a legitimate authority, and it must be undertaken for the right reason — to serve Allah.

"The aim of war is to establish and ensure justice and to eliminate oppression and abolish terror," he said. Thus war undertaken for power, territory, fame, wealth, property, "or even oil, is not an Islamic

jihad ," Ahmad said.

After a conference session, Ahmad told the *St. Louis Review* , the archdiocesan newspaper of St. Louis, that few Moslems would agree Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has fulfilled the conditions for a just war.

"Very few people believe in his Islamic rhetoric," he said. "The problem is also the just cause. The war didn't start on the 17th (of January, Iraqi time). It started on the 2nd of August when he had invaded Kuwait."

The two-day conference was hosted by the Center for Interreligious Dialogue of Washington University and organized by J. Patout Burns, a professor of Christian thought at the university and director of the center.

Scholars representing the three faiths at the conference were:

- Christians: Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland of Milwaukee, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, who chaired the conference's public sessions; Father J. Bryan Hehir of Georgetown University in Washington; and James Turner Johnson of Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J.

- Jews: Reuvan Kimelman of Brandeis University, Waltham, Mass.; and Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Washington-based Religious Action Center of the Union of American Hebrew Con-

gregations.

- Muslims: Ahmad and Azim Nanji of the University of Florida, Gainesville, Fla.

John Borelli, the U.S. bishops' associate secretary for Catholic relations with non-Christian religions, initiated the idea for the conference last November and helped Burns organize it.

Archbishop Weakland said that in Christian just war theory "it always looks as if God is left out. The whole idea of the preservation of faith doesn't seem to be part of the criteria."

Father Hehir said that Christian thinking on the issue has made "a strong attempt since the 17th century to dissociate religious reasons" from justification for war — in part because "explicitly religious claims" tend to intensify the use of force and make negotiation and peace making more difficult.

Kimelman, who teaches Jewish religious thought, said invoking God to justify war is "problematic" because it tends to make people "believe when they're right they're totally right, and those who are wrong are totally wrong."

Burns said afterward that a number of shared views on war's limits emerged from the scholars' comments. He said these included the principles that:

- "The effort must be directed against the opposing military forces and the resources which are being used in the war effort."

- "Non-combatant civilians may never be the object of direct attack and must, as far as possible, be shielded from harm."

- "Force used against military targets must be proportionate and appropriate to the justifying cause of the war."

- It is "the legitimate objectives of the war," not the "justness of the cause," that must serve as a measure of a "morally acceptable level of violence and destruction."

Burns said a concern that "the natural environment must be protected" is addressed more specifically in Muslim and Jewish thought than in Christian just war theory, "but all three traditions agree that wanton destruction of the means of life must be avoided."

Prelate expresses doubts that war in the gulf is 'just'

By John Thavis
Catholic News Service

ROME — Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the Vatican's top doctrinal official, said he has "profound doubts" about whether the war in the Persian Gulf fits the definition of a "just war."

The cardinal said it was possible that modern warfare may no longer be able to meet the traditional moral requirement of "proportionality" — the principle that says the human and other costs of a war must be commensurate with the values at stake and the evil that one is trying to overcome.

Cardinal Ratzinger, head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, made the comments in an interview with the Italian state radio RAI Jan. 25.

Asked whether proportionality exists in the gulf war, the cardinal said he did not want to give a definitive answer, but added: "Profound doubts are justified."

"No one questions the fact that serious injustices are caused by a tyrant, but it is also true that new and serious problems, as well as injustices, are created by war," Cardinal Ratzinger said.

"In a world in which the (military) means develop to the point where the injustices they create are more serious than the injustice one seeks to eliminate, this position (of a just war) is no longer valid," he said.

The cardinal said he could not offer a "final word" on whether today's weaponry and warfare made all modern war unjust. "But I think we are in a situation in which one must at least reflect on whether proportionality is still possible,"

he said.

The church traditionally has taught that a "just war" must meet several criteria. In addition to being proportional, it must be fought for a just cause, authorized by a competent authority, have the right intention, have probability of success, be waged only as a last resort and avoid targeting civilians.

Spanish officials find obstructions during inquest

MADRID, Spain (CNS) — A special committee of Spain's Congress of Deputies has issued a report charging that the Salvadoran armed forces and the U.S. government conducted a "deliberate obstruction" of the judicial inquest into the November 1989 murders of six Jesuit priests in El Salvador.

According to news reports, the special committee presented the report to the full congress on Jan. 29.

Based on the committee's fact-finding mission to El Salvador last November, the report concluded that there "are others ... responsible in addition to those presently charged" with the murders.

"There exists a clear lack of cooperation and even deliberate obstruction by the Armed Forces and some sectors of the Salvadoran government, as well as by the U.S. administration, in terms of providing precise information and documentation for the complete clarification of the facts," the committee's report said.

The report said there is a "favorable climate" for criminal acts among some sectors of the Salvadoran military, which it



AP/Wide World Photos
FRESH GUNSHIPS — Salvadoran air force crews in Ilopango, El Salvador, prepare rocket launchers on six 'UH-1M' Vietnam-era helicopter gunships. U.S. officials provided the armed helicopters along with three A-37 attack jets on Jan. 29.

Fisher forum to examine Gulf and Palestinian issues

ROCHESTER — St. John Fisher College has scheduled a forum to study the relationship between the war in the Persian Gulf and Palestinian issues on Feb. 12, at 7:30 p.m. in Basil Hall auditorium, 3690 East Ave.

Part of the college's International Speakers Series, the forum will feature addresses by five speakers: Robert Holloway, Vietnam veteran from Roch-

ester's Veterans Outreach Center; Shaw Dallal, professor of international law at Utica College; Robert Holmes, professor of philosophy at the University of Rochester; Tamara Sonn, director of international studies at St. John Fisher; and Ilham Abu Ghazaleh, a Palestinian from Bir Zeit University on the West Bank.

The forum is free and open to the public. For information, call 716/385-8104.

said is accustomed to acting with "absolute impunity." It noted that a sense of loyalty among officers of the same graduating classes, known as "tandas," had led in many cases to "complicity or concealment" of evidence in criminal activity.

"For that reason it is important to determine, through due process of law, those who were directly or indirectly responsible for the massacre" of the Jesuits, it said.

Only by doing so, it said, would a "profound reform of the (Salvadoran)

armed forces" be possible.

The Jesuits, including the rector of Jesuit-run Central American University, Father Ignacio Ellacuria, were found slain on the university campus Nov. 16, 1989, along with their cook and her teenaged daughter.

Nine military personnel, including the former head of the national officers' school, were arrested and bound over for trial in connection with the murderers.

But critics of the government charge that the investigation failed to go after those who might have ordered the killings.

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