

Agencies struggling to aid Kurds

By Laurie Hansen
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Catholic Church agencies in mid-April struggled to find effective methods of distributing relief aid to Iraq's Kurdish refugees and urged greater U.S. emergency assistance to stem the crisis.

Meanwhile, *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican newspaper, said in an April 21 front-page editorial that a just solution for the Kurds must be part of any Middle East peace plan.

Iraqi Kurds, whose hopes of their own nation rose following Iraq's defeat in the Persian Gulf war, were fleeing their homes in Iraq by the millions in the wake of the Iraqi army's crushing of a Kurdish popular revolt.

Bush administration officials estimated that as many as 800,000 homeless Kurds had gathered along the Iraq-Turkey border, with the State Department estimating that as many as 1,000 were dying daily from disease. Bad sanitation was reportedly taking a heavy toll on children.

Another 1.5 million Iraqi Kurds had surged toward Iran and were huddled along the Iran-Iraq border in mid-April.

Dawn T. Calabria, director of refugee services for the U.S. Catholic Conference, in testimony before a House of Representatives subcommittee April 17, noted that the U.S. public has become more aware of the needs of refugees worldwide.

She reported to members of the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee that her office had received hundreds of calls expressing sympathy and support for the Kurdish

refugees.

Given the Kurdish crisis, Calabria called on Congress to raise federal Emergency Refugee Medical Assistance to \$100 million this year and to increase regular Refugee Medical Assistance by at least \$100 million to \$333 million.

Representatives of Catholic relief agencies, in interviews with Catholic News Service, acknowledged that better coordination is needed for the aid that has been donated.

An International Catholic Migration Commission project that would have interviewed 3,000 Kurdish refugees in hopes of resettling them had to be put off "given the crisis situation," said Monsignor Nicholas DiMarzio, vice president of the commission, which is based in Geneva. Monsignor DiMarzio is former director of the U.S. bishops' Migration and Refugee Services

in Washington and now vicar for human services in his home archdiocese of Newark, N.J.

"Supplies are dispersed haphazardly," said Jennifer Habte, a spokeswoman for Kurdish relief efforts of the Baltimore-based Catholic Relief Services. Better coordination, she added, is needed "at the governmental level, the United Nations level (and) down on the ground where the people are."

Habte called the resultant wave of donations to CRS to assist in the crisis "the greatest single outpouring of support for a project since the Ethiopian famine" of 1984-85.

A U.S. plan to send U.S. soldiers into northern Iraq to create safe havens for Kurds was "probably the best that could be accomplished," Monsignor DiMarzio



AP/Wide World Photos
A Kurdish refugee feeds his baby milk provided by one of the recently established medical centers in Cukurca, Turkey, April 11. The village is located near one of the many camps along the Iraqi border.

Bishops' committee requests comments for series

By Sister Mary Ann Walsh
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — The U.S. bishops' Committee on Women in Society and in the Church is seeking input for a video series on issues affecting women in the church.

The series will consist of four 10-minute videotapes examining the topics of: women's spirituality; balancing family and work from a spiritual perspective; use of mentors; and women and men as partners in mission, working together for the church.

Dolores R. Leckey, executive director of the U.S. Catholic Conference Secretariat for Laity and Family Life, said input would

be accepted in letter form. Leckey also serves as staff member to the bishops' committee headed by Rochester's Bishop Matthew H. Clark.

Letters must be received by May 31. They should include both suggestions about issues the series can address and examples of what is occurring in the four topical areas, she said.

Two videotapes are slated for fall release, and the other two are scheduled for release prior to Lent of 1992.

"We want people to help shape these videos," Leckey said April 16. "We want letters in which people tell us their stories, raise questions and point out what should be addressed in parish discussions."

The committee wants to know, for example, whether groups of women are gathering for prayer, and how men and women are collaborating on such parish efforts as outreach to the needy.

The goal is for the videos to "develop and expand upon questions that affect women's lives," be both "inspirational and motivational," and "get men and women talking on these issues."

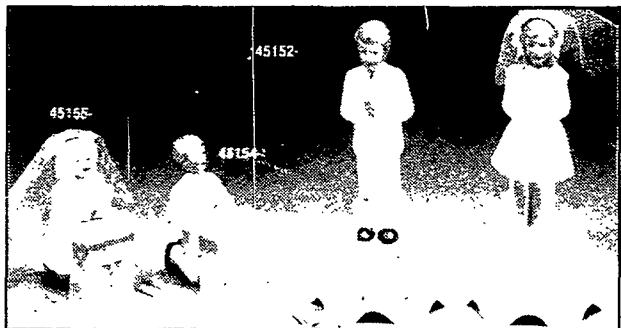
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EDITORS' NOTE: Letters should be sent to Mrs. Dolores R. Leckey, U.S. Catholic Conference Secretariat for Laity and Family Life, 3211 Fourth St., NE, Washington, D.C. 20017.

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