

# Bishops denounce Bush decision

WASHINGTON (CNS) — U.S. bishops and other church officials quickly denounced the Bush administration decision in early February to begin repatriation of thousands of U.S.-bound Haitian boat people intercepted at sea by the U.S. Coast Guard.

"I say and the Catholic Church says to the U.S. government: Give us these people. Don't force them back ... Don't send people where they may die," said Jesuit Father Richard Ryscavage, executive director of the U.S. bishops' Migration and Refugee Services, in a Feb. 5 statement.

Working with the Archdiocese of Miami, MRS recently established an office in Miami to provide resettlement services to Haitians arriving in the United States. The office is partially funded by the Justice Department's Community Relations Service.

The first 150 of thousands being returned home by the U.S. government arrived in Haiti Feb. 3.

The repatriation began less than a month after release of a new report by Amnesty International documenting human-rights violations in Haiti since a military coup in September toppled Haiti's president, Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Fleeing Haitians have claimed they face political persecution in their country while the Bush administration argues that the majority fled for economic reasons.

Meanwhile the U.S. State Department is investigating allegations that the Haitian military has beaten and killed boat people who were returned to Haiti last November after U.S. officials rejected their claims for asylum.

In an interview with Catholic News Service, Father Ryscavage said the Jan. 31 Supreme Court decision that allowed U.S. repatriation of Haitians was based on "hysteria" and what he believed to be a questionable report that some 20,000 U.S.-bound Haitians were poised to exit their homeland.

He said the report and what he called "exaggerated" claims that an unusually high percentage of U.S.-bound Haitian boat people had tested positive for the AIDS virus "fed an alarmist feeling in Washington."

"We have no independent confirmation" of the 20,000 figure, said Father Ryscavage.

The priest said his office was urging members of Congress to "put on the fast track" a bill to halt the repatriation. Such a bill, if approved, could face a veto by President Bush.

Cardinal Bernard F. Law of Boston noted that while the repatriation is "legally justifiable" it is "morally questionable."

The cardinal, who is chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Migration, asked how anyone could doubt that the Haitian boat people "are refugees worthy of reception into our country."

Cardinal Law made the comments in a statement issued by the Arch-

diocese of Boston Feb. 3. An edited version of the statement appeared in the Feb. 4 issue of the *Boston Globe*.

Cardinal Anthony J. Bevilacqua of Philadelphia, a member of the Committee on Migration, in a Feb. 10 letter to President Bush urged him to halt the repatriation, saying "these patriots are fleeing an illegal military dictatorship that uses violence in place of reason and threatens their lives and the lives of their families."

Bishop Thomas V. Daily of Brooklyn, in a Feb. 3 statement, said the Haitians left "not for frivolous reasons" but "in desperation because of intolerable violence and oppression."

The U.S. Supreme Court's Jan. 31 decision lifted a ban that had prevented the government from sending Haitians back, ending months of legal wrangling that left more than 10,000 Haitians in a state of limbo at Guantanamo Bay naval base in Cuba.



AP/Wide World Photos  
**DEBRIS OF WAR — A young boy Feb. 2 carries an exploded military rocket in Stepanakert, capital of the disputed Nagorno Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. The city's Armenian population is under regular artillery and rocket attack from surrounding Azerbaijani forces.**

## Vatican recognizes new European states

By John Thavis  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — The Vatican, responding to the redrawn political map of Eastern Europe, announced it was establishing diplomatic relations with Ukraine, Croatia and Slovenia.

Ukraine, home of an estimated 5 million Catholics, became the first ex-Soviet republic after Russia to be recognized by the Vatican following the breakup of the Soviet Union in December.

The former Yugoslavian republics of Croatia and Slovenia, both predominantly Catholic, were formally recognized as independent by the Vatican in January. They are Europe's newest states.

The Vatican announcement Feb. 8

was expected to be followed in coming weeks by the appointment of papal ambassadors, called nuncios. The presence of nuncios will allow the Vatican to monitor more directly the problems encountered by the churches in all three countries.

In Ukraine, the Catholic Church is a minority of about 10 percent and has been embroiled in property and organizational disputes with the Orthodox in recent years. The Vatican has tried unsuccessfully to mediate the conflict.


Most Ukrainian Catholics belong to the Eastern-rite church, which was suppressed in 1946 but re-emerged under the reform policies of former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev.

A Vatican statement noted that re-

lations between Ukraine and Rome began in the year 988, when Prince Vladimir of Kiev converted to Christianity. These relations have never been completely severed, even after the Catholic-Orthodox schism of 1054, the statement said.

It also noted that the Holy See had attempted to send a papal legate to Ukraine in 1920, but the diplomat had to turn back after the state was overrun in fighting between Russia and Poland. Ukraine later became part of the Soviet Union.


The Vatican statement said Croatia, following months of bloody warfare with Serbian forces and the federal Yugoslav army, is in need of a "new resurrection."



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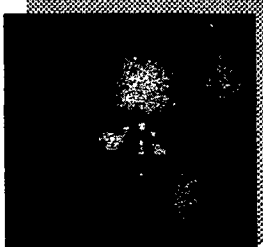
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Bishop William J. McCormack,  
National Director

The year 1991 ended with great news from the Missions: the ordination of the first three young men of the Sidamo tribe in southern Ethiopia. Yet, too, there is the knowledge of still greater needs in the Missions: to train seminarians, novices, catechists; to support pastoral and evangelizing programs. ♦ A Propagation of the Faith Gift Annuity lets you provide for the Church's missionary work of the future. You can make an important charitable gift, claim a charitable contribution and receive an income for the rest of your life. Your income remains constant, unaffected by falling interest rates or stock market uncertainty; a portion is tax-free. Write for more details. God bless!

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