

# Vatican debates moral criteria of intervention

## U.S. troops enter strife-torn Somalia to guard supplies

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VATICAN CITY — As U.S. troops in Somalia began guarding relief supplies for millions of starving people, Vatican officials started work on the moral criteria for deploying foreign military forces for humanitarian purposes.

The term used to describe this activity is "humanitarian intervention."

It involves the morally and politically thorny questions of:

- When does feeding starving masses become unwarranted interference in the domestic affairs of another nation?

- Who is the competent international authority to justify such intervention?

- Will the intervention create more problems than it solves?

- Is the intervention accompanied by a long-term program to solve core economic, production and political problems?

Pope John Paul II has been leading the call for world leaders to take strong measures so that food and basic necessities reach people put in desperate conditions by war.

"The conscience of humanity ... asks that humanitarian intervention be obligatory where the survival of populations and entire ethnic groups is seriously compromised," the pope said in opening a U.N.-sponsored international nutrition conference in Rome.

"War between nations or internal conflicts must not condemn defenseless civilians to death by hunger," said the pope.

International leaders cannot hide behind the objection that this constitutes "interference in the internal affairs of a country," he added.

The pope spoke Dec. 5. He did not mention the U.S.-led initiative to send tens of thousands of multinational troops to Somalia.

The aim is to protect relief supplies from the clan warfare that has plagued the East African country since the bloody ouster in 1991 of dictator Mohamed Siad Barre left Somalia without a central government.

But the papal speech came as the United States, with U.N. backing, was preparing to send troops. Several Vatican officials quickly supported the action.

Somalia's situation justifies "humanitarian intervention," said Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

"Somalia is an example of involvement not to end lives, but to help lives," he said.

The church should develop a moral criteria to guide actions on this newly emerging type of military intervention, he said at a Dec. 9 Vatican news conference on the new universal catechism.

Also praising the intervention in Somalia were Vatican representatives to U.N. organizations.

"This is a real social and charitable work that the Americans are doing," said Archbishop Alois Wagner, Vatican delegate to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization.

FAO sponsored the Rome conference opened by the pope.

When humanitarian programs are blocked, the international community



A 20-year-old victim of Somalia's famine lies in a makeshift tent in Mogadishu Dec. 8. U.S. Marines began arriving in Mogadishu early Dec. 9 to begin a mission of mercy to feed Somalia's starving millions.

should take action, Archbishop Wagner told Catholic News Service Dec. 10.

"We understand that for the Americans it's not easy — but it is necessary," he said, to help restore justice.

Archbishop Renato R. Martino, head of the Vatican delegation at U.N. headquarters in New York, told Catholic News Service Dec. 10 that the intervention in Somalia is a precedent that should be repeated elsewhere.

"The international community cannot just watch the faces of starving children on television and do nothing," said Archbishop Martino.

Bosnia-Herzegovina in the former territory of Yugoslavia and other places in Africa than Somalia "could be helped by an intervention like

that," he said.

Other church officials, however, were wary about applying the Somalia situation to other world trouble spots.

Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger of Paris, in a Dec. 7 radio interview in France, supported "humanitarian intervention" in Somalia.

But in Bosnia "an intervention could be onerous, bloody and cruel," the cardinal said.

Also cautious were Cardinal Roger Etchegaray and Bishop Jorge Mejia, president and vice-president respectively of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.

At a Dec. 11 Vatican news conference to make public the pope's 1993 peace day message, both Vatican offi-

cials supported "humanitarian intervention" in Somalia. But they said it would be riskier in Bosnia and other places where war is already raging. They said they feared foreign military intervention would probably provoke more problems than it would solve.

Cardinal Etchegaray also stressed a limited value of "humanitarian intervention."

"The armed hand of humanity" is sometimes needed, but this cannot replace negotiations and diplomacy, said Cardinal Etchegaray.

"Do not fix only on the right to intervention," he said. "More important, more difficult and more necessary is how to prevent these things from happening."

Both officials said more study is required of the complex moral and political reasons that might justify "humanitarian intervention."

A line has to be drawn to prevent such intervention from turning into a war or becoming part of an existing war, said the cardinal.

Bishop Mejia said, "If it is necessary to kill to feed Somalis, this is not good."

Bishop Mejia added that practical questions have to be raised as to whether the United Nations, as it is now, is the proper international body to authorize such intervention.

The United Nations "is not a group of equal states; real power is concentrated in the small membership of the Security Council, he said.

"This always tilts toward decisions by the more powerful," said the bishop.

In the case of Somalia, the United States is "too much in the spotlight," he said.

Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, retired Vatican Secretary of State, said that the United Nations should be strengthened so that it has the legitimacy and credibility to undertake such actions without superpower help.

A formula has to be reached by which the organization has its own military force and has safeguards to prevent it from acting only on behalf of a specific nation or bloc, he said in a Dec. 14 interview with the Rome newspaper, *Il Messaggero*.

Currently the United Nations has to rely on the powerful countries to intervene and has to hope that they are "well intentioned," he said.

"This is certainly not good criteria, because others are always suspecting that there is a partisan interest," he said.

The FAO nutrition conference in Rome approved a final declaration Dec. 11 asking for changes in world political, economic, production and distribution policies to prevent similar disasters in the future.

## Ex-priest convicted of sexually molesting baby sitter

MINNEAPOLIS (CNS) — Former priest James R. Porter was convicted Dec. 11 of sexually molesting a 15-year-old baby sitter.

It was the first criminal conviction for Porter, who is accused of molesting dozens of boys and girls in several states before and after he left the priesthood in 1974.

His sentencing was set for Jan. 28. Porter was released to the custody of his attorney, Paul Lukas.

The 57-year-old former priest was convicted of six counts of fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct. He faces up to four years in prison and a \$10,000 fine on each count, but state

guidelines recommend probation for a person with no previous criminal record.

A jury deliberated for 12 hours over three days before convicting Porter on the charges, which stemmed from 1987 incidents in which a woman, now 21, said Porter had molested her while she was baby-sitting for the former priest's four children.

Porter's wife, Verlyne, testified that the family did not use the woman as a baby sitter after 1984. His older daughter, Colleen, said her father was never home when the family had baby sitters.

The verdict came the week after the

Diocese of Fall River, Mass., announced that it had reached a financial settlement with 68 people who said they were sexually abused by Porter when he worked in that diocese 30 years ago.

As part of the settlement both parties agreed to keep financial details private.

Porter still faces criminal charges in Massachusetts for 46 counts of sexual assault and civil lawsuits by alleged victims in Minnesota, where he now lives, and New Mexico, where he was treated for pedophilia at a church-run center.