

# Vatican calls for U.N. to seek a halt in raids

By John Thavis  
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VATICAN CITY — The Vatican, at Iraq's request, said it was asking the United Nations to seek a halt to military actions in Iraq in favor of dialogue.

The Vatican said it was taking the step because it was convinced that continued use of force would only compound violence in the region. The move came after three U.S.-led bombing attacks on Iraqi targets in response to Iraqi violations of U.N. cease-fire resolutions.

A Vatican spokesman, Joaquin Navarro-Valls, described the bombings as an "overreaction" to Iraqi provocations.

"That there were provocations is clear. That there was overreaction by the other side is also clear," he said Jan. 19.

Navarro-Valls said the Vatican, in pressing the issue with the United Nations, was "not taking Iraq's side, but the side of reason." He said the Vatican's action could not be termed mediation, since it was not acting at the request of both sides in the dispute.

Iraq's ambassador to the Holy See, Wissam Chawkat Al-Zahari, met twice in mid-January with a top Vatican diplomat, Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran, to outline the Iraqi position.

During the second meeting Jan. 19, the Iraqi ambassador made a formal request: that the Vatican Secretariat of State ask the U.N. secretary-general to "undertake efforts to favor dialogue between the interested parties and the cessation of military actions," a Vatican statement said.

"The Holy See accepted the request because it is convinced that using weapons to impose one's own will and one's own political program can only lead to increased violence and consequences that are not always controllable," the Vatican said.

Before the meeting, Navarro-Valls said the Vatican's longstanding position was that "armed force, violence and provocations" were not the way to resolve disputes.

The Vatican statements echoed its strong criticism of the Persian Gulf War in 1991, when the United States led a coalition of international forces in pushing an Iraqi occupying army out of Kuwait. Iraq was heavily bombed during the war, and an economic embargo has been maintained against the country.



Two Jordanian men and an Iraqi woman read the Jordanian daily newspaper *Al Ra'i* Jan. 14, the morning after allied forces attacked Iraqi positions in southern Iraq. The headlines read "American, British and French Air Aggression on Southern Iraq." AP/Wide World Photos

bargo has been maintained against the country.

Vatican officials privately have expressed deep concern at the effect the renewed bombings could have on Arab and Muslim sentiments worldwide and on peace prospects throughout the Middle East.

Pope John Paul II, speaking to diplomats at the Vatican Jan. 16, did not comment on the recent bombings but asked world leaders not to forget the hardships imposed on Iraq's population. It was a case of innocent civilians

being forced to accept "heavy sufferings," he said.

Vatican Radio, in a commentary Jan. 18, said the latest escalation in Iraq demonstrated that the 1991 war had not solved the region's difficulties.

"The repetition in recent days of Iraqi provocations on one side and the harsh allied military response on the other is one of the gravest sources of worry on the world horizon," said the commentary by the radio's program director, Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi.

# High Court rejects effort to stop rescues under Klan law

By Patricia Zapor  
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WASHINGTON — Abortion clinic blockades do not violate a 122-year-old civil rights law and therefore fail to warrant federal intervention to stop them, the Supreme Court ruled Jan. 13.

Six justices agreed that women as a class are not deprived of civil rights by the blockades. Justice David Souter agreed in part but dissented in part and three others disagreed vehemently with the prevailing opinion.

Writing for the majority, Justice Antonin Scalia said, "opposition to abortion cannot possibly be considered ... opposition to (or paternalism towards) women. Whatever one thinks of abortion, it cannot be denied that there are common and respectable reasons for opposing it, other than hatred or condescension toward (women)."

The Alexandria Women's Health Clinic in Virginia claimed blockades by abortion protesters, including Jayne Bray and members of Operation Rescue, violated the 1871 Civil Rights Act, also known as the Ku Klux Klan Act because it was used to guarantee the rights of blacks targeted by the Klan.

Originally heard by the court in October 1991, the justices asked that the case be re-argued this term. At the original argument, Justice Clarence Thomas had not yet joined the court and speculation was high that the remaining eight members were evenly divided on the case.

Thomas voted with Scalia in the majority, as did Chief Justice William Rehnquist, and Justices Byron White and Anthony Kennedy, and Souter in part. Justices John Paul Stevens, Harry Blackmun and Sandra Day O'Connor dissented.

Pro-life activists in the Rochester diocese applauded the decision, but were not certain of its full effects.

"We are elated at the outcome in that any good news at this point is great in light of the (President Bill) Clinton administration," noted David

Long, executive director of Christians in Action, alluding to President Clinton's pro-choice stance. "It's a reasonable ruling in that it's a logical approach to interpreting the laws."

At the same time, Long added, "The actual practical outlook remains to be seen. We believe Clinton will use federal powers against clinic blockades."

Likewise, Robert Dorscheid, who was arrested during the clinic blockades in Wichita, Kan., in the summer of 1991, noted that he was "happy" to read about the decision. "I'm not sure how it will affect people who are in jail," he added.

Long, however, speculated that the decision may affect a number of federal cases pending against clinic blockade participants.

"It will probably at least gut some of the injunctions nationally," Long suggested.

Under the Klan Act, the health clinic claimed abortion protesters engaged in a conspiracy to deprive women as a class of a protected civil right of access to abortion.

Scalia noted that although abortions are performed only on women, the blockades were intended to keep out everyone who participates in an abortion, including the pregnant woman, clinic staff, spouses or boyfriends. He also distinguished between opposing abortion and opposing racism.

"Whether one agrees or disagrees with the goal of preventing abortion, that goal in itself (apart from the use of unlawful means to achieve it ...) does not remotely qualify for such harsh description and for such derogatory association with racism," Scalia wrote.

"To the contrary, we have said that

'a value judgment favoring childbirth over abortion' is proper and reasonable enough to be implemented by the allocation of public funds ... and Congress itself, has, with our approval, discriminated against abortion in its provision of financial support for medical procedures."

Souter agreed with Scalia's interpretation that women seeking abortions did not constitute a class appropriate to the use of the Klan Act, but disagreed with his conclusion that the Supreme Court was not asked to consider the issue of whether the blockades hindered legitimate law enforcement.

By invoking the Klan Act, supporters of legal abortion hoped to create a precedent for involving federal law enforcement agencies in fighting blockades.

# Clinton says Georgetown years helped form views

By Patricia Zapor  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Attending college at Georgetown University "opened my eyes to the world in a way that they never would have been otherwise," President Bill Clinton told students at the university two days before his inauguration.

"Georgetown played a major role in my path to the presidency," Clinton told 1,000 students who had waited for him in a cold courtyard for three and a half hours Jan. 18.

Clinton is the first graduate of a Catholic college to be elected president. A Southern Baptist, he has credited his experiences at Georgetown with shaping his philosophies of public service.

He told the students that even after the death two weeks earlier of former Georgetown president Father Timothy Healy, the priest and Clinton friend was influencing him.

Found among the Jesuit priest's personal effects was a four-page outline of instructions for his inaugural address, Clinton explained.

"Tim's buried down the hill here," he said. "I want him to know that I've absorbed the instructions and that I've taken some and rejected some. That was always the case."

The meeting with students followed a reception at the university for Washington's diplomatic corps. Clinton noted that many of his fellow classmates from Georgetown's School of Foreign Service are in the foreign service or military.

In a brief speech, Clinton acknowledged that events in the previous week "remind us anew that this era will not lack for dangers."

He repeated his resolve to maintain President Bush's approach to foreign policy in the face of tensions with Iraq. As Clinton spoke, U.S.-led forces waged another in a series of attacks on Iraq intended to force Iraqi President

Saddam Hussein to back down from violations of U.N. Security Council resolutions.

Clinton stressed his intention of relying on the United Nations to solve disputes and meet the challenges of the coming century. He urged the diplomats to encourage their governments to join together in making a better world.

Among the crowd of students waiting after the diplomatic reception were a handful of alumni who attended the school with him between 1964 and 1968. Clinton credited those classmates and friends with helping him rally resources and strength for the campaign.

Clinton has maintained close ties with many former classmates from his years in the university's School of Foreign Service.

He told the students he wished for them the same types of experiences and friendships during their years at his alma mater and asked them to give to America and not just take.