

All eyes remain on Korean standoff

By Tod Tamberg
Catholic News Service

LOS ANGELES — Domina Kim regards the escalating tensions between North and South Korea with a mixture of sadness, puzzlement and fear.

Both sides seem to be talking past each other, she says, and she's afraid that if it keeps up it will embroil her homeland in yet another devastating conflict.

Kim's fear of another war and the chaos it would bring to the Korean peninsula are rooted in personal experience. She was a 17-year-old university student living in Seoul when the city was overrun by advancing North Korean troops on June 28, 1950.

After the three-year civil war, she and many of her fellow countrymen and women emigrated to the United States.

Today, the Los Angeles area boasts the largest Korean population — 145,431 — in the world outside of Seoul, South Korea's capital. Of that number, more than 14,000 are Catholics.

A new standoff between North and South Korea has escalated during the past 15 months over the north's nuclear program.

North Korea has refused to comply with U.N.-affiliated nuclear inspectors. This has led to fears that North Korea is developing a nuclear bomb.

President Clinton has warned North Korea the United States will advocate sanctions if nuclear safeguards are ignored, but offered to end the north's international isolation if it cooperates with the world community.

Former president Jimmy Carter, in North Korea to try to defuse the crisis, said North Korean president Kim Il Sung agreed not to expel U.N. nuclear inspectors during "good faith efforts"

to ease the standoff.

President Clinton said June 20 he found "hopeful signs" in Carter's talks with North Korea, but said the communist regime must freeze its nuclear program as promised.

Clinton said administration officials are trying to confirm North Korea's willingness to keep its promises to Carter, including freezing its nuclear program, allowing international inspectors to stay and holding an unprecedented summit with South Korean President Kim Young-sam.

In an interview with *The Tidings*, Los Angeles archdiocesan newspaper, Kim recalled the war years.

"We had to hide when the communists came in," she said of the June 28, 1950, invasion of Seoul. "No one could go outside. I was very scared."

Just three days earlier, North Korea had launched a massive surprise attack on South Korea. By early September, the north had advanced way beyond Seoul to within 30 miles of the southern port city of Pusan.

On Sept. 15, however, U.S. and U.N. forces under Gen. Douglas MacArthur counterattacked. By the end of October, MacArthur's troops had pushed the North Korean army back to the Yalu River border between North Korea and China.

Then 300,000 Chinese "volunteers" entered the war in late November, and the ensuing back-and-forth fighting resulted in an estimated 3 million to 4 million military and civilian lives lost.

Kim recalled how communist troops beat a Catholic priest — a family friend — for the actions of a child under his care.

"He ran an orphanage near Seoul. When the communists came, they put

pictures of Kim Il Sung everywhere," she said. "One of the orphan boys destroyed a picture. So they took father to prison and they beat him very badly. He was almost dead when he came out."

Kim eventually escaped from Seoul and returned only after the fighting ended. But there was nothing left to return to.

"The buildings were totally destroyed. Our house was there, but all the things we had in it were gone. We couldn't find anything," she said.

Most Korean Americans still have family in South Korea and are watching the situation closely. But Kenneth Son, a 24-year-old first-generation Korean American, doubts that war will come because the sheer destruction it would bring would amount to "certain suicide."

Moreover, "Koreans are a very spiritual people," Son said. "Many who live here and over there believe that Korea is specially protected by God and the spirits. They believe that Providence is looking over their shoulders right now and that because of this nothing will happen."

If war were to come, 1.1 million North Korean soldiers would square off against 633,000 South Korean troops and 36,000 U.S. soldiers stationed near the demilitarized zone.

Kenneth M. Weare, a professor of moral theology at the University of Dayton, said in an essay in *The Tidings* that such a war would be difficult to justify under Catholic just-war criteria.

Weare said going to war would mean "risking perhaps hundreds of thousands if not ultimately millions of military and civilian lives, and untold ecological devastation, just on the chance of avoiding some projected hypothesized uncertain worse scenario on the (Korean) peninsula."



AP/Wide World Photos

Haiti crisis continues

Stevenson Louisaint, 3, is consoled by his 5-year-old brother Serge (left) after learning that a church-run food program in the Port-au-Prince slum of La Saline had run out of food. Although tightened sanctions on Haiti have been imposed over its military's refusal to relinquish power, humanitarian aid is excluded from embargoed items. However, frequent shortages of food and medical supplies have been the norm since the sanctions began.

USCC joins effort to revise harassment guidelines

By Patricia Zapor
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Catholic Conference has joined a chorus of religious and civil rights organizations pushing for changes in how proposed guidelines on harassment in the workplace address religion.

In a June 13 letter, USCC general counsel Mark E. Chopko said that while the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is right to be concerned

about religious harassment in the workplace, guidelines currently being considered lack the balance necessary.

The guidelines are intended to enforce 1964 Civil Rights Act protections against discrimination based on race, religion, sex, disability, age, color or national origin. They have been the subject of intense lobbying by organizations such as the Christian Coalition and the Traditional Values Coalition, which argue that any reference to religion might be construed by an employer as pro-

hibiting workers from wearing religious symbols, discussing religion or keeping a Bible on a desk.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, the American Atheists are asking that the guidelines be stricter, prohibiting religious radio programs and religious holiday celebrations in the workplace and forbidding employees from wearing crucifixes, yarmulkes, scarves or other items dictated by religious custom.

Other groups, including the National Council of Churches, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Lutheran Church in America and the American Jewish Committee argue that some reference to religion is necessary in the guidelines to protect individual rights. Most of those organizations advocate revising the religion references to clarify what would be considered illegal harassment.

The U.S. Senate voted 94-0 June 16 to urge the EEOC to drop religion from the guidelines. The resolution, sponsored by Sens. Howard Heflin, D-Ala., and Hank Brown, R-Colo., also asks the EEOC to make it clear in any new guidelines on workplace harassment that religious symbols or expressions of religious beliefs are not restricted and cannot be used to prove harassment.

Heflin said the language on religion was vague and indefinite and would result in employers prohibiting all forms of religious expressions to protect themselves from lawsuits.

In his letter to Douglas A. Gallegos, executive director of the EEOC, Chopko said the guidelines create confusion which "will have a chilling effect on religious expression in the workplace." They also fail to distinguish between secular and religious employers and overlook a recent Supreme Court decision on workplace harassment, he said.

Chopko warned the guidelines as written fail to distinguish between constitutionally protected expression of personal beliefs and insults, punishment or coercion based on religion.

Without clarification, employers are likely to try to avoid controversy by adopting workplace regulations that suppress religious expression, he said.

"This draconian approach is not far-fetched — it has been reported that a major airline adopted just such an approach in reaction to the guidelines," the letter said. Chopko suggested the guidelines be revised to include concrete examples of what would be considered religious harassment and to acknowledge that First Amendment rights of employers and employees include free expression of religious ideas.

The letter also said the guidelines should recognize that religious employers have statutory exemptions from hiring people who act contrary to the religious beliefs of the organization.

At a hearing June 9, Gallegos testified that the guidelines are intended to define unlawful religious harassment as that which is unwelcome and "severely or pervasively denigrates or shows hostility on the basis of religion."

He told the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Courts and Administrative Practice that contrary to some fears, the guidelines could not be used to forbid workers from wearing religious jewelry or a yarmulke, from having a Bible on one's desk or from inviting a colleague to church.

He and members of the EEOC legal staff acknowledged that the proposed guidelines could use some revision, based upon information received during the regulatory comment period ending June 14.

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