

# WORLD & NATION

## Christians mourn Rabin's murder

By Judith Sudilovsky  
Catholic News Service

JERUSALEM — Christian leaders joined some 80 heads of state and dignitaries at Mount Herzl Military Cemetery Nov. 6 to mourn the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

"We were shocked by the terrorist act which put an end to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's life because of his courageous action for peace. We present our condolences to the prime minister's family, to the government and the whole people of Israel," said Latin-rite Patriarch Michel Sabbah of Jerusalem.

"We hope that Israel will remain unified in order to be able to resume its march toward full peace ... with the Palestinians and all the Arabs of the region," he said. "We pray and hope that this land of God and all the region of the Middle East will one day enjoy the stability and prosperity of peace."

Melkite Archbishop Loufi Laham of Jerusalem called Rabin's assassination "a huge crime, especially in a democratic society."

"Violence and the seed of nontolerance is spreading more and more in Israel," he said. "Prime Minister Rabin changed from a person of war to a person of peace, and he dared to make peace with the Palestinians. We have come here to show our solidarity."

Among other Mideast Christian leaders who attended the funeral were the papal nuncio to Israel, Archbishop Andrea Cordero Lanza di Moritzemolo; Franciscan Father Joseph Nazarro, custodian of the Holy Land; Melkite Archbishop Maximos Salloum of Akka (Haifa); Syrian Catholic Bishop Pierre Abdel-Ahad; and Armenian Patriarch Torkom II of Jerusalem.

Also attending the funeral were President Bill Clinton, Jordan's King Hussein, and President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt.

Bethlehem Mayor Elias Freij did not attend the funeral, but called Rabin a peacemaker he respected.

"I have known him for 25 years. I know him very well. He came to my house, he would eat lunch at my house," Freij said in a telephone interview with CNS.

"Every member of my family and most people in Bethlehem are shocked," he said. "It was the work of extremists, who oppose the peace process, who brainwashed (the assassin) to act in such a violent way."

"The initiators of such hate in both camps should be quieted," he added. "If young people are filled with hate, some will act crazy, like our young boys who go to Israel with bombs to kill people, and they know they will die. It is the same thing with the man who killed Rabin."

In order to show respect for Rabin's memory, the peace talks must continue, he said.

In fact, Rabin's assassination may have that effect, noted Paulist Father Thomas Stransky, director of the Tantur Ecumenical Institute.

"This will strengthen the will for



Family members and others gather as the coffin of Israeli Prime Minister Rabin is lowered into the ground Nov. 6. At center left, Rabin's son Yuval comforts his widowed mother Leah, while Rabin's grandson Yonatan (center, right), an Israeli paratrooper, hugs his sister Noah Ben-Artzi Philsof. At the rear are Jordan's King Hussein and Queen Noor.

peace," the priest said. "No matter how many fights they have, when the Israelis (are faced with a tragedy), they solidify. They will still disagree on some key points, such as the issue of refugees, water rights and Jerusalem, but the will for peace will be solidified; how the enfleshing of that will be done is the question."

Father Stransky said the assassination has forced the Israelis to realize that there are more extremist elements within their society than they would like to admit.

"It has made them more aware that they can't just talk about terrorist or Palestinian suicide bombers. They don't

only have to be concerned with one lone person; it is within their society, just as it is within American society, except here it has a religious element," he said.

Rabin was shot by 25-year-old law student Yigal Amir after a peace rally Nov. 4.

He was shot twice, at close range, with a gun loaded with bullets designed to explode inside the body.

Amir allegedly was active in an extreme right-wing organization called Eyal. He said he was following an edict by a group of right-wing rabbis that it is permissible to take the blood of anyone who gives away the land of Israel.

## Bishop urges: Pray for peace in Holy Land

Bishop Matthew H. Clark released the following statement on the death of Yitzhak Rabin. The statement was read by Deacon Brian J. McNulty, coordinator of the diocesan Department of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, at a Nov. 6 ecumenical memorial service held in Rochester's Temple Beth El.

We join the world in mourning the loss of our brother Yitzhak Rabin, cruelly assassinated last Saturday.

Catholics in the diocese of Rochester join with our Jewish neighbors, the people of the State of Israel, and friends of peace everywhere in grief for this tragic loss. Many American Catholics remember the shock of President John F. Kennedy's assassination, and recall the pain and agonized confusion of those days. We pray for and with the people of Israel in this hour of testing.

Prime Minister Rabin was a general schooled in war. He was also a man with the inner strength and determination to pursue the goal of peace for all the peoples of the Middle East. He will be remembered by all as a true soldier for peace.

I invite our Catholic people to pray that Jerusalem, as the Psalmist entreats, may have peace, and in the coming months, that the world's leaders may renew their commitment to making Prime Minister Rabin's dream a reality.

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