

# WORLD & NATION

## Religious leaders back accords

WASHINGTON (CNS) — U.S. religious organizations are asking Americans to support the Bosnian peace accord and pledging to work with Bosnian counterparts to promote reconciliation in the war-ravaged Balkan nation.

"While religion has sometimes been misused in Bosnia to exacerbate the violence, religious communities will be a vital part of any long-term solution," Catholic, Orthodox, and Muslim leaders said in a Dec. 6 statement on the agreement signed in Dayton, Ohio, Nov. 21 by the presidents of Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

"We are committed ... to redoubling our efforts to work with our Muslim, Orthodox and Catholic counterparts in the Balkans to bridge the deep divisions between communities," they said.

The religious leaders also pledged to use their relief and reconstruction programs "to promote peace and reconciliation."

The statement was signed by Bishop Daniel P. Reilly of Worcester, Mass., chairman of the U.S. Catholic Conference International Policy Committee; Muhammad Aslam Cheema, president of the American Muslim Council; and Father Leonid Kishkovsky, ecumenical officer of the Orthodox Church in American

and chairman of the Europe Committee of the National Council of Churches of Christ.

Bishop Reilly, in a separate message, also urged members of Congress to back implementing the agreement, "including with the use of U.S. troops.

"While not without significant risk, the use of U.S. forces seems indispensable to ending the agony" that the Balkans have suffered for more than four years, he said.

Catholic, Muslim, Jewish, Protestant and other organizations joined on the same day in a show of support for the peace accords at a U.S. Capitol press conference.

Father Drew Christiansen, director of the USCC Office of International Justice and Peace, said in remarks prepared for the press conference that the peace agreement signed in Dayton "offers hope for a permanent and potentially just peace."

He said the U.S. bishops believe such a peace "will depend on full enforcement of all the elements which will make peace on the ground."

Father Christiansen identified those elements as: the right of people to return safely home; cooperation with the International War Crimes Tribunal; democra-

tic government; preservation of a multiethnic state; and fulfillment of all pledges of international aid.

"Fulfilling all these provisions with equal seriousness will make the difference between peace with a considerable measure of justice and a peace which is but a prolonged cease-fire," he said.

The American Muslim Council said it supports the deployment of U.S. troops to Bosnia as part of the NATO force assigned to help set the peace in place.

"Not since World War II has Europe been host to mass executions, murder and rape," Muslim Council executive director Abdurahman Alamoudi said. "We support the American brokered-peace agreement that will put an end to this ethnic cleansing.

"We applaud the administration's decision to send American troops to participate with NATO forces to implement the peace agreement," Alamoudi said.



Jacques Brund/CNS

Father Juraj Jerneic stands where a church was destroyed during fighting in the town of Glina in Croatia. The Vatican has promised aid to rebuild churches.

## President challenged not to veto partial-birth abortion ban

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Boston Cardinal Bernard F. Law and other opponents of abortion challenged President Clinton not to veto a bill approved by the Senate Dec. 7 that would for the first time since Roe vs. Wade outlaw a specific type of abortion.

In a 54-44 vote, the Senate passed a bill banning so-called partial-birth abortions.

With a provision for saving the life of the mother, the bill differs slightly from a House version approved Nov. 1 in a 288-139 vote. But House leaders said they expected the Senate version would be acceptable, ensuring it would be sent to Clinton.

"It is encouraging, though not surprising, that the Senate voted last night to

ban the direct killing of children who are in the very process of being born alive," Cardinal Law, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee for Pro-Life Activities, said in a statement.

"I urge President Clinton to allow the ban on partial-birth abortions to become law, so our nation can begin to restore partial sanity to its abortion policy," Cardinal Law said.

When the House bill passed, Clinton had indicated he would veto any version that did not include an exception for the procedure to be used to protect the mother's health.

As described by supporters of the legislation, a partial-birth abortion involves the doctor grabbing the feet of the fetus with forceps and pulling the body, up to the head, through the birth canal. The doctor stabs scissors into the base of the skull. A catheter is then used to suction out the brains,

causing the skull to collapse and allowing easier removal of the head to complete the procedure.

Opponents of the bill argue that by the time the fetus reaches the birth canal, death has occurred as a result of the anesthetic given to the mother. But that claim has been strongly contested by anesthesiologists.

In November Dr. Norig Ellison, who is president of the 32,000-member American Society of Anesthesiologists, testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee that some types of general anesthesia might sedate a fetus to a degree but would not harm the fetus.

The Senate bill was amended to provide an exception permitting the procedure to be used "to save the life of the mother whose life is endangered by a physical disorder, illness or injury, provided no other medical procedure would suffice for that purpose."

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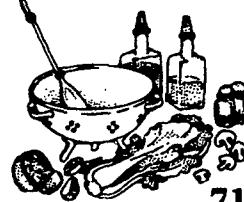
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