

WORLD & NATION

Groups wary, watching immigration proposals

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Immigration reform provisions that would limit family reunification and impose tougher income standards for immigrants to receive government assistance are high on the list of worries of the U.S. Catholic Conference as Congress takes up the subject.

The Senate Judiciary Committee Feb. 29 began its consideration of a bill that would reduce the number of immigrant visas for family members from the current 480,000 to 300,000. It also would dramatically reduce the number of employment-related visas and eliminate entire categories of family visas, such as for siblings and adult children of immigrants.

Debate the first day of committee voting on the Senate immigration bill centered on attempts to split the legislation into separate measures on legal and illegal immigration. A broad coalition of religious, social service, business and immigrant support groups is advocating the split.

Father Jenco diagnosed with cancer; in therapy

HILLSIDE, Ill. — Servite Father Lawrence Martin Jenco, who once faced pain and violence as a hostage in Beirut, Lebanon, now faces another kind of challenge.

In January he was diagnosed with pancreatic and lung cancer. Doctors at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., told Father Jenco of his disease. He is now on a regimen of chemotherapy.

Another January day 11 years ago Father Jenco was returning to his Catholic Relief Services office in Beirut when his car was stopped. He was dragged out of the car and thrown into the trunk of a different car. Shiite Muslims had mistaken him for someone else.

He was held prisoner for 19 months — days of horror, degradation, tears and occasional laughter, when he and others taken hostage found themselves in the same room. "I always wondered what cross I would have to bear next," said Father Jenco, 61, an assistant at St. Domitilla Parish in Hillside in the Diocese of Joliet.

Pope declares Hamas attack unjustified

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope John Paul II condemned the deadly bus bombing in Jerusalem March 3, saying such acts of terrorism can have "no justification."

His condemnation came before the explosion of yet another terrorist bomb March 4 in Tel Aviv.

The pope offered prayers for the victims a few hours after an explosion March 3 ripped apart a packed bus in the center of the Holy City, leaving 19 dead and many injured.

The suicide bombing, believed carried out by Palestinian extremists, was the second in a week in Jerusalem and prompted widespread anger and protests among Israelis.

The pope called it a "cruel attack" carried out with "cold determination."

The March 4 bombing, this one out-

side a shopping mall in Tel Aviv, killed 14 people and wounded at least 108 others.

The two recent attacks follow two bomb attacks Feb. 25, one in Jerusalem and one in Ashkelon. The death toll of four bombings had reached 59 as of March 5.

Members of the military wing of the Islamic Resistance Movement — known by its acronym, Hamas — have claimed responsibility for the attacks.

"The recourse to violence against innocent people cannot have any justification. For this reason, the condemnation can only be strong and complete," Pope John Paul said.

He added that he was also praying for those who "despite everything, continue to believe in peace."

Soon after the bombing, Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres announced what

he called a "war" against Hamas, which opposes Israeli-Palestinian peace talks and which has been responsible for terrorism in the past. Hamas leadership disavowed the latest attacks, however, raising questions about divisions in the group's ranks.

Peres outlined strict new security measures, including barricades on the border dividing Israel and the West Bank territories administered by the Palestinian Authority.

He refused to suspend the peace process or call off scheduled Israeli troop withdrawals later in March, two suggestions being made by angry demonstrators.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat has also said that he hoped peace talks will not be broken off, and promised to cooperate with Israel in going after Palestinian militants.

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