

WORLD & NATION

Groups attack decisions

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Pro-life leaders in at least two states criticized a federal appeals court ruling overturning Arkansas, Iowa and Nebraska laws banning partial-birth abortions.

The 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in St. Louis ruled Sept. 24 that the laws create an undue burden on the right to have an abortion and therefore are unconstitutional.

In Arkansas, the director of the Little Rock Diocese's Respect Life Office, Anne Dierks, told Catholic News Service Sept. 27 she hoped the state's attorney general would appeal the ruling to the U.S. Supreme Court, but that she hadn't heard any such plans yet.

With the 1997 law held up in court since its passage, there was an attempt in the Arkansas Legislature this year to pass another bill barring the abortion procedure, typically used late in pregnancy, but the effort failed, Dierks said.

The appeals court ruling was based in part on the peculiarities of the individual laws. For instance, the court said that Nebraska's statute includes such a broad description that it encompasses far more than the specific procedure the Legislature was trying to prohibit.

The rulings are the first consideration of laws banning partial-birth abortion by a federal circuit court.

A statement from the legislative director of the Iowa Right to Life Committee said the appeals court ruling showed "blatant disregard for innocent human life."

"Most appalling is the fact that abortion providers overturned the law by arguing that 'partially delivering a living fetus before killing it' applies to even first trimester abortions," said Samona Joy Yentes, of Iowa Right to Life.

"This case goes far beyond the arguments of 'choice,' Yentes said. "We are no longer discussing when life begins. Abortion providers argued in great detail that babies in the process of being aborted, even in the first trimester, are indeed alive."

"Incredibly, they gave the cold-hearted defense that they must be able to kill older, larger babies so that they would not lose the right to kill younger, tinier babies — because even the abortionists are arguing that babies are alive at every stage of pregnancy for every kind of abortion."

The 8th Circuit includes the states of North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri and Arkansas.



Reuters/CNS

Protesters burn flag in Dili

Men shout independence slogans while burning an Indonesian flag in front of a military building in Dili, East Timor, Sept. 23 after Indonesian soldiers evacuated the compound. The Indonesian army was pulling out of East Timor as multinational peacekeeping forces arrived to handle security.

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Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester

Pressure mounts for relief of debt

By Jerry Filteau
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Religious and humanitarian campaigns for immediate relief of Third World debts mounted shortly before the annual fall meetings of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

The late-September meetings would play a key role in determining the extent of debt relief programs in coming years, and the degree to which those programs are tied to poverty reduction and basic health and social services for the citizens of those countries.

In the days before the meetings:

- Pope John Paul II called debt relief "urgent" as he met with leaders of Jubilee 2000, an international movement to eliminate the external debt of the world's poorest countries by the start of the new millennium. "It is the poor who pay the cost of indecision and delay," he said.

- Leaders of the Religious Working Group on the World Bank and IMF met with World Bank President James D. Wolfensohn and other top World Bank leaders to discuss debt relief and poverty reduction.

- The Religious Working Group launched a "rolling fast" by 20,000 Americans, advocating for debt relief during the last 100 days of the millennium.

- Some 1,800 Catholics and organizations, including eight bishops, signed a full-page advertisement in *The New York Times* calling for complete cancellation of some \$200 billion in international debts owed by poor countries. The ad was sponsored by Pax Christi USA, the U.S. branch of the international Catholic peace movement.

- Religious Working Group chairwoman Marie Dennis and three other Catholic activists were arrested for demonstrating inside the U.S. Capitol in an effort to call on Congress to appropriate \$670 million to debt relief for poor nations in the coming fiscal year.

Jubilee 2000, the Religious Working Group and collaborating religious and humanitarian groups around the world have played a major role in recent years in drawing the attention of World Bank and IMF officials to the human dimensions of the debt issue.

The groups have highlighted the negative impact, especially on the poor, of the fiscal and economic structural conditions imposed on the world's most heavily indebted poor countries.