

WORLD & NATION

Patriarch calls for a Palestinian state

By Judith Sudilovsky
Catholic News Service

JERUSALEM — As Israeli-Palestinian violence increased and the death toll mounted, Latin-rite Patriarch Michel Sabbah said the only way to prevent such conflict is to create a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

"These sorrowful and painful events prove to all that there is no choice but to have justice for the Palestinian people, who must be given back their entire freedom and own independent state with Jerusalem as its capital," Patriarch Sabbah said in a statement.

"This will lead to real stability for both Israelis and Palestinians and the entire region," he said.

He urged Israel to implement international resolutions about the city's status to guarantee that freedom of religion for Christians, Muslims and Jews is respected within the city.

The provocative visit of (Israeli opposition leader) Ariel Sharon to al-Harem al-Sharif which caused all this bloodshed shows that religious feelings must be respected and the holy places must be preserved," he said in the statement, translated from Arabic.

Sharon visited the Temple Mount, known to Muslims as al-Harem al-Sharif, Sept. 28. The following day, Sept. 29, violence erupted in Jerusalem and throughout the Palestinian Territories when Israeli troops stormed the Temple Mount, which includes the Western Wall, a Jewish holy site, and the al-Aksa Mosque, a Muslim holy site.



Reuters/CNS

Palestinians hurl bottles at Israeli border police during clashes in the West Bank city of Hebron Sept. 30. Several people were killed and hundreds injured over a weekend of violence in and near the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

At the Vatican, Pope John Paul II asked for prayers for peace in Israel and the Palestinian Territories Oct. 2 as violent clashes moved into their fourth day.

The fighting "weighs heavily on my soul," the pope told pilgrims gathered at the Vatican.

"For several days the holy city of Jerusalem has been a theater of violent conflicts which have caused numerous deaths and injuries, including of several children," the pope said.

"Spiritually near to the families of those who lost their lives, I make a heartfelt appeal to all the leaders so that the weapons would be silenced, provocations would be avoided and the way of dialogue would be undertaken again," the pope said.

"The Holy Land must be the land of peace and fraternity," Pope John Paul said. "That is what God wants."

At an East Jerusalem hospital, accompanied by several priests, Patriarch Sabbah visited a wounded Palestinian and "expressed his support to the people and to the entire Palestinian people and leadership." During the visit he expressed his sorrow for the events and condemned the "brutal attitudes" used by the Israelis.

In a separate statement Sept. 30 that seemed intent on reaffirming Christian solidarity with the Palestinian cause, the heads of the Christian communities in Jerusalem condemned Sharon's visit, denouncing it as an "aggression on the sanctuary of a holy place in Jerusalem."

"Such a violation is tantamount to a violation on any and all Christian and Muslim holy sites, and we affirm (our) solidarity with the Palestinian people, Muslims and Christians alike, in defending their fundamental rights of worship and prayer in Jerusalem," said the Christian leaders' statement.

They reaffirm, they said, the need to "ensure the freedom of movement, access, worship and prayer, as much as the need to put an end to all violations against our Christian and Muslim holy places in Jerusalem."

The Palestinian death toll after the bloodshed approached 30, including a 12-year-old boy who was caught in the crossfire between Palestinians and Israeli forces in Gaza. The injured numbered in the hundreds.

In the Melkite village of Fassuta in Galilee, Mayor Geras Khoury said: "All day I am using my voice to shout at both sides to keep calm and to say that more dead will not solve the situation. I am sorry for what has happened and all the blood spilt at a time we are seeking peace and justice. I am also very angry at what is happening ... and I identify with my people."

"What is happening is incredibly painful, especially when we were close to peace and now suddenly we are at war," said Khoury.

Contributing to this story was Cindy Wood-
en at the Vatican.

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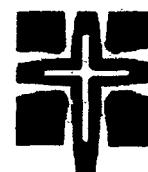
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RU-486

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"The FDA's review and approval of this drug has adhered strictly to our legal mandate and mission as a science-based public health regulatory agency," she added.

Danco Laboratories in New York was expected to have the drug on the market in about a month. It would be sold directly to doctors and not through pharmacies. The National Abortion Federation, which accredits abortion providers, says it has 240 member clinics ready to offer the abortion drug, which was expected to cost about the same as a surgical abortion.

Vicki Saporta, executive director of the National Abortion Federation, said the FDA approval marked "a milestone in the history of abortion in America."

But Joseph M. Scheidler, executive director of the Pro-Life Action League, called Sept. 28 "a black day in the history of the FDA and women's health."

The FDA placed some restrictions on use of mifepristone, requiring doctors who use the drug to be trained in surgical abortions or to have plans in advance to provide such care through others.

Absent from the regulations, however, was a requirement for doctors who plan to use RU-486 to sign a registry.

The FDA also said each woman receiving mifepristone must be given a guide that clearly explains how to take the drug, who should avoid taking it, and what side effects can occur.

The agency said RU-486 should not be used in cases of confirmed or suspected ectopic pregnancies, when an intrauterine device is in place, or by those with bleeding disorders or chronic failure of the adrenal glands, those receiving long-term therapy with corticosteroids or those allergic to mifepristone or prostaglandins. Women who smoke more than 10 cigarettes a day are warned that its effect on heavy smokers is not known.

The FDA also mandated that certain follow-up studies be conducted by the Population Council, which holds the U.S. rights to the drug. These studies would look at whether doctors were providing surgical abortions when needed or referring to others; whether the patient agreement was being properly signed by doctors and patients and placed in the patient's medical record; and what happens in cases of the "rare ongoing pregnancies after treatment with mifepristone in the U.S."

The process by which an RU-486 abortion takes place will involve three visits to the doctor, including a follow-up two weeks after the first drug is taken.

"In reality, chemical abortion is an intense, three- to 15-day regimen involving multiple office visits and a combination of drugs with the possibility of life-threatening complications," Quinn said.

Priest breaks into clinic

ROCKFORD, Ill. (CNS) — A Rockford priest was expected to be arraigned Oct. 9 on charges of burglary and criminal trespass in connection with his alleged entry into a Rockford abortion clinic Sept. 30.

Father John Earl, pastor of St. Patrick Parish in Rochelle, was released on \$10,000 bond following an incident at the Northern Illinois Women's Center in which he is alleged to have driven his Saturn car into a closed garage door to gain entry, and then used an ax to open other doors and move about inside the building.

According to news reports, the building's owner, Gerald W. Webster, fired two shots toward the intruder from a 12-gauge shotgun. Neither man was injured.

Winnebago County State's Attorney Paul Loggi indicated that Father Earl might face other charges regarding the incident.

The Diocese of Rockford stated that "it has never been nor is it the policy or practice of the Roman-Catholic Church to condone, approve or promote violence in any form to achieve a desired end."