

Violence continues in the Middle East

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Violence in the Holy Land brought fresh condemnations and prayers for peace, while groups in the United States and Europe continued their protests against a potential U.S.-led war against Iraq.

Pope John Paul II said the Holy Land and other regions of the Middle East are "caught up in a dangerous cycle which seems humanly unstoppable. May God make this vortex of violence stop," the pope said Nov. 21 while addressing members of the Congregation for Eastern Churches at the Vatican.

On Nov. 17, the pope condemned a deadly attack on Israeli soldiers in the biblical city of Hebron and prayed that Israelis and Palestinians find the courage to make peace.

The pope said he was particularly troubled by the attack, which killed 12 Israeli soldiers and security agents who had been protecting Jewish worshippers.

According to reports from Hebron, snipers of the militant Islamic Jihad group launched the attack as Jewish worshippers returned from Sabbath prayers at the Tomb of the Patriarchs, a site in Hebron revered as the burial place of Abraham.

The attack focused on the soldiers and private security agents that protected the settlers as they walked back to the settlement compound. The presence of more than 400 settlers in Hebron, a West Bank city of more than 100,000 Palestinians, frequently has sparked violence.

In Jerusalem, a suicide bombing of a bus that killed 11 Israelis and injured 48 others resulted in Israeli forces re-entering Bethlehem Nov. 22 in the West Bank and sealing off the Church of the Nativity.

The army retreated to the city's outskirts Nov. 25, but not before preventing St. Catherine's Church, adjacent to the Church of the Nativity, from celebrating its parish feast.

Also Nov. 22 in Jenin, West Bank, a British U.N. worker was shot and killed by an Israeli sniper. According to Palestinian reports, a 10-year-old Palestinian boy was fatally shot the same day.

Meanwhile, protests against a possible war with Iraq continued in the United States and England.

In New York, members of the Catholic Worker community, Pax Christi and the War Resisters League continued their weekly vigil in Union Square Park. About 25 peo-



Reuters/CNS

The mother of 13-year-old Israeli Hodaya Asraf, who was killed in a Palestinian suicide bomb attack, weeps during the girl's funeral in Jerusalem Nov. 21.

ple attended a Nov. 23 vigil. The group has been meeting every Saturday since September 2001.

The group has collected hundreds of signatures for the Iraq pledge of resistance, a nationwide promise of civil disobedience scheduled for Dec. 10 should tensions between the United States and Iraq continue to escalate, said Melissa Jameson, national office director of the War Resisters League.

Several thousand signatures have been collected nationwide, she said.

In London, Pax Christi members presented British Prime Minister Tony Blair with 4,000 more signatures to a petition asking him to help prevent suffering and bloodshed in Iraq. The petition already had 5,000 signatures.

The group also held a prayer vigil outside the prime minister's residence Nov. 22.

Fisher scholarship aids Catholic-school grads

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

Qualified Catholic high school seniors in the Diocese of Rochester can receive \$5,000 yearly scholarships from St. John Fisher College beginning in the fall of 2003 if they plan to go directly to Fisher and to reside on campus.

Students who commute to the Pittsford college can receive \$2,500 scholarships under the same program.

For resident students, one year at Fisher costs \$23,250. Commuters pay \$16,200 for tuition. Fisher officials said the school expects to award about a half-million dollars through the new scholarship program in its first year of operation.

The scholarships will be awarded regardless of a student's financial need, and can be combined with other merit-based or special scholarships.

Dr. Katherine Keough, Fisher's president, formally announced the new scholarship program at a press conference in the school's Wilson

Formal Lounge on the morning of Nov. 23.

To qualify, students must have maintained a cumulative B-plus average or better over the course of their high school careers, and been considered by their high schools as having leadership qualities, she said. Students must also maintain a 2.0 average at Fisher and attend full-time.

Students at the following schools are eligible for the scholarship: Aquinas Institute and Nazareth Academy in Rochester, McQuaid Jesuit and Our Lady of Mercy in Brighton; Bishop Kearney in Irondequoit; Notre Dame in Elmira; and DeSales in Geneva.

In attendance at the press conference were several representatives of Catholic high schools in the diocese, along with some students who may receive scholarships. The administrators noted that the announcement preceded the Catholic high schools' entrance exams, slated for Dec. 7.

All of the students present wel-

comed the scholarship announcement.

"It makes it more likely that I'll go here, definitely," said Kerry Meagher, a senior at Bishop Kearney.

Marie Heberger, a senior at Aquinas, said one of her brothers attends Fisher, and another attends a state school, so her family could use the scholarship money.

"It'll be a big help," she said, adding that she has a 4.0, or A, average.

In an interview prior to the press conference, Keough laid out several reasons for creating the scholarship program, which will be funded by the school's endowment. The region's tough economic times have made sending offspring to college more difficult than ever, she noted, but the primary reason the college is offering the scholarships is to solidify its base among Catholic high schools in this diocese. A little more than 10 percent of Fisher's students hail from the diocese's seven Catholic high schools, she noted,

and Fisher would like to increase the number who enroll from these schools, she said.

Mark Peterson, president of Bishop Kearney and a 1983 Fisher graduate, praised the college for creating the scholarship program.

"This program answers the prayers of many of our families," he said. "They no longer have to choose between providing their children with a quality, values-based high school education and being able to afford a top-notch college."

Keough noted that parents could view the scholarships as payback for sending their children to Catholic high schools. For example, she said, a student who receives the \$5,000 scholarship for four consecutive years essentially would get back the cost of his or her Catholic high school education.

Bishop Kearney senior DeKontee Lombel said the chance of getting a scholarship encouraged him to maintain a good average.

"It's a big incentive to make me want to work harder," he said.