



UNITED STATES CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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NEWS

DIVISION OF INFORMATION

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WASHINGTON -- The Executive Secretary of the Catholic bishops' Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations has sharply condemned Arab terrorist attacks on persons living in or traveling to Israel.

The Reverend Edward H. Flannery called such attacks a "callous disregard of moral law and human values" and said that to the degree Arab countries support them, "they make themselves accomplices in their crimes."

He urged the United Nations and its member states to take action to prevent such "atrocities" and appealed to the Christian churches to speak out, saying that "To keep silence could only lend encouragement to the reckless and the violent."

Father Flannery also expressed concern for the suffering of innocent parties as a result of Israeli air raids. "It is fervently to be hoped that both sides of the conflict will exercise greater restraint and flexibility in the pursuit of peace," he said.

The Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations is a secretariat of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Inter-religious Affairs. The secretariat is located at Seton Hall University in South Orange, N.J.

The text of Father Flannery's statement follows:

"Murder of the innocent horrifies not alone the Christian conscience but every decent human sensitivity. Intrinsicly evil, it cannot be justified by any consideration whatsoever. Indeed, Christian witness stands under a grave obligation openly to condemn it, always and everywhere, without regard to unfavorable reactions.

add/one statement Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations

"It is in the light of these principles that I raise my voice in protest against the crescendo of terrorism that has in recent months been visited on persons living in or traveling to Israel by Arab guerrillas.

"Sympathy must first be extended to the victims of the atrocities and to their loved ones, as well as to the Israeli people that must undergo them. They should be assured that all who abhor violence and injustice are not insensitive to their pain.

"But more than condemnation and sympathy is needed. An unequivocal call must be made upon the Arab countries, first and foremost, to do all in their power to put an end to the callous disregard of moral law and human values. They must understand that this can only injure their cause and their image before the civilized world. To the degree that they condone or aid the actions of the groups responsible, they make themselves accomplices in their crimes.

"Call must also be made on the world community in its United Nations Organization and in its various national members. Only concerted action of all countries can effectually prevent recurrences of the atrocities.

"It is primarily the Christian churches, however, that are expected to exercise their civilizing and healing role. Be it against the onslaughts of an Attila in the fifth century or the bombing of a plane full of innocents in the twentieth, they must cry out for justice, mercy and for peace. To keep silence could only lend encouragement to the reckless and the violent.

"What is expressed here in no way indicates an unconcern for sufferings of Arab peoples. Although it is not possible to compare the accidental Israeli bombing of an Egyptian scrap-metal factory with deliberate attacks on commercial aircraft, market places, or tourist buses, we must deeply regret such bombings and express profound sympathy for the victims.

"It is fervently to be hoped that both sides of the conflict will exercise greater restraint and flexibility in the pursuit of peace."

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