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June 23, 1989

89-98

2 Baptist families exit
 Gaza after kidnapping

By Mike Creswell

N-FMB

GAZA (BP)--Two Southern Baptist families evacuated from Gaza June 23 following the kidnapping of an American relief worker the day before.

Although the Save the Children worker was released unharmed June 23, the kidnapping prompted fears that other Americans might become targets in Gaza, where a Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation has continued during the past 18 months.

Americans remaining in Gaza are staying indoors and out of sight. A total of 11 Southern Baptist career workers and four volunteers -- primarily involved in medical care -- have continued to work during the uprising, despite schedules often disrupted by strikes, curfews and periodic outbreaks of violence. Earlier in the week, one Southern Baptist couple led a quiet class on marriage while armed troops passed by on patrol on the street outside.

Gaza streets, already impoverished, have taken on an even more battle-weary look as many buildings have been painted with resistance slogans, which in turn have been covered with black paint by authorities.

The constant pressure and war of nerves, Southern Baptist workers say, have become increasingly difficult to bear. Often they must stay indoors for days because of erratic strikes called by Arab leaders or curfews imposed by Israeli forces. Food has been hard to obtain at times, and water and telephone service frequently have been interrupted. Most stores are open only from 8 a.m. until noon.

One Southern Baptist worker and her child barely missed being shot when they happened to walk into the midst of a pitched battle between rock-throwing protesters and troops who opened fire. The two took shelter in a neighbor's home until the fighting stopped. Other workers have narrowly escaped injury from bombs and rocks as they pass through Gaza in their cars.

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Creswell is Baptist Press overseas correspondent for Europe, the Middle East and north Africa. Note to Editors: Creswell left Gaza just before the June 22 kidnapping. This story will be followed by a longer one, with photos, next week.

Court issues opinion
 in dial-a-porn case

By Kathy Palen

N-BJC

Baptist Press
 6/23/89

WASHINGTON (BP)--Congress may not ban all dial-a-porn, the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled.

In an opinion issued June 23, the high court upheld a congressional prohibition against obscene interstate commercial telephone communications but struck down a ban against indecent messages.

The legal dispute arose over a 1988 amendment to the Communications Act of 1988 that imposed an outright ban on all -- indecent, as well as obscene -- dial-a-porn. Proponents of the amendment claimed it was necessary to guarantee minors would not have access to such sexually explicit messages.

Sable Communications of California, a firm that offers sexually oriented pre-recorded telephone messages to callers in and outside the Los Angeles area, filed suit in the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California, charging the amended statute was unconstitutional and seeking an injunction to keep the Federal Communications Commission and Justice Department from enforcing the law.

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The district court upheld the prohibition of obscene telephone messages as constitutional but found the prohibition of indecent messages to be unconstitutional.

In writing for the high court, Justice Byron R. White said the constitution has no prohibition against Congress' banning the interstate transmission of obscene commercial telephone recordings.

Also, such a ban "no more establishes a 'national standard' of obscenity than do federal statutes prohibiting the mailing of obscene materials or the broadcasting of obscene messages," White wrote.

But the court rejected the government's argument that nothing short of a total ban on dial-a-porn could prevent children from gaining access to such messages.

Although the government has a compelling interest in protecting children from exposure to indecent dial-a-porn messages, White said, the Communications Act amendment was not drawn narrowly enough to avoid violating the First Amendment.

"It is not enough to show that the government's ends are compelling; the means must be carefully tailored to achieve those ends," he wrote.

The court drew a distinction between the case in question and a 1978 dispute -- FCC v. Pacifica Foundation -- in which the court considered whether the FCC has the power to regulate a radio broadcast that is indecent but not obscene.

"Pacifica is readily distinguishable from this case, most obviously because it did not involve a total ban on broadcasting indecent material," White wrote. "The FCC rule was not intended to place an absolute prohibition on the broadcast of this type of language, but rather sought to channel it to times of day when children most likely would not be exposed to it."

The Pacifica opinion also relied on the "unique" attributes of broadcasting, he added, noting that broadcasting is uniquely pervasive, can intrude on the privacy of the home without prior warning as to program content and is uniquely accessible to children.

"In contrast to public displays, unsolicited mailings and other means of expression which the recipient has not meaningful opportunity to avoid," White said, "the dial-it medium requires the listener to take affirmative steps to receive the communication. ... Placing a telephone call is not the same as turning on a radio and being taken by surprise by an indecent message."

White cited previously worked-out FCC regulations that would have used credit card, access code and scrambling rules to keep indecent dial-a-porn messages out of the reach of minors.

"The congressional record contains no legislative findings that would justify us in concluding that there is no constitutionally acceptable less restrictive means, short of a total ban, to achieve the government's interest in protecting minors," he said.

Although joining the other six justices in most of the opinion, Justices William J. Brennan Jr., Thurgood Marshall and John Paul Stevens said they found the entire ban unconstitutional.

"To be sure, the government has a strong interest in protecting children against exposure to pornographic material that might be harmful to them," said Brennan, writing for the trio. "But a complete criminal ban on obscene telephonic messages for profit is unconstitutionally overbroad ... as a means for achieving this end."

Brennan called the total ban against obscene dial-a-porn messages "heavy handed" and a "draconian restriction on the First Amendment rights of adults who seek to hear the messages that Sable and others provide."

Ministries fellowship
organizes in Las Vegas

By Art Toalston

N-FMB

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--The Fellowship of Baptist World Ministries was organized in Las Vegas, Nev., June 15, with its leaders pledging close cooperation with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and overseas Baptist bodies.

The aim of the fellowship is greater unity in Southern Baptist world evangelization efforts, organizers said.

The fellowship would encompass as many as 70 organizations founded by and involving Southern Baptist ministers and laypeople in a range of overseas efforts, said the fellowship's first president, W.H. (Dub) Jackson.

Jackson is president of World Evangelism Foundation of Dallas. Since its founding in 1969, he said, his organization has coordinated the witnessing efforts of 8,000 Southern Baptist volunteers who traveled to 40 countries. Jackson was a Southern Baptist missionary to Japan from 1951 to 1968.

Leaders of the 15 charter member organizations in the new fellowship have "a desire to cooperate with the total program of Southern Baptists all over the world," Jackson said.

The organizational meeting followed two other gatherings of representatives of the Southern Baptist-related ministries. The first, Feb. 7 of this year, was initiated by the president of the Foreign Mission Board, R. Keith Parks, who voiced a concern for greater understanding and cooperation between the denomination's missions agency and the various independent groups.

Bill O'Brien, the Foreign Mission Board's executive vice president, said, "This (new fellowship) represents a further step in the dialogue and mutual understanding of the roles and ministries of each entity -- and how all these resources can be brought to bear in a more effective way on world evangelization."

"We can enhance each other's ministries," agreed Rudy Hernandez, pastor-evangelist of Metro Park Baptist Church in San Antonio, Texas. He also is president of Rudy Hernandez Evangelism International, which has conducted pastor-training clinics and crusades in 45 countries since 1973. He was Texas Baptists' director of Hispanic evangelism from 1955 to 1969.

"We hope to keep from having duplications and wasted efforts," Jackson said. To maximize cooperation, the fellowship plans to work with the Foreign Mission Board to create a computer database listing each organization's purpose statement and scheduled plans for ministry.

If the date reveals that too many volunteers are headed for a particular country at the same time, for example, "We would do our best to schedule ourselves to be there at the most appropriate times," Johnson said.

In addition to Jackson, the fellowship's officers are Mike Downey, vice president, Kathy Evitts, secretary-treasurer, and Hernandez and Jim Ponder, executive committee members.

Downey leads Global Missions Fellowship of Dallas; Evitts is president of Dehoney's BibleLand/Heritage Travel of Louisville, Ky.; and Ponder leads the Jim Ponder Evangelistic Association of Jacksonville, Fla.

The organization's mailing address will be 1204 South Third, Suite A, Louisville, Ky., 40203.

O'Brien will be the Foreign Mission Board's liaison to the new fellowship, and James T. Draper Jr. will be its pastor adviser. Draper is pastor of First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas, and a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The fellowship will hold annual meetings prior to the SBC annual meeting. Next year's session will be Monday morning, June 11, in New Orleans.

When church van wrecks,
doctors quick to arrive

By Ken Camp

N-Texas

DALLAS (BP)--When Lake Highlands Baptist Church in Dallas prayed that God would grant "traveling mercy" to its youth group bound for camp in Evergreen, Colo., members never dreamed God's provision would come in the form of a van loaded with doctors and nurses returning from a medical seminar in Amarillo, Texas.

At 2:15 p.m., June 19, one of three northwest-bound Lake Highlands Church vans blew a tire and flipped onto the median outside Clarendon, Texas. The accident injured two adults and five youth, at least three of whom were thrown from the vehicle.

"The church van behind them, which had 12 people in it, had to swerve to miss them," said Rowland Gregory, minister of education at Lake Highlands Church. "The beauty of it was that some doctors and nurses returning from a seminar were on the highway right behind them."

By the time the lead church van had turned around and come back to the accident, the doctors and nurses already were administering first aid.

"They had a huge box of medicine and bandages with them, so they were able to give the necessary shots and first aid right there on the scene," said Gregory.

Although all seven passengers in the van were injured, the absence of fatalities was miraculous, Gregory said: "The policeman who arrived at the scene of the accident said he had been patrolling the area for 20 years, and he couldn't believe what he saw. He said he'd never seen a vehicle take a spill like that, do that much damage and then see anybody walk out of it alive."

The seven injured people were treated at the emergency center in Clarendon and then shuttled to Northwest Texas Hospital in Amarillo. Five then were released after treatment.

Jason Fowler remained hospitalized in Amarillo with eye injuries and deep lacerations. David Hallmark was scheduled to be airlifted from Amarillo to Presbyterian Hospital in Kaufman, Texas, to receive further treatment for a broken wrist and leg.

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Southern Baptist schools
honored by foundation

By Tim Fields

N-CO
(Ed. Comm.)

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Eighteen Southern Baptist colleges and universities have been selected to appear on the 1989 Templeton Foundations Honor Roll for Character Building Colleges.

The Southern Baptist educational institutions were among the 92 four-year accredited colleges and universities nationwide named to the annual honor roll of schools sponsored by John Marks Templeton and the Templeton Foundations.

The honor roll, selected annually by college presidents and development directors at more than 1,400 colleges and universities, is a listing of schools "which best exemplify campuses that encourage the development of strong moral character among students."

The final honor roll recipients were chosen from 719 colleges nominated for the annual listing. Only 3 percent of honor roll colleges and universities were public institutions, while 27 percent were private and 70 percent were church-affiliated.

An additional 14 Southern Baptist colleges and universities were among an additional 80 schools that did not make the honor roll but were listed as receiving honorable mention.

According to the Templeton Foundations, the annual honor roll is sponsored "in the belief that our country's institutions of higher learning should not only turn out individuals of strong intellect but of strong character as well."

"We hope the honor roll might be of some help to future college students and their parents and to those whose generosity supports higher education," a Templeton news release stated.

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Arthur L. Walker Jr., executive director of the Southern Baptist Education Commission, said the fact that more than 37 percent of the 48 Southern Baptist four-year colleges and universities made the Templeton honor roll, attests to the strong commitment Southern Baptist schools have made to the integration of faith and discipline into all areas of academic life.

"With a total of 32 Southern Baptist colleges and universities being named to the honor roll or receiving honorable mention, more than 68 percent of Southern Baptist institutions were recognized by the Templeton honor roll as being among the tops in the nation for their strong moral character development of students," Walker said.

Southern Baptist schools named to the honor roll by states are:

- Alabama-Samford University, Mobile College and Judson College.
- Arizona-Grand Canyon University.
- Kentucky-Georgetown College.
- Louisiana-Louisiana College.
- Missouri-William Jewell College.
- Mississippi-Mississippi College.
- North Carolina-Wake Forest University, Gardner-Webb College and Mars Hill College.
- Oklahoma-Oklahoma Baptist University.
- South Carolina-Furman University.
- Tennessee-Belmont College, Carson-Newman College and Union University.
- Texas-Baylor University.
- Virginia-University of Richmond.

Southern Baptist schools receiving honorable mention are:

- Arkansas-Ouachita Baptist University.
- California-California Baptist College.
- Florida-Palm Beach Atlantic College and Stetson University.
- Georgia-Mercer University.
- Kentucky-Cumberland College and Campbellsville College.
- Mississippi-Blue Mountain College.
- Missouri-Southwest Baptist University.
- North Carolina-Campbell University, Meredith College and Wingate College.
- Texas-East Texas Baptist University and Dallas Baptist University.

SBC churches combining
music, drama in worship

By Charles Willis

N-SSB

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--A trend toward using music and drama together in a variety of worship formats in churches of all sizes is evident throughout the Southern Baptist Convention, according to Ev Robertson, a consultant in the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church recreation department.

Robertson's assessment was supported by overflow attendance at a church music/drama class during Church Music Leadership Conference at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center, June 17-23.

"As Christians, we must be communicators," Robertson said. "It's not something we have a choice about. Music is a communication form we hear. Drama can bring music to life visually.

"We live in a society that is much more visually oriented than any generation before. We've seen a pronounced visual influence over the past 20 years. Almost all communication today has visual elements to support the verbal message."

From live manger scenes and singing Christmas trees to full-blown religious pageants, Robertson said, churches all across the Southern Baptist Convention "are having some tremendous evangelistic and outreach successes" in combining drama with church music.

Production of pageants is not the exclusive domain of large churches, Robertson maintained. "Some small, rural churches are attracting large crowds at religious pageants," he observed.

Visual influence is so great today "we almost demand it, and we're bored when we don't get it -- even though we may not know why," he said.

Robertson advocated more forms of drama than once-a-year pageant production. He teaches how to visualize traditional music, including anthems and hymns, as well as how to use drama to introduce a music portion of the worship service. He encourages drama as a means to congregational involvement rather than spectator worship.

"Entertainment in our society has had a negative effect on us," he said. "Some have tried to use entertainment in church in a negative way; consequently, people have come to church and sat to be entertained."

Robertson endorsed the use of interesting characters with dialogue, both planned and spontaneous, to support other worship activities.

"Historically, Baptists have been in the middle as a corporate worshipping body of believers. We have not worshipped liturgy," he observed. "We've sought to make our worship fresh and exciting. When you get into complete congregational involvement, it affects your worship philosophy."

Drama can be used as "a medicine," Robertson said. "If traditional calls to worship are not working well, for example, then something dramatic and unexpected may call the congregation's attention to that part of worship."

Many pastors support drama in their churches, "even though a sermon is not the central feature," he said. "Some pastors appear as characters in the dramas, and they are involved in planning the evangelistic outreach. Drama and music together provide visual possibilities that attract people."

Church Music Leadership Conference was sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church music department.