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Vatican Decries Fence Planned for U.S. Border

By PETER KIEFER

ROME, Nov. 14 — In a speech discussing immigrants and refugees, a top [Vatican](#) official on Tuesday took aim at Washington's plan to build a fence along the Mexican border, saying it was inhumane.

“Speaking of borders, I must unfortunately say that in a world that greeted the fall of the Berlin Wall with joy, new walls are being built between neighborhood and neighborhood, city and city, nation and nation,” said Cardinal Renato Martino, in presenting [Pope Benedict XVI](#)'s message for the Roman Catholic Church's World Day of Migrants and Refugees.

Cardinal Martino discussed child labor and forced prostitution, and according to Reuters was asked about President Bush's recent signing of legislation enabling the construction of a 700-mile border fence. The cardinal, head of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, responded by praising Mexican and [United States](#) bishops who opposed the plan.

Plans for the fence served as a rallying point in American elections last week, with proponents calling it necessary to stem the tide of immigrants entering the country illegally.

Cardinal Martino also said human trafficking, specifically child labor and the forced prostitution of women, was worse now than the trade in African slaves of past centuries.

“It's worse than the slavery of those who were taken from Africa and brought to other countries,” the cardinal said. “In a world which proclaims human rights left and right, let's see what it does about the rights of so many human beings which are not respected, but trampled.”

Speaking for the pope, Cardinal Martino also addressed the issue of the integration of Muslim immigrants in European countries. “Much still remains to be done,” he said, adding, “It is necessary to provide for legislative, juridical and social intervention to facilitate such an integration.”

In related news, Italy said it would open its job market to Romanians once their country joined the [European Union](#) on Jan. 1, on condition that Romania cracked down on cross-border crime that led to prostitution and drug trafficking.

“I will try to sign an agreement with Romania to strengthen cooperation in the fight against crime,” Interior Minister Giuliano D'Amato told the daily newspaper La Repubblica.

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