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Vatican: Amnesty International welcomes message by Pope John Paul II on prisons

Amnesty International welcomed the statement today by Pope John Paul II on prison conditions. Pope John Paul II emphasizes the fact that "in many countries, prisons are overcrowded" and in some they are "altogether unworthy of human beings".

As part of the celebration of the Jubilee Year of 2000, the Vatican is launching a Day of Jubilee for Prisoners. "Not to promote the interests of prisoners would be to make imprisonment a mere act of vengeance on the part of society, provoking only hatred in the prisoners themselves," says the Pope.

Pope John Paul II notes "the wretched state of some of the places of detention where prisoners are forced to live, and the harassment to which they are sometimes subjected because of ethnic, social, economic, sexual, political and religious discrimination."

Amnesty International also endorses Pope John Paul II's call for basic respect for human rights: "Regulations contrary to the dignity and fundamental rights of the human person should be definitively abolished from national legislation, as should laws which deny prisoners religious freedom."

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