

America must play even-handedly to stop cycle of violence

The Catholic News Service quotes Father Artemio Vitores, former director of Jerusalem's Franciscan seminary (CR, March 13). When asked about the deadly attack by a gunman on Mercaz Harav Seminary students, he described the attack as "monstrous." It was indeed. No word could better describe what happened.

For those who have followed the Israeli Palestinian struggle, we find the deadly attack followed the incursion of Israeli troops into Gaza one week earlier where 106 Palestinians were killed, half of them civilians and half of the civilians were children. It would have been fair to call the attack as monstrous, as well. I think Father Vitores would have agreed.

The article mentioned the celebration in Gaza of the seminary killings, certainly noteworthy to report. That is reprehensible behavior.

The article also described the Mercaz Harav Seminary as a flagship seminary of the Zionist movement which aggressively works to remove Palestinians from their land and claims all of Palestine as a gift from God to the Jews.

The points are two, that the Western media too often views the deaths of Jews and Palestinians very differently. I do not recall the same outrage when young Palestinians are killed as expressed on this occasion or any other. There is a prevailing prejudgment here about the relative value of lives which must be removed as a precondition to any serious move toward peace.

The second point is that the two monstrous acts are both justified in the minds of their perpetrators and both demonstrate how the cycle of violence is fed by the last

act of terror by the other side. The cycle can only be broken if America and the rest of the world become even-handed brokers for peace with justice. We have only to listen to the words of our presidential aspirants to know that is not the case today.