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Military archbishop opposes death penalty for Fort Hood shooter

by Catholic News Service

Washington — Archbishop Timothy Broglio of the Archdiocese for the Military Services said he opposes capital punishment for Army Maj. Nidal Hasan, who was sentenced to death Aug. 28 following his conviction of the shootings in the 2009 massacre at Fort Hood, Texas.

"The church teaches that unjustified killing is wrong in all circumstances. That includes the death penalty," Broglio said in an Aug. 29 statement.

"Maj. Hasan and his victims are all entitled to justice," the archbishop added. "Maj. Hasan, at least, now has recourse to a scrupulous appeals process. Would that his victims have received as much fairness."

The jury at a military court-martial convicted Hasan of 13 counts of premeditated murder and 32 counts of attempted murder in connection with the massacre, which a U.S. Senate report later called "the worst terrorist attack on U.S. soil since Sept. 11, 2001."

Hasan was himself wounded in a gun battle with Army civilian police when he followed a wounded victim outside. Hasan was shot in the spine and has had to use a wheelchair ever since.

According to documents obtained and published by *The New York Times*, Hasan told medical health experts in 2010 that he "would still be a martyr" even if he was convicted and executed.

Hasan, who received permission to act as his own attorney, questioned only three of the witnesses called during the court-martial, introduced no defense witnesses and gave no closing argument. At the penalty phase of the trial, he cross-examined none of the 24 witnesses called. In addition to the death sentence, the jury recommended that Hasan also be stripped of his pay and dismissed from the Army.

When the trial started Aug. 6, Hasan said in his opening statement that he was the gunman, adding the evidence would show he was the shooter. He also told the hearing that he had "switched sides" and considered himself a "mujahideen" waging "jihad" against the United States.

He had last year offered twice to plead guilty to the charges, but Army rules forbid the entry of a guilty plea in a death-penalty case.

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