

Bin Laden's death rated top religion news story

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(RNS) The death of Osama bin Laden and the reactions it produced among people of faith was rated the No. 1 religion news story of 2011 by the nation's leading religion journalists.

The Religion Newswriters Association (RNA) polls its members annually to compile a list of the top 10 religion stories of the year. About 90 religion beat specialists took the poll this year.

The al-Qaida leader's death topped the ranks because of the national discussion it sparked among people of faith on issues of forgiveness, peace, justice and retribution.

The No. 2 story was a series of controversial congressional hearings focused on American Muslims. Hearings were held in the House on the alleged radicalization of U.S. Muslims, and in the Senate on hate crimes reported against U.S. Muslims.

RNA also usually names a Religion Newsmaker of the Year, but did not do so this year because of a virtual three-way tie between failed doomsday evangelist Harold Camping, Pope Benedict XVI and Texas Gov. Rick Perry.

Rounding out the 10 religion news stories in 2011 were as follows:

3. Catholic Bishop Robert Finn of Kansas City, Mo., is charged with failure to report the suspected abuse of a child, becoming the first active bishop in the country to face criminal prosecution in such a case.
4. The Catholic Church introduces a new translation of the Roman Missal throughout the English-speaking world, making the first significant change to a liturgy since 1973.
5. The Presbyterian Church (USA) allows local option on ordination of partnered gay people.
6. Pope John Paul II is beatified in May.
7. California evangelist Harold Camping attracts attention with his predictions that the world would end in May and again in October.
8. A book by Michigan megachurch pastor Rob Bell, "Love Wins," presenting a much less harsh picture of hell than is traditional, stirs discussion in evangelical circles.
9. The Personhood Initiative, designed to outlaw abortion by declaring a fetus a person, fails on Election Day in Mississippi, but advocates plan to try in other states.
10. Bible translations make news, with celebrations of the 400th anniversary of the King James Version; criticism about gender usage in the newest New International Version; and completion of the Common English Bible.