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ADL REPORTS HIGHEST INCIDENCE OF ANTI-SEMITISM IN FIVE YEARS

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Jan. 26 (JTA) -- Last year witnessed the highest number of anti-Semitic incidents in the United States in over five years, according to the 10th annual audit of such events released Thursday by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

This was the second straight year in which there was a sharp upswing of anti-Semitic acts and harassment, following a four-year downward trend. New York, California and Florida were the leading states where such incidents took place.

"A troubling undercurrent of anti-Jewish hostility remains beneath the surface of American society," the report stated.

Anti-Jewish acts included 823 incidents of vandalism in 1988, compared with 694 the year before; and 458 cases of harassment last year, compared with 324 in 1987.

For the first time since 1981, the ADL called a news conference to discuss the findings. They were motivated by concern over what ADL's national director, Abraham Foxman, called "disturbing statistics."

Foxman pointed out factors that contributed significantly to the pronounced increase, including the Palestinian uprising in the Israeli-administered territories.

ADL counts a total of 117 anti-Semitic incidents linked by their perpetrators to the intifada, a factor of almost one out of 10 of all such incidents in 1988.

But Foxman said the intifada was "not so much a cause, but an excuse" for anti-Semitism.

Anti-Semitic vandalism tied specifically to the 50th anniversary of Kristallnacht added substantially and rather ominously to the annual toll.

During the week of Nov. 6, when both Jewish and Christian houses of worship observed commemorative services for the "Night of Broken Glass," more than 60 anti-Semitic incidents, ranging from graffiti to threats, were recorded in all parts of the country.

That was a four-fold jump from the 15 such incidents reported during the rest of the year.

Serious Crimes Doubled

Serious crimes more than doubled in 1988. Anti-Semitic acts considered as serious crimes included seven cases of arson and seven of attempted arson, one bombing and 13 cemetery desecrations. These 28 acts in 1988 contrast with 12 in 1987.

The audit reported anti-Semitic acts in 40 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. They were compiled by the ADL's regional offices as well as by law enforcement officials.

The report shows an increase of 18.5 percent in anti-Jewish vandalism, which included arson, bombings and swastika daubings; and a 41 percent increase in harassment, threats and assaults against Jews.

The largest number of anti-Semitic incidents last year took place in New York state. Here, 208 acts of vandalism were reported, and 115 cases of harassment, threats and assaults.

California was next after New York, with 121 acts of vandalism and 49 of harassment. This was followed by Florida, with 89 acts of vandalism and 40 of harassment. New Jersey followed with 67 acts of vandalism and 30 harassments.

Of those four states, only California's incidents decreased from those in 1987.

Anti-Semitic vandalism was particularly prevalent in the South. The most striking case was Tennessee, which saw a jump from zero acts of vandalism in 1987 to eight, and zero incidents of harassment in 1987 to nine in 1988.

Moreover, the violent youth known as Skinheads either were found responsible or claimed responsibility for 41 anti-Semitic incidents in at least 15 states.

The most recent ADL report on Skinheads said there were more than 2,000 of them active in 21 states.

College Campuses Also Hit

In addition, there was a steep climb in the number of incidents on college campuses in 1988 -- a total of 54 such events, compared with 14 in 1987. The incidents ranged from harassment to vandalism.

Foxman said the 1988 statistics emphasize the continual need for vigorous counteraction efforts by law enforcement officials as well as community, educational and religious leaders.

He called for strict enforcement of anti-bias crime statutes, which have now been enacted in 43 states; community counteraction and informational programs; expanded educational efforts in schools; and strengthened security measures by Jewish institutions.

"Who would have imagined or believed in 1938 that 50 years after Kristallnacht . . . there would be a need to issue an audit or report of anti-Semitic incidents in the United States? Yet, this is the fact," said Foxman.

The audit, which was compiled by the research department of ADL's civil rights division, was made possible through a grant from the Harry Lipsig Endowment Fund.

An unprecedented inclusion in the report is a foreword by U.S. Attorney General Dick Thornburgh, who praised the ADL as a "leader in the fight for equal justice" and called its annual audit "an invaluable tool" whose "unblinking exposure is the first step in prevention and reform."

TABA TALKS SHAKEN BY EGYPTIAN PLAN TO TAKE BACK THE TERRITORY

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Jan. 26 (JTA) -- Final negotiations over Taba, badly shaken by an Egyptian announcement that it would take possession of the territory this Sunday, returned to normal Thursday, after Cairo backed off.

Reuven Merhav, head of the Israeli negotiating team, called a news conference late Thursday night to report the Egyptians' change of mind.

He said it was the result of strong Israeli opposition to the move and the Egyptians' understanding that such unilateral action would adversely affect the talks, which are supposed to resolve the remaining issues in the Taba dispute.

The Egyptian government, nevertheless, will

instruct its Ministry of Tourism to enter negotiations for the purchase of Israeli-owned tourist facilities in Taba.

After nearly a week bogged down in arguments over the agenda of the talks, the head of the Egyptian negotiating team, Nabil el-Arabi, startled and angered the Israelis Wednesday night with the statement that Egypt would formally take legal ownership of the territory and its tourist facilities on Jan. 29.

Arabi explained Thursday morning that his announcement the previous night was not a unilateral grab, but an exercise of Cairo's right under last year's international arbitration procedure, which awarded the disputed Taba enclave to Egypt.

He pointed out that the Nov. 29 arbitration decision, which was binding on both sides, set a 60-day deadline for Egypt's takeover of the territory. It expires Sunday.

Israeli sources said their understanding was that the arbitration ruling merely committed Israel to "make its best effort" to resolve the Taba dispute by that date.

Settlement Of Sinai Incident

The Israelis were also annoyed because the Egyptian authorities were scheduled to announce Sunday their offer of compensation to the families of six Israeli tourists gunned down in October 1985 by a demented Egyptian border policeman at Ras Burka, in Sinai.

While the Cabinet ruled out linkage between the amount of compensation and an agreement on Taba, the Israelis still want time to study the offer before the Taba talks adjourn.

Merhav, who is director general of the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem, said he lodged a formal protest with the Egyptians and asked the Israeli ambassador in Cairo, Shimon Shamir, to obtain "clarification" of the Egyptians' moves.

He said the negotiations would continue, meanwhile, "under protest."

There were no plenary sessions Wednesday. The heads of the two delegations consulted with each other and with their respective governments.

They also had regular contacts with the U.S. observer mission, headed by the State Department's legal adviser, Abraham Sofaer.

He has been engaged in "shuttle diplomacy," conveying the views of each side to the other while trying to edge each toward a compromise settlement.

At the American suggestion, both parties agreed to divide their delegations into three "working groups."

Value Estimated At $100 Million

One group is dealing with technical questions and access to Taba by Israeli tourists. Another is involved with the financial aspects of transferring the territory.

A third group, composed of military liaison officers, is trying to resolve the touchy issue of where the last 185 yards of boundary are located. That was left open by the arbitrators.

Meanwhile, the overall value of tourist facilities at Taba has been estimated at $100 million.

They consist of the Avia Sonesta Hotel and the Rafi Nelson Vacation Village, the only tangible assets in the territory.

The Egyptians have indicated they have the money to pay. Israel reportedly has rejected a Saudi offer to buy the Sonesta for $50 million.

BUSH INVITES SHAMIR TO WASHINGTON, THANKS PRIME MINISTER FOR LETTER
By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Jan. 26 (JTA) -- President Bush has invited Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir to Washington, Israeli Embassy spokesman Yossi Gal said Thursday.

White House and State Department officials would not confirm Bush's apparent invitation. "We have seen the report, but we do not have a confirmation of it," a State Department source said.

Gal said there is no definite date for a Shamir visit, but it may occur in April.

Gal said Bush called Shamir Wednesday "to thank him for his congratulatory note or letter that was delivered to the White House."

The phone call lasted five to six minutes, during which Bush said he enjoyed receiving Shamir's letter and "promised to keep the good relationship between the two countries."

A text of the Shamir letter made available by the Israeli Embassy quoted the prime minister as wishing Bush "every success in the task that lies ahead of you."

"We, in Israel, have the feeling that an old friend is at the helm, who has a deep understanding of our people's past and of its ongoing struggle for security, peace and economic development," Shamir said.

BAKER CONFIRMED; OTHER KEY POSTS AT STATE DEPT. STILL TO BE FILLED
By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Jan. 26 (JTA) -- James Baker III was confirmed as secretary of state by a 98-0 vote of the Senate Wednesday. But there is still no indication as to who will run the State Department's various bureaus.

This includes those of particular interest to the Jewish community, such as the assistant secretaries of state for the Near East and South Asia, human rights and humanitarian affairs, and Europe and Canada.

The greatest speculation has centered around who Bush will name to succeed Richard Murphy as assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs.

Names being mentioned are Robert Oakley, who was in charge of Middle East issues at the National Security Council before being named ambassador to Pakistan; Frank Wisner, ambassador to Egypt; and Robert Pelletreau Jr., ambassador to Tunisia, who at present is the only U.S. diplomat authorized to meet with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Baker already has named Lawrence Eagleburger as deputy secretary of state, the No. 2 position in the department, and Robert Kimmitt, a former National Security Council official who has been a close aide to Baker, as undersecretary of state for political affairs, the No. 3 position in the department.

Baker has also named two other longtime associates to State Department posts. Margaret Tutweiler was named assistant secretary for public affairs and department spokeswoman.

Robert Zoellick, who was Baker's counselor at the Treasury Department, will hold a similar post at the State Department.

Baker has also named Dennis Ross, a Jew who was President Bush's senior foreign policy adviser during the presidential campaign, as director of policy planning.

VIOLENCE SPREADS TO ISRAEL PROPER, AS ARABS AWAIT HUSSEINI'S RELEASE

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Jan. 26 (JTA) -- The Palestinian uprising spilled over into Israel proper Thursday, as new violence erupted in the West Bank.

Israeli police raided the Arab village of Dabburiya, in the foothills of Mount Tabor, searching for arsonists who set fire to four local vehicles.

Palestinian flags were flown in the center of the village and anti-Israel wall posters appeared. No arrests have been reported so far.

According to the regional police commander, Danny Tabib, "this is an event of a dimension we have not seen in the past."

Tension ran high Thursday in the West Bank village of Habla, near Kalkilya, where a second local resident in two days was killed in a clash with security forces.

He was alleged to belong to a gang that threatened Arabs who refused to participate in the intifada or were suspected of collaborating with Israeli authorities.

Military sources reported the capture of a terrorist cell in Akraba village, near Nablus in the West Bank.

The 12-member gang is alleged to be responsible for attacks on Israeli vehicles, including a gasoline bomb thrown at one of them.

Security forces demolished the homes of several gang members as a punitive measure Thursday and sealed off another house.

The same punishment was meted out in Tulkarm, where one house was demolished and another sealed. They were said to belong to members of a gang that firebombed a military jeep in Tulkarm, injuring two soldiers.

Said To Favor Rabin Idea

A gasoline bomb was thrown at an Israel Defense Force patrol in Ramallah Thursday. There were no injuries.

Meanwhile, Israelis and Arabs alike were waiting for the scheduled release this weekend of Palestinian activist Faisal Husseini, who has been under administrative detention.

Husseini, 48, is associated with Al Fatah, the fighting arm of the Palestine Liberation Organization controlled by Yasir Arafat.

But he is also reputed to be a "dove," one of the few Palestinian leaders on record in support of local elections in the administered territories "under certain conditions."

This, at the moment, is the pet project of Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin. It has been rejected outright by the PLO and met with skepticism in Israel government circles.

Rabin's idea is to hold elections in the territories after a three- to six-month lull in the intifada. Israel would then negotiate with the local representatives chosen by the voters.

Rabin reportedly intervened personally to have Husseini released, because he subscribes to the idea of elections and is considered sufficiently influential to challenge the PLO on certain issues if necessary.

Husseini, in effect, spent a year in prison without charges or trial. He was put under administrative arrest in November 1987, a month before the Palestinian uprising began.

He was released after six months and enjoyed a month's freedom until he was rearrested and put under detention for another six months.

IDF CHIEF SAYS THE PALESTINIANS NO LONGER WANT TO DESTROY ISRAEL

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Jan. 26 (JTA) -- The chief of staff of the Israel Defense Force, Lt. Gen. Dan Shomron, believes that the Palestinians have given up on the idea of destroying Israel.

That is the price they paid for the limited political success of the uprising in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Shomron said in an interview Wednesday night on Israel Television.

In return for some recognition of their cause, the Palestinians "have, in effect, given up the Palestinian Charter," which calls for the destruction of Israel, he said.

Shomron outraged right-wing politicians by telling the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee recently that the uprising requires a political solution because it cannot be ended by military means.

In his TV interview, he maintained that the political aspirations of the Palestinians did not begin and would not end with the uprising, which they call the intifada.

Much of Shomron's interview was devoted to a vigorous defense of the IDF's methods used to quell the uprising, particularly the much criticized use of plastic bullets.

He maintained that the IDF has actually reduced casualties and that it will succeed "in a matter of time" to restore relative calm in the administered territories.

Shomron's deputy, Maj. Gen. Ehud Barak, delivered a similar message in a question-and-answer session with the Foreign Press Association.

Barak said plastic bullets were being used as a last resort and actually helped reduce casualties.

When correspondents pressed him to explain the killing of 47 Palestinians in the past six months by supposedly non-lethal plastic bullets, Barak insisted that "overall during this period we have reduced the number of deaths by one-third."

Quoting IDF figures, the deputy chief of staff said 352 Palestinians have been killed since the uprising started, "289 from IDF fire and the rest from other causes, including 30 killed by other Palestinians."

He said that 4,300 Palestinians have been wounded and 5,600 confined to detention camps, 1,100 of whom were under administrative arrest.

TERRORIST URGES CONQUEST OF ISRAEL

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Jan. 26 (JTA) -- Leila Khaled, heroine of a spate of Palestinian aircraft hijackings some 20 years ago, has emerged from years of obscurity as a radical firebrand, calling for a Palestinian takeover of all of Israel.

"The day that we achieve independence will signify the defeat of Israel as a state -- a state built on our ruins," she wrote in the January issue of the London-based Middle East Monthly.

But Khaled debated whether the conquest should begin in the Arab-populated territories or in the heart of Israel. "I am from Haifa and would like to go back there," she wrote.

"But should there be a struggle for the liberation of Haifa, where the Israelis are concentrated, or should we first liberate the West Bank and Gaza, where the Arabs are concentrated?" she asked.

Said Khaled, "Our first objective is to return to Nablus and then move on to Tel Aviv."

SOVIET SAYS IMPROVED RELATIONS DEPEND ON ISRAELI STANCE ON PEACE

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Jan. 26 (JTA) -- The Soviet Union wants to improve its consular-level relations with Israel, Yuri Dubinin, the Soviet ambassador to the United States, said late Wednesday.

Dubinin, speaking at the Soviet Embassy to reporters and representatives of the Lubavitch movement, said he also would like to see the restoration of full diplomatic relations with Israel.

The Soviet Union "is not responsible for the absence of relations," said Dubinin. He said that progress on restoring them "will depend on Israel."

He said full relations could be restored as part of a Middle East peace settlement. But he added, "It is not our demand for Israel to do something specific" for relations to be upgraded.

The Soviets severed relations in 1967, but Dubinin noted that in 1948, his country was one of the first to recognize Israel's existence.

The Soviet Union supports an international peace conference on the Middle East that includes itself, the United States, China, France and Great Britain as co-sponsors, Dubinin said.

He said having the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, and not just the superpowers, "could assure more authority" to such a forum.

The Soviet ambassador was asked whether his government favors direct flights from the Soviet Union to Israel for Jews emigrating on Israeli visas.

Restoration Of Lubavitch Town

Dubinin replied: "All of the persons from Jewish origin who desire to leave the Soviet Union and who has received the visa is absolutely free to buy a ticket to any direction and to leave the Soviet Union."

"It is a complete freedom," Dubinin said. "Those who would like to go directly to Israel are free to do it."

Conversely, those who want to go the United States via Vienna are also free to do so, he added.

At the embassy, Rabbi Noson Gurary, upstate New York regional director of Chabad House-Bais Lubavitch, presented Dubinin with a 15-inch high sterling silver menorah and a book, entitled "The Lamplighter," that tells of Lubavitch's work worldwide.

In return, Gurary proposed that the Soviet town of Lubavitch "be restored to look like a shtetl, to look like a little town looked like 200 years ago."

Lubavitch, where the Hasidic movement bearing the same name began, is near Smolensk, close to the border of the Soviet Republic of Byelorussia.

Responding diplomatically to Gurary's proposal, Dubinin said, "We will try to do it."

REPORTS OF U.S.-SOVIET DEAL DENIED

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Jan. 26 (JTA) -- Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir said Thursday he could not take seriously a British television report that the United States and Soviet Union had agreed on the format of a Middle East peace settlement.

American and Soviet officials also dismissed the report.

CARMELITE NUNS SOON EXPECTED TO VACATE AUSCHWITZ GROUNDS

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Jan. 26 (JTA) -- The ongoing conflict over the removal of a Carmelite convent from the grounds of the Auschwitz concentration camp may soon be resolved.

The Vatican issued a statement Wednesday saying that the Carmelite convent is "now in its final phase" of movement "away from the boundaries of the former Nazi death camp," according to Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, international consultant for the American Jewish Committee.

Tanenbaum is former chairman of the international Jewish group that has been negotiating with the Vatican on this matter.

Two years ago, Jewish and Catholic officials signed an agreement stipulating that the nuns who are occupying the convent be relocated to a site outside the camp by February 1989.

A Catholic-Jewish conference that had been scheduled for February in Zurich was recently postponed because the nuns had not yet vacated the convent, as called for by that accord.

On Jan. 24, Cardinal Franciszek Macharski, the archbishop of Krakow in whose domain Auschwitz lies, issued a statement saying that "the new convent will be built away from the boundaries of the former Nazi camp, along with the interreligious center for prayer and information.

"The convent will be constructed on separate grounds inside the new interreligious center, so that it will be in the vicinity of the camp but well outside its boundaries."

Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, president of the Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, sent Macharski a telegram Wednesday expressing his gratitude for the decision.

Tanenbaum welcomed Cardinal Macharski's announcement "as a sign of good faith" which Willebrands "has demonstrated through this difficult crisis."

The group designated to confer with the Vatican, known as the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations, did not issue a statement at this time.

"We want to study all the texts closely, and we want to confer with our colleagues in Europe," said Rabbi A. James Rudin, IJCIC chairman and international affairs director at AJCommittee.

There are five groups within IJCIC, all of whom must be consulted before an official statement is issued.

"This is a problem that does have the means for a resolution, and the means is the accord signed Feb. 27, 1987," Rudin said. "It remains my hope that the Catholic partners to that accord will carry out that agreement."

ISRAEL CUTS FARM AID TO GREECE

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Jan. 26 (JTA) -- Israel has stopped all agricultural assistance to Greece, on the orders of Agriculture Minister Avraham Katz-Oz, Ha'aretz reported Thursday.

According to the minister's associates, he made the decision because the Greek government's "negative" policy toward Israel is incompatible with the extensive agricultural aid it receives from Israel.

Ha'aretz said the ban was not coordinated with the Foreign Ministry.