

NEWS AT A GLANCE

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■ A Cabinet ministerial committee appointed to deal with settlement expansion approved the construction of apartments in Givat Ze'ev, Ma'aleh Adumim and Betar, three communities near Jerusalem. Settlement leaders criticized the decision and accused the government of misleading the public by approving construction that was already under way. [Page 4]

■ Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat traveled to Amman for his first meeting with King Hussein since Israel and Jordan signed a peace treaty three months ago. Jordanian officials said the two sides had reached an understanding regarding their ongoing dispute about control of Muslim holy sites in eastern Jerusalem. The PLO acknowledged Jordanian custodianship over the holy sites, while Jordan backed what it referred to as future Palestinian sovereignty in eastern Jerusalem. [Page 3]

■ The vast majority of Polish people favor keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive, but they stress their own suffering under the Nazis as much as that of the Jews, according to a new survey by the American Jewish Committee. The poll was released this week to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. [Page 3]

■ Activist Rabbi Avi Weiss was detained by Polish police after he refused to leave a church located near the former Nazi death camp of Birkenau. Weiss had staged a sit-in demonstration inside the church to protest its presence near the camp, where at least 1 million Jews were killed during World War II. Three of Weiss' followers were also expelled from the church by police.

**Clinton launches war on terror;
Jewish groups applaud the move**

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON, Jan. 25 (JTA) — The Clinton administration launched a war on terrorism this week, freezing the U.S. assets and banning charitable contributions for 12 Middle East terrorist groups, including two Jewish extremist organizations.

Calling the move a demonstration of American "determination to thwart acts of terrorism that threaten to disrupt the Middle East peace process," President Clinton signed an executive order freezing the U.S. assets of these organizations on Monday.

The move denies the terrorist groups access to U.S. banks and bans American citizens from contributing directly to these organizations.

Clinton's order came as the administration was putting the final touches on comprehensive anti-terrorism legislation. The legislation was expected to be unveiled at the end of this week.

Clinton's move against the terrorist groups comes "in response to recurrent acts" of terrorism, including the latest suicide bombing attack in Israel, in which at least 19 Israelis died, the president said in a letter to members of Congress announcing the plan.

Clinton referred to his initiative as well as Sunday's incident during his State of the Union address Tuesday night.

He conveyed his "deepest sympathy to the families of the victims."

"I know that in the face of such evil it is hard for the people in the Middle East to go forward," he said, adding, "We must and we will."

"The terrorists represent the past, not the future," Clinton said during his lengthy speech before a joint session of Congress.

And he called on "all our allies and peace-loving nations throughout the world to join us with renewed fervor in a global effort to combat terrorism."

Senate condemns terror attacks in Israel

The leadership of the Senate joined Clinton on Tuesday in condemning terrorist attacks in Israel.

Citing Sunday's "brutal and cowardly" attack, as well as other attacks, the Senate unanimously approved a resolution calling on Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat to "publicly and forcefully condemn acts of terror" and to take "immediate steps to prevent future acts of terrorism."

The resolution also calls on Syrian President Hafez Assad to "immediately end all support for terrorist groups."

The measure was sponsored by Sens. Bob Dole (R-Kan.), Thomas Daschle (D-S.D.), Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) and Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.).

Among the groups listed in Clinton's executive order are the Islamic fundamentalist organizations Hamas and Islamic Jihad, the latter of which claimed responsibility for the latest attack.

Other groups declared as "terrorist organizations which threaten to disrupt the Middle East peace process" include: Hezbollah, the Abu Nidal Organization and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

Israeli officials and Jewish groups were quick to praise the president's initiative.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres praised Clinton for his "courageous and important step" against terrorist groups bent on halting the peace process.

"This is a historic moment in the war on terrorism," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League.

"This is the beginning of a serious recognition that [terrorism] is a serious disease that needs actions, not only words."

The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations hailed the Clinton administration for showing a "bold and creative initiative in dealing with this long overdue problem."

"The freezing of assets is a key to containing terrorists by denying them support. Money is their life's blood," said Lester Pollack, the umbrella group's chairman, and Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman, in a statement.

Members of the Conference of Presidents were briefed on the

proposal Tuesday afternoon by Richard Clarke, special assistant to the president for global issues and multinational affairs.

Other Jewish organizations that applauded Clinton's move were B'nai B'rith International, the American Jewish Congress and the Institute for Public Affairs of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America.

Although the move was widely hailed as a solid first step, its long-term effectiveness remains unclear, according to observers.

Some 5,000 American financial institutions received a five-page list of targeted organizations and their leaders, with instructions to seize assets and prevent future transfers to overseas accounts.

Because individuals associated with these groups often use more than one name or pseudonym, administration officials acknowledged that the system is not "fool-proof."

A senior administration official said few terrorists groups actually have bank accounts in their own names or the name of their leaders, but "we wouldn't have done this if we didn't think we would find some groups."

The list is "an additional mechanism for addressing the problem; it is not the exclusive one," the official said.

Banks were ordered to seize the assets and stop fund transfers as of 12:01 a.m. Tuesday. The actual dollar amount of funds that may have been seized is not yet known.

Two militant Jewish groups singled out

In addition to targeting 10 Arab organizations, the executive order also singles out two militant Jewish groups as terrorist organizations: Kach and Kahane Chai.

However, the order specifically applies only to the Israeli branches of the two groups.

Therefore, only U.S. assets held by Kach and Kahane Chai's Israeli groups can be seized under the executive order.

The measure also declares 18 individuals as terrorists and seizes their assets, if any, and bans them from obtaining U.S. visas.

A senior administration official said Clinton included the Jewish extremist organizations because they are outlawed in Israel.

While Jewish groups widely praised the initiative, some expressed grave concern that the administration categorized the extremist Jewish organizations on the same plane as the Arab terrorist groups.

"They belong on some list but not this one," Foxman said. Kach and Kahane Chai are not the "same league and caliber" as the 10 Arab groups named, he said.

Michael Guzofsky, national director of Kahane Chai in America, said comparing his organization and Arab terrorist groups is "as insane as comparing Bill Clinton to Adolf Hitler."

The Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine also condemned the move, calling it an effort by Clinton to gain the Jewish vote.

Hamas also condemned the action, but said it would not weaken the organization. A Hamas leader told Israel Radio that most of Hamas' financial support comes from the territories.

Meanwhile, a draft of the administration anti-terrorism bill that was scheduled to be unveiled this week requires the president to compile a list of American organizations that raise funds for terrorist organizations.

Their fund-raisers would then be required to register with the attorney general's office in order to obtain a license.

Licenses would only be granted, according to a

draft copy of the bill, if the applicant could prove that the money would be used for charitable purposes and not to free up other money for terrorist purposes.

The bill would also eliminate the high legal threshold to which U.S. law enforcement personnel must now adhere before launching an investigation into suspected terrorist activity and fund raising.

The bill also creates a new federal statute to give law enforcement officials clear jurisdiction over any international terrorist act committed within the United States.

Other provisions in the draft create criminal penalties for any U.S. citizen who seeks to commit a terrorist act abroad.

Another aspect of the bill provides for expedited deportation proceedings for non-citizens who engage in terrorist activities.

"Today was a first step. Now we need a new federal anti-terrorism statute," Foxman said. The ADL's Washington office has been working closely with administration officials and congressional offices on such a bill, he said. □

(JTA correspondent Naomi Segal in Jerusalem contributed to this report.)

Haredim clash with Antiquities Authority over site in Beersheba

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Jan. 22 (JTA) — Fervently Orthodox Jews and archaeologists have again butted horns, this time at an electric company construction site in Beersheba, which the haredim claim contains Jewish remains.

The conflict began when ruins of a Byzantine church were uncovered at the site where the company planned to build.

Archaeologists asked to excavate the area and then discovered the remains.

These were turned over to the Ministry of Religious Affairs at the direction of the Attorney General. The head of the excavation site said no more human remains have since been found.

The excavations are continuing, as are haredi protests over what they claim is the desecration of Jewish graves.

This is the latest eruption of friction between the Antiquities Authority and fervently Orthodox Jews, who have clashed in the past over various sites in Israel.

The authority this week sent Knesset members copies of a report that said that several of the haredi neighborhoods in Jerusalem have been built on graves from the Second Temple period.

The Israeli daily Ha'aretz said the document, "Two or Three Things You Didn't Know About the Antiquities Authority," was sent in response to a series of critical articles that appeared in the haredi press recently.

Among other things, the report said that "during archeological excavations in Shuafat and Mazor, which were undertaken to build haredi neighborhoods, dozens of ancient graves were discovered, including those of Jews, and no one protested until it was reported in the press."

Antiquities Authority spokeswoman Efrat Orbach said the authority had informed the haredim about the Jewish graves, but they did nothing in response.

A spokesman for the Athra Kadisha Society, which monitors sites for the haredi community, said in response that the authority's claims were empty accusations with no basis in fact.

"Maybe in Shuafat they found one grave, which they quickly destroyed so no one would know," the spokesman told Ha'aretz. "Just show me one grave." □

Poles value memory of Holocaust, but stress own suffering, survey says

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, Jan. 25 (JTA) — The vast majority of Poles favor keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive, but they stress their own suffering under the Nazis as much as that of the Jews.

These were among the findings of a new survey by the American Jewish Committee, released this week to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

The survey also found that fewer Poles than four years ago hold opinions generally considered anti-Semitic.

Only 16 percent of Poles believe that Jews have too great an influence in society, down from 26 percent in a 1991 AJCommittee survey.

There was a similar decline in the number of Poles who would prefer not to have Jewish neighbors and who think that Jews behave in a way that provokes hostility.

For all of these questions, Jews received among the lowest negative ratings compared with other groups such as Gypsies, Ukrainians, Arabs, Romanians, businessmen and the Catholic Church.

At the same time, just under half of those surveyed said anti-Semitism is "somewhat of a problem" in Poland today. The rest were almost equally divided between considering anti-Semitism a "very serious problem" or "not a problem at all."

The survey was conducted for AJCommittee by the Warsaw-based Demoskop polling agency in late December and early January.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 1,145 respondents. The poll's margin of error was 3 percentage points.

Eighty-five percent of those surveyed agreed with the statement, "We should keep the remembrance of the extermination of the Jews strong even after the passage of time."

Only 10 percent agreed with the statement, "Fifty years after the end of World War II, it is time to put the memory of the Nazi extermination of the Jews behind us."

Strong knowledge of the Holocaust found

Asked whether Poles or Jews had suffered more from Nazi persecution, 40 percent volunteered that both groups had suffered the same, with the rest being evenly divided.

Strong majorities said many Poles rescued Jews during the Holocaust, few participated in the persecution of Jews and Poles generally did enough, or as much as they could, to help Jews.

The survey also revealed a greater knowledge about the Holocaust than did a similar survey in the United States last year.

But while nine out of 10 Poles were able to identify Auschwitz, Dachau and Treblinka as concentration camps, they were far less accurate when it came to knowing the number of Jewish victims.

Only 34 percent of the Poles selected 6 million as the approximate number of Jews killed by the Nazis. Thirty-eight percent chose numbers ranging from 25,000 to 2 million for this multiple-choice question.

This finding is similar to those of an AJCommittee poll of Germans last year.

The survey released this week brought together two streams of research that AJCommittee has been conducting in various countries over the past several years — one relating to knowledge and remembrance of the Holocaust, the second focusing on attitudes toward Jews and other minorities. □

German bishops: Catholic Church responsible for lack of resistance

By Gil Sedan

BONN, Jan. 25 (JTA) — The Conference of German Bishops has admitted the "shared responsibility" of the Catholic Church for anti-Semitism during World War II.

In a statement issued here, the bishops said they regretted the "absence of resistance by many Catholics against the Nazis."

"Many Catholics allowed themselves to be taken over by Nazi ideology," the statement said.

The statement was issued as political and religious leaders from around the world gathered in Poland to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp by Soviet troops.

The bishops also admitted that the Catholic Church was guilty during the Third Reich of harboring anti-Semitic attitudes.

Because of the absence of church leadership on the issue, they said, many Christians failed to show the necessary resistance against the Nazis' racist ideology.

Also in Germany this week, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl honored 10 Germans who had dared to mount a resistance to Adolf Hitler during World War II.

Accompanied by members of his Christian Democratic Party, Kohl laid a wreath at the site where the 10 were hanged from meathooks for attempting to defy Hitler's regime.

"These men were ready to sacrifice their lives for human dignity and freedom," Kohl said during a ceremony Wednesday at the prison where the 10 were executed.

The most prominent among those executed on Jan. 23, 1945, was Count Helmut James von Moltke, who was the leader of a resistance group of young idealists known as the Kreisau Circle.

Moltke was among those who drafted a plan to establish a German democracy after Hitler's overthrow.

In a separate development, the German Greens Party expressed support on Tuesday for a proposal calling for the establishment of a special Holocaust memorial day in Germany. The idea was introduced by Michael Friedman, chairman of the Frankfurt Jewish community and a member of the presidium of the Central Council of Jews in Germany. □

Seeking reconciliation, Jordan and PLO reach accord on Jerusalem

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Jan. 25 (JTA) — Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat traveled to the Jordanian capital of Amman on Wednesday for his first meeting with King Hussein since Israel and Jordan signed a peace treaty three months ago.

Jordanian officials said the two sides had reached an understanding regarding their ongoing dispute about control of Muslim holy sites in eastern Jerusalem.

Under the terms of their understanding, the PLO acknowledged Jordanian custodianship over the holy sites, while Jordan backed what was called future Palestinian sovereignty in eastern Jerusalem.

Before the PLO chairman's arrival, Jordanian Prime Minister Zeid Bin Shaker told the Parliament that Jordan was seeking to improve its ties with the Arab world.

Jordan suffered strained relations with the PLO and Syria after signing its historic peace treaty with Israel in October. Its ties with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait remain strained following Jordan's decision to side with Iraq during the 1991 Persian Gulf War. □

Suicide bomber reportedly was part of prisoner release

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Jan. 25 (JTA) — One of the terrorists involved in Sunday's suicide attack at Beit Lid Junction had been freed from an Israeli prison as part of a prisoner-release arrangement with the Palestinian Authority, Israel Radio reported.

The report prompted Likud Knesset member Tzachi Hanegbi to submit a bill to the Knesset that would prevent Israeli authorities from releasing Palestinian prisoners who had committed murder. Hanegbi also called for the dismantling of the recently appointed ministerial committee that oversees prisoner releases.

Justice Minister David Libai, who responded for the government during the Knesset debate, said the committee had suspended its activities since Sunday's attack.

He also said that criteria governing future releases of Palestinian prisoners had not yet been established and that guidelines should be determined by the government and the president without legislative constraints.

The Knesset rejected Hanegbi's bill on Wednesday.

In a related development, the army is investigating whether a Palestinian convicted of murdering an Israeli soldier was mistakenly freed from jail several months ago.

Mahmoud Barjoun, a member of Al Fatah who was found guilty of murdering Israeli soldier Yoram Cohen in September 1991, was freed last summer as part of a prisoner-release arrangement, Israel Radio reported.

He was subsequently transferred to the autonomous Jericho enclave in the West Bank.

The error was discovered when the military prosecutor called on Barjoun to testify at the trial of another terrorist.

According to Palestinian sources, Barjoun recently moved to Jordan. □

Committee on settlements reduces construction projects

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Jan. 25 (JTA) — In its first session since it was formed earlier in the week, a ministerial committee appointed to deal with settlement expansion decided to reduce, but not halt entirely, privately financed construction in settlements near Jerusalem.

The committee on Wednesday approved the construction of 340 apartments in Givat Ze'ev, one of Jerusalem's so-called satellite communities.

The committee also backed plans for the construction of an additional 800 apartments in Givat Ze'ev, but only inside the settlement's existing borders and not on nearby lands that were slated for development.

The committee also authorized the sale of 800 apartments in Ma'aleh Adumim, another satellite settlement near Jerusalem, and approved the construction of 1,000 more during the next two years.

The ministers approved plans for building some 900 apartments in Betar, another settlement, but said it would hold another discussion on the timing for construction there.

The committee also authorized the government construction of 50 housing units in the Jordan Valley.

Settlement leaders protested the decision. Members of the Council of Jewish Settlements in Judea, Samaria and Gaza charged that the committee had frozen half of the construction that had been planned for this year in Givat Ze'ev and in Betar.

They also accused the government of misleading the Israeli public by approving construction already under

way. Settlement leaders met with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on Wednesday, but were unable to persuade him to disband the ministerial committee.

In a decision adopted at Sunday's weekly meeting, the Cabinet created the controversial committee, which includes Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, Finance Minister Avraham Shohat, Housing Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, Justice Minister David Libai and Communications Minister Shulamit Aloni.

Although the other committee members were drawn from the ranks of Labor ministers, Aloni was the sole representative from the Meretz bloc, the government's coalition partner that opposes all settlement expansion.

Housing Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer recently announced an ambitious plan for building some 30,000 housing units in the Jerusalem area as well as in the Gush Etzion bloc of settlements south of Jerusalem.

Both the creation of the ministerial committee itself and its first action were seen as attempts to reach a compromise between Ben-Eliezer's plans and the left-wing Meretz ministers' demand that all settlement activity be stopped.

Meanwhile, the left-wing Peace Now movement also expressed disappointment over the decisions reached by the ministerial committee. The group said it was wrong to approve further expansion in the territories, especially because the prime minister had just declared a need to separate Israelis and Palestinians because of terror attacks.

Meanwhile, the Knesset on Wednesday narrowly defeated a bill to include the satellite communities of Ma'aleh Adumim and Givat Ze'ev within Jerusalem's boundaries. Chaos erupted after Yi'ud Knesset member Ester Salmovitz, who was presiding over the session, called for a vote before all the members of the governing coalition had arrived on the floor.

Parliamentarians attacked the rostrum, hurling insults and demanding another vote. Salmovitz denied that she had called the vote early in an attempt to improve the bill's chances of passing. □

Down on its luck, high school gets mezuzah check from Chabad

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Jan. 25 (JTA) — The principal of a Jerusalem high school that is mourning the deaths of former students ejected six members of the Chabad movement who reportedly were checking mezuzot in the building to see whether the school's luck could be changed.

Six graduates from Rene Kassen High School were killed during their army service this year, the most recent loss sustained in the terrorist attack at Beit Lid Junction near Netanya on Sunday.

Students this week spotted Chabad members checking mezuzot in the building to see whether they were kosher. The students alerted the principal, Yehezkiel Gabai, who asked the Chabad members to leave.

Gabai told the Israeli daily Ha'aretz that he received phone calls this week from people suggesting that changing the school's name might change its luck.

Gabai criticized leaders in the fervently Orthodox Agudat Yisrael Party, who this week said the soldiers killed in the terror attack at Beit Lid Junction had died because they had broken the Sabbath.

"It is inconceivable that in the 20th century, someone would think that one of these flowers who contributed to the state, died because of violation of the Sabbath or because the mezuzot are not good," Gabai said.

A Chabad spokesman said he was unaware of the incident at the school. But, he added, it is worthwhile for a school to make sure that its mezuzot are kosher. □