



## NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ A Jewish settler fatally shot a Palestinian who apparently entered a Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip. Circumstances surrounding the shooting were not immediately clear, but the settler was quoted as saying that he opened fire when the Palestinian attacked him.

■ Senior Israeli and Palestinian officials engaged in intensive negotiations on a Hebron deal as U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross returned to the region. Officials from both sides said they were attempting to conclude an agreement on the West Bank town by New Year's Eve.

■ U.S. Rep. Sonny Callahan (R-Ala.) is scheduled to lead a congressional delegation to Israel in early January. Callahan, who chairs the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee, is likely to discuss the level of U.S. aid to Israel during meetings with top Israeli officials.

■ A Jewish couple was reportedly among the now-released hostages held by a Marxist rebel group in Peru. Evelyn Gleiser, who was released before her husband, Samuel, a prominent Peruvian industrialist, reportedly sought solace at Lima's Chabad-Lubavitch center after their captivity.

■ A 23-foot cross on display at Auschwitz and religious symbols on the nearby former Carmelite convent are slated to come down. The move is part of an agreement reached by the Polish government and the World Jewish Congress.

■ The Knesset defeated a no-confidence motion submitted by the right-wing Moledet Party in response to the emerging Hebron accord. Key coalition members from the Likud and the National Religious Party stayed away from the plenum rather than vote against the Netanyahu government.

**REMINDER: The JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Thursday, Jan. 2.**

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### Israel, Palestinians prepare for post-Hebron negotiations

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Like stock market pundits speculating on what will happen after an anticipated development, Mideast analysts this week were trying to look beyond the still-unsigned Hebron accord.

Expectations that the deal on redeploying Israeli forces from most of Hebron would be initialed this week rose after last week's summit between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat.

As U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross returned to the region Monday to help the two sides conclude an agreement, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators were holding marathon sessions to bridge their differences.

A top issue precluding a deal concerned security at the Tomb of the Patriarchs, a holy site for both Jews and Muslims.

Arafat has insisted on joint Israeli-Palestinian patrols at the tomb.

But Netanyahu declared Sunday that the Jewish state alone would continue to maintain security at the site.

An agreement on Hebron nevertheless seemed within reach — barring a horrific act of terrorism.

Significantly, much of the last-minute wrangling was focused on the next stages of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

The Palestinians were seeking firm, written assurances from the Netanyahu government that it would implement subsequent phases prescribed by the existing Israeli-Palestinian agreements.

The United States, it is understood, was preparing side letters reiterating Israeli and Palestinian commitment to the remaining steps of the peace process.

Israel has promised to implement the next stage of that process six weeks after the Hebron redeployment. At that time, the Israel Defense Force will carry out the first of three "further redeployments" in the West Bank. The other two are slated to take place within one year.

In the first of these redeployments, troops will pull back from certain areas now incorporated in "Area C," the largely rural areas of the West Bank still under Israeli military and civilian control.

Possibly, too, some areas now designated "Area B" that are under a mix of Palestinian civilian control and Israeli security control may become part of "Area A," which is wholly controlled by the Palestinian Authority.

But the extent of the three further redeployments is not spelled out in the 1995 Interim Agreement, and Netanyahu clearly intends to keep it modest.

### Seen as seed of future strife

Moreover, the Israeli premier is reportedly contemplating not making any further withdrawals beyond the first further redeployment until Israel and the Palestinians conclude a final-status agreement.

Many observers see this as the seed of future strife.

Netanyahu has been urging that the two sides embark on intensive permanent-status negotiations immediately after Hebron.

He believes that carrying out all three further redeployments would weaken Israel's position in the final-status talks because the great bulk of the West Bank and Gaza Strip will already have been ceded to the Palestinian Authority.

The final-status talks will deal with several of the most contentious issues, including Palestinian statehood, Israeli settlements and Jerusalem.

Notwithstanding the increasing focus on what will happen in the next phases of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, some observers predict that American peacemaking efforts will now shift toward the long-stalled Israeli-Syrian track.

The temperature of the rhetoric between Israel and Syria rose again recently, after efforts in recent weeks to cool it, when the IDF deputy chief of staff told reporters that the army now viewed as more likely the chances of war with Syria in the coming year.

Maj. Gen. Matan Vilnai said the army had channeled funds and

personnel toward enhancing its war preparedness and was now in a much better position than a few months ago.

Damascus hit back with accusations that Israel was not really interested in peace at all. During the weekend, the Syrians reiterated their assertions that both former Prime Ministers Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres had pledged full withdrawal from the Golan Heights, and that the current government was reneging.

The Israeli chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Amnon Shahak, stepping in before tension escalated on the ground, said Vilnai had not been predicting war or even warning that it was probable.

Rather, he was doing what generals are supposed to do: preparing for worst-case scenarios.

Meanwhile, Peres welcomed Netanyahu's statement that he would bring peace with Syria during his term in office. But Peres added that it should be clear to the prime minister that the terms for such peace would not be different from that concluded between Israel and Egypt: full withdrawal for full peace.

Given the extreme difficulty the United States has experienced in getting the Israelis and the Palestinians to reach agreement on Hebron, and the volatility of the situation between Syria and Israel, there has been speculation both in the region and in Washington that the Clinton administration may appoint Richard Holbrooke as the president's personal envoy to the Mideast.

The appointment of Holbrooke, who brokered peace in Bosnia, would be seen in the region as raising the level of American diplomatic investment in the peace process on an ongoing basis.

Currently, U.S. efforts are headed by Ross, the State Department's top Mideast expert, with periodic interventions by the outgoing secretary of state, Warren Christopher.

Compounding the complexity of the post-Hebron picture is the confused state of Israel's domestic politics.

To the chagrin of many in his own Labor Party, Peres still says a government of national unity is "weeks" away. Peres continues to meet frequently on this issue with Likud hard-liner Ariel Sharon, now minister of national infrastructure.

At the same time, 10 Knesset members from the two major parties, led by Labor's Yossi Beilin and Likud's Michael Eitan, have held a series of discreet meetings and are said to have found surprisingly varied areas of consensus. These consultations, however, are paradoxical.

While Peres and Labor have welcomed the impending Hebron deal and pledged their support for it in the Knesset, Sharon is conducting a high-profile political effort to drum up opposition to the deal from within the Cabinet.

While the National Religious Party is the coalition partner most implacably opposed to the Hebron deal, it has asked to be included in the Likud-Labor talks led by Beilin and Eitan that are seeking to reach common ground on the final-status talks.

Lastly, two senior Cabinet pragmatists, Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai and Foreign Minister David Levy, are staunchly opposed to a unity government. Commentators presume that they would likely lose their jobs to Labor representatives if a unity government were formed. □

## Israel worried about possible coordinated attacks in Turkey

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli officials have expressed concern about the possibility of coordinated attacks by Palestinian terrorists and Kurdish rebels against Israeli targets in Turkey.

Members of the Kurdish underground and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine recently met, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported Monday.

The contacts were with Kurdish rebels based in Syria, where the PFLP maintains its headquarters, according to Israeli experts.

The experts were quoted as saying that there was no evidence to date of Kurdish involvement in any attacks against Israeli targets.

The reports come amid heightened alertness among Israeli security forces against the possibility of terrorist attacks against Israeli targets abroad. □

## Baram announces support for Barak as Labor leader

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Labor Knesset member Uzi Baram announced this week that he thought that Ehud Barak should be the next chairman of the Labor Party.

At a news conference Monday, Baram said he believed that Barak, a Labor Knesset member and former foreign minister, would be good for the strength of the party and that his candidacy for the premiership would boost the party's chances in the next national elections, slated for the year 2000.

In announcing his decision, Baram, who finished first in Labor Party primaries last year, withdrew his own candidacy for party leadership.

Sources close to Baram said he made his decision after determining that he could not beat Barak in the internal party elections scheduled for June.

Labor Knesset members Haim Ramon and Ephraim Sneh, who also are vying for party leadership, said they were not surprised by the announcement. □

## Arab announces candidacy for prime minister of Israel

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — What do Benjamin Netanyahu, Ehud Barak and Azmi Beshara have in common?

All three have declared that they intend to run for prime minister in the next Israeli election.

The intentions of Prime Minister Netanyahu and Barak, a Labor Party Knesset member and former foreign minister, are already well-known.

But Beshara who?

Beshara, an Arab member of Knesset, said this week that he had little chance of winning. But he said his candidacy would advance the interests of Israel's Arab citizens.

A third candidate for premier would force a runoff between the leaders of Labor and Likud, Beshara said.

Israeli Arabs "will then become a political force, which both major parties will court, and they will give in to the national and daily demands of that force," he said.

"Thus we will cease to be a reserve of ballots for the Labor Party." Labor leader Shimon Peres won 95 percent of the Arab vote in the May election.

Beshara, a lecturer of philosophy at Bir Zeit University in the West Bank, won a Knesset seat in May as a member of Hadash, the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality.

He has been outspoken in demanding cultural autonomy for Israeli Arabs, and in calling for a redefinition of Israel as the "state of all its citizens," rather than a "Jewish state."

The next national election is slated for the year 2000. □

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

**Christian ad on 'shared' Jerusalem sparks Jewish anger, not surprise**

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — A recent Christian-sponsored advertisement in The New York Times calling for Jews to share control over Jerusalem and for readers to lobby the U.S. Congress has left Jewish officials wincing in anger — but not surprised.

Representatives of Jewish groups, many of which condemned the ad, say the intent of the campaign by Churches for Middle East Peace — which includes leaders of America's largest mainline Protestant denominations — is to erode U.S. government support for the Jewish state.

They say the effort is most troubling because of its potential influence over U.S. foreign policy toward Israel, and the possibility that it could contribute to disrupting the delicate political balance in Israel over Jerusalem. It is not surprising, Jews say, because sponsors of the campaign have a history of criticizing Israel even as they work with Jewish groups on domestic issues of common concern.

In addition to the ad, the group is also circulating to its member churches materials decidedly slanted against Israel, including a prayer and sample letters addressed to the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and to newspaper editors.

Among other things, the material encourages members to urge the U.S. government to press negotiators to "move beyond exclusivists' claims" to Jerusalem.

The Dec. 21 ad also included a coupon addressed to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee urging the committee's members "to raise and recommend the concept of a shared Jerusalem" in the confirmation hearings for the next U.S. secretary of state.

Madeleine Albright has been nominated for that post.

Corinne Whitlatch, director of Churches for Middle East Peace, denied that her group wants to influence U.S. foreign policy toward Israel. In a telephone interview, Whitlatch said the disposition of Jerusalem's status is up to the Israelis and Palestinians, and that "our ultimate goal is to open up the debate a bit."

**'More a construct of the mind'**

In many people's minds there are only two options for Jerusalem: Greater Jerusalem under the sole sovereignty of Israel or a divided Jerusalem.

"The discussion of other options can bring about a different future for the peoples," she said. "The definition of a shared Jerusalem is more a construct of the mind and the attitude" than a political construct, she said.

Leaders of some of America's largest Protestant denominations, including the United Methodist Church, Episcopal Church, Presbyterian Church (USA), United Church of Christ, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Disciples of Christ, signed onto the ad.

So did leaders of smaller denominations and religious orders, including the Unitarians, Quakers, Mennonites, Maryknoll Sisters, and Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, as well as the head of the group that oversees all Catholic orders of nuns and monks.

Several major Jewish groups raced to issue press releases condemning the group's effort.

Many said the 12-year-old Washington-based group has always lobbied against Israeli interests and on behalf of what it perceives to be Palestinian concerns. Churches for Middle East Peace "has had a long record" of opposition to Israeli interests, said Rabbi A. James Rudin, director of interreligious affairs at the American Jewish Committee. "They cannot stand Jews with power. That's their dirty

little secret. They can deal with Jews as a minority, as individuals, as purely a religious group, but when they see Jews with power, especially over Jerusalem, it sticks in their throat," he said.

Rabbi Leon Klenicki, director of interfaith affairs for the Anti-Defamation League, agreed. Their "constant criticism of the State of Israel is the new way of theological anti-Judaism, of the teaching of contempt," he said. "Before they denied us a role in God's plan and now they want to deny us a place in history," Klenicki said.

Responding to the charges, Whitlatch of Churches for Middle East Peace said there "is not even a whiff of contempt" in her group's effort, and accused Rudin and Klenicki of "almost race-baiting, trying to goad a Jewish-Christian conflict here."

The Churches' campaign, kicked off by the ad headlined "Christians Call for a Shared Jerusalem," comes after a brief hiatus from what one Jewish interreligious affairs professional called the group's "history of bashing Israel." The group has lobbied against U.S. military and economic aid to Israel, and against legislation requiring the U.S. Embassy to move from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. That hiatus coincided with a peace process that was headed in a direction that the Christian signatories apparently liked.

Despite their sense of the group's anti-Israel positions, Jews have often worked closely with organizations included in the Christian umbrella group.

One example is the recent effort by Jewish groups to aid black churches destroyed by arson. In the last several months, the American Jewish Committee has raised about \$200,000 and worked with the National Council of Churches to rebuild some of the houses of worship.

Jewish groups have also worked with the National Council and its members to prevent erosion of the constitutional wall separating church and state, and on public policy issues such as abortion law.

The campaign will not stop the AJCommittee and other groups from continuing a relationship with its backers where there are concerns of mutual interest, said Rudin.

**'Open letter' issued**

Meanwhile, Jewish groups hope to counter the Jerusalem campaign — and prevent similar future efforts — by discussing their concerns with its signatories now. The AJCommittee is sending a letter to the 17 leaders of Christian denominations and religious orders who signed the ad, and the Anti-Defamation League issued an "open letter" condemning the campaign.

The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations has asked for a meeting with the Rev. Joan Brown Campbell, secretary general of the National Council of Churches, which represents the interests of some 42 million Protestant and Orthodox Christians.

The Conference of Presidents is also organizing a national educational outreach countercampaign to "sensitize the American public about the facts and realities of Jerusalem," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the umbrella group. He expects to publish materials written by non-Jews about Jerusalem, and use the Internet and speakers to reach church and school groups.

Statements condemning the Churches for Middle East peace were also issued by the American Jewish Congress, the Orthodox Rabbinical Council of America and the Orthodox Union's Institute for Public Affairs.

Conspicuously absent from the ad's list of main signatories was the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, which in the past has joined Churches for Middle East Peace in harshly condemning Israeli policies in disputed West Bank territory and in Jerusalem. Despite the concern, Rudin said Churches for Middle East Peace does not represent the majority of American Christians. □

## Regional leaders monitor progress of reform at JNF

By Cynthia Mann

NEW YORK (JTA) — Regional leaders of the Jewish National Fund of America are watching and waiting to see whether plans to reform the organization will be carried out and will be sufficient to restore confidence in its operation.

The charity, which is marking its 95th anniversary, has been scrambling to put its house in order after upheaval over its spending and accounting practices.

At least one regional chapter, New England, has threatened to disband its board unless the principals at the organization resign and other changes are implemented.

The New England chapter's president, Michael Lipof, charged that the organization's reform plans have so far been a "sham." Lipof said he had even "stopped people from contributing" to the charity best known for its tree-planting and land development projects in Israel.

But other regional leaders say New England's "revolutionary" approach is not representative of the sentiment across the nation and that restructuring the charity will take time. Such radicalism is counterproductive, they say.

Stuart Gertman of Cleveland said he is "disturbed by the inflammatory rhetoric" of a vocal minority and decried what he called a "vendetta atmosphere among a few." JNF board members in his city, he said, are upset about the organization's problems, "but are gratified by the [reform] process and are giving it time" to take its course.

For their part, national JNF officials also defend the reform effort, saying that it is far-reaching and moving as quickly as possible.

"None of the steps can be taken overnight," said Mark Cohen, JNF's spokesman.

Regional lay leaders agreed last week during a conference call to wait until Jan. 20 before meeting to evaluate the progress of the reforms and to decide on the next step. They formed a committee, of which Gertman is a member, to monitor the reforms on behalf of the regional leadership.

### Slight drop in contributions

An internal probe of JNF led to disclosures in the fall that far less money than expected — roughly 20 percent — actually makes it to Israel annually for tree-planting and other land development projects. Historically, this has been JNF's central mission.

The probe, which included an independent partial audit of the agency, found no fraud or malfeasance, but said sloppy accounting procedures were rife.

The revelations were a blow to the charity's public profile, apparently contributing to a slight drop in nationwide contributions. They led its lay leadership to undertake a host of measures designed to restore confidence in JNF. The measures were decided upon in mid-November, at the time of the group's annual meeting. These measures included:

- launching a search to replace Samuel Cohen, who has moved from executive vice president of the agency to the post of senior executive vice president;
- searching for a new chief financial officer and a major accounting firm to audit its 1996 spending and overall accounting procedures;
- forming a new committee to nominate new lay leaders;
- forming a task force with subcommittees on program priorities, restructuring, fund raising and increasing the flow of JNF money to Israel.

But the New England regional chapter in late

November formally rejected the plan, calling it "unacceptable."

The board of directors unanimously called for the immediate resignation of JNF's national senior officials — lay and professional — and called for the appointment of a crisis manager to guide the restructuring effort.

"In charities with serious problems, the top people resign," said Lipof. He said it was inappropriate that Cohen continue to have hands-on responsibility for the management of JNF's day-to-day operations.

He cited as "unconscionable" a recent memo from Samuel Cohen to national and regional executive staffs. The memo, which was obtained by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, shows his continued control over JNF.

"From now on," the Cohen memo read, "until notified otherwise, before any of our regional directors or national departments send out memos, reports, articles or whatever, across the board throughout the country, I want to see and approve them beforehand."

"The business of shipping out articles and minutes across the country, especially those that relate to our recent problems, exacerbate the situation and certainly don't help," the memo said.

But Alan Blumenfeld, president of the New Jersey region and a member of the new monitoring committee, defended Cohen and the reform plans. "We decided something in November and we should at least see it through before we say it's not working," he said.

The problems developed at JNF "not through fraud or fault," but through "enormous growth in a short period of time." He said of Cohen: "There is nothing Sam did intentionally to harm the organization."

"The business angle got beyond him and everyone's annoyed about it and rightfully so," Blumenfeld said. But Cohen "won't be hands-off until they fill the position" he occupied. "There's nobody in the wings and the organization can't run itself," Blumenfeld added.

Cohen dismissed the detractors as "dissidents." He said his mandate "comes from the duly elected leadership of the Jewish National Fund and they have asked me to be helpful in the process of instituting the changes as quickly as possible." Cohen said the search and interview process for the top positions is under way, noting that he is involved in some preliminary screening of candidates.

### 'Bound to make mistakes'

He also said the task force committees on restructuring and other matters are at work. Officials said they are slated to meet starting Jan. 9.

Leonard Kleinman, who lives in Tampa, Fla., and chairs the subcommittee on restructuring, said he has confidence in the reform effort. "Some people appear to be reactive and impatient but if you make moves on that level, you're bound to make mistakes." He added, "Nobody has imposed limitations" on his restructuring initiative.

For his part, Lipof agreed to wait until the task force subcommittees meet next month before rendering final judgment.

Meanwhile, there appears to be some impact on fund-raising efforts with the approach of the organization's banner holiday, Tu B'Shevat, the annual celebration of land and trees. The holiday falls this year on Jan. 23.

Blumenfeld, who also serves as JNF's national community campaign chairman, said contributions across the nation appear to be down "slightly," though "stronger regions are doing well," including his own New Jersey.

Gertman also said the episode has had little impact in Cleveland. "The cash is flowing, people are paying their pledges, trees are being purchased," he said.

People "believe we're in the process of cleaning up" the problem "and we are." □