



# Daily News Bulletin

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81<sup>st</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Israeli Cabinet mulling pullback

The Israeli Cabinet still has not decided on the scope of a further redeployment that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would offer during a scheduled meeting next week with President Clinton.

The Cabinet, which planned to meet again Sunday, said the extent of the redeployment would depend on whether U.S. officials would agree that Israel forgo the third pullback called for under the 1995 Interim Agreement.

American officials gave a cold reception to an earlier Israeli Cabinet decision to retain portions of the West Bank as "security interests" in any future deal with the Palestinians, according to news reports.

"We were taken by surprise, and it's not helpful to our ability to conduct diplomacy on this important subject," a U.S. official was quoted as saying.

### U.S. Jewish voters polled

In a recent poll of American Jewish voters, 65.3 percent of the respondents said President Clinton should not pressure Israel "to move faster trading land for peace than Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu may otherwise be prepared to do."

The poll, commissioned by Middle East Quarterly, was released as Clinton administration officials debate how much pressure to apply during a meeting scheduled for next week between Netanyahu and Clinton.

### Plundered art said to be in U.S.

At least 16 paintings possibly plundered from Jewish families by the Nazis are hanging in museums and homes in the United States, according to an Austrian collector.

The remarks by Dr. Rudolf Leopold are an apparent attempt to prevent his collection from being singled out. The Manhattan district attorney recently prevented New York City's Museum of Modern Art from returning to Austria two paintings in Leopold's collection that two Jewish families claimed were plundered from their families by the Nazis.

Leopold said some of the paintings are hanging at museums across the United States, including the Museum of Modern Art and the Art Institute of Chicago.

Reminder: The JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Monday, Jan. 19.

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

### Church-state tug of war to heat up Congress' session

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — When Congress returns later this month from its winter recess, the tug of war across the line separating church and state is likely to increase in intensity.

This is, after all, an election year. Indeed, as the November congressional campaigns heat up, many issues long on the legislative agenda acquire more immediacy.

For Jewish activists, religious freedom and church-state issues will continue to be high on the agenda, as will efforts to contain Iran, promote Jerusalem's status as Israel's capital and address the problem of religious persecution abroad.

Here's a closer look at some of the legislative initiatives that will garner Jewish attention during the second half of the 105th Congress beginning Jan. 27.

On the domestic front, issues include:

- A school prayer amendment: In what has amounted to a recurring nightmare for church-state watchdogs, proposed school prayer amendments to the Constitution have been batted about the halls of Congress over the last several years.

The coming year, however, holds the first solid prospects for a vote on such a measure. The "Religious Freedom Amendment" would give the go-ahead to government subsidy of religion, prayer in schools and other forms of religious expression on public property. Opponents, including most Jewish groups, have consistently derided the measure as unnecessary and dangerous, charging that it runs headlong into the wall separating church and state.

Last year, a House panel voted to support the measure. Now proponents are hoping to bring the measure to the floor for a vote — a move that would be welcomed by the Christian Coalition, which has said it will conduct a "major push" in 1998 to get the amendment passed.

Most observers believe that the amendment will fall far short of the two-thirds majority necessary for passage, though some believe it has a shot at winning a majority.

"Because it's so thermonuclear, we have to take it very seriously," said Michael Lieberman, Washington counsel for the Anti-Defamation League.

There is no movement in the Senate for such an amendment.

- School vouchers: After suffering several setbacks last year, school voucher proponents are hoping a voucher plan for the District of Columbia can pass both houses of Congress this year.

One of the most controversial and divisive issues facing the Jewish community, vouchers are favored by most Orthodox and politically conservative Jews, while most others in the organized Jewish community remain opposed to the idea.

Last fall, the House voted down a national voucher bill that would have made public funding available for low-income students to use at private and religious schools across the country. Shortly thereafter, the House narrowly approved an appropriations package for Washington, D.C., that included a voucher initiative for low-income students. But a Democratic-led filibuster in the Senate succeeded in removing the voucher plan from the bill.

Now, voucher supporters are seeking to advance a separate D.C. voucher bill, which they hope would serve as a trial balloon for a national push. Some observers believe it stands a good chance of reaching President Clinton's desk. A veto, however, would be a virtual certainty, which could prompt supporters to seek passage of a variety of other voucher measures.

- Religious Freedom Restoration Act: Following last year's Supreme Court

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Israelis protest redeployment

Tens of thousands of right-wing Israelis called on the government not to cede any more land in the West Bank to the Palestinians.

Some of the demonstrators, gathered at Rabin Square in Tel Aviv, lashed out at the United States for pressuring Israel to turn over to the Palestinians at least 10 percent more of the West Bank.

### Tense standoff in Gaza

Israeli and Palestinian security forces aimed rifles at each other during a confrontation that took place in the Gaza Strip.

The incident took place when 400 Palestinians launched a demonstration.

The standoff lasted some 20 minutes before the two sides lowered their guns.

### Settlers decry 'limitations'

Jewish settlers in Hebron scuffled with Palestinian police when they were barred from visiting a Jewish holy site in a Palestinian-ruled part of the West Bank town.

The settlers, who were marking one year since the signing of the Hebron Agreement, said the encounter underscored the limitations placed on them since Israel transferred 80 percent of the city to Palestinian self-rule.

### Israeli extremists charged

Two Israeli right-wing extremists were charged with planning to throw a pig's head onto the Al-Aksa Mosque on the Temple Mount during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

The two allegedly wanted to provoke clashes between Arabs and Jews.

Avigdor Eskin and Damien Pakovitch, arrested last month, were charged in a Jerusalem district court with sedition and conspiracy to desecrate a holy place and offend religious feelings.



## Daily News Bulletin

Caryn Rosen Adelman, *President*  
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decision striking down the Religious Freedom Restoration Act as unconstitutional, religious leaders have been scrambling to find a way to restore the protections afforded under the law.

Enacted in 1993, RFRA made it harder for the government to interfere with the practice of religion. The justices, however, ruled that Congress overstepped its bounds and usurped judicial authority when it enacted the law. Now a group consisting of a handful of Jewish and other religious organizations is helping to craft a revised version of the law intended to circumvent the roadblocks set up by the Supreme Court.

"We will not reach everything that the old RFRA reached, but we think we'll reach substantial amounts of government behavior," said Marc Stern, co-director of the American Jewish Congress' legal department.

Because the fix falls short of solving every arena of government intervention into religion, Jewish activists say they will continue to focus their attention on enacting similar statutes on a state-by-state basis.

- **Religious freedom in the workplace:** Legislation that would force employers to accommodate their employees' religious needs may finally see the light of day in the 105th Congress.

After languishing in two previous Congresses, the Workplace Religious Freedom Act is now acquiring the support Jewish activists have long sought.

The bill would set a new standard requiring employers to prove a "significant difficulty or expense" if they decide not to accommodate a worker's religious needs. Current law only requires an employer to "reasonably accommodate" such needs.

A hearing on the bill has already been held in the Senate, and proponents are hoping the House will take up the measure in coming months.

- **Social welfare:** Promoting and protecting social welfare programs will also remain high on the Jewish agenda. Jewish activists spent much of the holiday season successfully convincing the administration to restore in its budget proposal food stamps for legal immigrants and refugees, a benefit cut under last year's balanced-budget agreement. That battle will shift to Capitol Hill, where its fate is uncertain.

Activists will also be paying close attention to new proposals regarding housing assistance, Medicare and Clinton's child-care initiative with an eye on how such programs would affect Jewish immigrants and refugees.

In the realm of foreign policy, issues include:

- **The containment of Iran:** Containment of the Islamic state and its potential to rain terror on Israel and other nations remains a top priority for Jewish activists.

A Senate vote is expected on a bill that steps up pressure on Russia to stop aiding Iran's ballistic missile program. The House approved the Iran Missiles Proliferation Act before recessing last year, and the Senate version has already gained 82 co-sponsors.

The bill would provide for stronger sanctions against countries, companies or research institutes helping Iran develop ballistic missiles.

U.S. and Israeli intelligence reports have indicated that with continued help from Russian firms, Tehran could have the ability within the next year to launch ballistic missiles equipped with chemical, biological and other warheads capable of reaching Israel and other states in the region. The Clinton administration opposes the measure, saying it would interfere with diplomatic efforts to address the problem.

- **Fighting religious persecution abroad:** Momentum began gathering last summer for legislation aimed at the problem of religious persecution abroad, but disagreements among the issue's proponents have since stalled the effort.

While most support the concept of combating religious persecution, some religious leaders — Jewish ones included — have questioned the wisdom of focusing solely on religious persecution, rather than human rights abuses in general. Others have raised concerns about the mechanism for monitoring abuses and the nature of the sanctions mandated by the "Freedom From Religious Persecution Act."

Although the campaign has been modeled in part after the movement to free Soviet Jewry, most mainstream Jewish groups have yet to get behind the legislation. A vote in a House subcommittee on the bill was canceled last fall, and the Senate has yet to take action.

- **Jerusalem bill:** Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.) has introduced legislation that would require all U.S. government publications to list Jerusalem as Israel's capital. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Jewish leaders call foul on time of Red Sox opener

By Michael Gelbwasser  
The Jewish Advocate

BOSTON (JTA) — In the opinion of two local Jewish leaders, the Boston Red Sox struck out last week when the baseball team changed the time of its opening day game in an attempt to minimize conflicts with Good Friday.

The ballgame usually gets under way between 1 p.m. and 1:30 p.m., but this year it is scheduled to start at 3:05 p.m. on April 10.

And it is not likely to end before sundown when the first Passover seder begins, according to local Jewish officials.

"I suspect there will be few Jews at Fenway Park," said Sheila Decter, director of the American Jewish Congress' New England regional office.

Leonard Zakim, executive director of the region's Anti-Defamation League, said the time change will force Jews to choose between "being home for a seder or attending one game at 'Temple Fenway Park.'"

He contends the team "should've changed the time to much earlier" for that very reason.

"I think they were certainly well intended," Zakim said of the Red Sox, "but people for whom this is an issue in the Jewish community basically have to make a choice."

The Red Sox announced the time change to 3:05 p.m. in a Jan. 5 press release detailing ticket information for the 1998 season. The release noted that "in recognition of the religious observances," alcohol will not be served at Fenway during the game and the traditional opening day ceremonies will be "limited to the introduction of both teams." Boston will take on the Seattle Mariners that day.

A spokeswoman for the American League said the holidays would not affect other home openers scheduled for April 10.

The last time a local professional sporting event was subject to a change in schedule to accommodate fans observing a Jewish holiday was Sept. 22, 1996, when kickoff for a football game between the New England Patriots and the Jacksonville Jaguars was changed to avoid a conflict with the observance of Yom Kippur, which started at sundown that evening.

Patriots owner and Jewish philanthropist Robert Kraft requested the change so that Jews, including his family, could see the entire game before attending Kol Nidre services that night.

Red Sox spokesman Kevin Shea said Monday the ball club tried unsuccessfully to reschedule its opening game when team officials discovered it conflicted with Passover and Good Friday.

The Red Sox asked the Mariners to consider instead playing a doubleheader the following day, Shea said. However, the team discovered that such an arrangement would violate a labor agreement between the Major League Baseball Players Association and the team owners.

The Mariners would have rejected the idea from a "competitive standpoint" because it would have given the team two consecutive days off, Seattle spokesman Dave Oust said in a telephone interview Tuesday. And rescheduling the games for later in the year, he continued, would be difficult, especially if inclement weather postponed those games, because the teams are playing on the day before and after the Mariners' only other visit to Boston this year, in August.

"It's a concern," Oust said of playing on Passover and Good Friday, "but the major league baseball schedule is not very flexible."

With the new, later starting time, the Red Sox hope the game will be over "by sundown" and "satisfy both religions at the same time," Shea said.

Neither the Red Sox, the ADL, the AJCongress nor the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston have reported receiving complaints about the new game time.

The Red Sox have received "positive feedback" from both the Jewish and non-Jewish communities, Shea said. □

### Clinton urged to pressure Baltics

The Simon Wiesenthal Center called on President Clinton to urge the leaders of the Baltic nations to prosecute suspected Nazi war criminals living unhindered in those countries.

Efraim Zuroff, the center's Israel director, wrote that some citizens of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia cooperated with the Nazis to an extent that made it a major factor in the annihilation of those countries' Jewish populations.

Zuroff wrote that the three countries should make a "serious commitment" to "Western norms of justice and the rule of law."

### Meili suing Swiss bank

The former Swiss security guard who lost his job at the Union Bank of Switzerland last January after rescuing Holocaust-era documents from the shredder is suing the bank for \$60 million in compensatory damages as well as another \$2.5 billion in punitive damages.

Christoph Meili, who sought haven in the United States last year after receiving death threats against his family, said the bank had "turned my country against me."

The bank's Manhattan office issued a statement denying that UBS had anything to do with Meili's losing his job with a private security firm, adding that it had offered to help him rebuild his life in Switzerland.

### B'nai B'rith gets housing grant

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development awarded B'nai B'rith a \$3.72 million grant to build a 47-unit low-income senior housing project in Chesilhurst, N. J.

Including the new facility, B'nai B'rith sponsors 34 apartment buildings that house more than 6,000 seniors across the country.

### Three Jews get medals

A longtime Jewish professional was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor.

Arnold Aronson, who served for more than 30 years with the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, was cited for his accomplishments with the civil rights movement.

Aronson, who co-founded the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, was one of three Jews to receive the award from President Clinton at a White House ceremony. The others were Sol Linowitz, a diplomat who contributed to the pursuit of Middle East peace in the Carter administration, and the late Albert Shanker, former president of the American Federation of Teachers and an advocate for public education.

## Cold vibes from White House on eve of Netanyahu meetings

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The White House is turning a cold diplomatic shoulder toward Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu even as it prepares for his arrival.

In the wake of recent Israeli Cabinet decisions that signal further defiance of an American call for a "credible and substantial" redeployment from the West Bank, President Clinton is planning to forgo the customary working lunch and joint news conference when the Israeli premier visits here next week.

Instead, Israeli and White House officials said Clinton and Netanyahu will meet in the Oval Office on Tuesday, the second day of Netanyahu's planned three-day visit. Clinton has scheduled a meeting Thursday with Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat.

Although the White House is not rolling out any welcome mats, members of Congress, even though they are not in session, have prepared a generous welcome.

Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) plans to return to Washington for a private meeting with Netanyahu before the White House session.

The House and Senate leadership will treat Netanyahu to lunch.

Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) and Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.), both Netanyahu supporters and the chairmen of their respective foreign relations committees, have invited Netanyahu for separate sessions with members of their committees.

The Jewish members of Congress have also scheduled a separate meeting with Netanyahu.

And some expect that Netanyahu might get a better hearing from Vice President Al Gore than from Clinton.

A separate meeting with Gore is in the works.

Before he arrives at the White House, Netanyahu's first Washington event is a support rally by the National Unity Coalition for Israel, a group of avid Christian supporters and hard-line American Jews.

Netanyahu is also scheduled to meet with representatives from the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and later with a larger group of Jewish officials.

But it is the White House where eyes will be focused.

By all indications, the Netanyahu session with Clinton will be serious and confrontational.

The Israeli Cabinet caught the Americans off guard when they decided this week to declare certain territories off-limits in their negotiations with the Palestinians, according to State Department officials.

The move, which appears to violate a promise from the prime minister to Clinton not to surprise the United States, came only days after Dennis Ross, the U.S. special Middle East coordinator, left Israel.

The Cabinet is scheduled to meet again Sunday to discuss further redeployment from the West Bank.

A statement issued following Thursday's Cabinet meeting quoted Netanyahu as telling his ministers that no decision on the scope of a redeployment would be wrapped up before Sunday.

The actual size of the pullback would depend on whether the

Americans insist on Israel carrying out a third pullback, Netanyahu said, as called for under the Interim Accords.

The inconclusiveness of Thursday's Cabinet session, along with two earlier government decisions this week, contributed to the pessimism concerning Clinton's ability to achieve a breakthrough in his discussions.

On Tuesday, the Israeli government voted unanimously to condition any further redeployment on Palestinian compliance with its commitments.

On Wednesday, the Cabinet decided to retain portions of the West Bank as areas of "security interest."

The Palestinians rejected the Israeli Cabinet decisions this week.

Arafat told reporters that what was important were the signed agreements, not the Israeli government decisions.

He was speaking to reporters in Hebron following talks with European Union's Middle East envoy, Miguel Angel Moratinos, and the British deputy foreign secretary, Derek Fatchett.

Meanwhile, confrontations between Israelis and Palestinians were reported in the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

Hebron was the site of heightened tensions Thursday between Jewish settlers and Palestinian police.

Settlers, marking one year since the Hebron Agreement, in which 80 percent of the town was transferred to self-rule, scuffled with Palestinian police when they tried to enter the self-rule authority area to visit a Jewish holy site.

Noam Arnon, spokesman for the Jewish residents of Hebron, said that despite the accord, which allow the Jews access to sacred sites, their movements were being restricted.

Arnon added that acts of Palestinian violence against the Jewish residents have increased in the year since the redeployment took place.

"This year was not a year of peace, it was a year of violence," Arnon told Israel Radio.

"We think the only conclusion that can be made from this is that this year was a failure of the agreement. The areas they obtained were used as a basis for more terrorist actions and attacks."

Arnon said the Hebron experience should be an example to the government against any further redeployment.

His remarks came a day after tens of thousands of people gathered at Rabin Square in Tel Aviv to demonstrate against ceding any further land.

In the Gaza Strip, tempers also flared when busloads of Palestinians arrived at the Gush Katif intersection and demonstrators disembarked and blocked the road, saying they wanted to pray there.

Israeli troops also tried to block the Palestinians from moving forward. Palestinian police arrived to disperse the protesters.

Meanwhile, at nearby Kfar Darom, a Palestinian man was lightly hurt in the hand by Israeli fire when the car he was traveling in tried to run an army roadblock.

In light of these events, Israeli and Palestinian security officials in the Gaza Strip met to discuss measures to reduce the tensions.

An army spokesman attributed the recent confrontations to heightened friction ahead of the Clinton talks in Washington. □

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