



# Daily News Bulletin

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81<sup>st</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Netanyahu, Clinton meet

A meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Clinton failed to produce an agreement on the size of an Israeli redeployment on the West Bank.

But officials said the talks focused on a plan that would link a phased withdrawal with Palestinian fulfillment of its commitments. In a sign of possible progress, Clinton scheduled a second, unplanned meeting with the prime minister. [Page 1]

### D.C. museum changes decision

The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum reversed itself and invited Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat to visit.

Arafat, who was stung by the museum's original refusal to host him in his official capacity, told a news conference in Paris that he was "keen to visit this museum." [Page 4]

### Palestinian group backs denier

Some 70 Palestinian professors, journalists and religious leaders rallied in the Gaza Strip to support a French Muslim writer on trial in Paris for denying the Holocaust.

Roger Garaudy's book, "Founding Myths of Israeli Politics," argues that the Jewish people inflated the number of Holocaust victims for political purposes.

### Swiss fund approves allocation

The advisory council of Switzerland's Holocaust Memorial Fund approved allocating some \$170 million to Jewish Holocaust survivors.

The fund's executive board is expected to meet Wednesday to ratify the allocation, which is in addition to the \$11 million allocated last year by the fund, according to the secretary-general of the World Jewish Congress, Israel Singer.

The fund was established last February by Switzerland's three largest banks to aid needy survivors worldwide.

### Israeli minister dies of cancer

Israeli Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister Zevulun Hammer died at 61 following a bout with cancer.

Hammer, who was leader of the National Religious Party, was remembered across the political spectrum as a sincere and moral figure. [Page 3]

## Long-awaited Netanyahu visit goes according to premier's plan

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's long-sought visit to Washington this week could be headlined, "The crisis that wasn't."

Despite predictions that the visit would highlight the gap between Israel and the Clinton administration, Netanyahu's own analysis of his meetings were echoed by American officials.

"The goodwill is there, the pieces are there, we're trying to put them together and we're making a real effort to do so," Netanyahu said after meeting with both President Clinton and U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

With so much at stake, Netanyahu had crafted his visit in a way to remind Clinton that he could bear the wrath of an angry American constituency if the White House was perceived as pressuring Israel.

Significantly, however, it was not the Jewish community he turned to to demonstrate his support as much as conservative political and Christian leaders.

At the same time, Netanyahu knows that he must continue to rely on Clinton to broker agreements with Arafat in the absence of direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

In the end, the plan seems to have worked.

Netanyahu pledged time and time again to forge ahead with the peace process, but only if the Palestinians fully comply with their previous accords with Israel. Only then, Netanyahu told his audiences, would he proceed with an overdue redeployment from the West Bank. But as Netanyahu moved from rallies and meetings into substantive talks, there were indications that progress on the long-stalled Israeli-Palestinian peace front was possible.

As the visit proceeded, furthermore, the premier's absolute declarations softened, according to Israeli and American officials.

And now the task has turned to forging a compromise agreement between Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat, who was due to meet Clinton on Thursday. Once in the Oval Office on Tuesday, Clinton tried to pin Netanyahu down on what it would take for Israel to implement the U.S. call for a "credible and substantial" redeployment from more of the West Bank.

Boosting claims of a possible breakthrough, Clinton scheduled an unplanned second meeting with Netanyahu.

In another possible sign of movement, Netanyahu revealed that the United States has asked him to allow the Palestine National Council to convene in the Gaza Strip.

"They wouldn't stay there for very long, but they could convene in Gaza," Netanyahu said he told the Americans. The purpose of such a gathering presumably would be to change the Palestinian Covenant, which calls for Israel's destruction.

Netanyahu has said he would not proceed with a redeployment unless the Palestinians complete the process of amending the covenant.

After his 90-minute meeting with Clinton on Tuesday, Netanyahu told reporters that he had explained Israel's security concerns to the president but stressed Israel's willingness to redeploy if they see "that measure of Palestinian compliance which has been lacking so far."

Netanyahu also met with Vice President Al Gore, who hosted a luncheon for his delegation.

While Netanyahu and Clinton did not produce an agreement, the outlines of a U.S.-proposed package are becoming clearer, according to Israeli and U.S. officials.

James Rubin, State Department spokesman, said the terms and conditions of a further Israeli redeployment were a major focus of Netanyahu's meetings with Clinton

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Former Yediot editor convicted

A former editor of Israel's largest-circulation daily newspaper was convicted of using illegal wiretaps as part of a circulation war.

A Tel Aviv court ruled that Moshe Vardi "turned a blind eye" to private investigators' bugging the phones of Vardi's employees at Yediot Achronot.

Vardi's news coordinator was also convicted in connection with the wiretaps, intended to catch employees giving information to rival daily Ma'ariv.

### Bridge collapse trial opens

A trial opened in Israel of five individuals charged with involuntary manslaughter in the bridge collapse at the opening of July's Maccabiah Games.

Four members of the Australian delegation were killed and dozens injured when a bridge buckled beneath them during the Games' opening ceremonies.

### U.S. jets arrive in Israel

Two F-15I jets arrived in Israel, the first of 25 purchased from the United States.

Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai said the planes would increase Israel's deterrent capability.

### Israeli ambassador approved

Israel's Cabinet approved the appointment of Zvi Magen as ambassador to Russia.

Magen currently serves as Israeli ambassador to Ukraine.

### Heifer declared impure

A red cow named Melody was declared impure after a rabbi detected white hairs on her tail. According to Jewish scripture, the ashes of a red heifer are required to purify Jews before they can enter the Temple in Jerusalem.

Melody's birth last year was seen by some fervently Orthodox Jews as a sign that the time had come to build the Third Temple.

and Albright. While reiterating the U.S. demand for a "credible" and "significant" redeployment, Rubin told reporters there is more at issue than how much land is involved. Also of concern is the quality of the land, the timing of a redeployment and the security situation. According to the U.S. plan, Israel would turn over at least 12 percent more of the West Bank.

But the plan would involve a phased redeployment that would be tied to specific Palestinian fulfillment of its commitments. A senior Israeli official told reporters that Clinton and Netanyahu moved closer to agreement on that point.

But Netanyahu still has his Cabinet to contend with, and everything discussed here must be approved by his coalition back home. Some members of his coalition have threatened to leave the government if Netanyahu agrees to cede any more land.

Thus Netanyahu arrived in Washington on Monday feeling pressure from his constituents at home — yet knowing that Clinton was determined to move the faltering process forward. In fact, Clinton, signaling that he meant business, had already announced that he would not be inviting Netanyahu to the customary working lunch usually accorded a head of state.

From the moment Netanyahu arrived, he tried to surround himself with supporters. In a breach of protocol that was seen as an attempt to send a message to the White House, Netanyahu huddled first with Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.). Usually visiting leaders first meet with administration officials.

But the Republican leader, usually an outspoken critic of Clinton's policy toward Israel policy, declined to comment on specific issues at hand.

Netanyahu also scheduled a series of Capitol Hill meetings with prominent Republicans and Democratic lawmakers who returned to Washington for this purpose even though they were still in recess.

After the Gingrich meeting, Netanyahu addressed a rally of primarily conservative Christian — and some Jewish — supporters. The standing-room-only crowd rose to its feet and cheered the Israeli premier in a fashion that was unparalleled in either of his two meetings with the Jewish community.

With American Jews deeply divided on the peace process, Netanyahu had turned to one of the few groups that he knew would give him an enthusiastic welcome.

Indeed, his visit was surrounded by an unusual display of full-page newspaper advertisements, as Jewish groups from across the political spectrum sought to make their voices heard. While some urged Clinton to continue to press both parties for peace, others cautioned the president against pressuring Israel.

For their part, speakers at the National Unity Coalition for Israel railed against the transfer of land for peace as a "hoax" and the crowd burst into a chant of "not one inch" after Netanyahu's speech. The White House saw the rally as an effort by Netanyahu to surround himself with politically important constituencies to insulate himself against public pressure from the president.

The meetings, which included a session with Moral Majority leader Jerry Falwell, an arch Clinton opponent, did not go unnoticed by Clinton.

"It would be sufficient to say that the prime minister is probably aware of concerns that the president might have on some aspects of that," Mike McCurry, the White House spokesman, said when asked about the sessions.

But at the end of the day, it was Clinton who insulated himself against charges that he was pressuring Netanyahu.

Prior to Netanyahu's arrival, Clinton met in the Oval Office with the chairman and executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. There's a "growing concern in the American Jewish community," Conference of Presidents Chairman Melvin Salberg said, "that there has been a shifting in attitude towards the peace process."

"Clinton assured us," Salberg said, that his support for Israel is unshakable and that the special relationship is as strong as ever.

Then, Clinton used a photo opportunity with Israeli journalists to signal his strong support for Israel. "I want to reaffirm to the people of Israel the strong support of the United States for Israel and the strong support of the United States for the security of Israel," Clinton said.

In addition, Clinton backed Netanyahu, saying that "Israel has to make its own decisions about its own security." □



## Daily News Bulletin

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## JEWISH WORLD

### Zevulun Hammer, NRP head, dies of cancer at the age of 61

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Zevulun Hammer, described as an embodiment of the religious Zionist movement, died Tuesday morning of cancer.

He was 61.

Hammer, the leader of the National Religious Party and Israel's deputy prime minister and education minister, was remembered across Israel's political spectrum as a dedicated public servant.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in Washington for talks with President Bill Clinton, said in a statement that Hammer's life was shaped by his love for Israel and Jewish values, which he worked to instill in younger generations.

President Ezer Weizman recalled Hammer as someone who in his life and work understood the connection between Jewish tradition and the new Israel. He described Hammer as someone who used his religious Zionist heritage to serve the state with faith and passion.

A founder of the Gush Emunim settler movement, Hammer later welcomed indications of Palestinian willingness for coexistence.

Hammer was born in Haifa.

As a child, he was a member of the Hapoel Mizrachi and Bnai Akiva religious youth movements.

During his army service, he was a member of the Nahal brigades.

After his army service, he earned a bachelor's degree in Judaism and the Bible from Bar-Ilan University.

He served in Israel's armored corps during the Six-Day War.

Following the war, Hammer was a founder of Gush Emunim and a leader in the NRP's Young Guard.

Hammer was a key figure in turning the NRP from a party primarily concerned with religious matters to one active in foreign affairs, security and settlement issues.

Hammer was elected to the Knesset on the NRP list in 1969. He received his first government portfolio six years later, as minister of welfare in Yitzhak Rabin's first government.

In 1977, following the Labor Party's defeat in general elections, Hammer shifted the NRP to the right, forming an alliance with the Likud government of Menachem Begin. As education minister in that government, Hammer introduced free, compulsory secondary school education.

In 1986, Hammer replaced Yosef Burg as religious affairs minister in the government of Yitzhak Shamir.

The next year, he became leader of the NRP.

Following the assassination of Rabin in 1995, Hammer issued a call for national soul-searching.

As condolence calls came in, allies and rivals alike lauded Hammer for his sincerity and integrity.

Labor Party leader Ehud Barak said during a special Knesset memorial session that although he and Hammer had their ideological differences, he greatly respected him.

Labor Party caucus leader Eli Goldschmidt described Hammer as a model legislator.

"He was considered by everyone to be one of the best parliamentarians and [one of] the most sincere politicians," he told Israel Radio.

Though Hammer's death, which came at the end of a long illness, was no surprise, members of his own party were still shocked by the loss.

"He tried to convince all that compromise is the best way to work," said NRP Knesset member Avner Shaki. "He was a leader and a friend at the same time."

In the Knesset courtyard, thousands of Israelis filed by Hammer's body as it lay in state before the funeral procession left for the Mount of Olives, where the minister was buried.

Hammer was married and a father of four. □

#### Ex-diplomat warns of terror

A former Iranian diplomat warned of a new attack on Jewish targets in Buenos Aires, according to an Argentine television station. Two previous attacks there in 1992 and 1994 killed 115 people.

The diplomat said in documents uncovered by the station that the attack would possibly be the result of Iranian planning.

#### Jews complain to museum

A group of politically conservative Jews sent a letter to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum complaining that a film about Christian anti-Semitism shown at the museum propagates "libels of Christianity" and ignores Islamic anti-Semitism.

The group includes people involved in the campaign to draft legislation designed to fight worldwide persecution against Christians.

#### Chasidim plan synagogue

Construction of a synagogue billed by its founders as the world's largest began in the Ukrainian town of Uman.

The synagogue for 10,000 worshipers — an undertaking of the international Bratslaver Chasidic movement — would serve the needs of Chasidic pilgrims who come each Rosh Hashanah to visit the grave of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav.

Nachman, who was born in 1772, became famous for his teachings and mystical interpretations of Jewish texts.

#### Monument unveiled in Kiev

A monument to one of the most famous Yiddish writers was unveiled in Kiev.

The 10-foot monument to Sholem Aleichem was erected in the downtown section of the city — next to the house in which the writer lived during the turn of the century.

Renovations have begun on the house, which is slated to become a Sholem Aleichem museum.

A dedication ceremony for the monument was attended by Jewish and Ukrainian dignitaries, including the city's mayor.

Sholem Aleichem spent much of his life in the Ukrainian capital, which he called by the fictitious name of "Yehupetz" in his writings.

#### Four sentenced for Nazi salute

A Swedish court sentenced four Americans to jail for giving the Nazi salute during a rock concert.

Two members of the U.S. rock band Max Resist and two of their fans were found guilty of violating Sweden's hate law and sentenced to one month in prison. Counting time served, they are expected to be released in two weeks.

## Museum invitation to Arafat does little to quell the debate

By Matthew Dorf and Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The question of whether the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum should invite Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat as an official guest posed a difficult dilemma.

Should Arafat be afforded an opportunity, as senior U.S. peace negotiators had sought, to walk the halls that stand as a memorial to Jewish victims of genocide in order to better understand the history and fears of his adversary?

Should a Jewish memorial extend special courtesies to a man who for years led a terrorist campaign against Israel and risk seeing the visit used as a public relations stunt that would serve to cheapen the Holocaust?

Would a snub prove detrimental to the peace process?

At the end of the day, after completing a 360-degree turnabout, museum officials decided this week to extend an invitation to Arafat for an official VIP visit. He indicated that he would accept the offer, raising expectations for a Friday visit that would mark the first time a major Arab leader has visited the national memorial.

The controversy began when the U.S. Middle East peace process team approached Arafat earlier this month and suggested that he visit the museum. Dennis Ross, the State Department's special Middle East coordinator, and his deputy, Aaron Miller, both sit on the museum's council.

But after Arafat accepted the idea, Miles Lerman, a death camp survivor who chairs the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, withdrew the invitation for Arafat to tour the museum as an official guest. Instead, the museum informed him that he would have to visit as an individual, without the security measures and protocol afforded world leaders — a decision Arafat angrily rejected.

But after being faced with what sources described as a virtual rebellion on the museum's governing board and opposition from administration officials, the museum reversed itself in a public and apologetic fashion.

"When I make a mistake, I'm big enough to admit I made a mistake," Lerman, who was not immediately available for comment, told *The Washington Post*. "The buck stops at my desk. I am the chairman.

"Ideas were given to me that by extending a full-status visit to Arafat we will divide the constituency of the museum" and that half of the Jewish community "will be blessing me and half will be cursing me," he said.

"The more I think about it the more I think the visit of Arafat to this museum will serve a good purpose for peace."

Museum officials emphasized that Arafat would not be received as a "head of state" — a formality that generally involves laying a wreath in the Hall of Remembrance — but as a VIP, as U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and others suggested.

But even after the issue was apparently resolved, the debate continued, mixing two issues — the Holocaust and politics — whose intermingling was once taboo.

And some of the reaction crossed the usual partisan lines. Some of Arafat's harshest critics remained steadfastly opposed, saying that a visit to the museum was wrong, while others urged that it happen.

Echoing the view of many in the Jewish community, Hyman Bookbinder, a longtime Jewish activist and a founding member of the museum's council, said, "A serious mistake has now been undone." In a letter to Lerman this week, he said, "Whatever arguments can be made about not opening wide the welcome gates to an Arafat, they are overwhelmed by the central argument that the museum exists because of its potential — demonstrated over and over again — to move even the most skeptical."

But some Jewish officials remained troubled by the motivations underlying the idea of an Arafat visit to the memorial.

"For me, it's an empty gesture," Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League and a Holocaust survivor, said, adding that it was not Arafat's idea to visit the memorial.

"It was recommended to him as part of image building, and I think that's an abuse of the Holocaust," said Foxman, who also sits on the museum's council.

Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean and founder of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, said he supported the idea of Arafat visiting the Holocaust memorial, but took issue with the assumption apparently made by the Clinton administration officials who proposed the idea.

"I don't think it should be used as an occasion to prove a point to otherwise skeptical American Jews about Arafat," Hier said Tuesday. Nevertheless, Hier said, Arafat and his deputies need an education about the Holocaust — particularly his top deputy, Abu Mazen, who wrote a book in the 1980s denying the Holocaust.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, speaking to reporters at the White House following his meeting with President Clinton on Tuesday, offered no opinion about the museum's decision, but suggested that a visit could prove beneficial to Palestinian Holocaust deniers.

"I would hope that the first thing that would happen is that there would be an immediate change in the unfortunate habit of the controlled Palestinian press to both deny the Holocaust and denigrate it by casting aspersions on Israel as a Nazi state," Netanyahu said.

Others remained less concerned about the Holocaust education of Arafat than about the potential benefits to the peace process.

Meanwhile, Arafat's loudest critics stood firm.

Morton Klein, president of the Zionist Organization of America and a child of Holocaust survivors who was born in a displaced persons camp, said the museum's decision "is a violation against the memory of Holocaust victims."

"Should a person who has murdered hundreds of Jews including Jewish children and one who continues to praise suicide bombers who have murdered Jews" be "an honored guest in a museum devoted to the memory of Jews who were murdered due to hatred of Jews?"

But such views seem to have lost this round. When the flap over the invitation became public, two Israeli Holocaust memorials immediately said they would welcome a visit by Arafat.

Avner Shalev, director of Yad Vashem, the Holocaust museum in Jerusalem, said that while he would like to see Arafat visit, official visits from dignitaries were determined by the Foreign Ministry. However, Shalev said he believed that the U.S. museum had made a mistake by becoming embroiled in the question of whether to host Arafat.

"To the best of its abilities," he said, "an organization which is involved in the documentation of and memorializing the Holocaust should try not to get involved in political matters." □