



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 76, No. 47

Thursday, March 12, 1998

81st Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Palestinians protest in West Bank

Palestinians hurled firebombs and stones at Israeli soldiers in three West Bank towns, prompting the soldiers to respond with rubber bullets that wounded at least 20 people.

The Palestinians were protesting the deaths of three Arabs who were killed a day earlier, when Israeli troops opened fire on a van at a roadblock near Hebron.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu expressed his sorrow about the roadblock incident during a call to Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat, who had publicly referred to it as a "big crime."

Court rules against Iran

A U.S. court issued a nearly \$250 million judgment against Iran for its involvement in a 1995 terrorist attack launched by Islamic Jihad in the Gaza Strip.

U.S. District Court Judge Royce Lamberth awarded the family of Alisa Flatow, an American student killed in the attack, \$225 million in punitive damages and \$22.5 million in compensatory damages. The judgment marks the first time a U.S. court has ruled on an American citizen's ability to recover damages from foreign nations that support or finance terrorist activities. [Page 3]

Indyk: No ultimatum planned

The U.S. assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs rejected reports that the United States is about to present a take-it-or-leave-it proposal to advance the deadlocked Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

But, in testimony before a Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee, Martin Indyk said, "There's only so far we can go before saying, 'There's nothing more we can do'" and leave the hard choices to the two sides to work out for themselves.

U.S. survivors may soon get funds

U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) said she was assured by Swiss officials that needy American Holocaust survivors could start receiving payments as early as this spring from the Holocaust Memorial Fund. The \$190 million fund, which was established last year by Switzerland's three largest banks, has already made payments to survivors in Latvia and Hungary.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Turkey once again seeks Jewish help in Washington

By Gil Sedan

ANKARA, Turkey (JTA) — What a difference two years make.

In the summer of 1996, Israel — and Jews around the world — were worried about Turkey.

The first Islamic-led government in modern Turkey's history had just taken power — and the new prime minister, Necmettin Erbakan, wanted to strengthen Turkey's ties with the fundamentalist Islamic world and was questioning relations with the West.

Now, as relations between Turkey and Israel continue to warm — as evidenced by the joint military exercises the two countries held with the United States in November and an agreement for Israel to upgrade Turkish military aircraft — it is Arab and Muslim countries that are worried.

More evidence of this turnaround was provided in Ankara last week, when a 50-member delegation representing the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations visited the former center of the Ottoman Empire.

Turkish outreach to American Jewish organizations is not new. Officials here have long sought U.S. Jewish help in making their case in Washington. Jewish groups, in turn, often visit Turkey and meet with visiting Turkish officials in the United States.

In this most recent encounter, top Turkish generals, led by the deputy chief of staff, Cevic Bir, laid out the red carpet. Premier Mesut Yilmaz took time out to host the guests for lunch, Deputy Premier Bulent Ecevit delivered a lecture and the U.S. ambassador to Turkey, Mark Parris, gave a reception in their honor.

"This group of Americans came to Turkey to show our support and to express our content with the continued cooperation between the three countries," Melvin Salberg, chairman of the Conference of Presidents, told a group of Turkish army generals as the delegation visited army headquarters in the Turkish capital.

Members of the Conference of Presidents made the four-day trip on their way home after their annual mission to Israel.

Each side, of course, had its own agenda. The American Jews wanted to encourage the Turkish-Israeli alliance. The Turks, for their part, wanted to use the good services of the Jewish leaders to pave the road straight to the heart of Washington.

"Turkey and the USA have been allies for many years," Premier Yilmaz told the delegation.

"We wish to further develop these relations," he said, but added, "Our relations have had their sour points, mainly due to anti-Turkish lobbies."

And then he came to the point, using subtle language: "We think your assistance to work against these lobbies is important."

Yilmaz had actually asked the Jewish leaders to intervene on Turkey's behalf in Washington against the strong pro-Greek lobby. Relations between Turkey and Greece, always tense, have deteriorated during the past year over the ever-present issue of Cyprus, the island in the Mediterranean that is one of the centers of dispute between the two countries — as well as over Turkey's failure to be admitted to the European Union.

Turkey, a member of NATO, has long resented its exclusion from the E.U.

Yilmaz's plea put the American Jews in an embarrassing situation. On one hand, they want to serve as ambassadors of goodwill for Turkey in Washington. On the other hand, they do not want to take sides in the longtime conflict between Turkey and Greece. "I can understand the feelings of the prime minister about the strength of the

MIDEAST FOCUS

Shin Bet warns about Hamas

The head of Israel's domestic security service warned that Hamas terrorists were planning to carry out attacks on a massive scale.

Ami Ayalon said Hamas operatives were changing their tactics and were planning to launch attacks in Israel using cars and trucks laden with hundreds of pounds of explosives.

Court petitioned on naval policy

Two female Knesset members petitioned Israel's High Court of Justice to compel the navy to open its seamen's course to women. The two argued in their petition against a standing policy that bars women from being stationed on boats because of possible sexual tensions.

IMF calls on Israel to cut budget

The International Monetary Fund issued a statement calling on Israel to make "vigorous efforts" to curb inflation and cut government deficits. Citing rising unemployment in Israel, the statement said prosperity for the Jewish state hinged on the success of the Middle East peace process.

Extremists laud massacre

Right-wing Jewish extremists distributed a pamphlet Wednesday justifying the killing of 29 Muslim worshippers at Hebron's Tomb of the Patriarchs four years ago.

The pamphlet was titled "Baruch, the Redeemer and Savior," a reference to Dr. Baruch Goldstein, the Kiryat Arba settler who carried out the massacre before being beaten to death by survivors.

Meretz Knesset member Ran Cohen — who has proposed legislation to move a shrine at Goldstein's grave from Kiryat Arba, saying it has become a pilgrimage site for extreme right-wingers — called on the police commissioner and attorney general to look into the legality of the pamphlet.



Daily News Bulletin

Caryn Rosen Adelman, *President*
 Mark J. Joffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*
 Lisa Hostein, *Editor*
 Kenneth Bandler, *Managing Editor*
 Lenore A. Silverstein, *Business Manager*

JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.
 © JTA Reproduction only by previous arrangement.

Greek lobby," Salberg said in an interview, "but obviously we cannot take sides." The Conference of Presidents' visit to Turkey had been planned way in advance, but its timing could not have been more appropriate.

The Jewish leaders laid a wreath at the tomb of Kemal Ataturk, the founder of Turkey's modern, secular state, just weeks after Turkey banned the Islamic Rafah Party and as Yilmaz's ruling Motherland Party is struggling to preserve its shaky minority coalition.

The Jewish delegation had the opportunity to see the tensions in contemporary Turkey. During the visit, Turkish television carried reports on violent clashes between workers and police; only a few yards from their hotels, and hundreds marched in a protest against the government on Sunday, International Women's Day; and veiled women and pious-looking bearded men were evident on the street.

It is in this context that the Turkish leadership — and the army in particular — views the warming relations with Israel.

As Bir, the deputy chief of staff, put it: "Turkey and Israel are the only democracies in the region. We face the threat of radical Islam to dominate the area. In this respect, the interests of Turkey and Israel meet."

The executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents, Malcolm Hoenlein, agrees. "We have to encourage Turkey because it can serve as a model for the Islamic states in the Caucasus and Central Asia, so that they can see that the West will stay with them if they go the right way," Hoenlein said. □

Extremists held in scheme to bomb ADL headquarters

By Peter Ephross

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Anti-Defamation League has long received threats from anti-Semitic extremists.

What's changed in recent years, said the group's national director, is the increased level of seriousness with which U.S. law-enforcement officials take these claims.

Since the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and the 1995 attack on the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, "there's a greater awareness" on the part of these officials that American soil is vulnerable to terrorist attacks, said Abraham Foxman. He made these comments after three men were arrested Feb. 23 for plotting to bomb the ADL headquarters in New York, the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Ala., and the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles.

The three suspects — an ex-Ku Klux Klan member, a retired Illinois prison guard and a construction worker — also are accused of forming a "hit list" that included a federal judge, planning to rob banks to finance their schemes and contaminating a water supply with cyanide to create a diversion. The three men are charged with one count of conspiracy to possess and make machine guns and destructive devices. They are being held without bond and could face up to five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. Their trial has been set for April 27.

A fourth man was also named in the indictment, but was not charged.

The three men are reportedly members of a group known as the New Order, which models itself after a now-defunct neo-Nazi group which, according to the ADL, used as one of its blueprints the novel "The Turner Diaries," which was reportedly a basis for the operations of convicted Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh.

The plot did not come as a surprise to Foxman. "We're in the business of exposing and challenging bigots, racists, anti-Semites and extremists," he said. "It's par for the course."

In April 1996, a federal jury convicted three men on charges of plotting to blow up the ADL office in Houston, among other targets. Awareness of terrorism "is part of the American landscape. And we've said it has to become part of the Jewish landscape," Foxman said.

It's advice being followed by one of the organizations apparently targeted in this latest plot: The Wiesenthal Center has increased its security in recent weeks. □

(JTA correspondent Tom Tugend in Los Angeles contributed to this report.)

JEWISH WORLD

Senate to consider opening files

The U.S. Senate will soon be taking up legislation that would open to the public all American records on Nazi war criminals and stolen assets of Holocaust victims.

The Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act, approved unanimously last week by the Senate Judiciary Committee, would amend the Freedom of Information Act to ease the release of Nazi-era records, while creating a special interagency group to identify, declassify and make available to the public all Nazi war records held by the government.

"The perpetrators of the Holocaust committed unthinkable crimes against humanity," said Sen. Mike DeWine (R-Ohio), who is sponsoring the bill along with Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.). "It is time to ensure all doors are fully open on this subject."

Sponsors of the bill believe U.S. openness would set an example for Switzerland and other countries to follow as they trace the movement of Nazi gold and assets stolen from Holocaust victims.

A similar bill authored by Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-N.Y.), which would also seek to illuminate the U.S. government's role in employing Nazi war criminals after World War II, is pending in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Lawyer: no life for Papon

A lawyer for the plaintiffs in the war crimes trial of Maurice Papon angered relatives of Holocaust victims when he said Papon should not be given a life sentence.

Arno Klarsfeld said Papon had acted out of sheer ambition when he worked as a high-ranking official for France's Vichy regime, but that he had no desire to see Jews die. Papon is accused of ordering the arrest for deportation of 1,560 Jews during World War II.

Le Pen warns of rebellion

French far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen said in interview that his followers might rebel against the government if a court followed a prosecutor's recommendation to bar him from public office on charges of assaulting a rival politician. Le Pen, who has made anti-Semitic statements and is staunchly anti-immigrant, did not elaborate on the threat. The court is expected to make its ruling next month.

Former Swiss president resigns

A former Swiss president who provoked a furor last year when he accused Jews of "blackmail" against his country stepped down from the Parliament, citing ill health. In an interview published in January 1996, Jean-Pascal Delamuraz accused Jewish organizations of using strong-arm tactics to get Swiss compensation for Holocaust survivors.

U.S. court orders Iran to pay \$247.5 million to N.J. family

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — As he stood in a federal courtroom here listening to a judge issue a landmark ruling, Stephen Flatow's thoughts turned to his daughter's smiling face.

"Alisa had this very big smile on her face all the time, and she's smiling today," Flatow said Wednesday, moments after U.S. District Court Judge Royce Lamberth ordered Iran to pay \$247.5 million in damages for its role in the 1995 terrorist bombing of an Israeli bus that claimed his daughter's life.

Believed to be the first time U.S. citizens were awarded punitive damages against a foreign nation accused of sponsoring terrorism, the decision is expected to pave the way for similar action by other families of American citizens killed in terrorist attacks abroad. Alisa Flatow, a Brandeis University student from West Orange, N.J., was attending a Jewish seminary in Israel when she and seven Israeli soldiers were killed by a suicide bomber who drove a van into their bus in the Gaza Strip in April 1995.

Flatow was headed for a resort in Gaza when the bus was attacked. Left with shrapnel in her brain, she lapsed into a coma from which she never awoke.

At a hearing earlier this month, the Flatow family argued that the Islamic Jihad — the fundamentalist faction that claimed responsibility for the attack — was financed by the Iranian government, and therefore Tehran bore responsibility for her death.

Lamberth agreed, saying he concluded from expert testimony that Iran had appropriated about \$75 million in 1995 to terrorist activities in support of the Palestinians. He said Iran was "brazen" enough to carry a line item in its budget pertaining to sponsorship of terrorist activities.

"This is a tragic case, but you've made something of it," Lamberth told the Flatow family upon awarding them \$225 million in punitive damages and \$22.5 million in compensatory damages. "This court seeks to deter further terrorist acts against Americans who may be in Israel or elsewhere," the judge said.

No Iranian representatives were present at the hearing. Iranian officials have dismissed claims that Iran is linked to terrorist groups.

In the courtroom, the decision brought gasps and a visible sense of relief to the Flatow family — Alisa's father, mother, a brother and two of her three sisters — and others, including Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.) and Rep. Jim Saxton (R-N.J.).

Lautenberg said the decision ensures that "terrorist acts against American citizens will cause some pain back in the country that sponsors that kind of terrorism."

"No nation can pick on American citizens without our country responding in some lawful but direct way," Lautenberg said, a view that was echoed by many Jewish groups that hailed the ruling. The case was brought under an anti-terrorism measure, sponsored by Lautenberg and Saxton and signed into law in 1996, that allows U.S. citizens to file suit in U.S. courts against foreign governments for damages from terrorism.

This was the first such case brought under the anti-terrorism law.

Steven Perles, a lawyer representing the Flatow family, said the money could come either from Iranian assets in the United States frozen following the Iranian revolution in 1979 or from Iranian assets in other nations that recognize the jurisdiction of U.S. courts. Flatow said the amount of the award was important because it was "significant enough that the Iranians will pay attention to it."

It is unclear whether he will be successful in actually collecting the money.

Flatow, an Orthodox Jew who decided to donate his daughter's organs to needy Israelis, said he had never sought revenge, only justice.

In an interview following the ruling, he recalled meeting in May 1996 with President Clinton, who he said marveled at his bravery. "Would you do anything for your daughter?" he remembers asking Clinton.

"Absolutely," Clinton said.

"Well, just because my daughter is not standing here with me doesn't mean we stop," Flatow said. "We still have a responsibility to our kids, even when they're not here physically." □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**Israel wants to deport man who helped save Ethiopians**

By Avi Machlis

JERUSALEM (JTA) — In the early 1980s, Dejen Gebrai, an Ethiopian Christian, helped thousands of Ethiopian Jews fly to Israel as part of Operation Moses.

But when Gebrai arrived in Israel in 1992, he did not receive a hero's welcome. Instead, six years later, he faces deportation.

Officials at the Israeli Interior Ministry say he entered Israel on false pretenses and misled authorities by masquerading as a Jew.

"It makes no sense," says Gebrai, 34, telling his story with a calmness that belies the public storm the incident has sparked.

"I've served in the army and I'm a full-fledged Israeli," he says.

Gebrai is awaiting the outcome of an appeal submitted to the Justice and Interior ministries that will determine his fate.

Meanwhile, his lawyer, Nadav Haber, is preparing to petition the High Court of Justice next week for a second time if the appeal to the ministries is delayed or rejected.

During the 1980s, Gebrai and his brother Aslaka Asafa escorted, guided and protected thousands of Ethiopian Jews along the treacherous, monthlong 180-mile journey by foot from their villages to the Sudanese border — from where they were airlifted to Israel.

The story of their efforts is backed up by eight affidavits signed by Ethiopian Jews they helped rescue, and three more signed by Israelis who know Gebrai personally.

In one statement, Sandaka Terko, an elderly Ethiopian Jew, describes the warm relationship between the entire Jewish community from the Ethiopian village of Terre and Gebrai's family — a relationship that predated Operation Moses, when 7,500 Ethiopian Jews were brought to Israel in 1984-1985.

In 1991's Operation Solomon, an additional 14,400 Ethiopian Jews were airlifted to Israel during a 24-hour period.

Moshe Elbal, who immigrated from Ethiopia in 1985, described how Gebrai selflessly risked his life for Ethiopian Jews.

"Helping Jews was very dangerous," says Elbal. "Aslaka and Dejen never asked for compensation as a condition for helping the Jews."

But the brothers paid a heavy personal price. During one trek, their cousin was killed in a clash with bandits.

Even so, Gebrai does not regret the risks he took.

"We did it out of love," he says. "It did not matter if they were Jews or Christians. Our parents told us, 'You must help these people.'"

And the families returned that love. Although he received no official payment for his services, some paid symbolic amounts from the little they had. Years later, after he helped one young woman make the trip from the province of Gondar to the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa for the Operation Solomon airlift, an indebted family paid him in kind — they listed him as a family member with the Jewish Agency for Israel.

This paved the way for Gebrai's entry into Israel, but would later prove to be his undoing.

Gebrai arrived in Israel in 1992 and joined the army — a move

he said strengthened the bond he feels with Jews.

"When I was drafted, I really felt like I wanted to contribute," he says. "I felt like a Jew and an Israeli."

After his service, Gebrai went to trade school and began to work as an electrician. He met an Ethiopian Jewish woman, married her by proxy in a civil ceremony and prepared to convert to Judaism.

But on Jan. 15, he was summoned by the Interior Ministry to sign a statement saying he was not a member of the Jewish family that sponsored his entry into Israel.

Minutes after signing, Gebrai was arrested and thrown into prison for 20 days.

Ironically, the deportation proceedings were initiated by an Ethiopian Jewish clerk in the Interior Ministry whom Gebrai helped escape from Ethiopia.

Gebrai is convinced that the campaign for his deportation was started by another family with whom he had a personal dispute.

With the help of his lawyer, Gebrai has been fighting the decree.

But two major Ethiopian Jewish organizations, along with Knesset member Adisu Massala, who immigrated from Ethiopia, have shied away from the struggle.

"My job is to help the absorption of Ethiopian Jewish immigrants," said the Labor Party lawmaker, explaining why he has not spoken out on behalf of Gebrai.

Massala said Gebrai's case is complicated because the Interior Ministry says he lied to enter Israel.

Some Ethiopian Jewish activists in Israel have said that they did not want to get involved in a struggle for a non-Jew, fearing it would unleash a flood of requests for citizenship by other gentiles.

But Massala said in an interview that he is helping Gebrai quietly.

The lawmaker said Gebrai should get help "on humanitarian grounds" because he served in the Israeli army.

While the Ethiopian organizations have been quiet, the outpouring of public sympathy for his cause has left Gebrai optimistic.

"People are rallying to help me, and everybody is showing their love. I like to be here, I love the people and I want to convert," he says.

"Nothing can make me move from Israel." □

Israeli company holds offering

NEW YORK (JTA) — Israel's Silicon Valley is making waves on Wall Street.

An Israeli software company plans to launch in the coming weeks what would be the largest initial public offering for an Israeli firm in the United States, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

Amdocs, which develops telecommunications software, including programs used in telephone billing systems, plans to sell 10 percent of its shares for an estimated \$300 million to \$400 million.

More than 100 Israeli companies are traded on the U.S. stock market.

Most of these are high-tech firms.

Israel has more representatives on Wall Street than any other foreign country except for Canada. □