



# Daily News Bulletin

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81<sup>st</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Israel worried about Iranian test

Israel's defense minister said he was "very worried" by a report that Iran had successfully tested a medium-range missile capable of striking Israel, Saudi Arabia and most of Turkey.

Yitzhak Mordechai called for additional pressure on Russia to block the transfer of missile technology to Iran.

The successful test, capable of altering the balance of power in the Middle East, was detected by a U.S. spy satellite, according to a New York Times report. The United States and Israel consulted on the issue, but U.S. officials refused to give details of the conversation.

### Albright hosts Palestinians

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright hosted a group of Palestinian legislators in an informal meeting at the State Department.

The group met with U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.), who had invited them and other lawmakers to come to Washington during his recent trip to the Middle East.

Ahmed Karia, the head of the Palestinian legislative council, said he hoped the talks would lead to closer ties with Congress.

### Netanyahu and Arafat to meet?

Israel is trying to arrange a meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat, according to officials from both sides.

The head of Netanyahu's Knesset coalition, Meir Sheerit, raised the idea of a summit during a meeting Thursday with Arafat, the officials said.

The meeting would be an attempt to jump-start the peace negotiations, which have been stalled for 18 months.

### Split decision in subway case

A U.S. federal jury convicted a Palestinian immigrant of plotting to bomb New York City's subway system last year.

Gazi Ibrahim Abu Maizar could face life imprisonment as a result of the jury's decision.

A Palestinian co-defendant, Lafi Khalil, was acquitted of that charge, but was convicted of carrying an illegal green card.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Israel opposes international court, fearing it would target settlements

By Mitchell Danow

NEW YORK (JTA) — For 50 years, Jewish jurists in Israel and abroad were among the prime supporters of an international court that could prosecute war crimes whenever and wherever they were committed.

But now Israel is among a handful of nations opposing a resolution, adopted over the weekend at a U.N.-sponsored conference in Rome, calling for the creation of what is being called the International Criminal Court.

The Jewish state's opposition is based on a single clause in the resolution under which Israeli settlement activity could be interpreted as a war crime.

Israel, which stands alongside the United States in opposing the resolution, is concerned that the clause would be used to justify the prosecution of any Israeli involved in settlement activities, Alan Baker, legal adviser to the Israeli Foreign Ministry, said in an interview. Outside of Israel, Jewish observers have a mixed view of the court, with some expressing solidarity for Israel's position and others pointing to the legacy of the Holocaust as a reason Jews should support it.

Richard Goldstone, the former chief prosecutor of the international war crimes tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, said Israel's opposition to the court is particularly disappointing in light of the Jewish experience during the Holocaust.

He said that because the very concepts of genocide and crimes against humanity have their roots in the Holocaust, the issue "should resonate in every Jewish heart, if not every Jewish vein."

The concept of a permanent war crimes tribunal was born half a century ago, when the first such court was convened in the German city of Nuremberg to try Nazi war criminals.

The idea languished during the Cold War, but was revived a few years ago, when the ad-hoc tribunals that Goldstone headed were set up to prosecute war crimes committed during the civil war in the former Yugoslavia and the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

Some 160 nations took part in the Rome conference, which saw weeks of haggling and compromises over the document's wording.

Israel had long sought the court's creation. But it began encountering difficulties two years ago, when Egypt and Syria introduced the issue of Israeli settlement activity into a draft of the resolution, Baker said.

"We fought very hard against the Arab initiative. We tried to convince others to steer away from politics, but we were the victims of political deals among the countries concerned," said Baker. "It is very frustrating that now the court may be used against us."

The clause in the resolution that disturbs Israel refers to the "transfer, directly or indirectly, by an occupying power of parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies, or the deportation or transfer of all or part of the population of the occupied territory within or outside this territory."

Reflecting on the bind Israel was put in by the Arab-sponsored clause, Israel's attorney general, Elyakim Rubinstein, wrote in the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot that Israel was "forced" to vote against the resolution and "did so with real regret."

"Our only concern was to ensure as much as possible that this noble idea does not turn into yet another international political forum," wrote Rubinstein, who headed the

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Observers sanguine on Jordan

Political analysts in Israel agree that if Jordan's King Hussein succumbs to cancer he would be succeeded by his brother, Crown Prince Hassan, in a smooth transition of power. The estimates came after Hussein disclosed earlier this week that he is being treated for suspected lymphatic cancer.

### Palestinian mission upgraded

The Palestinian diplomatic mission in Britain was upgraded to "Palestinian General Delegation" in a move virtually making the mission's status that of an embassy.

A British Foreign Ministry official was quoted as calling the change — which would bring British-Palestinian diplomacy in line with the European Union's approach — "not really such a big deal." The Israeli Foreign Ministry reportedly expressed concern about the upgrade and called on its London embassy to look into the matter.

### Digs alter view of City of David

Recent archaeological digs provide evidence that Jerusalem was a large, fortified city in 1800 B.C.E. — 800 years before King David conquered the city from the Jebusites.

The new findings contradict the theory that prior to David's time, Jerusalem was a poor and small village.

### New cable stations approved

Israeli television viewers are expected to have six new cable television stations within a year as the result of a decision reached in the Knesset.

Soon to be available will be two all-news channels, one Arabic-language station, one broadcasting Middle Eastern music, one religious station and one for new immigrants. Communications Minister Limor Livnat said the move reflected the needs of a "pluralistic and democratic society."



## Daily News Bulletin

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Israeli delegation to the Rome conference. The clause has provoked mixed reactions among Jewish observers.

Harris Schoenberg, the director of U.N. affairs for B'nai B'rith, has long supported the court's creation. He noted that the resolution — which must still be ratified by 60 nations before it goes into effect, a process that could take up to five years — would create a court with jurisdiction over four broad areas, each with its own specific definition: genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and aggression.

He hailed one aspect of the resolution, which calls for redress — in the form of rehabilitation, restitution and reparations — for the victims of such crimes.

Schoenberg, the only representative of the organized American Jewish community to participate in the sessions leading up to the weekend decision in Rome, interpreted the clause that provoked Israeli concerns as referring to ethnic cleansing.

But just the same, he said he regretted the "potential for abuse" of the clause, adding that only a "misreading" of it could form the basis for action against Israel.

Ambassador Morris Abram, the chairman of U.N. Watch, a Geneva-based non-governmental agency, had a more grim assessment, saying the clause would be used "inevitably as a hammer against Israel and Israel alone."

Abram, in a telephone interview, made clear that he had long favored the creation of an international tribunal — a commitment dating back to when he was a young lawyer serving on the staff of the chief prosecutor at the Nuremberg Trials.

Just the same, he said, he was "very distressed by what has come out of this process."

Given Israel's treatment at the hands of the international community over the decades, he said, the clause regarding population transfers "will make it possible for the [Israeli] prime minister and others to be hauled before an international court for reasons that are political."

"No one would ever think of other occupations, such as those in Tibet or Sri Lanka," he said.

He predicted that the court's activities would also be directed against the United States.

But Goldstone disagreed. He said he does not believe any country, including Israel, could have a "valid objection" to the way the new court defines war crimes because the definition is based upon standards "that have been accepted by the international community."

At the same time, Goldstone, a South African Jew who sits on that country's constitutional court, said he was "sympathetic with an Israeli fear that any international institution is going to treat Israel partially, because Israel on many occasions has been treated unjustly by the international community."

As one example, he cited Israel's exclusion from participation in a United Nations regional group, a pariah status that, among other things, prohibits the country from holding a rotating spot on the U.N. Security Council.

Meanwhile, the United States, citing a range of concerns, said that if changes are not made to the treaty, it would "actively oppose" ratification and implementation.

U.S. State Department spokesman James Rubin said the United States objects mainly to what it calls inconsistencies in the treaty that would allow countries that sign the document to avoid prosecution of their nationals for war crimes for the first seven years of the court's existence, while nations that do not sign could face prosecution.

Rubin also said the court "could inhibit the ability of the United States to meet alliance obligations and participate in multinational peacekeeping operations."

Echoing a concern expressed by Israel, Rubin said, "In short, it could let U.S. forces be subject to politically motivated or ill-considered or unjustified prosecutions."

The Arab League, for its part, praised the decision to set up the court.

The league's secretary-general, Esmat Abdel Meguid, said he was pleased that the resolution creating the court "regards Israeli settlements in occupied lands as a war crime."

"We hope the court plays its desired role as an efficient and independent international jurisdiction body," he said. □

(JTA correspondents Daniel Kurtzman in Washington and Gil Sedan in Jerusalem contributed to this report.)

## JEWISH WORLD

### European firms face sanctions for dormant insurance policies

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — A California state senator has warned that European insurance firms are pressing lawmakers to water down legislation intended to force the companies to pay out policies from the Holocaust era.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. Tom Hayden, would require the California insurance department to suspend the business license of the companies involved until the claims of Holocaust survivors, or descendants of Holocaust victims, are met. It has already passed the Senate and is pending in the state Assembly.

California is one of several states across the country that have joined in a national effort to use every legal means available to force insurance companies to open their records to locate dormant policies taken out by Holocaust victims.

Deborah Senn, the insurance commissioner for Washington state who is spearheading the national campaign, last week suggested a new way to gather information about possible policyholders and their heirs.

At an international gathering of Jewish genealogists in Los Angeles, Senn urged families of Holocaust victims to use a global computer database to help track down relatives who may have left unclaimed insurance policies dating back to the Holocaust era.

The value of such policies could total billions of dollars, said Senn, who was attending the convention of the Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies to learn more about tracing her own family's roots.

The association's president, Sallyann Amdur Sack, announced that the group is working with the Tel Aviv-based Museum of the Diaspora and an Internet site called JewishGen to compile a family tree of the Jewish people that could be used to discover living relatives of Holocaust victims who held insurance policies.

The potential stakes for the European companies are large.

Most of the European firms linked to Holocaust-era insurance claims are major players in the insurance market in the United States — they collected some \$14.7 billion in American premiums in 1996, according to a recent report by the National Association of Insurance Commissioners.

California policyholders, for example, paid \$2.3 billion in premiums to branches of the companies licensed in the state in 1996 alone, Hayden said.

By far the largest is the German-based Allianz, whose 14 branches in California collected more than \$1.4 billion in premiums.

"The big European insurance firms, which have 73 branches licensed in California, are now lobbying behind the scenes to weaken my bill," Hayden said.

A few weeks ago, the California senator said, representatives of major German, Italian and French insurance companies presented him with an amended draft of his own bill.

The proposed amendments would nullify the license suspensions if the affected firms participated "reasonably and meaningfully" in an international commission to address the claimants' grievances, and also protect the companies from future liabilities. Hayden said he rejected the proposals.

An international commission was established in April by four major European insurance companies — including Allianz — three Jewish organizations and several state insurance commissioners to expedite the processing of claims.

Hayden also said that he would shortly introduce a bill in the legislature directing state employee pension funds to suspend investments in recalcitrant Swiss banks for one year. Such state funds currently have \$350 million in Swiss banks and another \$3 billion in Swiss-related investments, he said.

The proposed move comes in the wake of a call earlier this month by U.S. public finance officials to lift a moratorium on sanctions against Swiss banks in an attempt to press them to reach an agreement with Jewish groups on settling claims dating from the Holocaust era. □

(JTA correspondent Bill Gladstone contributed to this report.)

### Conference slams Palestinians

The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations joined the growing chorus of Jewish groups criticizing the Palestinian Authority's support of Holocaust denial.

In a letter to Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat and the U.S. Middle East peace process team, the umbrella group of 55 Jewish organizations strongly protested the "continuing series" of statements and publications from official Palestinian Authority sources that "denigrate and deny the tragedy of the Holocaust."

### Kohl supports Holocaust museum

German Chancellor Helmut Kohl said he supported building a central Holocaust memorial in Berlin. He added that comments by members of the opposition Social Democrats rejecting the memorial had turned the long-delayed project into a campaign issue. Polls indicate that Kohl is trailing Social Democratic challenger Gerhard Schroeder in the run-up to the country's Sept. 27 general elections.

### Museums to get Warhol works

A series of paintings by Andy Warhol will join the Israel Museum thanks to a group of international donors honoring Israel's 50th anniversary. The 1980 series of silkscreens, titled "Ten Portraits of Jews in the 20th Century," includes likenesses of such figures as Albert Einstein, Golda Meir, Sigmund Freud, Franz Kafka and George Gershwin. Another set of the 10 silkscreens has been promised to The Jewish Museum in New York.

### YIVO director goes to Germany

A Jewish museum curator who fled Nazi Germany in 1938 was named deputy director and chief operating officer of a Jewish museum slated to open in two years in Berlin. Tom Freudenheim, who is slated to assume the post in September, is currently executive director of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York.

### Police close Web site

Police shut down an anti-Semitic Web site that was created by a 13-year-old boy in New York. The site included cartoons of Hitler and hate messages directed at one of the boy's Jewish classmates.

### Camp teaches Central Americans

A group of 120 Jewish boys and girls from Central American countries are spending a month at a summer program at the fervently Orthodox Ner Israel Rabbinical College in Baltimore. The program, now in its 12th year, exposes the secular children to traditional Judaism.

## JNF seeks to reclaim property by evicting a Palestinian family

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Jewish National Fund is vowing to press ahead with plans to evict a Palestinian family from the Jerusalem land they have lived on since the 1920s.

At the same time, the JNF is trying to work out a compensation arrangement with the family.

The disputed property in the Silwan neighborhood, just south of Jerusalem's Old City, was purchased in 1923 by Baron Edmond de Rothschild from the Gozlan family and was later turned over to the JNF.

During the Jordanian period, the Gozlan family registered the property in their name in a Jordanian deeds book, and built their house on the lot. However, in 1992, the Jerusalem District Court ruled the Jordanian registration null and void, judging that the JNF was the legal owner of the property.

Last year, Israel's Supreme Court upheld the ruling and gave the family up to 18 months to move. Peace Now vowed to join the Gozlan family in resisting the eviction.

The Gozlan family has turned down a \$75,000 court-ordered settlement for the cost of the house, which was built in 1964. The JNF, according to sources, has offered the family at least another \$100,000.

The family has a rich history in the area, including a citation by authorities in the 1920s for protecting Jews during riots.

Peace Now has charged the JNF with serving as a tool for the Israeli settler movement because it plans to turn the property over to the Elad settlement group, which owns 24 houses in Silwan.

Under JNF's mandate, the group cannot sell land to non-Jews.

JNF spokesman Moshe Pearl rejected the charge. He confirmed the facts, but charged that Peace Now misunderstood the role of the JNF. "Our purpose is to care for and promote Jewish settlement," said Pearl.

Peace Now convened a news conference on Monday at the Gozlan House in Silwan protesting the intention to evict the family.

Peace Now activist Tsali Reshef said that if the 28 members of the family are evicted, the Palestinian riots of September 1997, prompted by the opening of a new tunnel entrance in Jerusalem's Old City, would be dwarfed by what would happen in Silwan.

However, the JNF insists that the family has no right to the property, that it had settled there illegally and that the land legally belongs to the JNF.

The Elad housing group has indicated it intends to move five Jewish families into the house as soon as the Arabs leave. □

## Despite previous success, Israeli star not a lock for NBA

By Scott D. Granowitz

BEDFORD, Mass. (JTA) — If Israeli basketball star Oded Katash is to make it in the NBA, he'll first have to overcome a few liabilities — and his country's non-existent presence in the world's premier basketball league.

Katash, a 6-foot-4-inch point guard from Givatayim, a suburb of Tel Aviv, verbally agreed to terms with the New York Knicks

just before a dispute between NBA players and owners led to a July 1 lockout. During the lockout, teams are prohibited from conducting business, workouts or other formal communication with players or media.

Katash has enjoyed a meteoric rise in the Israeli and European basketball worlds. A participant in Maccabi's youth program, he was sent to Maccabi Darom, a team in the country's second-tier league, when he was only in his mid-teens. At the beginning of the 1993-1994 season, when he was 19, he moved on to Maccabi Ramat Gan. His ambidexterity and long, angular physique instantly improved that team, which had been an also-ran.

For the 1995-1996 season, he joined Maccabi Tel Aviv. After an injury to the starting point guard, Katash became a starter — and he has excelled.

Indeed, the 23-year-old Katash, who would join an increasing number of foreign-born players in the NBA, is coming off a great year with Maccabi Tel Aviv in which he averaged 19.6 points, 3.9 assists, 2.9 rebounds and 1.7 steals in the European League.

Last summer at the European Championships, Katash's 22 points per game for the Israeli National Team was the best average among all tournament scorers. And last winter, he was one of the 20 top players picked for the first-ever European All-Star game.

Katash is known for his great penetrating ability, quick release on his shot, ball-handling and accurate shooting. But like other European stars, he needs to improve his weight conditioning and defense if he is to compete in the NBA.

It's likely that if Katash makes the team, he'll have to spend some time as a backup. That wouldn't be the only sacrifice he would have to make. He would also have to accept a salary that would reportedly be in the \$350,000-\$400,000 range — considerably less than what he makes with Maccabi.

If he makes it, Katash would become the first Israeli to play in the NBA.

The last Israeli player with serious hopes to make the NBA was Doron Sheffer, who starred for the University of Connecticut from 1993 to 1996. He was selected in the second round of the 1996 NBA draft by the Los Angeles Clippers, but decided to return home after not being offered a guaranteed contract.

Three other Israeli players in the past have attended summer free-agent camps with respective NBA clubs: Doron Jamchee with the Washington Bullets in 1990, Nadav Henefeld with the Boston Celtics in 1993 and Adi Gordon with the Seattle SuperSonics in 1993. Israeli basketball legend Mickey Berkowitz had offers from the Atlanta Hawks and New Jersey Nets in the early 1980s, but a contract with Maccabi Tel Aviv stood in the way.

Katash's possible entry into the NBA comes at a time when the career of the NBA's only Jewish player for over a decade, journeyman center Danny Schayes, may be coming to an end. Ironically, the last time two Jews were active in the NBA at the same time was the 1984-85 season, when Schayes was playing for the Denver Nuggets and current Knicks General Manager Ernie Grunfeld was closing out his playing career for the New York club.

Katash's agent Marc Fleisher said the Knicks were interested in Katash because he would improve their team, and not because he might increase fan support among the large Jewish and Israeli populations in the New York metropolitan region. "The New York Knicks sell out every game, regardless of whether they have a Jewish player on the team or not," Fleisher, of Entersport Management, in New Canaan, Conn., said in an interview. □