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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

No-confidence motion defeated

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu easily survived a no-confidence motion submitted by the far-right Moledet Party over the latest Israeli-Palestinian accord.

But the premier suffered a defeat when a Knesset committee approved a bill calling for new Israeli elections.

The bill, which will now go to the full Knesset for a vote, was supported by hard-liners in Netanyahu's governing coalition, as well as by opposition members seeking to topple the premier.

Two slain in West Bank

An Israeli security guard at a power station was killed in the Israeli-controlled portion of the West Bank town of Hebron.

Army officers said the man, identified as Dan Vargas, 29, was shot at close range before his body was dumped on a roadside from a speeding car.

Hours later, police found the body of a Palestinian man in what was apparently a revenge attack. [Page 4]

U.S. comments on redeployment

The size of a third Israeli redeployment from the West Bank called for under the Oslo accords is "an Israeli responsibility to implement rather than negotiate," said James Rubin, U.S. State Department spokesman.

Unlike the stance it adopted regarding the second redeployment, the United States told the Israelis and Palestinians that it "will not adopt any position or express any view about the size or the content" of the third redeployment, he said.

Murder sparks Jewish reaction

Last Friday's murder of Dr. Barnett Slepian, an obstetrician-gynecologist who also performed abortions, has mobilized some Jewish groups.

Slepian had just returned to his upstate N.Y. home from his Reform temple's Shabbat service when a sniper shot him through his window. The National Council of Jewish Women is organizing vigils in Washington, D.C. and other cities in response. The Reform movement is sending out materials to its congregations to help them address the murder of one of their own.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Palestinian human rights workers fear impact of Wye security accord

By Avi Machlis

AL-BURJ, The West Bank (JTA) — From her hilltop village of Al-Burj, located southwest of Hebron, Majida Talahmeh closely followed Israeli and Palestinian negotiators last week as they put the finishing touches on the Wye River Memorandum in the United States.

Like many Palestinians, Talahmeh, 27, is worried about how a new agreement on security cooperation would affect the Palestinian people.

Her family feels that it has already paid a heavy price for Israeli security demands, even though before the latest accord was signed last Friday in Washington, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu often complained that Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat maintained no security cooperation with Israel.

More than two years ago, Israel ordered the Palestinians to arrest Talahmeh's husband, Saleh, a 32-year-old computer engineer. They gave no reason, but the Palestinians swiftly obliged.

Saleh Talahmeh was never allowed to see a lawyer or put on trial. He remains in prison today — ironically, in a Jericho facility once run by the Israeli army.

Majida Talahmeh, a mother of four dressed in a traditional white head scarf, admits her husband is a sympathizer of Hamas, the Islamist movement whose military wing has killed scores of Israelis in recent years in an effort to destroy the peace process.

But she claims he was never involved in attacks on Israelis, and she cannot understand how his imprisonment improves Israeli security.

"Israel didn't allow Arafat to enter Palestine until he promised to satisfy all their demands," she says, echoing a popular Palestinian gripe about the peace process.

A provision of the Wye agreement calling on Israel to release 750 imprisoned Palestinians offers her little hope.

"Arafat might then agree to arrest those who were released," she says cynically.

Human rights groups echo the Talahmeh family's sentiments. They fear that the security provisions of the Wye accords, drafted to ease Israeli concerns, will only lead to more human rights violations by the Palestinian Authority, which already has a poor record. At the same time, they say, Israel appears oblivious to the security dangers of fostering a Palestinian police state on its doorstep.

And some experts predict that even tougher action by the Palestinian Authority could backfire by fueling frustration with Arafat and boosting support for Hamas, the very group Israel hopes to see undermined by the new accord.

Immediately after the Wye agreement was signed, Palestinian police launched a series of measures against Islamist groups, though not all appeared to directly improve Israeli security. They detained 11 journalists — including several representing Western news agencies — who interviewed Sheik Ahmed Yassin, the spiritual leader of Hamas who vowed that the new accord would not prevent Hamas terror cells from carrying out attacks. Another prominent Islamic cleric in Nablus who voiced opposition to the agreement was also arrested.

And in an ominous sign of possible Palestinian infighting to come, Palestinian police raided an office of Fatah, Arafat's own political movement, in a search for documents and illegal weapons.

The raid sparked a clash Sunday between Palestinian security forces and Fatah activists in which one Palestinian teen-ager died after being shot twice in the head.

MIDEAST FOCUS

Netanyahu briefs Cabinet

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu convened his Cabinet to brief them on The Wye River Memorandum signed last Friday at the White House. The Cabinet is slated to vote on the latest Israeli-Palestinian accord Thursday.

The Knesset is expected to begin formal debate on the pact on Nov. 2.

Since returning to Israel, Netanyahu has portrayed himself as a tough negotiator who obtained important security concessions from the Palestinians in exchange for a further Israeli redeployment from 13 percent of the West Bank.

Fatah demands resignation

Leaders of Yasser Arafat's mainstream Fatah movement demanded the resignation of the head of Palestinian intelligence services in the West Bank town of Ramallah after a violent clash there.

In the first Palestinian-on-Palestinian violence since The Wye River Memorandum was signed last Friday at the White House, Fatah members dashed Sunday with Palestinian security officials, who had attempted to collect unlicensed weapons.

One Palestinian youth died after being shot twice in the head during the clash. The Fatah leaders also demanded that those responsible for the shooting be executed.

Peace treaty remembered

Israel and Jordan marked the fourth anniversary of their historic peace treaty by starting work on a dam that will divert water to Jordan from the Yarmouk River on their shared border.

Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon, Israel's main negotiator with Jordan on water issues, joined Jordanian officials in a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the project, which is expected to be completed in a year.

The two countries signed the peace treaty on Oct. 26, 1994, ending a 46-year official state of war.

Fatah leaders are now demanding that those responsible for the shooting be executed.

Many Palestinians see the new crackdown as a continuation of what they view as Arafat's thuggish policies since his arrival in the Palestinian areas in 1994.

In areas it controls, the nascent Palestinian regime has used many controversial methods reminiscent of Israel's occupation — including torture and administrative detention — to quell opposition to Arafat and the peace process and to satisfy Israel.

According to Bassem Eid, executive director of the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group, some 150 Palestinians have been locked up without trial like Saleh Talahmeh. Another 500 are imprisoned without trial either for allegedly collaborating with Israel or for criminal offenses. Dozens more alleged terrorists have been convicted through the state security courts, which snatch suspects from their homes for midnight trials. These moves allow the Palestinian Authority to show Israel that it is cracking down on terrorism while avoiding Israeli demands for extradition.

Arafat, whose authoritarian governing style is well documented, appears to have little remorse about using these methods — even though the 1995 Interim Agreement called for security crackdowns to be carried out "with due regard to internationally accepted norms of human rights and the rule of law." But Eid and other human rights monitors say Israeli security demands, backed by the United States, only push the Palestinian Authority to contravene international standards of human rights.

Last week, Human Rights Watch, an international human rights group, warned that the Wye agreement — which calls in part for CIA officials to monitor Palestinian compliance on security issues — could deal a further blow to Palestinian democracy.

"The Palestinian Authority's human rights record is already deplorable," says Hanny Megally, executive director of the group's Middle East and North Africa division. "The U.S. doesn't condemn these violations now. Will the U.S. condemn violations once it is part of the process that creates them?"

Some U.S. officials say CIA involvement in Palestinian security could lead to an improvement, since the CIA may try to train Palestinian security forces in less controversial methods. If they don't, say experts, a further crackdown with more wanton arrests could ultimately undermine Israeli security.

Ghassan Khatib, a political analyst from Bir Zeit University in the West Bank, says Palestinian studies show that three factors boost support for Hamas: lack of success in the peace process, poor performance in the Palestinian Authority, and "pressure from the Palestinian Authority against Hamas, usually a result of Israeli demands."

"Many Israeli analysts recognize this trend, but the government either cannot see it or does not want to see it," he adds.

Indeed, the gradual transfer of West Bank land to Palestinian control has made it much easier for Israelis to ignore what goes on next door, he says. During the intifada, the 1987-1993 Palestinian uprising, many Israelis felt uncomfortable with the way the army was behaving. "But now, Israelis are building a cognitive partition that runs pretty much along the Green Line," the pre-1967 border separating Israel from the West Bank, says Tamar Hermann, a political scientist from Tel Aviv University who has been tracking Israeli public opinion on peace-related issues in a monthly poll since 1994.

"There is less and less interest among Israelis in what goes on in the Palestinian areas," she says. "And the type of regime being established there doesn't interest them in the least."

Hermann bases her observations on a poll from 1996. Israelis were then asked what they thought about the historic Palestinian elections that took place in January of that year. "We discovered that the average Israeli is not the least bit interested," she says. "I am certain that if I asked Israelis today what they think about the cost of Israeli security demands on the Palestinians, 90 percent would say they simply don't care."

Jessica Montell, development director at B'Tselem, the Israeli human rights group, recalls a comment by the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who once said that the Palestinians could crack down on terror better than Israel since they have no B'Tselem or supreme court.

"It's clear that security is an important concern," says Montell. "But there are also limits and steps that governments are forbidden from taking. The message that is constantly communicated to the Palestinians is 'Stop terrorism — and we don't care how you do it.' "



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JEWISH WORLD

Committee plans hearings

The chairman of the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee plans hearings about the CIA's role as monitor of Palestinian compliance with the specific security steps spelled out in the latest Israeli-Palestinian accord.

Sen. Richard Shelby (R-Ala.) said he was troubled by the agreement because it gives the usually clandestine agency a "visible role" in Middle East peacekeeping. U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright defended the agency's role, saying it has long worked to prevent terror in the region.

Vatican discusses Jerusalem

The future of Jerusalem is too important to be decided only by Israeli and Palestinian negotiators in the final-status talks, the Vatican's foreign minister said. The international community and the Vatican should also be "responsible for the uniqueness and sacredness of this incomparable city," Jean-Louis Tauran said during a visit to Jerusalem.

Asylum request approved

A U.S. appeals court approved the asylum request of a Jewish woman who said she received repeated death threats in her native Ukraine. Vera Korablina arrived in the United States on a tourist visa in 1995 and applied for asylum on the grounds that she would be persecuted if she returned to Kiev, according to her lawyer.

U.S. immigration authorities twice rejected her request on the grounds that the beatings and death threats she experienced in Ukraine did not meet the standard for persecution.

Hitler movies found

Four reels of movies showing Hitler during World War II surfaced in the Tennessee home of a former U.S. army sergeant. Herbert St. Goar found 12 cans of the movies, which were shot by Hitler's personal pilot, in Germany after the war.

He turned most of the reels over to the U.S. government, but sent four to his home, where they ended up forgotten in his basement. The movies, which show Hitler's travels around Europe and include the only known color footage of him, are now being made available to German researchers.

Demonstration turns violent

Some 200 left-wing demonstrators were detained after they pelted police with stones on the sidelines of a far-right demonstration in Bonn.

The dashes took place after about 500 counter-protesters were cordoned off by police to keep them away from a similar number of supporters of the far-right National Democratic Party.

Gorbachev, Shamir celebrate a decade of mass Soviet aliyah

By Julia Goldman

NEW YORK (JTA) — The two men who headed the Soviet Union and Israel when the mass emigration of Russian Jews began came together this week to celebrate with U.S. Jewish activists the 10th anniversary of that revolution.

Addressing a State of Israel Bonds dinner here Monday, Gorbachev recalled that when Russian Jews first "responded to the call of their homeland," he regretted their leaving. "After all, they had done so much for our country," he said, citing Jewish contributions in science, culture, medicine and law.

"Nevertheless, I could not tell them not to go," he told the 1,200 supporters of Israel Bonds assembled at the New York Hilton. That was the "position of freedom," said Gorbachev, who received the group's Gates of Freedom Award.

Former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, who also spoke at the dinner, credited Gorbachev with giving "new life to the Jewish people" and enriching "the life of the State of Israel."

Beginning in 1989, Gorbachev's liberalizing policies of glasnost and perestroika "opened the gates" for nearly 1 million Soviet Jews to emigrate to Israel.

Gorbachev may well have been moved to his sympathetic stance when, in 1952, he learned that a Jewish classmate, and a decorated soldier, had been thrown off a Moscow tram during the "so-called campaign against anti-Semitism."

Gorbachev said he brought up the incident at a Communist Party meeting. "There were many people who understood the absurdity and inhumanity of anti-Semitism," he recalled.

Gorbachev condemned anti-Semitism as "a shameful page" in Soviet history.

Although such prejudice has yet to be fully overcome, the 1990 Nobel Peace Prize winner said, "Thank God we are now a lot wiser and I hope also kinder."

Glasnost and perestroika also brought about the economic and social reform that led to the fall of Communism — and ended his presidency.

He resigned in December 1991.

Indeed, while Gorbachev called the Israel Bonds event "an amazing experience," many of those in attendance were no less amazed at the historical turn of events.

Joining Gorbachev and Shamir on the two-tiered dais were community activists who were honored for their work on behalf of Soviet Jews.

Many of them had campaigned against Soviet policies, even during the first years of Gorbachev's presidency.

Audience members included Jews from the former Soviet Union whose apartments had been searched and whose compatriots had been imprisoned during that period for their open Jewish identification.

A small group of demonstrators outside carried signs that read, "Israel Bonds, Don't Honor Pharaoh Gorbachev."

Rabbi Avi Weiss, chairman of the Coalition for Jewish Concerns-Amcha, which organized the protest, equated honoring Gorbachev with "historical revisionism."

He also objected to a purported \$100,000 speaker's fee.

But a spokesman for Israel Bonds said the amount — paid to the foundation Gorbachev now directs — was "nowhere near what was reported."

Still, those who heard Gorbachev's emotional speech were impressed by his apparent respect for the Jewish people and appreciation for Israel, which he called "an example to other great nations."

"Only the Jews," he said, could build a state "in a place where there is only one resource — talent."

Judith Cohen, an honoree for her Soviet Jewry work in Atlanta, acknowledged the atmosphere of anti-Semitic persecution during Gorbachev's first years in office, but said forgivingly, "I think that was the world at that time."

Cohen, who spent two months teaching English to Soviet refugees in Ladispoli, Italy, stressed the need to celebrate what she considered to be a victory for the Jewish people.

She said Gorbachev was "gallant to be here with us and to praise us." □

ELECTIONS '98**Jewish voter guides offer a compass for Election Day***By Daniel Kurtzman*

WASHINGTON (JTA) — American Jews wondering where candidates stand on Jewish issues have a handful of tools available to them this election year.

Several Jewish groups have distributed voter guides to help educate Jewish voters about issues ranging from U.S.-Israel relations to the separation of church and state.

The guides, unlike the congressional "scorecards" distributed by the Christian Coalition and other advocacy groups that rate each candidate, do not suggest how voters should cast their ballots.

Indeed, Jewish groups, which are prohibited by federal law guiding tax-exempt organizations from advocating for the election or defeat of any candidate, attempt to remain scrupulously non-partisan. The guides, for the most part, simply attempt to lay out the issues from a Jewish viewpoint and provide voters with a compass with which to navigate through the electoral field.

The JAC Education Foundation publishes perhaps the best known guide in the Jewish community. During this election cycle, JAC has sent out some 75,000 guides to federations, synagogues and other Jewish organizations. The JAC guide focuses on the voting records of all incumbents, highlighting their votes on 11 measures in the House and seven in the Senate that the group considers of key concern to the Jewish community.

The House votes include a school voucher bill for the District of Columbia; a constitutional amendment that would have allowed for school prayer; a bill to deny reinstatement of food stamp benefits that were stripped from legal immigrants as part of the 1996 welfare overhaul; a bill sanctioning foreign companies providing missile technology to Iran; and various measures concerning abortion.

For Senate races, JAC highlighted a bill to sanction foreign companies providing missile technology to Iran; an attempt to limit food stamp eligibility for legal immigrants and refugees; a bill calling for tax breaks to support private or parochial education; and two measures concerning abortion.

The National Jewish Democratic Council, which is also constrained from advocating for any candidate's election or defeat, said it hopes to distribute nearly 250,000 voter guides in 10 states by Election Day. Ira Forman, the group's executive director, said the guides are intended both to "stimulate voter turnout" and to "make sure our community knows what's at stake in this election."

The NJDC guide highlights selected candidates' records, both incumbents and challengers, on U.S.-Israel relations, abortion rights, environmental protections, gun control, the separation of church and state, immigrants' rights and funding for public education.

The group has targeted congressional as well as gubernatorial campaigns across the country, such as the New York Senate race between Republican incumbent Sen. Alfonse D'Amato and Rep. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.), and California's gubernatorial race.

The Orthodox Union, for its part, has for the first time distributed an "election issues guide" to Orthodox synagogues and O.U. members around the country.

Nathan Diamant, director of the O.U.'s Institute of Public

Affairs, said the guides are intended to educate both voters and candidates about his group's core issues. But unlike the JAC and NJDC guides, the O.U.'s guide — as well as a similar guide published by the American Jewish Congress — leave it to voters to do their own research about where each candidate stands on those issues.

On the domestic front, it highlights its support for a school voucher bill for the District of Columbia; legislation to replace the now-defunct Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which would make it harder for government to interfere with religious practice; expansion of "charitable choice," which would permit religiously affiliated institutions to compete with private secular programs for government grants to provide social services; and a bill known as the Hate Crimes Prevention Act that would increase penalties for crimes motivated by religious or ethnic bias.

In the international arena, it highlights its support for a recently enacted bill requiring the United States to release data gathered on Nazi war criminals; creation of a U.S. commission charged with studying Holocaust victims' assets in the United States; and Congress' recent passage of a bill aimed at fighting religious persecution abroad.

The AJCongress' guide, meanwhile, highlights its support for such issues as foreign aid to Israel, attempts to contain Iran, new protections for religious liberty and stronger hate crimes laws.

The guide cites its opposition to a constitutional amendment allowing for school prayer, school vouchers and other subsidies for religious education, and banning so-called partial-birth abortion procedures. □

Israeli, Palestinian killed in two West Bank attacks*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Hebron was the site of renewed violence with the murder of a Jewish settler in the Israeli-controlled portion of the volatile West Bank town.

Soon after the settler was found murdered Monday, a Palestinian was found killed in what was apparently a revenge attack.

Israeli and Palestinian security forces worked together to apprehend those responsible for the settler's slaying. Israel blamed Palestinian militants. No group has yet claimed responsibility.

Israeli army officers said the victim, identified as Dan Vargas, a 29-year-old resident of Kiryat Arba, was shot at close range before his body was dumped on a roadside from a speeding car.

A security guard at a power station in Hebron, Vargas was a married father of one who was expecting a second child.

The attack came one day after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu returned from the United States to begin seeking support for the peace accord he signed last Friday in Washington with Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat.

Hours after his murder, police found the body of a Palestinian man near the West Bank settlement of Itamar.

The body was found after police received an anonymous phone call from a Hebrew-speaking man who said a Palestinian had been killed and his body left near Itamar to avenge the Hebron slaying.

The victim was identified as Mohammad Dalmout, 72, from a village near Itamar. He had been beaten to death with a rock. □