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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Cabinet approves redeployment

Israel will transfer 2 percent of the West Bank, or some 44 square miles, from sole Israeli control to joint control with the Palestinian Authority after the Cabinet approved the first of three Israeli redeployments called for under the Wye accord.

In addition, Israel will hand over 7.1 percent of land in the region from joint to sole Palestinian control.

The Cabinet vote, 7-5 with three abstentions, came after ministers decided that the Palestinian Authority had met its initial obligations under the land-for-security accord.

Reacting to the Cabinet decision, the Yesha Council, which represents settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, said it was "astounded" that the Israeli government had allowed itself to be duped by Arafat. [Page 2]

Covenant signed at G.A.

Knesset members joined thousands of representatives from UJA Federations of North America and Israeli delegates in signing a covenant of rededication to "enduring ties that bind us together" during the closing ceremonies of the 67th annual General Assembly of UJA Federations of North America.

The shared Jewish values described in the brief document include "belief in God; respect for the infinite value of human life; the goal of peace" and the concept of Jewish peoplehood. [Page 1]

Clinton invites donors

President Clinton invited 50 nations and organizations to attend a donor conference Nov. 30 at the State Department to ask for new pledges of aid to support the Palestinian Authority.

State Department spokesman James Rubin said Clinton will ask Congress to significantly increase the \$100 million a year that the United States has provided the Palestinians since 1994.

Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat plans to attend the conference, which is expected to draw dozens of foreign ministers from around the world.

A similar conference after the signing of the 1993 Oslo agreement resulted in \$4 billion in pledges.

Some \$2.1 billion of these pledges has been delivered.

Israelis, North Americans sign covenant on unity, shared values

By Julia Goldman

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Representatives of North American Jewry and Israel have concluded several days of dialogue aimed at improving Israel-Diaspora relations by signing a document proclaiming worldwide Jewish unity.

Knesset members joined thousands of American and Canadian Jewish leaders on Thursday in signing a covenant of rededication to "enduring ties that bind us together."

The speaker of the Knesset, Dan Tichon, convened the "unofficial session" of the Israeli Parliament at the final plenary session of the 67th General Assembly of the UJA Federations of North America — a mass annual gathering of American and Canadian Jewry that for the first time was held in Israel.

The brief covenant outlines a common vision for the Jewish people based on unity and building dynamic communities worldwide, and on shared values including "belief in God; respect for the infinite value of human life; the goal of peace;" and the concepts of Jewish peoplehood and tikkun olam, literally, "repairing the world."

Trade Minister Natan Sharansky, one of a dozen Knesset members seated on the stage of the main auditorium in the International Convention Center, addressed the crowd before excusing himself to attend a Cabinet meeting to approve the Israeli redeployment called for in the Wye peace accord.

In his remarks, Sharansky summed up four days of round-table discussions, speakers panels and field trips examining the Israel-Diaspora relationship in one straightforward conclusion: The two communities exist in a symbiotic relationship.

"Today we can talk about equal partnership on both sides," said Sharansky, explaining that Israel provides the Diaspora with a living link to Jewish history, while the Diaspora sustains Israel through its emotional engagement.

"Think about it," he said. "If you stop being concerned about Israel, it becomes another little country in the Middle East."

Maintaining and deepening the connections between the two Jewish entities formed the basis of formal and informal conversations throughout the General Assembly, as participants debated issues of mutual concern, such as Jewish education, continuity, pluralism and Middle East peace.

The need for increased Jewish unity emerged as a key theme during exchanges between North Americans and Israelis, including a morning session during which participants heard the views of — and questioned — Knesset members and Jewish communal leaders.

But no clear formula for revitalization emerged.

Perhaps the closest and most direct attempt to issue a plan of action came from World Jewish Congress President Edgar Bronfman, who advocated a renaissance of Jewish life, "changing what needs to be changed, keeping that which is useful."

Speaking to the closing session of the assembly, Bronfman said the Jewish people "are the most over-organized people in the world, and we are still not focused on the principal issue of our times — the gradual and painless Holocaust which afflicts our people in the Diaspora."

He stressed the need to appeal to Jewish youth and to correct ignorance of Jewish tradition through education, new media — such as interactive technologies and the Internet — and revised synagogue services, which he said are now "long, boring and repetitive to the young Jews of today."

"Our synagogues and temples don't belong to the rabbis," he said. The Jewish

MIDEAST FOCUS

Arafat issues decree

Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat issued a decree outlawing "incitement of racist prejudice and encouragement of violent practices."

Arafat was required to issue the decree under the terms of the Wye accord. Meanwhile, Hamas militants distributed a pamphlet vowing that their struggle against Israel "will not stop — ever."

Legislators threaten coalition

Orthodox legislators in Israel threatened to leave the governing coalition if non-Orthodox representatives are appointed to local religious councils.

The threat came after the High Court of Justice ordered the religious affairs minister, a portfolio currently held by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, to immediately appoint Reform and Conservative representatives to the local religious councils of Jerusalem and Kiryat Tivon.

Report: Israelis eyed terrorists

The two Israelis recently arrested in Cyprus for spying were monitoring an Islamic terrorist organization that was planning an attack against Israel, according to European intelligence sources quoted in the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reiterated the official Israeli denial that the two men were spying on Cyprus or were acting on behalf of Turkey.

Demonstrators investigated

Israel's state attorney said the prosecutor's office is investigating several people suspected of carrying signs denouncing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as a traitor during recent demonstrations against the Wye agreement. Edna Arbel made the announcement during an appearance before a Knesset committee that was holding a special discussion on efforts to prevent political incitement against Israel's leaders.



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people need "more of a Beit Midrash than a Beit Knesset," using the Hebrew words for "house of study" and "house of prayer."

He commended efforts toward making educational trips to Israel, day schools and summer camps a growing part of the Jewish renaissance and congratulated the creators of a renaissance department in the merger of the United Jewish Appeal and the Council of Jewish Federations.

"I trust they mean the same thing as I do, that the major goal is to increase in quantum terms the number of young people who will self-identify as Jews," Bronfman said.

Many in the audience were surprised by the abruptness of Bronfman's speech, but endorsed his message.

"He's repeating what we know and feel," said Edward Young of Memphis. "He was right on target."

"You've got to hit a lot of different buttons; we don't yet know what's going to work," said Young, who is the chairman of the Southeast region of UJA Federations of North America.

"We're beyond the point of bossing people around. We've got to talk tachlis," the Yiddish term for "getting down to business." □

Israeli Cabinet gives go-ahead to transfer more West Bank land

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's Cabinet has approved the first of three redeployments called for under the Wye accord.

Thursday's decision, backed by fewer than half of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's 17 ministers, clears the way for the Israeli army to begin a further pullback in the West Bank on Friday.

The Cabinet vote, 7-5 with three abstentions, came after ministers decided that the Palestinian Authority had met its initial obligations under the land-for-security accord, according to Cabinet Secretary Danny Naveh.

Naveh said these obligations included arresting wanted fugitives, issuing a decree regarding illegal weapons and issuing an anti-incitement order.

He also said the 18-member PLO Executive Committee had backed the annulment of those clauses in the Palestinian charter that call for Israel's destruction.

Reacting to the Cabinet decision, the Yesha Council, which represents settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, said it was "astounded" that the Israeli government had been duped by Arafat.

As a result of the Cabinet vote, Israel will transfer 2 percent of the West Bank, or some 44 square miles, from sole Israeli control to joint control with the Palestinian Authority. In addition, Israel will hand over 7.1 percent of land in the region from joint to sole Palestinian control.

Along with making the first of the three redeployments, Israel will soon release some 250 Palestinian prisoners. In addition, Israel will approve the long-delayed opening of a Palestinian airport in the Gaza Strip.

Naveh said Israel would be responsible for security for the first three months of operation, when the matter would again come up for review. On Sunday, Morocco's national airline will be the first plane to land at the Palestinian airport.

Public Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani said 100 prisoners convicted of security offenses and 150 prisoners convicted of criminal offenses would be freed in the first release.

Army crews are meanwhile continuing to pave bypass roads near Jewish settlements in preparation for the redeployment.

Security arrangements are not complete for two Jewish settlements that will be surrounded by Palestinian self-rule areas after the first redeployment called for under the Wye accord takes place, Israel Radio reported.

Thousands of Palestinians paraded in the West Bank town of Jenin to celebrate what will be Israel's first hand-over of lands in nearly two years. □

JEWISH WORLD

Swiss settlement discussed

Members of the World Jewish Congress and the World Jewish Restitution Organization met in Jerusalem to hammer out the details of the recent \$1.25 billion Swiss bank settlement on Holocaust-era assets.

They also met to prepare for an upcoming international meeting on Holocaust-era assets in Washington.

Banks paid some \$4 million

Swiss banks have paid about \$4 million to some 84 Holocaust survivors so far from accounts left over from the Holocaust era, according to a representative for the banks.

The Swiss Bankers Association said it expects remaining claims to be resolved by late next year, and that any remaining moneys will be donated to charity.

After pressure from the international and Jewish communities, the Swiss Bankers Association last year published a list of some 5,500 dormant accounts left over from the Holocaust era.

Poland agrees to return property

The Polish government recently agreed to return \$3 billion in property to the Jewish community, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

The communal properties, which includes buildings and land, will be divided equally among the Polish Jewish community, the World Jewish Restitution Organization and organizations that will be selected in negotiations between the first two groups.

Deals have also recently been struck with the governments of Romania and Hungary to return stolen communal property as well.

Croatia gets permanent rabbi

For the first time in more than 50 years, a permanent rabbi was installed in the Croatian capital of Zagreb.

Rabbi Kotel Dadon, an Israeli who had been teaching at a rabbinical seminary in Budapest, was recently inaugurated as the chief, and so far only, rabbi in Croatia. Dadon said he wanted to re-introduce Jewish ritual encompassing the entire life cycle and calendar.

About 2,000 Jews live in Croatia, most of them secular and assimilated into the mainstream community. Most children are from mixed marriages.

Genetic mutation identified

Scientists identified a genetic mutation that is a major cause of deafness among Ashkenazi Jews.

A test for the mutation is expected to be available next year. The mutation does not mean that deafness is more prevalent among Ashkenazi Jews than among other groups.

Court backs ADL claim to keep files confidential

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The Anti-Defamation League has claimed victory in a court decision affirming that its files and sources are protected by the same confidentiality rules that apply to journalists.

The 1st District Court of Appeals ruled that the ADL can keep information it gathered about pro-Palestinian and anti-apartheid activists confidential, but must turn over any material that was obtained illegally and distributed.

The ADL was appealing a judge's order to hand over files it gathered during the early 1990s on 17 activists who later sued the Jewish organization for invasion of privacy.

The activists accused the ADL of illegally obtaining confidential records, including driver's licenses and Social Security numbers, from the state of California and using the information to create a blacklist.

The ADL, which publishes various reports, books and special bulletins as part of its hate-monitoring activities, argued that it was merely gathering information about terrorists and other hate groups. It denied having a blacklist.

In a statement, the ADL said it viewed the decision "as a victory for the ADL and a victory for the First Amendment."

The decision "reaffirms our status as a journalistic news gathering organization with the right to protect our files. ADL is confident that the court's ruling, which allowed for very limited discovery, will demonstrate the plaintiffs' claims are unfounded."

The appeals court ruling, while protecting the ADL's journalistic rights, requires the organization to turn over any material used for non-journalistic purposes, such as disclosures made to the governments of Israel or South Africa or to the ADL's supporters.

Believing that the ADL made such disclosures, an attorney for one of the plaintiffs also declared victory in the ruling, saying it would force the ADL to turn over illegally obtained material and clear the way for the lawsuit against the ADL to proceed.

Jill Meltzer, the ADL's in-house counsel, said the plaintiffs have a "mistaken view of the information that ADL has about them, and that's going to become apparent."

Some of the information the plaintiffs have sought was contained in thousands of documents seized by San Francisco authorities in 1992 from a researcher working with the ADL. Authorities conducted an 11-month investigation into whether the ADL illegally obtained the files, but no criminal charges were filed.

The ADL, however, later settled a civil suit brought by the city in connection with the files by paying \$75,000 into a hate crimes reward fund and another \$25,000 for hate crimes training in the office of the San Francisco district attorney. □

Canadian Jewish Congress sued

TORONTO (JTA) — A Holocaust denier has filed a lawsuit against the Canadian Jewish Congress and the prime minister of Canada, charging them and others with conspiring to bar him from Parliament.

The lawsuit charges that CJC President Moshe Ronen, Prime Minister Jean Chretien and the heads of three political parties "maliciously conspired" to ban Ernst Zundel from Parliament Hill last June, when the House of Commons voted unanimously to bar Zundel from the Parliament buildings.

Zundel is seeking hundreds of thousands of dollars from each of 18 defendants for violating his free speech rights. Zundel had booked a room on Parliament Hill that is usually available to individuals who want to hold a news conference on subjects related to federal government business.

A native of Germany, he had intended to denounce a ruling of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, which is holding hearings to determine whether he is spreading hate via the Internet. □

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Israeli Arabs open lodgings, restaurants to serve tourists*By Kenneth Bandler*

SAKHNIN, Israel (JTA) — Omar Ayadi believes that the path to Jewish-Arab coexistence in Israel is paved with good food.

On most weekends, his Peace Tent restaurant is filled to capacity — more than 200 Arabs and Jews, and often some foreign tourists as well, reclining, Bedouin-style, on colorful cushions while feasting on a wide variety of Middle Eastern dishes.

Perched on a hill in Arrabe, overlooking the neighboring Arab town of Sakhnin and several hilltop Jewish communities in northern Israel, the Peace Tent is situated in an idyllic location — conducive to “the spirituality of relaxing,” as Ayadi puts it.

Business has been so brisk since Ayadi opened his restaurant three years ago — some 30,000 people, he says, have dined in his tent — that he is expanding. Next to the tent, Ayadi is constructing a building that will house an expanded kitchen for the restaurant, and a bed-and-breakfast so he can accommodate overnight guests.

In a country renowned for its tourism industry, Arab communities have been virtually ignored on travel itineraries.

But in recent years, Israeli Arabs have begun developing facilities that cater to tourists. For the time being, the effort is being carried out by individual entrepreneurs who have recognized the economic potential of tourism, especially here in the Galilee, a mountainous region rich in nature and archaeological sites that has become a weekend destination for Israelis from the overcrowded Tel Aviv area.

“The Arabs are very suitable for bed-and-breakfasts because it is in their nature,” says Philip Kaldawi, of the Center for Jewish-Arab Economic Development, referring to the traditional Arab hospitality of opening one’s home to visitors. Some 100 bed-and-breakfast rooms have opened in Arab communities since 1992, according to the center.

Fathi Haleilah opened the Brotherhood Bed and Breakfast — one of six bed-and-breakfasts in Sakhnin — in March 1997, after using a business loan to build two guest rooms with private bathrooms in the lower level of his home. Haleilah, who has cut back his teaching load in a local school to part time, is now considering retiring and devoting all of his energies to his business.

He charges about \$70 for two on a weekend night, including a full Arab breakfast of breads, cheeses, fruit and homemade jams. While he recommends restaurants in the area, including the Peace Tent where an average meal costs about \$20, his wife will, upon request, prepare dinner.

Both Ayadi and Haleilah say they would not have been able to launch these ventures without the assistance of the Center for Jewish-Arab Economic Development, a 10-year-old nonprofit organization that has pioneered grass-roots economic initiatives in Israeli Arab communities.

The center was founded by Sarah Kreimer, who immigrated to Israel from the United States in 1984, after spending two years in the Arab town of Tamra as part of a Jewish-Arab coexistence program called Interns for Peace. Observing the economic disparities between Jews and Arabs, Kreimer decided to do what she could to help Arab businesses.

For Arab entrepreneurs, the center’s arrangement with an Israeli bank to provide small-business loans has been critical.

Haleilah received a \$15,000 loan from the Mercantile Discount Bank and Ayadi obtained about \$20,000. Kreimer’s center guarantees one-third of each loan.

An Arab who lives in Haifa, Kaldawi is constantly on the road, encouraging Israeli Arabs to start business ventures, especially in the tourism sector.

There is a lot of potential for establishing businesses, Kaldawi says, but it often is difficult to overcome cultural obstacles.

Kaldawi cites, for example, the Bedouin town of Tuba-Zangria, located near Kiryat Shmona, an area in northern Israel that because of nature attractions receives some 1 million visitors a year — 250,000 come to Tuba itself, he says.

But there has been resistance to establish any bed-and-breakfasts there because, according to Bedouin culture, a guest is welcome to stay for free.

Ayadi, who is of Bedouin descent, had no such qualms. Using skills honed as a teen-ager working in a Jewish restaurant in the resort city of Tiberias, and later as a stone-cutter in a quarry, Ayadi built the Peace Tent next to his own home in Arrabe by himself. The structure actually is built of stone, with arches on three sides — the fourth side is completely open, offering diners a breathtaking panoramic view. The roof is made of black canvas, similar to a traditional Bedouin tent.

Although Haleilah knew little about the tourism business when he got started, he had few inhibitions. While he was motivated, in part, by a desire to make money, he also believes that Sakhnin has much to offer visitors and the town’s lodgings can be used as a basis for exploring this picturesque region of the Galilee.

Sakhnin boasts the Museum of Palestinian Folk Heritage which was first opened in 1990 and, according to its director, Amin Abu Raia, is the only museum of its kind in an Israeli Arab community.

Housed in what was his grandfather’s home, the museum has expanded from two to seven exhibit rooms, with some 1,500 Arab artifacts, such as clothing and cooking implements, on display.

The museum receives some 10,000 visitors a year, of which 55 percent are Jewish, 40 percent Arab and the remainder foreign tourists, according to Abu Raia.

And, Sakhnin is home to the studio of one of Israel’s leading Arab artists, Mahmoud Bardarny, who returned to his hometown in 1995 after spending 24 years in Holland.

Bardarny wants to turn part of his studio into a museum. “It will be the first art museum in the Arab sector. It will attract a lot of people,” he says.

Mustafa Abu Raia, a former mayor of Sakhnin who is returning to that post after an election victory this month, feels strongly that the municipality should back such entrepreneurs — if not with money then at least in publicizing the town’s attractions.

“We need to support every ambition,” he says. “With this painter, we can make Sakhnin famous.” □

Alleged harasser arrested

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An Israeli was arrested on suspicion of telephoning the Jordanian Embassy in Tel Aviv and making threats against King Hussein and his wife, Queen Noor.

Israel Radio reported that embassy officials filed a complaint, saying the suspect would phone several times a day and also send faxes.

Israeli police found the alleged caller by putting a trace on the calls. □