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81st Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Netanyahu stands firm

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed he would not cede another inch of West Bank land until the Palestinian Authority renounces plans to unilaterally declare a Palestinian state next year. Speaking at a news conference with a somber-faced President Clinton at his side, the premier called the plans a "gross violation of the Oslo and Wye accords."

Meanwhile, Clinton announced he would submit a request to the U.S. Congress for an additional \$1.2 billion in aid to help Israel cover the security costs of carrying out the West Bank redeployments called for under the Wye accord. [Page 1]

Rejectionists meet in Damascus

Arabs opposed to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process met in Damascus to reaffirm their support for the clauses in the Palestinian charter that call for Israel's destruction.

Speakers at the conference, which included representatives of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah, also called for the continuation of the armed struggle against Israel.

The conference came just days before members of the Palestine National Council were scheduled to affirm that the anti-Israel clauses in the Palestinian charter are null and void.

Premier goes to bat for Pollard

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Jonathan Pollard did something "bad and inexcusable," but asked President Clinton to free him on humanitarian grounds. Clinton has asked his top administration officials to recommend by Jan. 11 whether to free Pollard, who is serving a life sentence for spying on the United States for Israel.

Gore lights menorah

U.S. Vice President Al Gore lit a menorah at the annual White House ceremony on the first night of Chanukah.

President Clinton, who normally leads the event, was in Jerusalem, where he lit a menorah at the home of Israeli President Ezer Weizman. First lady Hillary Clinton lit a Chanukah candle, a Christmas tree and a Ramadan lantern during a visit to Neve Shalom, a village near Jerusalem where 36 Israeli Arab and Jewish families live together.

Clinton faces tough challenge to get Wye accord back on track

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — President Clinton originally planned to visit Israel and the Palestinian self-rule areas to celebrate the accomplishments of the Wye agreement.

But by the time he arrived in Israel on Saturday night, it was clear to all the parties that his visit would focus on rescuing the accord from the latest welter of Israeli and Palestinian grievances.

The president got a taste of the difficulties facing him when, during a joint news conference Sunday with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu after the two met privately, the premier vowed he would not cede another inch of West Bank land until the Palestinian Authority renounces plans to unilaterally declare a Palestinian state next May. Speaking with a somber-faced U.S. president at his side, the premier called the plans a "gross violation of the Oslo and Wye accords."

Netanyahu also called on the Palestinian Authority to immediately halt its "propaganda" campaign that Israel was renegeing on the terms of the Wye accord by refusing to release Palestinians jailed for anti-Israel activities.

Clinton struck a theme of reconciliation during his remarks at the news conference.

"The promise of Wye cannot be fulfilled by violence or by statements or actions which are inconsistent with the whole peace process," Clinton said. "Both sides should adhere to that."

Underscoring what he called America's "unshakable" commitment to Israeli security, Clinton announced he would submit a request to the U.S. Congress for an additional \$1.2 billion in aid to help Israel cover the costs of carrying out the West Bank redeployments called for under the Wye accord.

The president said the Palestinian Authority had taken some steps toward fulfilling their commitments under the accord. But at the same time, he added that they "could be doing better to prevent violent demonstrations in the street."

During the past week, there has been a series of violent clashes in the West Bank between Palestinian demonstrators and Israeli troops over protesters' demands for the release of Palestinian activists held in Israeli jails.

Palestinian officials have maintained that Israel broke a term of the Wye agreement when the majority of those the Jewish state recently released from prison were common criminals. Israel in turn claimed it was living up to the agreement — a view echoed by some American officials.

Two Palestinians died last Friday in clashes near the West Bank town of Kalkilya, bringing the total number of fatalities during the past week to four.

The Palestinian Authority clamped down on the demonstrations prior to Clinton's arrival. But the violence continued Sunday, when a 17-year-old female Israeli was moderately wounded after being stabbed in the back outside the West Bank settlement of Shavei Shomron. Her assailant, a 15-year-old Palestinian girl, told investigators after she was apprehended that she had acted alone. She added that she decided to attack a Jew after reading from the Koran the previous day.

Prior to Clinton's visit, Israel carried out the first phase of the redeployment under the Wye accord, transferring an additional 9 percent of West Bank land to Palestinian control. But Israel said it was suspending further implementation of the Wye agreement pending Palestinian fulfillment of its commitments under the accord.

A key Israeli demand calls for the Palestine National Council to formally vote to nullify the anti-Israel clauses in the Palestinian charter during a meeting Monday that

MIDEAST FOCUS

Prisoners mock Clinton

Palestinian prisoners in an Israeli jail shouted through the barbed wire perimeter of the prison that President Clinton's peace mission to the Middle East was a sham. "Clinton, you coward, go look for women," chanted the prisoners, who are continuing a hunger strike in hopes of getting their freedom. Four Palestinians were killed during the past week during a series of violent dashes in the West Bank with Israeli troops over the prisoner issue.

Non-Orthodox to join councils

Representatives of the Reform and Conservative movements were appointed to religious councils in the Israeli cities of Jerusalem and Kiryat Tivon.

The appointments came after Israel's High Court of Justice ruled that the councils must accept representatives of these movements. The approval of the appointments came from an official in the Prime Minister's Office after Interior Minister Eli Suissa refused to ratify them.

Arafat: I may not see full peace

Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat said he may not live to see the peace process through.

Arafat, who suffers from uncontrollable trembling of the hands and lower lip, responded to a question posed by members of the Washington Institute of Near East Policy about how he envisions the Palestinian Authority in 20 years by saying, "I don't know if I'll live one year or two years."

U.S. sends Patriots to Israel

The United States is sending several Patriot anti-missile batteries to Israel as part of a U.S.-Israeli military exercise.

Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon said that three groups of the missiles, including three launchers, would be moved to Israel from Europe, but declined to directly link the move to President Clinton's visit.



Daily News Bulletin

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Clinton is scheduled to attend. Palestinian officials counter that the Wye accord calls only for attendees at the meeting to approve by acclamation a letter that Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat sent to Clinton in January, indicating that the clauses were annulled.

Clinton's planned visit to the Gaza Strip for the meeting has been a source of anger for right-wing Israelis — some Cabinet ministers among them — who claim it will give support to Palestinian aspirations for statehood.

Despite the latest crisis in the peace process, Sunday's news conference was dominated by questions over the impeachment proceedings facing Clinton in Washington.

Clinton said he was "not surprised" that the House Judiciary Committee had approved over the weekend four articles of impeachment against him, adding that he has "no intention of resigning. It's never crossed my mind."

After his talks with Netanyahu, Clinton held a meeting with Israeli President Ezer Weizman.

The president is accompanied on the trip by first lady Hillary Clinton and their daughter, Chelsea. On Sunday the Clinton couple visited the grave of slain Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, accompanied by Rabin's widow, Leah.

They also attended a candle-lighting ceremony at the president's residence in Jerusalem marking the start of Chanukah. Chelsea Clinton made visits to the Western Wall, the Temple Mount and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

In a similar ecumenical spirit, the president plans to attend a Christmas tree-lighting ceremony in Bethlehem and visit Masada during his stay in the region. □

American students help boost Jewish life in Belarus

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — An American effort to revive Jewish life in Belarus has received a big boost — despite the grave economic problems and the uncertain future of the Jewish community in the former Soviet republic.

More than 300 local Jews and dignitaries, including 20 American guests, participated in the recent dedication of a Torah scroll at a Jewish youth center in Minsk. The ceremony, the first of its kind in Belarus since the Holocaust, took place in the Lauder Lech Lecha Youth Center, named after American philanthropist Ronald Lauder.

The center, housed in a Minsk synagogue, serves as the base of activities for the New York-based Yeshiva and University Students for the Spiritual Revival of Soviet Jewry, which works to develop Jewish identity among youth in the former Soviet Union — particularly in Belarus and Ukraine, where it has mobilized youth groups, organized camps and developed educational programs promoting aliyah to Israel and the spiritual awakening of Jewish youth.

The 20 Americans at the ceremony were concluding a weeklong mission throughout Lithuania and Belarus. The mission, organized by YUSSR and led by Rabbi Shnayer Leiman, visited cities once home to large numbers of Jews.

The Jewish community of Minsk currently numbers about 20,000, one-fifth of Belarus' 100,000 Jews.

The Torah, donated by Young Israel of Century City, Calif., enabled some Jewish teen-agers to celebrate their Bar and Bat Mitzvahs using a Torah — the first such ceremony since the destruction of the Minsk Jewish community in the Holocaust.

For 13-year-old Sergei Frolov, the ceremony was the most unforgettable event in his young life.

"I wanted so much to be a Bar Mitzvah and I was so excited as I read my parshah," he said using the Hebrew word for a Torah portion. "I'm very proud that everything turned out well."

Frolov was one of four teen-agers — three boys and one girl — that had their ceremonies with the newly dedicated scroll.

Neither they nor their parents had ever seen a Bar or Bat Mitzvah ceremony. □

JEWISH WORLD

Swiss to open claims office

The Swiss government said it would open a claims office to help Holocaust victims and their heirs looking for art that was looted during World War II.

The move came after a government-commissioned report said the Alpine nation was a major clearinghouse for art looted by the Nazis from Holocaust victims.

Hundreds of Nazi-looted artworks passed through the hands of Swiss art dealers and collectors during the war, according to the report.

New Holocaust memorial mullied

Germany's new government is developing a new plan for the country's national Holocaust memorial, according to the German news magazine *Der Spiegel*.

The plan being developed by an adviser to Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder would reportedly include educational exhibits. The most recent proposal for the memorial, which has been under consideration for a decade, called for a football field-sized design without any exhibits.

E.U. backs anti-racism proposal

The European Union approved a proposal that Eastern European countries hoping to join the organization curtail racism.

Sweden, which made the proposal, said it was important to educate people in former Soviet-bloc countries about the Holocaust. The group also welcomed a Swedish offer to host an international conference on Holocaust education next year.

Report: Chase to be in suit

Lawyers for Holocaust victims plan to include Chase Manhattan Bank in a class-action lawsuit, *Newsweek* reported.

The lawyers allege that Chase's Paris branch froze accounts of Jewish customers even before receiving orders from the Nazis to do so. Chase said in November that its preliminary investigation of the allegations indicated that fewer than 100 accounts are at issue, adding that the bank would pay out the accounts with full interest if necessary.

Museum gets 'Mein Kampf'

Heinrich Himmler's personal copy of "Mein Kampf" was recently obtained by a leading Jewish museum in New York.

Scholars say the underlining in the copy now at A Living Memorial to the Holocaust — The Museum of Jewish Heritage shows that the SS and Gestapo chief was thinking about the Final Solution as early as 1927, when he began reading Hitler's manifesto.

Sharansky marks 50 years of human rights declaration

By Julia Goldman

NEW YORK (JTA) — Joined by some of his "old accomplices," former Soviet dissident Natan Sharansky commemorated the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with a symbolic walk outside United Nations headquarters.

On an unseasonably mild December day, Sharansky was joined by many of the supporters who "defeated the KGB" to win his freedom.

Mass public demonstrations and political pressure helped bring about Sharansky's release after nine years of incarceration in prison and work camps beginning in 1978.

Sharansky, now Israel's trade minister, led about 45 people to the Sharansky Steps, a New York City monument.

Among the group was Peter Osnos, the publisher of *Public Affairs* magazine, which is reissuing Sharansky's account of his imprisonment, titled "Fear No Evil — The Classic Memoir of One Man's Triumph Over a Police State."

Standing across the street from the towering U.N. building, Sharansky, perhaps the most celebrated Prisoner of Zion in the former Soviet Union, read from the Declaration of Human Rights, which assures as a "common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations" basic human rights such as the right to a fair, public trial and freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

According to Sharansky, distribution of the U.N. document was prohibited in the Soviet Union.

In a telephone interview Sharansky said that during their struggle for freedom of religion and expression, Soviet prisoners of conscience made it a priority to highlight this censure as an example of the Communist regime's disregard for the principles of law.

Sharansky was charged with collaboration with the CIA, allegations which were widely regarded as a sham.

Upon his release in 1986, Sharansky immediately emigrated to Israel, where he founded the Yisrael B'Aliyah Party and won election to the Knesset in 1996.

With evident emotion, Sharansky said that in order to begin living according to his own principles, he first had to feel a connection to other free people as well as to other Jews.

At that moment, he could begin to live with a "feeling of inner freedom, protected by the declaration of human rights and protected by an army" to defend the law.

In Sharansky's case, he said, that protective force was the "army of students and housewives" who led the political movement on behalf of Soviet Jews.

The event in Manhattan was sponsored by a private foundation in cooperation with the Birthright Israel Program. □

Canadian Jews help Mitch victims

MONTREAL (JTA) — A donation by the Canadian Jewish Congress has enabled more than 3,000 boxes of supplies to travel to Central American victims of Hurricane Mitch.

An emergency relief committee working under the auspices of the Honduran consulate in Montreal has been collecting food, sleeping bags, blankets, toys and clothes, which have been sitting in a warehouse in the city. The goods were held up, however, because the committee simply did not have the money to pay for shipping them.

The CJC donated \$8,000 to the individuals responsible, which was given to the relief team this week.

Additional funds will shortly be sent to Honduras to assist in rebuilding a synagogue in Tegucigalpa that was destroyed by the hurricane. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**Arab girl's rehabilitation is handicapped by politics***By Gil Sedan*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The story of Alla Ghneim is a tale about tragedy and hope — and frustration. It's also about how individuals can fall victim to the unintended consequences of Israeli-Palestinian diplomacy.

In March 1995, 5-year-old Alla and a friend were crossing the main road passing through her West Bank village of Al Khader, near Bethlehem, when a cement truck ran over the two girls.

Her friend died immediately. Alla was rushed to the Hadassah Medical Center in the Ein Kerem section of Jerusalem.

The lower half of Alla's body was totally mutilated. The doctors at Hadassah had to amputate Alla's lower torso from the hips down.

Miraculously, Alla survived.

"The doctors had lost hope and had asked for my opinion," recalled Alla's father, Mohammad, a construction worker in a nearby West Bank town. "They told me that in similar cases in America and Europe, the parents do not want to accept children in similar circumstances, that they prefer that they die. But I told them: As long as the head is there and she can talk to me — I want her."

Although it was unclear whether Alla would survive the ordeal, the doctors went ahead with several operations. Two months after the accident, she was out of danger.

"Mentally, Alla remained a totally healthy child," said Dr. Shirley Meir of the Alyn Rehabilitation Center in Jerusalem. "The natural drive of a child, ever since birth, is to get up and do things on its own. We took advantage of that drive.

"When Alla came to us, she was a frightened little child," said Meir, "but on the day she managed to sit by herself, that was the day she began to smile."

Alyn's physiotherapists worked day and night to adjust the girl to her new life. They trained her to move using her arms, they taught her how to swim.

"I accepted the fact that one should not cry over this and that," recalled Alla, smiling. "I realized that one must try and change things."

But as the initial shock over the accident had faded away and Alla returned home from the hospital, another difficulty emerged — the financial one.

Despite her handicap, Alla insisted that she go to school. Alla's three brothers carried her every day by chair from the third floor of their building and then walked with her for 30 minutes through the dusty paths to school.

Taking care of Alla was now a full-time job. Mohammad missed several work days, and Alla's mother, Nawal, could not work at all.

Their medical and rehabilitation costs amounted to more than \$1,000 a month.

Mohammad's income from construction work could not cover the costs, and he was forced to take out several loans. He was not too concerned — eventually, he believed, insurance would reimburse him.

But it turned out to be not so simple. Soon after Alla's

accident, a political development got in the way of her rehabilitation.

In September 1995, Israel and the Palestinian Authority signed the second of the two Oslo accords, which expanded Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

In December 1995, six months after the accident, Alla's village was divided into three sections: Some of it fell into Area A, under total Palestinian control; some became part of Area B, under Palestinian civilian control but Israeli security control; and the rest became part of Area C, under total Israeli control.

The driver of the truck that ran over Alla and her friend did not have the proper license, and as a result, his insurance company refused to compensate the girl and her family. In Israel proper, the family would have been compensated by the state-run Karnit insurance company.

But since Al Khader was no longer under total Israeli control, representatives of Karnit appeared in court and demanded that its Palestinian equivalent take care of the compensation and rehabilitation costs.

"According to the legal opinion of the Israeli Civil Administration, the accident took place in Area A," said Lifa Lior, a lawyer for the insurance company. "Thus the burden lies on the Palestinian company."

For a year, the parties have debated who was in charge of that specific part of the road. A yard here, a yard there could mean tens of thousands of dollars — and could radically affect Alla and her family.

For once, the Palestinians and Israelis wanted the other party to be responsible for a parcel of land.

But Mazen Kopti, a lawyer for the girl and her family, claims that it is irrelevant to determine who owned the road. The only relevant fact in his view is that Israel was in control of the road at the time of the accident.

As the parties continued to haggle in court, the girl's rehabilitation process was slowed down for lack of funds.

"It is unacceptable that after having put so many efforts and so many resources into saving the girl, the girl cannot be rehabilitated," said Meir of the Alyn Rehabilitation Center.

When the story appeared on Israel Television, the public responded. Viewers from all sectors of Israeli society phoned in to offer contributions. A week after the story was aired, enough money was collected to buy Alla a specially designed wheelchair.

But the legal battle continues. Neither the Israelis nor the Palestinians appear to want to carry the burden of paying for Alla's rehabilitation all her life.

Just because she was unfortunate enough to lose her legs somewhere between A, B and C. □

Jerusalem shul identified

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An Israeli archaeologist said the remains of a seventh-century stone building and courtyard found within the wall of Jerusalem's Old City have been identified as the city's oldest known synagogue.

Eilat Mazar, an archaeologist at Jerusalem's Hebrew University, said the structure, known as the "House of Menorot" because of the paintings of menorahs decorating its walls, was used as a synagogue and house of study from 638 C.E. until the eighth century. □