



# Daily News Bulletin

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81<sup>st</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Clinton applauds charter vote

President Clinton thanked Palestinian leaders in the Gaza Strip for rejecting the anti-Israel clauses in the Palestinian charter. His comments came after members of the Palestine National Council and other Palestinian groups jumped to their feet and raised their hands to show the president that they no longer seek Israel's destruction.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the Palestinian representatives had provided the vote he had sought.

Meanwhile, Palestinian leaders hailed President Clinton's trip to the Gaza Strip as a boost to their aspirations for statehood. U.S. officials denied that the trip represented such an endorsement.

At a lunch with Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat, Clinton said that for the first time in their history, the Palestinian people "now have a chance to determine their own destiny on their own land." [Page 1]

### Redeployment to be postponed

Israel is not ready to carry out the next further redeployment scheduled for later this week, according to a spokesman for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Aviv Bushinsky said the premier spoke with President Clinton about the need for a delay, which Bushinsky said could last as long as "a week, two weeks, a month." Political observers say Netanyahu cannot carry out the redeployment until he resolves the political crisis that threatens to topple his coalition.

### Israel: No prisoner compromise

Israel denied reports that it was involved in efforts with U.S. and Palestinian officials to resolve the ongoing dispute with the self-rule authority over prisoner releases.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's spokesman said Israel had not changed its stance that no prisoners with blood on their hands or who belong to Hamas would be freed.

### Menorah lit in Budapest

A Chanukah menorah was lit in a public square in the heart of Budapest. Most of those gathered in the frigid weather to attend the ceremony were students at a yeshiva run by the Lubavitch movement.

## Clinton visit to Gaza gives boost to Palestinian dreams

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Confirming some Israeli hard-liners' worst fears, President Clinton has given Palestinian aspirations a major boost with his visit to the Gaza Strip.

The symbolism of an American president making a first visit to the self-rule areas was evident from the moment Clinton's helicopter touched down at the recently opened Palestinian airport in southern Gaza. Palestinian leaders were soon hailing Clinton's visit on Monday as a show of support for their goal of statehood, though U.S. officials denied that the trip represented such an endorsement.

Clinton has often stated that the issue of Palestinian statehood is a matter for the final-status talks between Israel and the self-rule government. In an effort to maintain that stance, U.S. officials requested that no Palestinian national anthems be played for Clinton's arrival at the airport, and their Palestinian counterparts complied.

Addressing the Palestine National Council in Gaza on Monday, Clinton urged both the Palestinian Authority and Israel to "move ahead to final-status negotiations together, without either side taking unilateral steps or making unilateral statements that could prejudice the outcome."

The president's admonition against unilateral action was, in part, aimed at Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's continuing threat to declare an independent state next May, regardless of the status of the peace talks. A day earlier, addressing the Israeli people from Jerusalem, Clinton said Palestinian leaders must work harder "to avoid the impression that unilateral actions can replace agreed-upon negotiations."

During Monday's visit, Clinton spoke repeatedly of the hard choices that Israel and the Palestinians face as they pursue peace. But even as he sought to appear even-handed in his remarks, a comment he made during a lunch with Arafat may spark questions as to whether U.S. officials have already reached the point of regarding Palestinian statehood as an inevitability — as some Israeli leaders have long believed.

At that lunch, Clinton said that for the first time in their history, the Palestinian people "now have a chance to determine their own destiny on their own land."

At the same time, however, he devoted many of his remarks to describing the decisions that have to be made while traveling the road to peace.

Clinton hailed one of those decisions later in the day when he participated in a meeting with Arafat and some 1,000 members of the Palestine National Council and other Palestinian groups. During his remarks, Clinton thanked the Palestinian officials for rejecting the anti-Israel clauses in the Palestinian charter.

"I am profoundly grateful to have had the opportunity" to see the conference attendees "standing up tall" to revoke the clauses, he said.

"By revoking them once and for all, you have sent a powerful message not to the government, but to the people of Israel."

His comments came after the Palestinian representatives jumped to their feet and raised their hands to show the president that they no longer seek Israel's destruction.

In his Sunday address, Clinton sought to reassure Israelis about the peace process and U.S. support for Israel.

"The United States will always stand with Israel, always remember that only a strong Israel can make peace," Clinton said. "We were, after all, your partners in security before we were partners for peace. Our commitment to your security is ironclad, it will never change."

Perhaps Monday's biggest surprise came when Prime Minister Benjamin

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Palestinian militants detained

Palestinian security forces detained some 40 Hamas and Islamic Jihad activists in the Gaza Strip prior to President Clinton's trip there. Among those detained was Islamic Jihad's leader, Abdallah Shami, who told a Spanish television station that he would not hesitate to assassinate Clinton if given the chance.

### Karni industrial park opens

Israeli, American and Palestinian trade officials took part in a ceremony inaugurating the opening of an industrial park at the Karni Crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip. The Palestinian Authority reportedly allowed Israeli Trade Minister Natan Sharansky to participate only after U.S. officials pressured them.

### Haredi leaders oppose ruling

Spiritual leaders of two fervently Orthodox movements in Israel said no yeshiva students should be drafted into the army. The comments by four rabbis of the groups, which make up the United Torah Judaism bloc in the Knesset, came a few days after the High Court of Justice ruled that an agreement granting the students army deferrals is illegal.

### Shahak may leave army early

The former head of the Israel Defense Force said he is considering moving up his departure from the army if early elections are scheduled. Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Amnon Shahak has long been rumored to be a possible candidate for prime minister.

### Palestinian refugees protest

Palestinian refugees in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan denounced President Clinton's visit to the Gaza Strip as a sham. Some 1,500 demonstrators participated in a rally at a refugee camp near Damascus in which they denounced Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's willingness to revoke the clauses in the Palestinian charter calling for the destruction of Israel.



## Daily News Bulletin

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Netanyahu welcomed the decision taken at the Gaza meeting. The premier had long demanded that a formal vote be taken at the meeting — but his adviser, David Bar-Illan, was soon saying, "This is the cancellation according to the formula of the Wye River Conference. There was a vote, there was no question about that."

"The issue, as far as we are concerned, is now off the table," Bar-Illan added.

At a Jerusalem news conference, Netanyahu said the change in the charter came as a result of his government's staunch stance that the move be taken.

"It was achieved, foremost, because we demanded cancellation," said Netanyahu, who faces a no-confidence motion in the Knesset next week that hard-liners in his coalition have threatened to back.

Despite the Palestinian officials' decision to change the charter, Netanyahu made it clear that they still had other obligations to live up to before Israel would carry out the next further redeployment in the West Bank, a move slated to occur Friday under the terms of the Wye agreement.

The Israeli demands include: seizure of illegal weapons in the autonomous areas; reduction of the Palestinian police force to the size specified in the Oslo accords; and cancellation of any plans to unilaterally declare a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

Political observers say Netanyahu cannot carry out the redeployment until he resolves the political crisis that threatens to topple his coalition.

Following the session in Gaza with the Palestinian representatives, preparations were made for a summit involving Clinton, Netanyahu and Arafat.

The summit, originally slated for Monday night, was rescheduled because of what officials described as tight schedules.

But Israeli media reports cited sources in Jerusalem as linking the delay to American pressure that in return for the Palestinian nullification of the charter, Israel stick to the timetable for carrying out the next phase of the further redeployment. □

## U.N. document's success is evaluated 50 years later

By Lee Yanowitch

PARIS (JTA) — Fifty years ago, world leaders said "never again" to the atrocities of the Holocaust and drew up the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The tenets laid out in the declaration, which states that all people have certain basic inalienable rights, have been supported by enlightened thinkers for centuries. But in the time since the document was approved in Paris on Dec. 10, 1948, millions of people have been massacred in such countries as Cambodia, Rwanda and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

When human rights activists from around the world converged on Paris last week to mark the 50th anniversary of the U.N. document, questions repeatedly surfaced regarding what it had really achieved.

"Who could fail to be dismayed when we compare the reality of the human rights situation around the world with the idealistic aims of the Universal Declaration?" asked Mary Robinson, the U.N. high commissioner for human rights. "It's painfully clear that inequities within and between societies are not diminishing but growing," she added.

Amnesty International, whose representatives were present at the Paris conference, took out a full-page newspaper ad showing pictures of people being tortured, enslaved and killed. Underneath each photograph was a line from the Universal Declaration.

"Well, happy bloody birthday, human rights," the ad said. "We'd love to celebrate the fine words set forth by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948. But they are words that could have been written a million times over in the blood of those who have been murdered, massacred and mutilated in the last 50 years."

In a sign of how difficult the situation remains, human rights campaigners from several countries — including Tunisia, Vietnam and Myanmar, formerly known as Burma — were banned by their governments from attending the gathering.

While there is much in the day-to-day news of the world to bolster the stances of the most inveterate pessimists, there are also signs of hope, such as the extradition of former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Dreifuss plans to speak out

Switzerland's first Jewish president said she plans to use her new post to speak out about her country's role in World War II.

Ruth Dreifuss told a Swiss newspaper that she had refused in the past "to speak as the token Jew of our government," but now intends to seize the opportunity to speak as president, "which gives me much clearer legitimacy."

Dreifuss is slated to take over the largely ceremonial post, which rotates among members of the Swiss Cabinet, on Jan. 1.

### AJCommittee visits Germany

Top officials in Germany's new government told a visiting delegation of American Jewish leaders that they plan to maintain that country's close relationship to Israel.

"There is a special responsibility of German democracy toward Israel," Foreign Minister Joschka Fisher told the delegation from the American Jewish Committee.

### Chief Nazi prosecutor dies

The United States' chief prosecutor of war criminals from Nazi concentration camps died at the age of 85.

From 1945 to 1947, William Denson successfully prosecuted 177 Nazi officials who served at Dachau, Mauthausen and Buchenwald.

### Hapsburg heir creates uproar

The son of Austria's last emperor caused an uproar recently when he suggested that his son was being hounded in a way comparable to the Nazi persecution of the Jews.

Otto von Hapsburg said his son Karl, who has faced calls to resign his seat on the European Parliament, is being "attacked because he carries that particular yellow star, the name of Hapsburg."

He later retracted the comment, which referred to the Star of David that the Jews were forced to wear during World War II, saying he had only meant that his son was being targeted because he belonged to a particular group.

### Maccabiah athlete remembered

A 54-year old lawn bowler who was one of four Australians killed when a bridge collapsed at the opening ceremony of the 1997 Maccabiah Games in Israel will have a park in Sydney, Australia, named after him.

The Warren Zines Memorial Park will be established in a Sydney suburb on the former site of the Dover Heights Bowling Club, of which he had been a member for 20 years.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### PNC vote to nullify covenant is recast to Israel's satisfaction

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The gathering of hundreds of Palestinian representatives in the Gaza Strip this week felt like a remake of an old movie.

When the members of the Palestine National Council, along with other groups, jumped to their feet and raised their hands to show President Clinton that they no longer seek Israel's destruction, their actions bore a striking resemblance to what they did in the spring of 1996, when the group voted by an overwhelming majority in favor of a vaguely worded resolution amending the covenant "by annulling clauses which contradict the exchange of letters between the PLO and the government of Israel on Sept. 9 and 10, 1993."

The script was almost identical, and so were the protagonists. The actors — members of the PNC, reinforced by newcomers — seemed tired, but the censor — Israel — wanted yet another scene before it would approve the film's release.

And like that vote, this week's action, which passed by an overwhelming majority, was met with praise.

President Clinton thanked Palestinian leaders in the Gaza Strip for rejecting the anti-Israel clauses in the Palestinian charter. Even Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who had sought a formal vote annulling the clauses, said he accepted the outcome of the Gaza meeting.

But it remained unclear whether the move would end the more than 30-year controversy surrounding the covenant — and solve the latest stumbling block in the peace talks.

The PNC was formed in 1964 as the supreme legislative body of the Palestinian people.

Long known as the Palestinian parliament-in-exile, the PNC was supposed to be elected directly by the Palestinian people, but these elections never materialized.

Its influence has waned in recent years with the formation of the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian Council, which represents Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The charter was adopted at what later became known as the first meeting of the PNC. On June 2, 1964, at the Ambassador Hotel in eastern Jerusalem, the 33 articles of the Palestinian charter were approved — 28 of which negate Israel's right to exist and call for its annihilation.

It is those articles that Israel has insisted be revoked.

Some of the clauses do, indeed, sharply contrast with the current Palestinian policy of coexistence. The first three articles declare that the Palestinian people have the sole right to Palestine in its pre-1948 borders.

According to Article 9, "armed struggle is the only way to liberate Palestine," and Article 19 says, "The partition of Palestine in 1947 and the establishment of the State of Israel are entirely illegal."

For the past 10 years, even before the Oslo process, Palestinian leaders had said the covenant was no longer in effect.

On Sept. 9, 1993, prior to the signing of the Oslo accords, Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat wrote a letter to Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin committing himself to changing the clauses negating Israel's right to exist and those that contradict the Palestinian promise to refrain from violence.

After Netanyahu took over as prime minister, and after the Palestinians failed to come through on their promise to redraft the covenant, the issue heated up once again.

Last January, Arafat spelled out in a letter to Clinton the 28 articles that would be annulled. The PLO Executive Committee and Central Council ratified the letter last week, and the PNC, joined by others, approved it in front of the president on Monday.

But despite the initial positive reviews, it remains to be seen whether this latest scene in the Israeli-Palestinian drama will lead to tangible progress in the peace process — or whether it will just be another burst of optimism that wanes over time. □

## Pledge on Auschwitz crosses advances talks over memorial

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Jewish and Polish officials have moved a step closer to resolving a long-running dispute over religious symbols at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Polish Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek last week pledged to remove 300 new crosses erected during the summer by radical Catholics at the site of the Nazi death camp.

In a letter to Jewish leaders who have been attempting during the last two years to work out a deal with the Polish government on the future of the memorial site, Buzek said the crosses would be removed "as soon as possible."

Polish officials are currently trying to remove the crosses through court action, but if that fails, Buzek said the government would adopt a new law enabling it to do so.

The crosses have stood as the latest stumbling block to efforts to work out a long-term plan to preserve and protect the concentration camps. Last year, a coalition of Jewish groups negotiated the removal of crosses and Stars of David from the area known as the Field of Ashes.

The coalition is still trying to work out an agreement concerning religious symbols just beyond the boundary of the camp, including a church with a cross on top, another cross in front and a third large cross alongside the old Carmelite convent.

Jewish groups have long protested the presence of the religious symbols as disrespectful. But some radical Catholic groups consider the crosses — particularly a 26-foot cross that served as a backdrop to a 1979 papal mass — a symbol of the Nazis' Polish victims.

Jewish and Polish officials had discussed replacing the church cross with a less intrusive monument to the Poles who died there, but talks stalled when the 300 new crosses were erected this summer to protest the negotiations.

Jewish groups and Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel said they were encouraged by the Polish prime minister's pledge, which a Polish official conveyed at a meeting of the coalition in Washington earlier this month.

The Jewish groups agreed to give the prime minister time to address the issue through the legislative process but emphasized they will not reopen the negotiations until the 300 crosses are removed.

Poland's pledge came as an outspoken critic of the plan for Auschwitz-Birkenau stepped up his criticism of U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum officials involved in the negotiations.

New York Rabbi Avi Weiss, president of AMCHA, the Coalition of Jewish Concerns, leveled a blistering attack at a meeting of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council this week, arguing that no Christian symbols should be tolerated.

He also charged that museum officials have no right to negotiate international agreements and said he would work with Congress to ensure that federal dollars are used solely to fulfill the museum's mandate of education and remembrance.

Miles Lerman, chairman of the museum's council, has been leading the coalition of Jewish groups that has been negotiating the agreement with Poland.

It includes the American Jewish Committee, American

Gathering of Holocaust Survivors, Anti-Defamation League, Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, World Jewish Congress and the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial Museum in Israel.

"If the Auschwitz-Birkenau agreement is signed, you will forever be held accountable for having been complicit in violating the memory of the dead," Weiss told council members Tuesday after they took the unprecedented step — albeit reluctantly — of allowing an outsider to speak at a council meeting.

"You have an obligation to order your leadership to cease and desist from dragging the museum into the Auschwitz-Birkenau negotiations lest the museum — and you as its council — be forever disgraced," the activist rabbi said.

His remarks left most museum officials and council members aghast.

Lerman angrily dismissed Weiss' remarks, telling JTA in an interview that "the man has a personal vendetta" and "he does not understand."

In remarks to the council, Lerman said the State Department, Congressional Research Service and the museum's general counsel informed museum officials that the negotiations with Poland "are totally consistent with our federal mandate."

Some museum officials have said they believe Weiss has an ax to grind with the museum's leadership following the ouster earlier this year of Walter Reich, his brother-in-law, as the museum's director.

Weiss denied that his criticism was based on his relationship with Reich and said he is driven solely by memory of the Holocaust.

Benjamin Meed, president of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and one of three people designated to respond to Weiss' remarks, said the Polish government has "come a long way in meeting the concerns of the Jewish community."

He charged that Weiss' "name-calling destroys the atmosphere and denies all serious dialogue."

Beyond the religious symbols, at issue in the negotiations is a plan to physically link Auschwitz and Birkenau with a walking path to induce more visitors to see Birkenau, where the vast majority of Jews were killed.

The talks are also aimed at balancing the commercial and development interests of the two towns — an important concern on the Polish side — against the Jewish imperative, as Lerman has described it, of preserving "for posterity the sacredness, physical integrity and centrality of Jewish suffering and martyrdom at Auschwitz-Birkenau." □

## Menorah lit in Moscow square

MOSCOW (JTA) — About 100 Jews attended an outdoor ceremony to witness the lighting of a 23-foot menorah in a Moscow square.

The Lubavitch movement, which traditionally stages far larger gatherings on the first night of Chanukah, decided on a smaller-scale event this year to avoid possible tensions at a time when Jewish leaders are concerned about a possible resurgence of anti-Semitism.

Other Chanukah ceremonies were held in locations throughout Russia, in some cases with the participation of local mayors and governors. There were no reports of any racist incidents connected to the celebrations. □