



Daily News Bulletin

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82nd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

House opposes statehood move

The U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution Tuesday opposing a unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood.

The 379-24 vote came several days after the Senate passed the same resolution. [Page 1]

U.S. slams Jewish settlements

The United States criticized the expansion of Jewish settlements in Israel beyond their present boundaries, saying it is harming the peace process with the Palestinian Authority.

"We have been troubled by the expansion of existing settlements well beyond their periphery," the spokesman for the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv said Tuesday.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's adviser, David Bar-Illan, rejected the charge, saying all settlement construction is taking place within the existing "municipal boundaries of these communities."

Sharon speaks out on Jerusalem

Israel regards a 1947 U.N. resolution that called for the internationalization of Jerusalem as "null and void," Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon told a gathering of foreign ambassadors Tuesday.

He added that Resolution 181 was meaningless because the 1947 partition plan proposed by the United Nations had been rejected at the time by Israel's Arab neighbors. Sharon's comments came days after Germany's ambassador to Israel stated that the European Union does not consider itself obligated to honor Israeli directives regarding Jerusalem because of the resolution.

Latvian veterans hold march

Hundreds of Latvians participated in a march of war veterans who fought the Soviet Red Army during World War II.

The local Jewish community protested the event, made into a national holiday for the first time this year, saying it commemorates soldiers who fought for the Nazi cause.

Jewish leaders say it commemorates soldiers who fought for the Nazi cause. Grigory Krupnikov, leader of the Latvian Jewish community, said he hopes the "holiday will be removed from the calendar next year." [Page 4]

NEWS ANALYSIS

As Clinton awaits Arafat visit, Congress rejects unilateral move

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — If pictures speak louder than words, photos of President Clinton's third meeting in three months with Yasser Arafat will roar.

The Palestinian Authority chairman, scheduled to meet with Clinton on Tuesday, has embarked on a world tour aimed at securing pledges of support for a unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood.

Although White House officials say Arafat won't get support for a unilateral declaration, the meeting is likely to boost his prominence among other world leaders and his own people.

"The visit itself is a reward — the fact that he's getting treated as he is with official recognition equivalent as a head of state," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

As the Clinton administration grapples with its exact response to Arafat, Congress has overwhelmingly rejected such a unilateral Palestinian move and is calling on the administration not to recognize such a state.

Arafat has threatened to unilaterally declare a state on the territory under his control on May 4, which marks the end of the interim peace period established by the Oslo accords.

But peace talks have repeatedly been stalled since that date was set. Issues of borders and statehood were supposed to be addressed in final-status talks, which have barely gotten off the ground.

As a result, Israel and many of its supporters view any such declaration a violation of the accords.

They point to a 1993 letter sent only four days before the signing of the Declaration of Principles in which Arafat promised then-Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to resolve all problems through negotiations.

"The PLO commits itself to the Middle East peace process, and to a peaceful resolution of the conflict between the two sides, and declares that all outstanding issues relating to permanent status will be resolved through negotiations," Arafat wrote.

The issue by and large is not the establishment of a Palestinian state — even most Israelis believe that such a state is inevitable.

For its part, the administration, while clear in its opposition to any unilateral declaration, has, on several occasions, come close to endorsing the more general principle of Palestinian statehood.

Senior U.S. officials have told Israelis that Clinton will not undercut final-status negotiations by promising Arafat future U.S. recognition for a state or by agreeing to a date when such a declaration would be acceptable.

Instead, most observers predict that Clinton will reiterate U.S. policy that a Palestinian state can only emerge through negotiations with Israel.

At the same time, Clinton is also promising to work toward accelerated final-status talks with a precise schedule to begin after the Israeli election, which is scheduled for May 17. Such a plan has been supported by Israel's three major candidates for prime minister.

But many activists express concern that Clinton will give Arafat vague pledges intended to be interpreted to support Palestinian statehood.

As he tours the world, Arafat appears willing to compromise on the May 4 date —

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel urged to return bodies

Israeli human rights groups criticized the government for refusing to return the bodies of Palestinian terrorists to their families for proper Muslim burials.

A joint report issued by the B'Tselem and Hamoked groups said Israel has in its custody the bodies of 24 Palestinians killed during the past five years in terrorist attacks or in clashes with Israeli soldiers.

The army responded that the practice conformed with Israeli and international law, but that discussions were nonetheless taking place among the army's top officials regarding the return of the bodies.

Strike halts phone service

A quarter of a million Israelis were left without phone service Tuesday after workers at the Bezek phone company launched work stoppages to protest an unresolved wage dispute. The stoppages also disrupted trading on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange.

Rape suspect denies charges

A travel agent charged with raping the Israeli who is the reigning Miss World argued in court this week that the plaintiff had actually been the one to rape him.

Shlomo Noor appeared in court this week for a hearing regarding a prosecution request to keep him in custody until the end of his trial. Noor is charged with raping Linor Abargil in Milan last fall, when she sought his help in arranging a flight to Israel.

Argentine 'Aliyah 2000' launched

Ten families immigrated Monday to Israel from Argentina as part of a special "Aliyah 2000" program of the Jewish Agency for Israel. An additional 20 Argentinian families are expected to move to Kiryat Bialik in northern Israel as a result of a visit to the South American country by a Jewish Agency delegation.



Daily News Bulletin

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even considering a new Dec. 31 deadline — but only in exchange for pledges of support for a recognition at that time.

These bargaining tactics have enraged Israel and its American supporters and have generated much concern on Capitol Hill.

In an effort to ensure that Clinton unequivocally opposes any unilateral declaration — regardless of the date — the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the pro-Israel lobby, turned to Congress to deliver a blunt message.

"We strongly believe that if Chairman Arafat is going to threaten to breach, both in letter and spirit, the most fundamental element of the peace process, then one cannot claim that the Palestinians are acting in good faith," said Howard Kohr, AIPAC's executive director.

Both the House and Senate delivered, overwhelmingly passing resolutions opposing any declaration of statehood that does not emerge through negotiations with the Jewish state.

"United States opposition to any unilateral Palestinian declaration of statehood should be made clear and unambiguous," said the Senate resolution, which passed 98-1 on March 11.

Calling such a declaration, "a most fundamental violation of the Oslo process," the Senate called on Clinton to "unequivocally assert" that such a state "would not be recognized by the United States."

During debate on the Senate floor, Sen. Sam Brownback (R-Kan.), one of the key sponsors of the resolution, summed up the view of many of his colleagues when he said, "We should not pay Mr. Arafat for not doing something which he should not have threatened to do in the first place."

"It cannot be resolved through force or fiat. The prospect of peace in the Middle East is just too important to risk in a game of political chicken. If the Palestinian leadership is truly serious about peace, they will abandon the prospect of unilateral statehood," said Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.).

An identical House measure passed on Tuesday by a margin of 379-24, with two members opting not take a position and voting present. □

Australian Jews ask Anglicans to end emphasis on conversions

By Jeremy Jones

SYDNEY, Australia (JTA) — Leaders of Sydney's Jewish community, responding to a dramatic increase in missionary activity aimed at converting Jews to Christianity, have called on the hierarchy of the Anglican Church to stop a practice they say Jews regard with "abhorrence."

Until the 1970s, Anglicanism — previously known as the Church of England — was Australia's largest religion, and one in four Australians still belongs to the church. Jewish-Anglican dialogue began for the first time in 1997.

At the second-ever dialogue, held here recently, Jewish Board of Deputies President Peter Wertheim told the five-person Anglican delegation that there is an "urgent need for the Anglican Church to promulgate guidelines on acceptable and unacceptable missionizing methods."

Of particular concern to Jews in Sydney are the activities of Jews for Jesus and Kehillat ha-Moshiach, which are led by ministers with Jewish backgrounds.

The literature of the groups, which is often phrased to appeal to schoolchildren, includes insulting caricatures of Judaism as a religion that requires "fulfilment" through Christianity.

Rabbi Raymond Apple, senior minister at the Great Synagogue in Sydney, said the Anglican paper on missionizing delivered at the dialogue was "diplomatic," but that it was "unambiguous in its presentation of the Anglican view" that a core Christian belief is that Jews should be converted to Christianity.

Although not discussed at the meeting, the Jewish community has also recently lodged complaints with the Anglican Church that textbooks in church schools teach that Jews killed Jesus, while pupils are instructed that Jews who do not accept Jews as Jesus as the messiah will go to hell. □

JEWISH WORLD

France prints wartime inventory

France published an extensive inventory of documents that detail the policy of the pro-Vichy regime during World War II.

The director of the French National Archives said two-thirds of the documents, which can be purchased in a package for \$50, pertain to the forced sale of Jewish property.

Spain, Austria to give to fund

Spain and Austria agreed to contribute a total of some \$10 million to a fund assisting Holocaust survivors, the countries' foreign ministers announced separately last Friday.

The fund, using gold the Nazis looted from the European countries they overran, but never returned by the Allies after the war, now totals about \$60 million.

The fund has already paid for medicine and other humanitarian needs for survivors in the former Soviet Union, according to the World Jewish Congress.

Meanwhile, the board of Austria's largest banking group agreed Monday to a proposed settlement of claims that it profited from gold looted by the Nazis from concentration camp victims.

Bank Austria would not disclose the terms of the settlement, but Jewish sources involved in the negotiations said it amounts to about \$40 million.

Croat proclaims innocence

The commander of Croatia's largest World War II concentration camp proclaimed his innocence at the start of his war crimes trial in the nation's capital of Zagreb.

"I absolutely do not feel guilty, not for a single charge," Dinko Sakic said Monday after hearing the 35-page indictment, which charged him with the deaths of some 2,000 people.

In 1944, Sakic, who was extradited from Argentina last year, was head of the Jasenovac concentration camp, where an estimated 600,000 Jews, Serbs and Gypsies were killed during the war.

Chapter splits from AJCongress

The southern California chapter of the American Jewish Congress announced Monday that it is splitting off from the national organization and closing its Los Angeles office.

Present and past officers of the regional office cited long-standing differences over ideology, including the issue of Palestinian statehood, which is supported in Los Angeles but opposed by the national headquarters in New York.

The officers also announced the formation of a new organization, provisionally named the Progressive Jewish Alliance.

Terrorist Abu Nidal is in Cairo, says biographer of Syria's Assad

By Douglas Davis

LONDON (JTA) — Top international terrorist Abu Nidal is alive and well and living in Cairo, according to an article in the London-based daily Al-Hayat on Tuesday.

Noted Arabist Patrick Seale, a biographer of Syrian President Hafez Assad and reportedly close to the Syrian regime, wrote that Abu Nidal — the nom de guerre of Jaffa-born Sabri al-Banna — left his safe haven in Libya after falling out with Libyan leader Muammar Gadhafi.

Seale flatly denied reports in both the Arabic and Western media that Abu Nidal was dying of leukemia and had been moved to Iraq.

Such reports, said Seale, were probably a concoction of Egyptian intelligence "to conceal his presence in Cairo and give themselves time to decide what to do with him."

Abu Nidal is reportedly now seeking to trade his extensive knowledge of radical Islamic groups, and of the inner workings of the regimes in Sudan, Yemen and Libya, for Egyptian protection.

"In particular, he is trying to sell his services to Egyptian State Security in its war against militant Islamic networks such as Jihad and Gama'a al-Islamiya, which have been responsible for numerous attacks in Egypt against tourists and other targets," wrote Seale. "There is no suggestion that Egypt has taken up Abu Nidal's offer."

Although some Egyptian — and perhaps American — intelligence officers might be tempted to use Abu Nidal, Seale noted, Western diplomats believe that the revelation of his presence in Cairo could prove a grave embarrassment to Egypt and damage its international standing.

"But Abu Nidal is clearly hoping to relaunch his dormant terrorist career under the protection of a new state patron," he wrote.

In another startling revelation, Seale claimed that Israel had comprehensively penetrated Abu Nidal's Fatah Revolutionary Council.

And he said top Abu Nidal defectors who renounced terrorism and recently settled in the West Bank and Gaza Strip with the permission of the Israeli authorities include two former terrorists who were involved in high-profile atrocities against Israeli targets.

Among those named by Seale as having settled in the Palestinian-controlled areas are Ali al-Farra and Hisham Harb. Al-Farra, according to Seale, is a former head of external intelligence for the Fatah Revolutionary Council and was involved in planning the attempted assassination of former ambassador to London Shlomo Argov on June 3, 1982, an event that provided a pretext for Israel's invasion of Lebanon.

Harb is described as having been a key member of Abu Nidal's Special Missions department and played a major role in the simultaneous attacks on El Al ticket counters at the Rome and Vienna airports in December 1985.

"According to reliable sources," added Seale, "none of these men has been arrested or interrogated by the Israelis, leading to renewed speculation that the group was already well-known to Israeli intelligence — indeed, that Israel had penetrated, and at least partially controlled, Abu Nidal's organization for much of its violent career."

Abu Nidal was the PLO's chief representative in Iraq when he broke with Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement in 1974 to protest the PLO's flirtation with diplomacy.

His Fatah Revolutionary Council claimed hundreds of lives and was regarded as one of the most dangerous and savage of international terrorist organizations.

But while he attacked Israeli and Jewish targets throughout the world, Abu Nidal is believed to have been responsible for even more killings of Palestinians.

He ordered the assassinations of the PLO's most dovish diplomats, including Sa'id Hammami in London, Ali Yassin in Kuwait and Izzeddin Khalak in Paris, all three in 1978.

He was also responsible for the killings of Naim Khodr in Brussels in 1981 and Issam Sartawi in Lisbon in 1983.

One of his more recent Palestinian victims was Abu Iyad, or Salah Khalaf, Arafat's intelligence chief and one of the confidants of the Palestinian leader, who was assassinated in January 1991, just before the start of the Persian Gulf War. □

Latvian Jews protest march, holiday for World War II veterans

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — Hundreds of Latvians participated in a march this week of war veterans who fought the Soviet Red Army during World War II.

The local Jewish community protested the event held Tuesday, made into a national holiday for the first time this year.

Jewish leaders say it commemorates soldiers who fought for the Nazi cause. Grigory Krupnikov, leader of the Latvian Jewish community, said he hopes the "holiday will be removed from the calendar next year."

A leading Jewish group denounced the march as well.

Efraim Zuroff, the Israel director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, said in a statement in Jerusalem that the march is "obvious proof that many Latvians have learned nothing from the horrors of World War II."

Meanwhile, Red Army war veterans and groups representing the ethnic Russian minority in this Baltic state staged a counter-demonstration.

The two marches, both of which were held with permission from the authorities, paralyzed traffic in the central part of the Latvian capital of Riga and kept police on full alert for several hours.

A march of Latvian SS veterans last year brought a storm of protest from Russia, Israel and a number of Jewish groups worldwide.

The celebration caused an international scandal when high-ranking Latvian state and military officials joined the veterans' march.

A parliamentary decision this year to turn March 16 into a national holiday dedicated to Latvian soldiers who died in World War II heightened the controversy.

Veterans of the Nazi-sponsored unit have traditionally marked March 16 as the day their unit first fought against the Soviet Red Army in 1943.

Earlier this month, after Tuesday was officially named a national holiday, the Latvian president, who had previously spoken out in favor of the day, said he regretted the parliament's decision. Guntis Ulmanis called the decision his personal mistake.

According to media reports from Riga, no officials participated in this year's march.

Many Latvians argue that the Latvian SS did not participate in Nazi atrocities, arguing that its soldiers only fought for Latvian independence from the Soviet Union, which invaded the country in 1940. □

Museums look into plundered art

SYDNEY, Australia (JTA) — The directors of Australia's museums and art galleries are reviewing a policy to deal with Nazi-looted art in their country.

Although no policy was adopted at a meeting held last week, the directors were given a copy of a statement of principles on the issue, which, in addition to deploring the plunder of art during World War II, includes a commitment to weigh thoroughly and speedily claims of title and a ban on accepting bequests or gifts of

looted works. The Association of Art Museum Directors in the United States has already adopted these principles.

Each gallery has the authority to adopt or reject the statement, but Bryan Kennedy, the director of the Australian National Gallery, has already committed his museum to review its holdings. □

Prosecutors in Russia refusing to investigate hard-line lawmaker

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — Russian prosecutors are refusing to launch a criminal investigation of a Communist Party lawmaker for a statement that was widely interpreted as a call for anti-Jewish pogroms.

According to the Rostov Regional Prosecutor's Office, a controversial speech made by Albert Makashov last month "was not aimed at inciting ethnic strife."

The decision by the prosecutors came as the president of the Russian Jewish Congress, Vladimir Goussinsky, urged the U.S. Jewish community to press for diplomatic isolation of members of the Communist Party who have made anti-Semitic remarks during the past year.

Goussinsky made his comments at a meeting Monday with leaders of the World Jewish Congress in New York, where he discussed the recent rise in Russian anti-Semitism.

Makashov, a hard-line Communist legislator, who has made repeated anti-Semitic statements since the Russian economy collapsed last August, said there are both "good Jews" and "bad Jews" and those whom the nationalists consider good "will continue to live," while the bad "will have a hard time."

The remarks in Novochoerkassk, a largely Cossack mining town in the southern Russian region of Rostov, outraged the Jewish community, liberal journalists and lawmakers.

Speaking at a conference sponsored by a nationalist group known as the Movement in Support of the Army, Makashov told the audience: "Jews are brave.

"They are so brave because we are sleeping, because none of us has yet knocked on their door."

He also suggested the group, of which he is a leader, should change its name to the Movement Against Yids.

Last week, the State Duma, the lower house of the Russian parliament, was scheduled to vote on a motion proposed by liberal deputies aimed at censuring Makashov.

The vote was blocked by the Communists, the largest single group in the house.

Makashov recently announced that he will make a bid for the Russian presidency in the elections that are scheduled to be held next year.

In January, federal prosecutors launched a criminal investigation of Makashov for his anti-Semitic statements, but little progress has been reported.

Meanwhile, Jewish officials say the surge in Russian anti-Semitism, along with the persistent economic trouble, is prompting more Jews to opt for emigration.

According to the Jewish Agency for Israel's Moscow office, 3,300 Jews left Russia for the Jewish state in the first two months of 1999.

Some 1,600 left in the same period last year. □