



# Daily News Bulletin

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82<sup>nd</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### U.S. shifts stance on Wye

In a shift of stance, a U.S. official said the Palestinian Authority must do more to combat terrorism before Israel is required to carry out any further West Bank redeployments under the terms of the Wye agreement.

Confirming Israeli media reports of the shift, the spokesman for the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv, Larry Schwartz, said Monday, "If you read the Wye agreement, you see that the handover of territory is the last step, and that other conditions have to be met first by the Palestinians."

For the past few months, the United States has been directing most of the blame toward Israel for the breakdown in the Wye process.

### U.S. to help needy survivors

The U.S. State Department released \$4 million to provide food, clothing and medical treatment to needy Holocaust survivors in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

The money is the first installment in \$25 million the United States has pledged to the Nazi Persecutee Relief Fund over the next three years. Approximately 17 countries have pledged more than \$61 million to the relief fund, which was established in 1997.

The Claims Conference will administer the aid, the first to be disbursed from the fund.

### Aliyah timed to Passover

Some 750 immigrants from the former Soviet Union are expected to arrive in Israel this week in time to celebrate Passover, according to the Jewish Agency for Israel. In addition, seven Jewish refugees from Yugoslavia will arrive in Israel from Budapest, agency officials said.

### Court: Rabbi's kids must testify

A U.S. federal appeals court ruled that an Orthodox rabbi's adult children must testify against him before a Newark grand jury in a criminal investigation believed to involve financial impropriety.

The family, which is anonymous under grand jury secrecy laws, appealed a judge's decision to force the children to testify.

The family had cited Jewish law, which prevents children or parents from testifying against each other.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Yugoslav Jews find refuge in Budapest from bombings

By Michael J. Jordan

BUDAPEST (JTA) — In other circumstances, there would be nothing unusual about busloads of Yugoslavs visiting the capital of their northern neighbor, Hungary.

But with NATO's daily assault on Kosovo and other locations throughout Yugoslavia, these are no ordinary "tourists."

Roughly 200 Yugoslav Jews — some of whom arrived one day before NATO fired its first missile on March 24 — are now in Budapest, hosted by the Hungarian Jewish community. As the Jews here wait and see how events unfold at home, more buses are on their way.

"We are not refugees; we're still tourists who crossed the border legally with our passports," said one woman from Belgrade, the Yugoslav capital, who arrived March 23 with her two grown children. "The plan was just to come for a couple of days until things settle down, then go back. But we're still waiting."

Indeed, there is a huge distinction between these citizens of Yugoslavia — comprised of two republics, Serbia and tiny Montenegro — and the ethnic Albanians of Kosovo, Serbia's southern province.

During 14 months of conflict, the Yugoslav army and Serbian police have forced tens of thousands of ethnic Albanians — known as Kosovars — to flee south into Albania proper. And more are coming every day. In all, 500,000 of the 2 million Kosovars have reportedly been uprooted from their homes.

Escalating tension in the province, fueled by Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, prompted NATO to launch its unprecedented air campaign. Soon, there may be other ethnic minorities in Serbia seeking relief from the warfare.

Hungary, for example, is bracing for a wave of ethnic Hungarians from northern Serbia, and many Serbs themselves are believed to be already staying with relatives in Hungary.

All the activity in Serbia is reminiscent of what happened earlier this decade, as Milosevic orchestrated the wars in Bosnia and Croatia next door. From 1991 to 1995, some 200,000 Serbian citizens emigrated abroad, many of them to avoid the army draft.

At that time, some Yugoslav Jewish parents also sent their draft-age sons to Israel.

This time around, as NATO strikes loomed last week, the Hungarian Federation of Jewish Communities offered shelter to the estimated 3,000 Yugoslav Jews.

With Yugoslavia a pariah state, Hungary is one of the few countries in the world that hasn't slapped visa requirements on Yugoslavia's citizens.

So on March 23, the Belgrade community took up the Hungarian offer, and rented the first two buses to make the 400-mile trip.

As NATO bombing has intensified in the days since, so, too, has the stream of Yugoslav Jews into Budapest. Two-thirds of them are teen-agers and young adults, sent away for safekeeping — and for their parents' peace of mind.

"I'm here because my mom made me," said Iva, 23, a university student who on Monday sent her first e-mail back home.

"She said, 'Go, while you can. You can always come back.' But I have just a few more exams before I graduate, so now I don't know what to do."

Other arrivals include a handful of families, a few elderly people and several young children.

The visitors are spending their days gathered at the center, the adults sitting on

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Israel offers to help refugees

Israel offered humanitarian aid to refugees fleeing the fighting in Kosovo. Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon said Monday he had appealed to the governments of Albania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for permission to land an airplane carrying humanitarian aid. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the fighting in Kosovo a "tragedy," adding that Israel is disturbed by the "loss of civilian life."

### Israel plans prisoner release

Israel was expected to release 20 Palestinian prisoners before the start of Passover, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported this week.

The paper quoted a source in the Prime Minister's Office as saying that none of those freed would be members of Hamas or have blood on their hands.

Under the U.S.-brokered Wye agreement signed last October, Israel agreed to release 750 Palestinian prisoners. It has so far freed about a third of that number.

### All-night talks resolve strike

Some 400,000 public sector workers in Israel ended their four-day strike Monday after all-night talks with government officials resulted in a 4.8 percent wage increase for the workers.

The strike had caused disruptions at Ben-Gurion Airport, slowed operations at hospitals and government offices, and left garbage piling up on the streets.

### Reservist convicted of murder

An Israeli army reserve major was convicted in a 1997 murder of a British tourist.

Suggesting he had suffered mental impairment from his army service, Daniel Okev had claimed he could not remember the incident, in which he shot and killed hitchhiker Jeffrey Hunter and wounded Hunter's girlfriend, Charlotte Gibb, after picking them up on a road near Eilat.



## Daily News Bulletin

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wooden chairs, chain-smoking, nervously talking about the war.

Community officials are trying to come up with activities for the kids — such as arts and crafts and basketball games — especially those separated from their parents.

Thrown into the mix are a pair of young sisters, Bosnian Jews who are on the move for the second time in their short lives.

They were among the 200 Jews evacuated from Sarajevo to Belgrade in 1992.

Up to 150 of the visiting Jews are being housed at the Jewish community center in downtown Budapest, in dorms usually reserved for 40 Hungarian Jewish students from the provinces. But those students are home for Passover. So extra foam mattresses have been crammed in to sleep seven to 10 per room.

The other Yugoslav Jews are sleeping at a Jewish high school in town, which lacks shower facilities.

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee has quickly swung into action, assisting with individual needs of the Yugoslav Jews, including counseling and finding better accommodations. In Budapest, when the number of Jews streaming in jumped from 40 to 200 over the weekend, the local Budapest community, which had initially thought it could assist their neighbors on its own, asked the JDC for help.

But thinking further ahead, the JDC's priority is to find better housing. One possibility is the Szarvas international Jewish camp, located two hours from Budapest.

Steven Schwager, associate executive vice president of the JDC, has alerted Jewish officials in neighboring countries — including Romania and Bulgaria — about the potential need to help provide temporary shelter if the exodus of Yugoslav Jews increases.

The Yugoslav Jews, aside from their anxiety about the future, also fret about how they will be viewed by those back home. Most of those interviewed did not want their names used.

During the Bosnian war, many who left Serbia were branded "traitors" by the Serbian media, a government mouthpiece.

But Yugoslav Jews are, in fact, quite loyal. Indeed, they want to return home when the dust clears. Many have opted not to come to Budapest — yet — for fear of losing jobs difficult to come by in a country in economic ruin.

And when it comes to the NATO assault, most share the hostility of their compatriots toward the United States and Europe.

"Milosevic is a jerk, but this does nothing to him," Iva said, echoing the views of many here. "Instead, they're killing people like my friends, who are forced to serve their military service in Kosovo."

Still, those Yugoslav Jews who can leave continue to do so. Another two busloads were expected in Budapest on Tuesday, with numbers perhaps climbing as high as 500 to 1,000. Yet JDC officials say it is too early to consider a replay of the dramatic 1992 evacuation, including an airlift, of 2,000 Jews and non-Jews from Sarajevo.

Meanwhile, Jews in Kosovo have declined offers to help them leave, according to Jewish aid workers who have been active in the former Yugoslavia.

Plans have reportedly been drawn up to extract the approximately 50 Jews remaining in the Kosovar capital of Pristina if necessary, the workers said.

Meanwhile, eight Jewish men from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia fled to Bulgaria over the weekend and are being cared for by local Jews near the Bulgarian capital of Sofia.

The men, all of them college students, expressed fears that the conflict may spill over the Serbian-Macedonian border. And the Jewish Agency for Israel reported that seven Yugoslav Jews — including a family of four from Pristina and three individuals from Serbia — have decided they wanted to immigrate to Israel.

The Jewish Agency said it was bringing these Jews via Budapest on Tuesday in time for Passover, and that they had been invited to be the seder guests of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

For those still in Budapest, seders awaited them as well. All those who have come were invited to the Budapest community seder on the first night of Passover and to a JDC-sponsored seder the second night.

"Kol Yisrael arevim zeh b'zeh. All Jews are responsible for each other," said Israel Sela, the JDC's representative in Hungary. "No Jew will be left out of the seder." □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Branch of British bank implicated

The manager of the French branch of Britain's leading commercial bank, Barclays, not only acted as the Nazis' banker during World War II but also volunteered to hand over Jewish staff members, according to documents found in the U.S. National Archives.

The materials were located by researchers working on a BBC television documentary, "Banking With Hitler," which examined the role of European banks during the war.

### High court rules in prayer case

The U.S. Supreme Court rejected an appeal from a Utah man who was denied the opportunity to offer a prayer at a city council meeting because of its content.

Without comment, the court refused to hear an appeal of a lower court's decision against Tom Snyder, calling his proposed prayer "political harangue." Snyder had accused the council, which traditionally allows opening prayers before its meetings, of violating the Constitution by favoring one religion over another.

### Red Cross to probe actions

The International Committee of the Red Cross agreed to appoint a panel of historians to investigate why the organization provided passports to Nazi war criminals such as Josef Mengele and Adolf Eichmann after the war, according to a Red Cross official.

The decision came after the Red Cross came under pressure from Swiss lawmakers who had seen recent media reports about the organization's postwar activities. In a related development, the Swiss government promised to investigate media accusations that the Swiss consul in Genoa, Italy, provided several war criminals with Red Cross travel documents at the end of the war.

### Polish Jews protest housing

Jewish organizations in Poland denounced plans to build housing at a square in Warsaw from which hundreds of thousands of Jews were deported to their deaths in Treblinka.

At a news conference last Friday in Warsaw convened by several Jewish organizations, Feliks Tych, the director of the Jewish Historical Institute, called plans to build at Umschlagplatz "moral vandalism." A monument to the deportees has stood at the site since the late 1980s.

### Jewish golfer receives honor

Amy Alcott was inducted last week into the Ladies Professional Golf Association Hall of Fame in St. Augustine, Fla. The Jewish athlete is the 15th woman to be inducted since the honor was established in 1967.

## Activists fear budget proposals could endanger U.S. aid to Israel

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Budget proposals speeding their way through Congress could endanger U.S. aid to Israel, Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinians.

That's the charge from many in the Jewish community, which represents the loudest U.S. supporters of foreign aid.

A \$1.74 trillion House budget resolution approved last week would cut foreign affairs spending, by some \$4 billion, to slightly more than \$16 billion. A Senate version of the bill — also passed last week — also contains substantial cuts but not as deep.

Domestic programs of interest to the Jewish community — including low-income housing and welfare — would also face similar cuts if the budget becomes law.

If these budgets become law, "there's no way we can get all the programs funded that we want, to adequate levels," said Reva Price, Washington representative for the Jewish Council for Public Affairs.

The House and Senate budgets, now subject to negotiation between representatives from each chamber, are the first step in setting federal spending for the fiscal year that begins Oct. 1. They also lay out spending guidelines for the next few years that include similar cuts. Much like President Clinton's budget offered earlier this year, the proposals passed by Congress are the opening gambit in what is certain to be an arduous negotiating process.

Although the U.S. government is enjoying forecasts of record budget surpluses, Congress and the Clinton administration are still living under the 1996 balanced budget agreement that requires deep cuts in federal spending.

Only military spending, Social Security and Medicare are exempt from an estimated 12.2 percent cut in 2000 and a 27.8 percent cut by 2004.

Aid to Israel and the Middle East is already vulnerable, activists say, because it represents about half the total foreign aid budget. If the budget is slashed even further, activists fear cuts are inevitable.

"These cuts would slash deeply into the bone and sinew of our programs," U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright told reporters hours before the House approved its budget resolution on March 25.

"These proposals are quite frankly outrageous and unacceptable," she said, adding that "as currently constituted represent a clear and present danger to American safety, prosperity and values."

The House budget resolution calls for \$16.4 billion in total foreign affairs spending, \$2.3 billion less than the State Department was allocated for 1999.

Clinton's budget called for \$20.9 billion for foreign affairs.

How much would go to foreign aid and how much to foreign operations, such as embassies and personnel, is determined later on in the budgeting process. When the numbers became public last week, a wave of concern hit the Jewish community.

"You can't believe that they would be this irresponsible. I can't believe that the numbers would hold up," said Ira Forman, executive director of the National Jewish Democratic Council.

But if they do, "Israel and Wye aid could be in danger," Forman said, referring to a \$1.9 billion package of aid promised Israel, Jordan and the Palestinians at the October Wye peace talks.

But not everyone in the Jewish community believes the budget should be opposed.

Matt Brooks, executive director of the National Jewish Coalition, a pro-Republican group, defended the budget, echoing Republican congressional leaders who say that federal spending needs to be reined in.

As for aid to Israel, Brooks believes it is protected by this budget.

"It is the Clinton administration that is trying to unilaterally cut aid to Israel against the wishes of those in Congress," he said, referring to a White House plan to speed Israel's reduction of economic assistance.

Israel itself has proposed cutting back on U.S. economic assistance, but at a slower rate than the White House. □

## Victims appeal to U.S. Congress in quest for terrorists' extradition

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — In the murky world of Middle Eastern terrorism, at least two things are certain: Palestinian terrorists have killed 12 American citizens since the 1993 Oslo accords were signed, and the United States has not extradited any suspects connected with the attacks.

An attempt to find out why the United States has not brought those responsible for planning, ordering and financing those attacks to justice ended last week with more questions than answers at an emotional U.S. Senate subcommittee hearing on the issue.

The March 25 hearing, the culmination of a two-year effort by the Zionist Organization of America to raise the matter's public profile, brought together victims' families, a terrorist attack survivor, and U.S., Israeli and Palestinian government officials.

"There's a real question whether the administration is doing what should be done," said Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.), who chaired the hearing on behalf of the Senate appropriations subcommittee responsible for foreign aid.

The hearing was the first official comprehensive discussion of the issue, which has emerged as a sticking point between the Clinton administration and Israel. It also is believed to mark the first time that Israeli government and Palestinian Authority officials testified together before Congress.

The dispute between Israel and the United States stems from a disagreement over how to interpret evidence about who is responsible for the killings and what to do with them.

Israel is convinced it knows the identity of the perpetrators and that the Palestinian Authority has not dealt with them adequately. The United States says that the evidence Israel cites does not conclusively prove the identity of the individuals and that it is engaged in its own investigation.

Israel's first choice would be to extradite the alleged terrorists to Israel, but barring that, it would like to see them extradited to the United States. Israel has charged the Palestinians with releasing suspects they had detained.

The FBI, which is set to make its third investigative trip to Israel on the matter, believes that the Palestinians are holding at least seven suspects tied to attacks on Americans.

The administration has said that if there are grounds for criminal indictments against any suspects, it would seek their extraditions.

While short on specifics, the public airing on Capitol Hill got the Clinton administration's attention.

Specter issued an unusual request for the two senior Clinton administration officials to stay after their own testimony to hear from a woman who had survived an attack and from two parents whose children were killed in suicide bombings.

Vicki Eisenfeld, her voice cracking, recounted in chilling detail the night she and her husband received a call from the U.S. Embassy in Israel announcing that her son Matthew had been killed in a 1996 Jerusalem bus bombing.

Her son, a 25-year-old rabbinical student at the Jewish Theological Seminary, was one of 26 people killed by the Hamas suicide bomber.

"Help the people here," Eisenfeld said of the victims' families, urging the senators to encourage the Palestinians "to help us" by extraditing the suspects.

Martin Indyk, U.S. assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, and Mark Richard, the deputy assistant attorney general who is overseeing the U.S. investigation into the attacks, sat at the witness table during Eisenfeld's testimony.

Another witness, Diana Campuzano, detailed the injuries she suffered after a suicide bomber struck on Ben Yehuda Street in Jerusalem in 1997. Campuzano, one of more than 190 people wounded during the attack that claimed five lives, is about to undergo a fifth operation to remove six screws from her skull.

Her forehead and nose have been completely rebuilt.

In response to a senator's question, Indyk said he takes the matter "very seriously," especially because several of the bombings occurred while he served as ambassador to Israel.

Richard suggested there were at least two reasons why the United States has not yet sought any extraditions. He said it has been difficult getting information from both Israel and the Palestinian Authority. In addition, there is concern over whether the evidence would stand up in an American court.

He said Israel's response to FBI requests for investigative and forensic reports "was not as timely or forthcoming as we had hoped." But he did say that through later direct meetings, U.S. investigators obtained the information they had sought.

As for the strength of the evidence, Richard strongly hinted that some of the confessions had come as a result of torture or police pressure by Palestinian authorities, and would therefore not be admissible in a U.S. court.

Specter reacted angrily to Richard's report that Israel and the Palestinians had not cooperated fully in the U.S. investigation, even suggesting that he would rethink U.S. aid to Israel and the Palestinians.

"I'm not going to support funding for any country that doesn't comply with our request for information," Specter said.

Meanwhile, as the FBI continues its investigation, it is unclear whether the suspects will ever see the inside of an American courtroom. □

## Israel closes Palestinian offices

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel has ordered a series of measures against what it says are illegal Palestinian activities in eastern Jerusalem.

Among the steps taken Monday was a directive to close three organizations allegedly linked to the Palestinian Authority: a Palestinian prisoners club, the Wafa Palestinian news agency and a manufacturers office.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the measures are intended to reaffirm Israel's sovereign rule in Jerusalem in the face of what he described as flagrant violation by the Palestinian Authority of prohibitions in the Wye accord preventing the self-rule government from operating in the city.

Meanwhile, activities were unaffected at a perennial target of Israeli criticism: Orient House, the Palestinian Authority's de facto headquarters in eastern Jerusalem. On Monday, a delegation of European officials met there with the top Palestinian official in Jerusalem to mark the Muslim Feast of the Sacrifice. □