



# Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 77, No. 129

Monday, July 12, 1999

82<sup>nd</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Barak, Arafat pledge progress

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat pledged to "move forward in peace" after the first summit of Israeli and Palestinian leaders to be held since last year. [Page 3]

### Suspects linked to shul arsons

Two brothers suspected in the slaying of two gay men in northern California last week may have been involved in last month's firebombing of three synagogues in the Sacramento area.

An FBI spokesman said an investigation into the murders has turned up notebooks linking the brothers to the attacks on the synagogues.

According to the San Francisco Chronicle, the World Church of the Creator, the white supremacist organization to which the alleged gunman in this month's racist shootings in the Midwest belonged, is also being investigated in conjunction with the synagogue arsons.

Meanwhile, the parents of two Jewish teen-agers wounded in the Midwest shooting rampage are suing the white supremacist group to which the alleged shooter, Benjamin Nathaniel Smith, belonged.

In another development, the U.S. Justice Department has not yet decided whether to investigate the World Church of the Creator. Attorney General Janet Reno said the Justice Department must have "a reasonable indication of criminal conduct" by the Illinois-based group before it can launch an investigation.

### Muslim removed from council

Jewish leaders are hailing a decision by U.S. House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.) to withdraw the appointment of a controversial American Muslim leader to a congressional anti-terrorism commission.

Gephardt came under fire after Jewish groups charged that Salam Al-Marayati, executive director of the Muslim Public Affairs Council, condoned terrorism against Israel and the United States.

Al-Marayati was told his appointment to the 10-member commission on terrorism was in jeopardy because the process of gaining a security clearance would take longer than the six-month life of the commission itself.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### Assad on board the peace train because time is right, experts say

By Douglas Davis

LONDON (JTA) — Syrian leader Hafez Assad, who has constructed his regime based on hostility to Israel, now says he is interested in talking about peace.

However, the overtures raise many questions about Assad, long the most dangerous and obdurate of Israel's neighbors, and how serious he really is about making peace. Among them:

- Will he risk the economic, political and strategic benefits of his 20-year alliance with Iran and abandon his proxy Hezbollah force operating against Israel in southern Lebanon?

- Is he prepared for full normalization of relations with Israel, opening his tightly sealed borders to the free flow of goods and people?

- Will he agree to an exchange of ambassadors and permit an Israeli flag to fly over Damascus?

- Will he agree to the tough security measures — early warning stations, a reduction of forces and partial demilitarization — that Israel will inevitably demand in exchange for withdrawal from the Golan Heights?

As Assad changes course, his credibility will rest on his ability to convince his political foes and his own long-suffering population that Israel is not, after all, the "spawn of the devil."

While he was apparently unable to bring himself to make these commitments to former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who was prepared to hand back the strategically important Golan in a peace treaty, Assad now appears to believe he has more to gain than lose by making peace with Israel.

In a carefully calibrated interview with British journalist and Syria specialist Patrick Seale, Assad spoke with unprecedented warmth and enthusiasm about new Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak.

"He seems to be a strong and honest man," Assad said about Barak. "As the election results show, he evidently has wide support.

"It is clear that he wants to achieve peace with Syria. He is moving forward at a well-studied plan."

Barak, he added "is a leader who, I feel sure, can accomplish whatever he decides to do."

Writing in the London-based al-Hayat, Seale, who is regarded as Assad's unofficial spokesman in the West, said he had gained the "overwhelming impression that a genuine will for peace exists on both sides.

"Never before have Israel and Syria been so ready for a settlement," he said.

"It would seem that the present situation offers more than a mere 'window of opportunity.'

"It is a door which, with real goodwill, could be opened wide, allowing these two adversaries to walk through together — and together put an end to this ancient conflict for the benefit of the whole region."

Assad's determination appeared to have been reinforced by a senior Syrian commentator, who, like Seale, used the Arabic media in London — the clearinghouse of Arab-Israeli exchanges — to send a thinly disguised message from Damascus to Jerusalem.

Writing in the Saudi-owned Asharq al-Awsat last week, Ghassan al-Imam launched

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Suspension of U.N. parley urged

Israel urged the Palestinians to cancel a United Nations conference called for later this week to discuss what are being called human rights violations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Foreign Minister David Levy said the meeting of signatories to the Fourth Geneva Convention would violate the goodwill that has been built between Israel and the Palestinians since the election of Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak.

### Soldier killed in tank accident

An Israeli soldier was killed Saturday when his tank overturned in southern Lebanon.

An Israeli army spokesman said the tank in which Staff Sgt. Ram Rothenberg, 21, was riding overturned as it was returning from a nighttime operation.

### Sabbath protesters blocked

Israeli police prevented several hundred fervently Orthodox Jews from blocking Jerusalem's Bar Ilan Road on Saturday in protest against traffic on the thoroughfare during the Sabbath.

An increased number of police officers were stationed in the area over the weekend in response to a recent resurgence of demonstrations and rock-throwing at cars by the protesters.

### Protesters march in Tehran

An estimated 25,000 protesters, mainly students, marched Saturday in the streets of Tehran calling for the arrest of a hard-line police chief they hold responsible for violence at a student rally for freedom of the press late last week.

Saturday's protest by the students, some of whom held up pictures in support of Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, is the latest sign of ongoing tensions between moderates, led by Khatami, and hard-line elements. The 13 Jews arrested earlier this year are being held in Iranian custody, presumably on the orders of the hard-liners.



## Daily News Bulletin

Caryn Rosen Adelman, *President*  
 Mark J. Joffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*  
 Lisa Hostein, *Editor*  
 Howard Lovy, *Managing Editor*  
 Lenore A. Silverstein, *Business Manager*

JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at [www.jta.org](http://www.jta.org).  
 © JTA      Reproduction only by previous arrangement.

a scathing attack on Iran, accusing it of attempting to sabotage the nascent Israeli-Syrian peace prospects by ordering last month's Hezbollah bombardment of northern Israel.

Not only did Imam pin the blame for the assault on Iran, but he also went out of his way to clear Syria of any complicity in the Hezbollah offensive.

He also threw down a challenge to Tehran: If, in the context of peace with Israel, Iran is unable to move from a military to a moral, spiritual posture in Lebanon, Tehran will find itself in conflict with Damascus.

If Imam's charges presage the beginning of a rift in the 20-year-old alliance between secular, Arab Syria and Islamic, non-Arab Iran, analysts believe this could produce a seismic shift in the geopolitical and geostrategic dispositions of several states in the region, including Israel.

Imam said there was no doubt that the Hezbollah attack on Israel was "prompted by the Iranian leadership — most probably without prior consultation with either the Lebanese or the Syrians."

The Iranians, he noted, might find it easy to order the bombardment of northern Israel, "but they still have some way to go before mastering the art of politics — particularly as far as Lebanon is concerned.

"In the past," he wrote, "Syria turned a blind eye to Iranian-sponsored military activity in Lebanon, primarily because it served its own interests in undermining Israeli occupation of the south.

Not anymore, apparently.

What has caused Assad to change his mind and risk so much for a peace deal with Israel?

First, said one senior Western diplomatic source, Assad has witnessed the peace treaties between Israel and Egypt, Israel and Jordan, and now the prospect of a final settlement with the Palestinians.

"Quite simply, he does not want to be left out," said the source.

Second, without a replacement for his old Soviet patron, he recognizes that the days of closed, controlled societies are over and that Syria's survival depends on integration into the global marketplace — economically, politically and diplomatically.

Third, he wants to improve Syria's strategic relationship with the West, rehabilitate his country and abandon bad old habits, like sponsoring international terrorism.

"He cannot afford to go on being a pariah," said the source.

Fourth, Assad wants not only to retrieve the Golan Heights but also to win recognition from the United States and Israel for Syria's continued domination of Lebanon, where some 40,000 Syrian troops are deployed and about 1 million Syrian citizens now reside.

Not least, said the source, Assad is ailing and wants to move quickly now to establish peace with Israel as an accomplished fact that he can leave to his son and heir-apparent, Bashar.

Assad is aware that Bashar's succession is not certain.

By all accounts, the former ophthalmologist is a quick study, but he does not have his father's natural authority.

He is still considered to lack the necessary political, economic and military skills, and, perhaps most important, a solid power base in the military.

Assad, says the source, has seen the peaceful succession of Jordan's King Abdullah following Hussein's death and is thought to ascribe at least some of the durability of the Hashemite throne to its powerful strategic ties to Israel.

A senior Israeli military official says the turning point for both Israel and Syria came with the realization that, ultimately, neither side can prevail militarily.

"We reached the view almost simultaneously that the military option is not decisive," he says.

"We cannot defeat each other, and unfortunately, it took 20 years to realize it, but I believe there is a new chance now."

But the official, who is likely to play a key role in talks with Syria, is not euphoric about the prospects.

A peace agreement between Damascus and Jerusalem, the official says, "will not be a romantic marriage. It will be more like a wedding ceremony between two elderly people." □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Rothschild art fetches \$90 million

The art collection owned by the Austrian branch of the Rothschild banking dynasty was auctioned off by Christie's in London for \$90 million. The 218-piece collection, looted by the Nazis in 1938 and returned to the family by the Austrian government last February, included 31 Old Masters, furniture, glass, porcelain, arms, armor and Renaissance musical instruments.

The highlight of the July 8 sale was an illuminated prayer book containing 67 full-page miniatures that was produced in 1505. The book, which fetched a record \$13.6 million, is now the most expensive illuminated manuscript ever sold.

### Federation helping victim's family

The first priority of a fund for victims of hate crimes opened by the Chicago Jewish federation will be to help the children of the black basketball coach killed in this month's racist shootings attend college.

"Ultimately, the fund will enable members of the Jewish community to offer help to victims of hate-motivated violence on behalf of the Jewish community," said Steven Nasatir, the president of the Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago.

Contributions to the fund should be sent to: JUF Fund for Hate Crime Victims and Families; c/o Jewish Community Relations Council; One S. Franklin, Rm. 718; Chicago, IL 60606.

### Neo-Nazis march in Idaho

Four people were arrested in Idaho when they blocked a street during an Aryan Nations march. About 25 members of the neo-Nazi group marched through the streets of Coeur d'Alene on Saturday after a judge ruled that moving the march to a nearby garbage dump was an infringement of their free speech rights.

### Nanny sentenced for kidnapping

A federal judge sentenced a Brooklyn nanny who kidnapped a Jewish boy with cerebral palsy earlier this year to four years in jail.

A lawyer for the nanny denied reports that she kidnapped 6-year-old Chaim Weill in order to take him to South Carolina for "holistic healing."

### WJC accuses Portugese bank

Portugal's central bank received nearly 44 metric tons of gold from the Nazis during World War II, according to a report released by the World Jewish Congress.

The WJC said it released the report in response to an article in a Lisbon newspaper last week, which said a Portugese commission investigating the issue has found that Portugal did not launder any Nazi gold.

## Barak, Arafat try to narrow differences on final-status talks

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A potential stumbling block to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process may have been removed by the leaders of the two sides.

During a meeting Sunday, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat appeared to have narrowed their differences over whether Israel's implementation of the Wye agreement should be linked to the start of the final-status negotiations.

Prior to the 75-minute meeting with Arafat at the Erez Crossing separating Israel from the Gaza Strip, Barak had made it clear that he would seek the linkage. Because the Wye agreement calls for Israel's handover of West Bank land to the Palestinians, Barak considers it important that these land transfers do not weaken Israel's bargaining position at the final-status talks.

With equal determination, Palestinian officials had indicated that Wye should be implemented without any conditions. For them, the Israeli redeployments should have no connection to any future land-for-peace deals that may be reached in the final-status negotiations. But there appeared to be some hint that there had been a meeting of the minds on the issue when Barak and Arafat spoke with reporters after their summit.

Directly addressing Palestinian concerns, Barak declared that Israel would implement the Wye agreement, including the further redeployments from the West Bank. The agreement had been suspended by Barak's predecessor, Benjamin Netanyahu, who maintained that the Palestinian Authority had failed to live up to the security pledges it made in the accord.

At the same time, Barak said the two sides would "find the way the final-status negotiations will be combined with the Wye agreement."

In his remarks, Arafat hinted that he would agree to this.

"The prime minister said he would implement the Wye River Memorandum and would go to final-status negotiations. We believe we need to do both," Arafat said.

Commenting on Arafat's statement, Knesset member Dr. Ahmed Tibi told Israel Television that the Palestinian leader had apparently agreed to Barak's proposal.

"Based on the remarks, it sounds like this is how it will be done, though I don't agree," said Tibi, who had previously served as Arafat's adviser on Israeli affairs.

While it remains unclear whether the sticking point has been resolved, Sunday's meeting — which was the first summit of Israeli and Palestinian leaders since last year — apparently succeeded in getting the two sides to move their long-stalled negotiations back on track. At the news conference, both leaders pledged to "move forward in peace" and described their talks as fruitful. While they each reiterated their respective demands and red lines, both conveyed a readiness for compromise and cooperation.

"I have no illusions, and the chairman has no illusions, that we are going into tough talks and negotiations with ups-and-downs," Barak said at the news conference.

Arafat reiterated the Palestinian demand for a halt to Jewish settlement activity in the territories.

Barak responded that the matter of Jewish settlements would be taken up in the final-status talks. He added that he had repeated to Arafat the position of his government that no Jewish settlements would be dismantled for now and that his administration would re-evaluate some construction decisions made by the previous government, but not yet acted upon.

Barak also raised Israel's demand that an uncompromising battle be waged against terrorism, to which Arafat responded that the Palestinian Authority would continue its policy of "zero tolerance" for terrorist actions.

Regarding the future framework for negotiations, both leaders said the sides would resume their dialogue upon Barak's return from his round of diplomatic talks.

Days after his government was sworn in last week, the Israeli leader launched the current round of diplomacy last Friday, when he met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Barak was slated to meet in Amman on Tuesday with Jordan's King Abdullah before flying to Washington to meet Thursday with President Clinton. □

## PROFILE

**Day school champ races ahead with his own '5 percent' solution***By Julie Wiener*

NEW YORK (JTA) — Two days before a special communal task force released a report last month urging significantly more funding for Jewish day schools, the man arguably most responsible for the task force's formation was neither celebrating nor patting himself on the back.

Instead he was shlepping around muggy New York City, enlisting allies in his campaign to persuade all Jewish day schools to start endowments and all American Jews to bequeath 5 percent of their estates to those endowments. It's a campaign he calls "Operation Jewish Education/The 5 Percent Answer."

A Chicago real estate developer who is vice president of his local federation and chairs the Ida Crown Jewish Academy, a modern Orthodox day school in Chicago, George Hanus burst onto the national scene two years ago when he convened a conference on the "crisis" of day school funding. That conference led to the formation of the National Jewish Day School Scholarship Committee, which Hanus chairs.

The committee, together with the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, pressed the Council of Jewish Federations — which recently merged with the United Jewish Appeal to become the United Jewish Communities — to adopt a resolution at its 1997 General Assembly that each community "fulfill its commitment to Jewish education with dedication and resources consistent with its significant importance to the survival of the Jewish community." Instead of voting on the resolution, federation officials decided to form the task force, on which Hanus served along with federation leaders and representatives from day school groups and foundations.

A heavyset man in his early 50s with gentle blue eyes and light gray hair, he displays seemingly endless energy for one subject: Jewish day schools. That narrow vision has alienated some federation leaders, who argue that other community needs — including the supplemental schools attended by 60 percent of children receiving a Jewish education — deserve attention, too.

But the way Hanus sees it, the correlation between day school attendance and high rates of Jewish identity makes the schools the key investment for a Jewish community poised, he believes, to lose 1 million children to assimilation and intermarriage.

"We as a Jewish society are under an affirmative obligation to educate our children, but the current day school system has such high tuition that it's an economic barrier of entry except for the most wealthy and most religious," he said, taking a break during his New York trip to have a Coke in a swanky Manhattan hotel.

Like his conversations, Hanus' promotional materials are peppered with phrases such as "impending Jewish calamity" and words such as "historic" and "devastating." With his melodramatic rhetoric and zealous energy, he comes off at times like a one-man mission to save the world and at other times like a Cassandra, frustrated that the rest of the Jewish community does not share his fear for a doom he believes can be prevented only by day schools.

"Why isn't this at the top of the agenda for everyone?" he asked. "This is a solvable problem. If there were an external enemy, we'd mobilize all forces."

To be sure, Hanus is not the only person concerned about the future of the Jewish people. Continuity has been a buzzword for the past decade and day schools have risen near, if not to, the top of the Jewish communal agenda.

The new report of the United Jewish Communities and Jewish Education Service of North America urges philanthropists, day schools, religious movements and federations to work together to fund the schools, to raise the quality of their instruction and to encourage more Jewish families to consider enrolling their children in day schools. The report, however, also says funding for day schools "cannot come at the expense of other vital communal needs and responsibilities."

Most federations are already increasing their support for day schools, which are enjoying growing enrollment. Day schools are serving not only their traditional core of Orthodox children, but growing numbers of Conservative and Reform children. Foundations are exploring ways of recruiting new families to the day school system and are also looking at ways to make day school education more affordable.

But the changes aren't happening fast enough for Hanus, who said he does not think "we can rely on federations, which are having a hard enough time trying to define themselves" to dramatically improve the lot of day schools.

Instead, he is plunging forward with his 5 percent plan, which he sees as a modern-day "kehillah tax," an obligatory community contribution that should apply to Jews of all incomes.

He dreams of raising \$11 billion — enough to guarantee a free day school education for all American Jewish children — by building "the largest Jewish political group in this country," a network of day school supporters from all streams of Judaism.

Day schools in Chicago have already set up endowments and are publicizing the 5 percent plan through a community-wide campaign, while schools in Long Island and Miami are discussing how they will implement Hanus' plan. The executive committee of the Rabbinical Council of America, the rabbinic arm of the Orthodox movement, has agreed to press members to discuss the issue from their pulpits during Rosh Hashanah.

Hanus estimates that \$20 million has been raised for day school scholarship endowments around the country in the past year and a half. Although the funds were not raised by the National Jewish Day School Scholarship Committee, he credits his organization with putting the idea on the table. But others suspect Hanus is exaggerating his — and his organization's — role.

Marvin Schick, president of the Rabbi Jacob Joseph School on Staten Island, N.Y., said his school just received a large bequest totaling more than 5 percent of the donor's will.

"It had nothing to do with Hanus' advocacy, but with the fact that the person had a connection to our institution," he said.

Schick, who co-authored a 1997 study on Jewish day schools, said Hanus' "heart is in the right place" and agreed with what he termed his "militancy." But, Schick said, "to think that anyone will pay attention" to his plan is "wishful thinking" because people don't draw up their wills that way.

For his part, Hanus insists his effort is not exclusively for the Orthodox and stresses that he doesn't care whether the day schools people support are Orthodox, Conservative, Reform or pluralistic.

But it is unclear whether free or reduced tuition would be enough to attract most liberal Jews, particularly those who are ambivalent about their religious identities, to day schools. □