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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

U.S. backs Barak's plan

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak expects the Palestinian Authority to begin meeting its security obligations in September, including cracking down on terrorism and confiscating illegal weapons. After that, Israel would begin withdrawing from West Bank land in October.

Barak's interpretation of the land-for-security Wye accord elicited protests Monday from Palestinian officials, but support from U.S. State Department officials.

The officials added that Secretary of State Madeleine Albright will postpone her visit to the Middle East until the end of this month or the start of September.

She was originally slated to visit the region in the coming days. [Page 3]

Debate rages over Nazi papers

An Israeli lawyer whose father prosecuted Adolf Eichmann nearly four decades ago said he will oppose releasing the memoirs Eichmann wrote while in an Israeli jail.

It would be dangerous to publish a war criminal's lies, Amos Hausner said Sunday. "There cannot be two versions about something as horrible as the Holocaust," he added.

In Germany, Eichmann's son Dieter said he had instructed lawyers to demand that his father's 1,300 pages of handwritten notes be turned over to the family.

"The manuscript belongs to us. It is our inheritance," he told the German daily *Die Welt*.

Third Reich buildings used

Several German ministries are moving into Berlin buildings used by the Third Reich as the government completes the transfer of its offices from Bonn.

The Foreign Ministry is being housed in the former Reichsbank, where gold looted from Holocaust victims was stored in the basement. The Finance Ministry is taking over the former Aviation Ministry, where Luftwaffe chief Hermann Goering plotted Hitler's air war.

The leader of Berlin's Jewish community, Andreas Nachama, backed the moves.

"These buildings should be made visible with their history," he said.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Israeli feminists gear up for battle against sexism, domestic violence

By Avi Machlis

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Two women are now among the most influential leaders in Israel. But for women's rights advocates, the appointment of two female Cabinet members doesn't begin to address the problem of a society, culture and government dominated by men.

After weeks of protest from Israeli women's rights groups and Jewish feminists around the world, Prime Minister Ehud Barak added a second woman to his expanded 23-member Cabinet last week.

But although many women welcomed the appointment of Yael "Yuli" Tamir as absorption minister, faxes from women's groups continue to stream into Barak's office, demanding that he keep his campaign promise to women, who represent half the electorate, to appoint more women than any previous Israeli government.

To fulfill that promise, he would have had to appoint a total of three women to his Cabinet.

The apparent ease with which he broke that vow unleashed a barrage of criticism from women, especially since even Tamir was appointed only after male candidates declined Barak's offer.

"This was too little too late, especially since we heard that a woman was not his first choice," says Yael Dayan, a popular female member of Barak's Labor Party who was passed over for a Cabinet post.

"Chauvinism is built into the system. We have a big problem with politics."

Barak has hinted that he will keep his promise in the future. But women like Dayan are not holding their breath.

"It is disgraceful that there is not a single woman participating in the peace talks. It is disgraceful that there are not more directors general of ministries and chairpersons of government companies," she said. "All we hear are promises, promises, but I hope something will change."

Feminists say their underrepresentation in politics reflects wider social problems. Discrimination, they say, is caused by the dominant role the military plays in society and politics and by the rising power of fervently Orthodox groups. Serving as a general is often a springboard to the Knesset.

In Israel's recently elected Knesset, women hold only 13 of 120 seats.

Although this is a slight improvement from nine in the previous Knesset, some women say their situation has actually deteriorated because the fervently Orthodox Shas Party, which is exclusively male, grew from 10 to 17 seats.

According to the Adva Center, an independent Tel Aviv social research institute, Israel ranks 53rd out of 94 countries in terms of representation of women in its legislature.

This is based on data from the U.N. Development Program.

The center says most developing countries, including sub-Saharan Africa, have a better record of women's representation in politics than Israel.

"Israel's low ranking with respect to representation of women in political life is inconsistent with its high ranking in terms of per capita output," said the center in a recent report, pointing out that Israel's economy is in the top 20 percent of the world's developed countries.

For Shelley Yacimovich, a popular Israel Radio political talk show host who has

MIDEAST FOCUS

Settlers complain about security

Jewish settlers in Hebron complained about security in the West Bank town during a meeting Sunday with Israel's deputy defense minister.

Ephraim Sneh responded to their complaints, prompted by a shooting attack last week that wounded two settlers, by saying Israel has more soldiers in Hebron than in southern Lebanon.

Arab League threatens boycott

The Arab League is threatening to boycott the Burger King restaurant chain for opening a fast-food branch in the Jewish settlement of Ma'aleh Adumim several weeks ago.

The league said Sunday it is awaiting the outcome of negotiations between Burger King and a U.S. Muslim group, which last week called for the boycott.

Meanwhile, the mayor of Ma'aleh Adumim warned that the boycott is a "big mistake." Benny Kashriel added that such a move could harm Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations.

Israel launches new airstrikes

Israel launched airstrikes Monday against Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon.

The sorties, which followed five other strikes during the past 24 hours, came in the wake of Hezbollah attacks on Israeli positions in the region. Israel has launched more than 100 such attacks this year.

Police search for rape suspect

A single person is suspected of raping and sexually assaulting more than 20 women in the Tel Aviv area during the past three years, Israeli police said.

Stumped in their efforts to find the suspect, the police lifted a ban on publishing details of their investigation in the hope that the Israeli public will help them.



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pushed feminist issues into mainstream discourse over the past five years, the closed political boys club is merely a symptom of a wider problem.

"The political representation reflects a very grim social situation," she says. "Israel is both a militaristic society with militaristic values and a clerical society with very conservative values."

Yacimovich still remembers how her editors frowned when she launched her first morning show with a full hour dedicated to the case of a man who burned his girlfriend to death.

"They said, 'How can you do this? This isn't worth an entire hour,'" Yacimovich recalls.

Despite the criticism, Yacimovich has pressed ahead in raising women's issues, with special emphasis on boosting public awareness of violence against women.

"Feminism is a social revolution," she says. "There is no magic formula, and it will take many years, but we must press on."

Na'amat, Israel's biggest women's organization, says violence against women has reached epidemic proportions.

The group says some 200,000 women have been beaten by their husbands or boyfriends, making one out of every seven Israeli women a victim of violence.

Israeli newspapers have been recently inundated with horrific headlines, including the story of Amnon Cohen, who last month allegedly murdered his wife, Leah, and his two children, Yael and Yair, and then set them on fire. Cohen had suspected his wife was having an Internet affair.

Since 1990, 123 women have been murdered by their partners.

Aside from the violence, Yacimovich says, the more widespread problem Israeli women face is discrimination in wages and employment.

Women earn about 30 percent less than men in the same jobs in many fields. In the civil service, that figure can climb as high as 50 percent.

Only a tiny proportion of senior positions in the civil service and the private sector are held by women.

"This is the most urgent issue, because at the end of the day, money is power," Yacimovich says.

At least, says Yacimovich, public awareness about violence against women is increasing.

Barak himself once rejected criticism of his alleged chauvinism by saying that he understands women because he has three daughters at home. Feminists say this comment is patronizing.

But what about the late Golda Meir?

Israeli men commonly dismiss criticism by pointing out that a woman served as prime minister.

Yet just as common is a joke that Meir "had balls," a reference to the premier's toughness.

Feminists say this proves that Israeli men think only people with male qualities can reach positions of power.

Yet at least one male member of Barak's Cabinet is dismayed at the lack of female representation — and he is an Orthodox rabbi.

"One of the things lacking here is the female aspect of politics," said Rabbi Michael Melchior, recently appointed to the Cabinet as the prime minister's representative for social and Diaspora affairs.

Scandinavian countries boast the highest proportion of women in politics, with women accounting for 37 percent of the legislature, and Melchior, the outgoing chief rabbi of Norway, thinks Israel should go the same way.

"This is the only way to change the aggressive nature of Israeli politics," Melchior says.

"The problem," says Dalia Itzik, Israel's minister of environment and Barak's first female appointee, "is that [chauvinism] is so deeply entrenched in Israeli society, that I'm afraid we have a long, long way to go."

Itzik says Barak's attitude may have unintentionally helped the cause.

"The prime minister pushed himself into a corner and inadvertently raised the issue onto the public agenda," she says. "We may yet come to thank him." □

JEWISH WORLD

Poland slams property lawsuits

Poland is rejecting the validity of lawsuits recently filed in the United States for the return of property seized from Polish Jews after World War II.

Such lawsuits should be filed in Poland, a Polish government lawyer said last week.

A spokesman for the Polish government added that the lawsuits were "unprecedented slander" by "making Poland responsible in the same way as Nazi Germany." The spokesman added that the lawsuits were unnecessary, since compensation or the return of property would be possible under a proposed restitution law.

Germany to probe online sales

German officials said Monday they will investigate two Internet booksellers who are making Nazi literature available in Germany.

The announcement came after a researcher for the Simon Wiesenthal Center found that amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com are making books such as Hitler's "Mein Kampf" available in Germany, where selling such tracts is illegal.

Jew quits as Guyanese leader

A Jewish grandmother who succeeded her husband as president of Guyana said she would resign as president of the South American nation because she is ill. Janet Jagan, born Janet Rosenberg, succeeded her husband, Cheddi Jagan, who died in March 1997.

Like her husband, Jagan, 78, was a former revolutionary Marxist who embraced the free market in the 1990s.

Judge to rule on slave lawsuit

Former U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher argued that a class-action lawsuit accusing Ford Motor Co. of profiting from the use of slave labor in its German plant during World War II should be dismissed.

Christopher told a federal judge in Newark on Aug. 5 that political branches of government, not courts, must decide questions of war reparations.

U.S. District Judge Joseph Greenway said he could rule on the dismissal request in September.

Shoah memorial planned

Holocaust survivors in Argentina are organizing Latin America's first museum dedicated to the Shoah. A cornerstone bearing the inscription, "We will give them an eternal name that will never be erased" was placed Aug. 5 for the building, which is scheduled to open in Buenos Aires next April.

Exhibits will include artifacts and documents donated by individuals and families of some of the 8,000 survivors who arrived in Argentina after the war.

Israelis, Palestinians disagree on when withdrawals will start

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — When exactly Israel will begin withdrawing from more West Bank territory has provoked a new round of disagreement between Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

The dispute stemmed from a comment Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak made Sunday, when he said Israel would begin implementing the Wye accord in September.

At first glance, it appeared that Barak meant that the second of three withdrawals spelled out in the accord would begin next month. The comment had sparked hopes that the two sides were inching closer toward resolving earlier differences.

Indeed, Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat, bolstering those hopes, subsequently accepted the timetable.

Barak had promised to carry out the Wye agreement in August, Arafat told reporters Sunday, but if it began in September, "We accept this."

But it soon became clear that the two sides were not talking about the same thing.

Barak's offer did not spell out when Israel would complete the withdrawals from the West Bank that are called for in the Wye agreement.

And when he and his aides began issuing clarifications, the Palestinian side was less than pleased.

It turned out that Barak expects the Palestinian Authority to begin meeting its security obligations in September, including confiscating illegal weapons and reducing the size of the Palestinian police force. After that, Israel would begin withdrawing from West Bank land in October.

Barak's interpretation of the accord's timetable elicited protests Monday from Palestinian officials, who said both sides should live up to their agreements simultaneously.

"We're willing to start today if the Israelis will start today," said chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat, who maintained that his side had already lived up to most of the security provisions spelled out in the accord.

He added that when Arafat welcomed Barak's proposed timetable a day earlier, it was based on the assumption that the Israeli withdrawal, not a countdown to a withdrawal, would begin then.

Barak spokesman Ya'acov Goldberg later said the premier is "very puzzled" by the Palestinian reaction, adding that Barak had made it clear during recent talks with Arafat and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak that the countdown to the Israeli withdrawal would take 30 days.

"The prime minister has said this from the beginning," Goldberg added.

In Washington, meanwhile, the U.S. State Department said Monday that Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who was due to visit the region this week, would put off her trip until the end of August or early September — by which time the two sides may have resolved their disputes.

State Department officials also said they back the proposal set forward by Barak, with the Wye timetable resuming in September and the Israeli withdrawal taking place some 30 days later.

Barak has repeatedly stressed that Israel would not change the U.S.-brokered land-for-security deal without Arafat's approval. He indicated last week that he would be willing to carry out the second of three Israeli withdrawals from portions of the West Bank by October.

The third withdrawal would be carried out by February, by which time the two sides would have launched the final-status talks.

The first Israeli withdrawal agreed to under last October's Wye accord was carried out last November. Former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu then suspended the agreement, charging that the Palestinian Authority was not living up to its part of the deal.

It is the third withdrawal that is the major problem for Barak, who has said it could leave Jewish settlements isolated within areas under Palestinian control. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Hillary has Jews in her family! Voters respond with, 'So what?'

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — "OY VEY!" the New York Post blared across its front page in three-inch letters last week.

"Hillary's ALMOST Jewish."

An accompanying column carried the headline, "The First Shiksa wants to be a yenta? Oy!"

New York's Senate campaign took a distinctly Jewish turn last week when the Forward, a weekly Jewish newspaper, reported that Clinton has some Jews on her family tree. Her step-grandfather was Jewish and her mother's half-sister later converted.

The Forward called Clinton's grandmother, Della Rosenberg, "the feisty wife of a Yiddish-speaking Jewish immigrant" and predicted that the revelation would boost her Senate chances. But even if Clinton were Jewish, her background would not influence Jewish voters, according to pollsters, analysts and politicians.

"Ethnicity has very little to do with how Jews vote," said John Zogby, president of Zogby International, a New York-based polling firm that has conducted many surveys of Jewish voters.

"Basically those who really viscerally dislike Hillary will add another notch in the column and ask, 'What's she trying to do?'" Zogby said.

Those who support her will ignore the issue, he said.

To be sure, Clinton has made courting Jewish voters a central focus of her campaign. One out of every eight voters in New York is Jewish, making them a key constituency in her campaign.

Former New York City Mayor Ed Koch tried to put the revelation into perspective.

"I think it's much ado about nothing," he said Sunday on ABC's "This Week" news show.

"I'm a proud member of the Jewish faith, and it would be wonderful if Hillary were Jewish. But she's not," Koch said.

According to the Forward, Clinton's maternal grandmother, Della Murray, divorced her husband in 1927 and married Max Rosenberg in 1933. Together they had a daughter, Adeline.

Like many activists from both parties, Koch said it "means nothing" that Clinton has Jewish relatives. "Jews don't vote, normally, on the basis of ethnicity," he said.

While the impact of the story is not fully known, pollsters are watching the Jewish vote carefully. Zogby predicts that the winner of the Jewish vote will win the election.

A compilation of Zogby polls over the last eight months released this week shows New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani leading Clinton, 43.9 percent to 41.8 percent, among Jewish voters.

The sample of 678 Jewish voters, with a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percent, has 14.3 percent undecided. Among all voters, Giuliani leads Clinton by 46.9 to 41.7 percent, Zogby said.

"Hillary is not doing as well among Jewish voters as a Democrat normally would do," Zogby said.

At the same time, Giuliani does better among Jewish voters than a Republican normally does, he said.

Most interesting is the large number of undecided voters, he said. But these voters are unlikely to be more supportive of Clinton because of her step-relatives, analysts said, because Jews don't vote for Jews just because they are Jewish.

In 1996, Republican Party leaders supported the candidacy of Dick Zimmer, a New Jersey Republican, in part because he is Jewish. But his opponent, Sen. Robert Torricelli (D-N.J.), received almost 80 percent of the Jewish vote, according to exit polls conducted by Zogby for the New Jersey Jewish News.

New Jersey's other senator, Frank Lautenberg, a Democrat who is Jewish, received less Jewish support than Toricelli did in his last election, polls showed.

In other recent races, Rep. Jon Fox, a Jewish Republican from suburban Philadelphia, received an estimated 25 percent of the Jewish vote in his losing 1998 battle for re-election against Rep. Joe Hoeffel (D-Pa.). And in New York, some 70 percent of Jewish voters supported Giuliani in his last election victory over Ruth Messinger, a Jewish Democrat.

With this in mind, Jewish Democrats and Republicans predicted that the revelation that Clinton has Jewish family members will have no impact on Jewish voters.

"People do not vote, by and large, on the basis on whether someone has a Jewish grandparent or not. People do not even vote for someone even if they are an active Jew," said Ira Forman, executive director of the National Jewish Democratic Council.

Matt Brooks, executive director of the Republican Jewish Coalition, agreed.

"Because someone married someone Jewish three decades ago is not particularly relevant," Brooks said, calling the revelation "a humorous one-day anecdotal story."

Being Jewish might "get you a leg up by getting in the door, but like anything else you have to earn votes on a number of issues," Brooks said. But if Brooks were competing for the Jewish vote, he said, "I'd rather be Jewish than not." □

Amnesty won't aid Shoah denier

SYDNEY (JTA) — The human rights organization Amnesty International has rejected an appeal by a Melbourne-based Holocaust revisionist to come to the aid of Fred Toben, a German-born Australian citizen jailed in Germany for promoting Holocaust denial and making anti-Semitic slurs.

John Bennett, who for many years was Australia's most prominent proponent of Holocaust denial and a member of the editorial board of the Californian-based Institute of Historical Review, received a letter from the International Secretariat of Amnesty International turning down the appeal.

Holocaust revisionists based in Australia and North America are circulating the letter as "evidence" to support their claim that organization is biased in favor of Jews.

The letter from Matthew Pringle, on behalf of Amnesty International, noted that "in 1995 the organization decided at a meeting of its International Council — the highest decision-making body of Amnesty International — that it would exclude from prisoner of conscience status not only people who have used or advocated violence, but also people who are imprisoned 'for having advocated national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.'

"There is compelling evidence that Dr. Gerald Fredrick Toben, through the Adelaide Institute's Web site, has been advocating, at time euphemistically, at times crudely, that the Holocaust is a myth," Pringle wrote. □