



# Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 77, No. 173

Wednesday, September 15, 1999

82<sup>nd</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Knesset mulls Israeli-Arab terror

Israel's Knesset held a stormy session Tuesday on Israeli Arab involvement in recent terrorist attacks.

Likud Knesset member Yisrael Katz assailed the government for failing to crack down on those members of the Israeli Arab community who have allied themselves with Hamas.

One Israel Knesset member Yossi Katz countered that while he did not mean to justify recent events, Israel's prolonged neglect of the Arab population had created a climate of hardship that provides fertile soil for extremists' recruiting efforts.

An Israeli Arab was indicted Tuesday for the August murder of a Jewish couple hiking in a forest in northern Israel.

Police said Abdullah Igbariya, 20, planned to use the couple's car as a car bomb, but they arrested him before he could do so. He was arrested days before three other Israeli Arabs were killed when they carried out car bombings in Haifa and Tiberias.

### AJCongress starts gun campaign

The American Jewish Congress launched a campaign aimed at stemming the scourge of gun violence.

The group hopes to gather 1 million signatures as part of a petition drive to urge Congress to pass meaningful gun control legislation. Democratic members of Congress and gun control advocates joined with the group at a Capitol Hill news conference Tuesday in calling for tougher gun-control legislation. [Page 3]

### Barak makes Jerusalem vow

The Israeli government plans to strengthen its hold on Jerusalem, Prime Minister Ehud Barak said Monday. His comments came as Israeli and Palestinian negotiators launched the final-status talks, which will address Jerusalem along with a number of other seemingly intractable issues.

One day later, Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert warned that Israel has to halt a population trend that might one day result in Arabs outnumbering Jews in the Holy City.

"It's a question of not all that much time before the Jewish population equals that of Arabs and is perhaps lower than it, unless the government does things," he told Israel Radio, citing the need for affordable housing and jobs for young people.

## Latest battle over Jerusalem surfaces in Mickey's backyard

By Julia Goldman

NEW YORK (JTA) — The latest round in the battle for Jerusalem is being waged, not in the Middle East, but in the Magic Kingdom.

The Arab League and Arab American groups are planning to meet with representatives of Walt Disney World to discuss their concerns that a special exhibit at Disney's EPCOT Center in Orlando, Fla., will depict Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

Israel's Foreign Ministry, which contributed \$1.8 million to the reported \$8 million project, says the criticism has no basis in the actual plans for the Israel pavilion at EPCOT's Millennium Village.

The exhibit, the exact content of which is being closely guarded by Walt Disney World, is slated to open to the public on Oct. 1.

Even Arab groups who have raised questions about the exhibit say they have learned about it only through news reports.

Plans revealed by Disney executives last month in Jerusalem indicated that Israel's exhibit will trace the religious history of Israel and showcase Israeli technological advances.

"Journey to Jerusalem," a simulated tour of the holy city through different historical periods, will be the exhibit's main attraction.

Israel maintains that the exhibit presents Jerusalem as "a center and a sacred site" for Jews, Christians and Muslims alike.

But, said a senior Israeli diplomatic official with knowledge of the exhibit's content, "Jerusalem is, of course, the center of Jewish dreams and Israel's existence. This centrality is emphasized in the EPCOT pavilion."

He said that at no time in the exhibit's planning was there an attempt "to make political statements."

In addition to contributing financially, Israel was responsible for the content of the 24,000-square-foot exhibit, with Disney's "creative input," say officials with Disney and with Israel's Foreign Ministry.

EPCOT's Millennium Village will feature exhibits from 24 countries, including Morocco, Saudi Arabia, China and Japan.

A spokesman for Disney said in a telephone interview that he would not reveal details of the exhibit's contents, citing a confidential agreement with Israel.

What has remained constant "from the beginning," said Bill Warren, the head of public affairs for Walt Disney World, is Disney's intent for the exhibit "to be interesting, entertaining, a tribute to Israel and its people and apolitical."

But the vagaries of Middle East politics have found their way into Disney's small world after all.

With the final-status talks having just begun, the question of Jerusalem still remains unresolved.

Israel claims the undivided city as its eternal capital.

The Palestinians, meanwhile, want eastern Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state.

Arab groups in the United States and overseas who read news reports about the Millennium Village exhibit were concerned that "Disney World is making a political statement about an issue that has not been settled yet," said Khalid Turaani, the executive director of American Muslims for Jerusalem, a Washington-based group among those leading a campaign to review the exhibit before it opens.

These groups have been pressing officials at the Disney company for a preview of

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Deri back from U.S. fund raising

The former leader of Israel's Shas Party returned Monday to Israel from the United States, where he has spent the past two months raising money for his legal defense against a corruption conviction.

Aryeh Deri has been abroad since he was forced to relinquish leadership of the party as a condition for Shas' entering the governing coalition. Deri was sentenced in April to four years in jail on charges of bribe-taking, fraud and breach of the public trust. A Jerusalem court later stayed his sentence, pending an appeal to the Supreme Court.

### Palestinians plan referendum

Yasser Abed Rabbo, the Palestinian Authority's minister of information, was named head of the Palestinian negotiating team in final-status talks with Israel. Rabbo said Monday that the self-rule government intends to hold a referendum on the details of any peace accord reached with Israel as a result of those talks.

### Barak blamed for Labor loss

A report commissioned by the Labor Party blamed Prime Minister Ehud Barak for the party's poor performance in the recent parliamentary elections, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported Tuesday.

The study concluded that the lack of any mention of the Labor Party in any of Barak's campaign broadcasts until a week before the election played a role in the party's losing eight seats in the Knesset.

### Athlete's comment declared foul

An Israeli soccer player was dropped from the national team after being quoted as claiming that the Austrian team is anti-Semitic.

"We simply will not accept what he said, and neither will the people in Israel," the chairman of the Israel Football Association, Gavri Levy, said this week. "We feel very bad about this."

the exhibit. "With Disney so tight-lipped about it," said Turaani, "there was something fishy right there."

According to news reports, Disney assured one of the large shareholders in the Paris-based Euro Disney, Saudi billionaire Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal, that the EPCOT exhibit would not depict Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

On Monday, the Arab League closed its two-day meeting in Cairo by voting to form a committee to investigate the exhibit.

Disney's chairman and chief executive, Michael Eisner, and the president of Walt Disney World, Al Weiss, wrote letters to the Arab League explaining that the exhibit was not meant to give offense and to offer to meet with an Arab League delegation to discuss the situation, Warren said, but added that the terms of the meeting have not yet been determined.

Although the Arab League resolved to see the exhibit in advance of the public opening date, there are no firm plans for such a visit, the Arab League's chief representative in Washington said.

Khalid Abdalla said the Arab League's main objective is "to be sure that Walt Disney is not bringing politics into its commercial activity in a way that will hurt the Arab and Islamic rights in Jerusalem." Abdalla is the Arab League's representative on the Disney committee, which also includes representatives from the Palestinian Authority and from Muslim American organizations.

If the committee is not satisfied with Disney's response or its handling of Jerusalem, however, the entertainment company can expect a "real reaction," Abdalla said. He said he could not confirm whether a boycott would ensue.

Last month, the Arab League called off plans to vote on a boycott of Burger King when the company withdrew its license from a franchise in the West Bank.

On Monday, Palestinian legislator Hanan Ashrawi told the Reuters news agency that "we will continue to press to ensure that Arab East Jerusalem is not portrayed in Disney's exhibit as part of Israel either."

When asked whether there were any plans to change the exhibit because of Arab pressure, Disney's spokesman said only that "all exhibits are under development and in a constant state of change."

But the spokesman implied that nothing would happen without approval from Israeli officials.

For their part, Israeli officials say plans for the exhibition have not changed.

American Jewish groups watching the situation say the Arab groups themselves are injecting politics into an exhibit meant to entertain.

"Some of the allegations and claims that they are making don't seem to be relating to the nature of the exhibit itself," which focuses on Israeli culture, science and society, said Jess Hordes, the Washington director of the Anti-Defamation League.

"In the end they claim victory for something that was an illusion to start with," he said in an interview.

The ADL has written to Disney in support of the exhibition.

Warren said he felt the exhibit was being "prejudged."

Disney now finds itself "in the middle of deeply political controversy that certainly didn't start with the concept of having an Israel exhibit," he said. □

## Polish officials award Ben-Gurion prize

WARSAW (JTA) — Municipal authorities in Plonsk, Poland, last week awarded prizes in an essay competition honoring the memory of Israeli founding father David Ben-Gurion, who was born in the small town north of Warsaw.

The Israeli and U.S. ambassadors to Poland were among those taking part in the ceremony, which was the centerpiece of a week of Jewish-themed lectures, concerts and other events. These included dedicating a memorial at the site where Ben-Gurion was born in 1886.

The Plonsk local government launched the David Ben-Gurion Polish Jewish Remembrance Competition two years ago, issuing a call for memoirs, diaries, interviews, literary essays and other pieces that dealt with Polish-Jewish relations this century. □



### Daily News Bulletin

Shoshana S. Cardin, *President*  
Mark J. Joffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*  
Lisa Hostein, *Editor*  
Howard Levy, *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.

## JEWISH WORLD

### Eizenstat reports on negotiations

U. S. Deputy Treasury Secretary Stuart Eizenstat told the House Banking Committee on Tuesday that representatives of Holocaust survivors and German companies seeking to settle Nazi-era slave labor claims must both "give considerably" to achieve a settlement. The two sides have narrowed their differences, but remain far apart on a dollar amount. In earlier talks, the German firms reportedly offered to create a fund of some \$1.8 billion. The former laborers, however, are calling for a settlement totaling some \$38 billion.

His comments came one day after a lawsuit brought on behalf of slave workers against Ford was dismissed by a federal judge in Newark. The judge ruled that the claims were filed after the expiration of time limits imposed under U.S. and German law.

The ruling came hours after another judge in Newark threw out a similar class-action lawsuit brought against two other German firms, electronics giant Siemens and chemicals manufacturer Degussa. The rulings could bolster the position of German firms in the talks for the creation of a fund to compensate former slave laborers, according to a Holocaust law expert at the University of Pennsylvania Law School.

### Warsaw cemetery desecrated

Vandals broke into Warsaw's only surviving Jewish cemetery over Rosh Hashanah, smashing tombstones, scrawling satanic graffiti and strewn ashes, beer cans and other rubbish.

Andrzej Zozula, executive director of the Union of Polish Jewish Communities, said Warsaw police were investigating. Zozula added that the desecration appeared to have been the work of a satanic cult and it was not clear whether anti-Semitism was a prime motivation. "This type of thing has happened in Christian cemeteries, too," he said.

### Basketball player rejects offer

An Orthodox high school basketball player reportedly turned down an offer to play at the University of Maryland because of friction with the team's coaches over his refusal to play on the Sabbath.

"If it comes to playing basketball on the Sabbath, I'm going to go with the Sabbath," Tamir Goodman told the Baltimore Sun newspaper.

### Kirk Douglas plans Bar Mitzvah

Actor Kirk Douglas plans to celebrate his second Bar Mitzvah when he marks his 83rd birthday in December. According to tradition, a person's allotted life span is 70 years, so the actor feels that in his "second life" his Bar Mitzvah is due 13 years later.

A spokeswoman for Douglas said the ceremony will be held in Los Angeles.

## Grass-roots campaign launched to push for gun control legislation

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Seizing on public frustration over gun violence in America and Congress' failure to enact tougher gun control laws, the American Jewish Congress has launched a grass-roots campaign aimed at prodding lawmakers to action.

Democratic members of Congress and gun control advocates joined with the group in calling for meaningful gun control legislation at a Capitol Hill news conference on Tuesday.

Although Congress has demonstrated that it has little appetite for any such legislation, several lawmakers said it was time to start doing what is right — and not what the National Rifle Association deems acceptable.

The AJCongress, for its part, hopes to gather one million signatures as part of a petition drive to urge Congress to pass legislation requiring all gun buyers to pass background checks and for all guns to be licensed and registered, much like cars.

It is also calling for safety devices to prevent accidental firing of guns and closing loopholes that create different standards for licensed and unlicensed firearm dealers.

"It is time for public officials to understand that America's parents cannot tolerate what is happening in school after school, state after state," said Jack Rosen, president of the AJCongress.

"Everyone agrees there must never be another Columbine, another North Hills Community Center," he said, referring to this year's shootings at the Colorado high school and at the Jewish Community Center near Los Angeles.

Combating hate crimes and controlling guns have emerged as priority issues for the Jewish community in recent months. In the wake of this summer's shooting rampages targeted at Jews and other minorities in Illinois and California, Jews around the country have been urging greater protections, Jewish officials say.

Several rabbis marked the call for action by blowing shofars outside the U.S. Capitol building. Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.) said the shofar blast signaled both a call to battle for meaningful gun control legislation and a call for repentance.

He said lawmakers should ask forgiveness "for our great sin of kowtowing to the NRA and being complicit in the thousands of murders of innocent people that would not have happened had this Congress acted properly years ago."

The AJCongress and other Jewish groups have not endorsed specific legislation, but there appears to be support among gun control advocates for legislation Nadler said he planned to introduce this week.

He is proposing three separate bills that would establish a licensing system for handguns; require states to put registration programs into place to track when weapons are bought and sold; and create a federally funded gun buy-back program.

Enacting legislation requiring licensing and registration of guns faces an uphill battle. So far, Congress has balked at passing gun control measures contained in the Senate version of the juvenile justice bill passed earlier this year.

Those provisions would subject individuals purchasing guns at gun shows to background checks, ban the import of magazines with a capacity of more than 10 rounds and require that trigger locks or other safety devices be sold with handguns. The House rejected those proposals in June, following a fierce lobbying effort by the NRA.

House and Senate conferees were expected to resolve differences over the two bills this week, and it appeared unlikely that the gun control provisions would survive.

Nevertheless, lawmakers are certain to be hearing continuing appeals in coming months from people like Carol Kingsley, a victim of gun violence who spoke at the news conference on Tuesday.

Kingsley's husband, Jack Berman, a regional director of the AJCongress, was killed in a 1993 shooting spree at a law firm inside a San Francisco high-rise building.

Kingsley urged lawmakers to "find the courage to just say no to the NRA."

"Do your job and listen to the majority of your constituents who want stricter gun control laws. If you don't act soon, it may not just be your elected position that you lose. Tomorrow's victims may be a neighbor, a friend or a family member." □

## NEWS ANALYSIS

**Parties relaunch final-status talks amid doubts about a timely accord***By David Landau*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Given the opening positions staked out by the Israelis and Palestinians at the start of their final-status talks this week, it is hard to imagine how the two sides will reach an agreement in one year.

Further clouding the atmosphere at Monday's start of the talks, there appears to be little consensus among either side to make the concessions needed.

Israeli and Palestinian officials presumably resumed the long-suspended final-status talks on Sept. 13 — the sixth anniversary of the historic Rabin-Arafat handshake in Washington that launched the Oslo peace process — in order to add a touch of celebration to the event.

But the mood was far from upbeat as Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy and Abu Mazen, Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat's second-in-command, delivered their speeches.

The two officials seemed determined to present the toughest formulation of their positions.

The audience of diplomats, dignitaries and reporters found it hard to identify any common ground between Abu Mazen's vision — of a Palestinian state extending across the West Bank and Gaza Strip and having Jerusalem as its capital — and Levy's insistence that his country would not withdraw to the pre-1967 borders and that Jerusalem would remain united as Israel's capital.

To an extent, of course, tough posturing at the start of this process is to be expected. If the two sides do not lay out their opening positions now, when would they do so?

In the Wye II accord signed at the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheik earlier this month, Israel and the Palestinians agreed to an ambitious schedule: a framework agreement on the final-status issues by February and a full accord by Sept. 13, 2000.

Last Friday, Israel transferred an additional 7 percent of the West Bank to Palestinian civil control, implementing the first phase of Wye II. Now, with the start of the final-status talks, the two sides will have to confront the troubling issues that they avoided dealing with in the previous agreements — including final borders, Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees, Jewish settlements, water and security arrangements.

Finally faced with the prospect of grappling with the core issues of the conflict, there seems to be, at least among the Israelis, an instinctive shrinking back and a grasping for the familiar techniques of postponement: the "interim" agreement or the "partial" settlement.

Israeli officials — noting that the issue of Jerusalem alone could require decades to settle — are already saying that the Palestinians would be better off leaving some issues unresolved for the time being. To insist on a full resolution of all the issues during the coming year, say these officials, may well lead to the collapse of the talks. This sort of talk is a far cry from Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak's election promises that the 100-year conflict would be settled within 15 months, with no loose ends left to unravel in future talks.

Adding to the generally less-than-jubilant atmosphere surrounding the resumption of the final-status talks — which had

an opening ceremony prior to the 1996 Israeli elections but have remained dormant ever since — were tensions within the Israeli government.

Barak warned his ministers on Monday to refrain from making statements about the negotiations. The premier pointed no fingers, but his aides mentioned a slew of Cabinet members who had expressed skepticism in recent days about Barak's ambitious timetable for the talks. Especially awkward were the comments of two Cabinet members — Shimon Peres and Yossi Beilin, the two architects of the original Oslo process — both of whom have now been sidelined from active day-to-day diplomacy.

Even the question of who will head the negotiating teams has yet to be resolved. Levy is not expected to be Israel's full-time representative, but Barak has yet to appoint one.

For their part, the Palestinians announced Monday that their delegation would be led by Yasser Abed Rabbo, the Palestinian Authority's minister of information.

Israeli sources greeted this news with a scowl: Rabbo, though urbane and personable, is considered a hard-liner given to sloganeering rather than to seeking conciliatory solutions.

Ultimately, as Beilin said Monday, the possibility of bringing the permanent-status talks to a successful conclusion depends on the political will of both sides. He referred obliquely to the draft accord he reached with Abu Mazen back in 1995, just before the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

That accord reportedly provided for Israel's withdrawal from more than 90 percent of the West Bank; Israel's annexation of blocs of settlements; a Palestinian capital at Abu Dis, just outside Jerusalem; and a sovereign, but demilitarized Palestinian state.

Abu Mazen and other Palestinian officials now maintain that no paper was actually drawn up in 1995 and therefore any concessions their side may have made in those informal discussions are not binding. Barak, too, refuses to endorse, even privately, the Beilin-Abu Mazen understandings.

And yet, once the two teams get organized and the talks begin in earnest, the Beilin-Abu Mazen experience will loom ever larger as the one serious effort made so far to reach concrete compromises on the core issues of the conflict. □

**Mystical tradition draws crowd for Rosh Hashanah observances***By Tom Tugend*

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — More than 2,500 members of Kabbalah centers around the world joined in celebration of Rosh Hashanah this year in what is believed to be the largest public gathering of followers of the mystical Jewish tradition in the United States.

Billed as the "Rosh Hashanah of the Millennium," the observances at the Anaheim Hilton hotel in California ushered in the Hebrew year 5760. According to kabbalistic teaching, 5760 will bring an age of blessings and good fortune to believers and an end to chaos and death on earth.

The Kabbalah Centre of Los Angeles organized the event, which drew adherents from Argentina, Brazil, Britain, Canada, France, Israel, Japan, Mexico and from all parts of the United States, according to Billy Phillips, director of communications for the local center. □