



Daily News Bulletin

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82nd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Arafat visits White House

The United States is prepared to do everything it can to help Israel and the Palestinian Authority move the peace process forward, President Clinton said after a meeting Thursday with Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat at the White House.

Earlier in the day in New York, Arafat called for the immediate end of Israeli settlement policy during an address to the U.N. General Assembly.

In his speech he also said he looks forward to the participation of an independent Palestine, with Jerusalem as its capital, "as a member-state in the United Nations" next year.

Judge blocks artwork's return

A U.S. federal judge blocked the Museum of Modern Art from sending an oil painting back to a gallery in Austria because of claims the Nazis may have looted it from a Jewish family.

The move came hours after a New York state court said the painting, as well as a second oil by Austrian artist Egon Schiele, should be returned to Vienna.

It remains unclear whether a federal seizure order will also be issued for the second painting, which is believed to have been looted from a second Jewish family.

The U.S. attorney who sought the seizure order said it is "an important policy of the United States and other countries to return Holocaust-era looted property."

Shot fired at Russian shul

A single shotgun blast was fired at a window of the recently opened synagogue in the northwestern Russian town of Borovichi on Yom Kippur eve.

Edward Alexeev, leader of the Borovichi Jewish community, believes the shooter wanted to damage the congregation's only Torah scroll.

Before Rosh Hashanah, vandals desecrated dozens of graves in a Jewish cemetery in Astrakhan, 1,200 miles south of Moscow. [Page 4]

REMINDER: Because of Sukkot, the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Monday, Sept. 27.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Officials fear Islamic Movement is doing Hamas' work inside Israel

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Sheik Raed Salah Mahajneh is known for his fiery speeches.

The mayor of Umm el-Fahm, the second largest Arab town in Israel after Nazareth, Mahajneh is the leader of the radical wing of the Islamic Movement in Israel.

For years, he has railed against successive Israeli governments for confiscating the lands of Israeli Arabs and for undermining Muslim rights to holy sites on Jerusalem's Temple Mount.

While he has never been suspected of involvement in actions against the Jewish state, he has likewise never called for Jewish-Arab coexistence. Even if his speeches were considered inflammatory, Israeli officials largely ignored them.

But this is changing, now that three Israeli Arabs who carried out car bombings earlier this month in Haifa and Tiberias were linked by police to the Islamic Movement.

Moreover, police officials have pointed to a link between the movement and Hamas. Indeed, the Sept. 5 car bombings — which came hours after Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat signed an agreement in Egypt for advancing the peace process — have prompted some police officials to speculate that Hamas recruited Israeli Arabs who belong to the Islamic Movement because Israeli and Palestinian security officials have hampered Hamas' activities in the territories.

In the wake of the bombings, Israeli officials are now paying considerable attention to the speeches of people such as Mahajneh.

Israelis of all political stripes well remember that the assassination of former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was also preceded by inflammatory speeches.

Although Israeli leaders, including Barak, have cautioned that the entire Israeli Arab population should not be condemned for the crimes of a few, there have been growing concerns that Israeli Arabs — who make up one-fifth of Israel's population — could create a formidable "fifth column" for anti-Israel attacks.

While Israeli Arab leaders have condemned members of their community who are involved in terrorist attacks, Israeli security branches are not satisfied.

On Sunday, Public Security Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami consulted with senior security officials on how to deal with the Islamic Movement.

Among the proposals raised at the meeting was a plan to revoke the licenses of religious leaders who preach against Israel. The officials also discussed a plan to place restrictions on Islamic religious leaders suspected of anti-Israel incitement.

In the wake of that meeting, Ben-Ami was expected to recommend to the Inner Security Cabinet that steps be taken to limit the activities of the Islamic Movement in Israel, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported Tuesday.

A rally that was sponsored by the Islamic Movement and held last Friday in Umm el-Fahm, which is the movement's stronghold, could well provide ammunition for those who believe that the activities of some of the movement's leaders should be restricted.

At that rally, thousands of protesters heard speeches alleging that the "Zionists" were bent on taking over Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem.

Israeli officials are well aware that the Islamic Movement, which has developed its own network of social services, including kindergartens, medical services and libraries, is not a monolithic entity. Along with the northern wing, which is led by Mahajneh and

MIDEAST FOCUS

Barak again vows withdrawal

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak reaffirmed his campaign pledge to withdraw all Israeli troops from southern Lebanon by the middle of next year.

"I don't advise anyone to test us when we draw back" to the international border, Barak said Thursday after meeting with French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin in Paris.

The Israeli prime minister's comments came one day after Israeli jets raided suspected Hezbollah positions in Lebanon, killing one Lebanese soldier and wounding five others.

The attack brought swift condemnation from Lebanese President Emile Lahoud, who described it as a "barbaric" violation of international law.

Jordan deports Hamas official

Jordanian officials Wednesday deported one of three Hamas officials arrested when they arrived in Amman. Mousa Mohammed Abu Marzook was arrested in the United States in 1995 and held in a New York jail until the late King Hussein allowed him to enter Jordan in 1997.

Meanwhile, the spiritual leader of Hamas said he would seek peaceful ways to convince Jordan to free the remaining two Hamas officials.

Sheik Ahmed Yassin said Hamas would reserve its use of violence for Israel, which "occupies our land with force and can only be removed by force."

Building project starts on Golan

Israel began building a neighborhood of 52 houses in the Golan Heights on Wednesday.

The construction, which comes amid efforts to restart Israeli-Syrian talks, is likely to anger Damascus, which is seeking the return of all of the Golan as part of a peace deal with Israel.

Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy said Wednesday that Syria is hesitant to restart the talks, which broke off in 1996.

by Sheik Kamal Khatib of Kafr Kana, there is a more moderate southern wing, led by Sheik Abdullah Nimmer Darwish of Kafr Kasim, an enthusiastic supporter of the peace process, and by Ibrahim Sarsour, Kafr Kasim's mayor.

Representatives from the movement's southern wing are members of the United Arab List, the largest Arab party in the Knesset.

The three Israeli Arabs who carried out the attacks — in which the car bombs apparently exploded prematurely, killing them and seriously wounding an Israeli female passer-by — came from the villages of Mashad and Daburiya, where residents are considered well off and their young people receive a relatively high standard of education.

Neither village is considered the typical hotbed of radical fundamentalist activity, and if Islamic fanaticism could sink roots in such places, Israeli officials believe they have reason to be concerned about the emergence of other fanatics in places of poverty and social misery such as Umm el-Fahm and its neighboring villages.

The alleged link between the Islamic Movement and Hamas is not a new one.

In recent years, the deputy mayor of Umm el-Fahm, Suleiman Aghbariya, was detained four times on charges of transferring funds between the movement and Hamas. The charges were never substantiated, and Aghbariya was freed each time.

Whether the link with Hamas is ever proven, Israeli officials are now calling for a crackdown against any form of incitement within the Israeli Arab community.

When the Knesset convened last week for a special session about the involvement of Israeli Arabs in the Sept. 5 car bombings, some Jewish members of Knesset all but accused their Arab counterparts of complicity in the attacks.

Likud legislator Moshe Katsav, who served in the previous government as the minister in charge of the Arab population, told Israeli Arab Knesset members, "Unintentionally you are responsible for those acts, because you sow the seeds of violence.

"Your statements influence the weak among you."

Likud Knesset Member Yisrael Katz maintained that Hamas not only has branches in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but also within the Galilee and the Negev.

Katz also charged that the "Arab members of Knesset are among its leaders."

Such comments sparked the fury of Israeli Arab legislators.

"I have never acted violently or urged violence," said Azmi Beshara, who earlier this year became the first Israeli Arab to run for prime minister, "even though, during my entire adult life, I was exposed to police violence against myself and the Arab public."

Beshara blamed the Likud Party for having convened the special session in order to incite public opinion against Israeli Arabs.

While most Israeli officials are stressing the need to curb the influence of the Islamic Movement, they are ruling out proposals, like one made by Katz, to outlaw the group. □

Argentina candidates denounce desecration

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — Jewish leaders in Argentina are warning that recent vandalism at a Jewish cemetery near Buenos Aires should not be used as a tool in the country's presidential campaign.

The comments came after vandals desecrated 63 tombs at the Cemetery of La Tablada, which has been the target of similar attacks in the past, the most recent in December 1997. Carlos Menem, Argentina's president, called the attack "an act to be condemned in every sense."

This latest act of vandalism comes almost a month before the presidential elections and intensifies the scrutiny on local police.

The campaign of the governor of the province, Eduardo Duhalde, one of the two leading presidential candidates, has already been damaged by a botched hostage rescue, and four officers have been accused of participating in the 1994 bombing of the AMIA Jewish center that killed 86 people.

Both Duhalde and Fernando de la Rúa, the leading presidential candidate, expressed solidarity with the Jewish community. □



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JEWISH WORLD

'Jakob the Liar' opens

A Holocaust film starring Robin Williams opens Friday in theaters across North America.

In "Jakob the Liar," Williams plays a resident of a Polish ghetto during World War II who tells lies about advancing Russian troops based on a radio he claims to have.

The film, which comes on the heels of last year's Academy Award-winning Holocaust film "Life Is Beautiful," is based on a 1969 novel.

Gallery owner faces trial

A French court plans to try the head of a New York gallery for owning a work of art that the Nazis looted from a Jewish family.

French officials said Tuesday that Adam Williams, owner of the Newhouse Galleries, would be tried for receiving stolen goods.

Italian extremists to resurface

Rome's most prominent far-right leader told the *La Repubblica* newspaper that he plans next month to relaunch his group, known as the Political Movement, despite a government ban on its activities.

Maurizio Boccacci, 42, has been investigated more than 50 times for hate activities and militant neo-fascism.

He described himself to *La Repubblica* as "fascist, Catholic traditionalist, anti-Zionist, racist."

The Political Movement was banned and broken up in 1993 for its anti-Semitic and xenophobic activities.

'Jewish Giant' bio premiers

An audio documentary about a Jewish man who stood around 8 feet tall and weighed about 300 pounds is scheduled to be premiered at the Jewish Museum in New York on Thursday evening.

The piece about Eddie Carmel, the "Jewish Giant," is also slated to air on National Public Radio on Oct. 6.

Carmel, who suffered from an excess of growth hormones, died in 1972 at the age of 36.

Jewish sites on endangered list

A group devoted to preserving historical sites named three synagogues on its list of the 100 most endangered sites worldwide.

On its List of Most Endangered Sites 2000, the New York-based World Monuments Fund included the Kahal Shalom Synagogue on the Greek island of Rhodes; the Jodensavanne Archaeological Site in Redi Doti, Suriname; and the Zhovka Synagogue in Zhovka, Ukraine.

In addition, the Tel-Dan Canaanite Gate, near Kibbutz Dan in Israel, also made the list.

European nations link relations with Iran to fair trial of 13 Jews

By Julia Goldman

NEW YORK (JTA) — European nations pursuing expanded relations with Iran are raising the issue of 13 Jews being held on charges of spying for Israel and the United States.

During a meeting this week with Iran's spiritual leader, Austrian President Thomas Klestil discussed the "fears and concerns of the European Union" regarding Iran's human rights record. In his meeting with Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Klestil spoke about the 13 Jewish detainees and four students condemned to death for their alleged role in leading the July pro-democracy demonstrations in Tehran, according to a report issued by Agence France-Presse.

Meanwhile, in New York on Tuesday, British Foreign Minister Robin Cook reportedly brought up the issue of the Jewish detainees with his Iranian counterpart, Kamal Kharazmi, during a meeting at the United Nations.

The hourlong discussion is the first time in 20 years that the United Kingdom and Iran have exchanged foreign ministerial visits. Cook is reportedly planning a trip to Iran next year and said he would bring up the issue again then.

Klestil's visit was meant to develop bilateral relations and to give support to the liberalizing reforms of Iranian President Mohammed Khatami.

Responding to Klestil's concerns, Khamenei reportedly said, "We are very sensitive to problems such as espionage, and we ask for nobody's permission to punish anyone."

The 13 Jews, the youngest of whom is 16, were arrested in March and have remained in custody in Shiraz, a city in southern Iran, while awaiting trial by a revolutionary court. Their ranks include a rabbi and several teachers.

Iran's official news agency, IRNA, quoted Khamenei as saying, "We hate spies, whether they work for Israel or anyone else."

"If their crime is proved by the court," he said, "they will probably be punished."

The news reports quote Khamenei as telling Klestil, "Zionist agents are everywhere, in Austria, too," adding that he knew of such agents' "subversive activities" in Austria, without giving details.

Spying for Israel or the United States is punishable by death in Iran. Iran maintains that several Muslims were involved in espionage along with the 13 Jews.

Both Israel and the United States say the espionage charges are unfounded. Advocates for the prisoners adamantly insist they are innocent.

On Sept. 15, the European Parliament passed a resolution demanding the release of "all the prisoners, to enable them freely to prepare their defense with the lawyers of their choice." An amendment to the resolution says that "any dialogue between the European Union and the Islamic Republic of Iran must be dependent on respect for fundamental human rights."

Hujat al-Aslam Hadi Marvi, Iran's deputy judiciary chief, said in remarks published Monday that a trial is unlikely to occur soon because several people associated with the case are outside Iran.

"The 13 Iranian Jews who are under arrest are 'accused' of spying; we are not saying they 'are' spies," Marvi was quoted as saying in the English-language magazine *Iran Daily*. He said the accused would be allowed to choose their own lawyer, according to news reports. Because of the political nature of the charges, the case would be heard not by a jury, but by a judge, who would determine whether the trial would be open.

Advocates for the 13 in the United States and Iran have been working in recent weeks to arrange for legal representation.

Marvi is also reported to have said that some of the Jewish detainees had "admitted to their crimes." These confessions, he said, make up the bulk of the evidence against them. But last week, the head of Iran's hard-line judiciary said the courts had "strong and sufficient" evidence to prove the case against the alleged spies.

Iranian-American Jewish groups welcomed Marvi's comments as a gesture to allay European concerns that the prisoners receive a fair trial.

"But the true test for Iran is not in words, but in action," said Pooya Dayanim, the spokesman for the Council of Iranian American Jewish Organizations. □

As Russian Jews mark holidays, vandals attack a new synagogue

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — Two anti-Semitic incidents, including an attack on a synagogue that was recently opened with the help of U.S. Jews, have marred the commemoration of the High Holidays in Russia.

A single shotgun blast was fired on Yom Kippur eve at a window of the synagogue, located in the northwestern Russian town of Borovichi.

Edward Alexeev, leader of the Borovichi Jewish community, believes the shooter wanted to damage the congregation's only Torah scroll, which was donated by a Miami synagogue, but missed. In an earlier incident, which took place before Rosh Hashanah, vandals desecrated dozens of graves in a Jewish cemetery in Astrakhan, 1,200 miles south of Moscow.

Twenty-eight tombstones were toppled and destroyed and 25 more stones were damaged or spray-painted, according to Lev Bolotin, who heads the local Jewish religious community.

Vandals have targeted Borovichi's Beth Torah Synagogue several times since it was dedicated in August.

In those attacks, Alexeev said, several windows were broken and dead cats and birds were hung on the shul's front door.

Police have launched a criminal investigation into the latest incident.

Last year the small Jewish community of Borovichi launched an international campaign when Jewish officials there reported an increase in neo-Nazi activities.

As a result of the campaign, which was led by the Bay Area Council for Jewish Rescue and Renewal in San Francisco, municipal authorities granted a space to Jews in the town's central square for the synagogue.

In the wake of the latest incidents, a Russian Jewish umbrella group urged local authorities in both Borovichi and Astrakhan to take the necessary steps to investigate the attacks and prevent future acts of anti-Semitism.

"We are concerned and outraged by this outbreak of anti-Semitism in Russia," Zinovy Kogan, the executive director of the Congress of Jewish Religious Organizations and Communities of Russia, said in a statement.

"The shooting in Borovichi and the pogrom in the cemetery in Astrakhan during the Jewish holidays is nothing else but a new challenge to the Jewish community of Russia.

"We call on politicians across the spectrum and ordinary Russians to show zero tolerance for such acts." □

Jewish man, niece killed in attack on Moscow building

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — On the eve of the Jewish new year, a Moscow synagogue mailed out wall calendars for the year 5760 to several thousand Jewish families in the Russian capital.

The one addressed to Bella Zutler was never delivered. The 62-year-old Muscovite was killed in last week's terrorist attack on her residential building in southern Moscow.

According to Berel Lazar, rabbi of the Marina Roscha synagogue, which maintains Moscow's largest database of Jewish families living in the capital, at least six Jews died in an explosion on the night of Sept. 13 that left at least 118 dead.

Zutler, a pensioner who lived alone, died along with her niece, Irina Fleishman, 37. Hours before the early morning blast, Zutler entertained guests for her birthday. After her friends and family left, Fleishman, who lived in a distant part of town, stayed with her aunt overnight to avoid a lengthy late-night journey.

Four days later, Lazar officiated at the funeral of Zutler and Fleishman at Vostraykovo Cemetery, Moscow's only graveyard with a separate Jewish section.

After rescuers recovered Zutler's body under the ruins, her son, Arkady, arranged the burial through the synagogue. He said his mother was not an observant Jew, yet it was important to give her a Jewish burial.

Fleishman, whose body was found in the rubble three days after the explosion, was buried in the same grave as her aunt.

Arkady recalled that last Monday, he was awakened at 5 a.m. by a terrible sound. He called his mother, who lived across the street, to find out what happened.

"I thought she could not be asleep either." But there was no answer.

He was the first at the scene only a few minutes after the blast, clambering up the ruins of what moments earlier was a nine-story residential building.

What had been a huge building was now just a column of dust and smoke.

"I was shocked by the deathly silence," he said. □

Floyd fails to flood out holidays in communities on the East Coast

By Peter Ephross

NEW YORK (JTA) — Hurricane Floyd was certainly no picnic, but it wasn't Noah's flood, either.

That's the assessment as Jewish communities on the East Coast cleaned up from last week's hurricane as they commemorated Yom Kippur, the holiest day on the Jewish calendar, and erected their booths to celebrate the upcoming holiday of Sukkot.

"We had a little water in the shul, but things were cleaned up by Sunday," said Rabbi Eliot Malomet of Highland Park Conservative Temple in Highland Park, N.J.

While a lot of people in his synagogue lost power and thousands of dollars in property when their basements flooded, Malomet emphasized that the overall damage to the shul was relatively minor. The synagogue's sukkah, built by a local Jewish Boy Scout, also survived, after the s'chach, or sukkah covering, was taken off before Floyd hit the area Sept. 15.

The bamboo coverings, which were placed inside the sukkah "got wet, but they didn't go flying into the neighborhood."

North Carolina was another state badly hit by the force of Floyd, which at its peak there generated wind gusts topping out at 110 miles per hour and killed 35.

"We essentially escaped," said Judah Segal, the director of the Wake County Jewish Federation, which serves the area surrounding Raleigh, N.C. "No helicopters had to come over and pluck us off the roof," he said. But in addition to power outages, local synagogues and his federation offices suffered water damage. □