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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

State of emergency declared

Residents in northern Israel headed for shelters as officials placed the region under a formal state of emergency.

There were indications Tuesday that the fighting in Lebanon was about to escalate after an Israeli soldier was killed by a Hezbollah anti-tank missile in southern Lebanon, raising to six the number of Israeli fatalities in the region during the past two weeks.

Meanwhile, Israel may withdraw troops from Lebanon before a July deadline with or without an accompanying peace agreement with Syria, said a member of Israel's Cabinet close to Prime Minister Ehud Barak.

Speaking hours after the Jewish state launched a series of airstrikes Monday night in Lebanon, Haim Ramon added that talks with Syria would not resume as long as Hezbollah continues to attack Israeli targets. [Page 2]

Albright criticizes Haider

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright accused far-right Austrian politician Jorg Haider of duplicity.

"It's quite unacceptable for Mr. Haider to make a statement one day and then apologize for it and then make another statement the next day," Albright said Monday. "That is not how we operate in our line of work."

Albright also said Deputy Treasury Secretary Stuart Eizenstat, the U.S. point man on Holocaust issues, has contacted Austrian officials to find out how they plan to tackle Holocaust-era restitution.

In a related development, Austria's Parliament convened for a special session Tuesday to debate its international isolation following the controversial entry of Haider's far-right Freedom Party into the government.

Anti-Jewish acts rise in Canada

Canada experienced an 11 percent increase in reported incidents of anti-Semitic harassment and vandalism in 1999 over the year before, according to a newly issued report.

The report by the League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith Canada, which cited 267 such cases last year, indicated that the incidents of harassment had become more violent over previous years.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Palestinians say talks are frozen, while Israelis claim rift is just a blip

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli and Palestinian negotiators, long at odds over a host of issues, again cannot even agree on whether peace talks have reached a crisis.

On Sunday, Palestinian negotiators did not show up for the latest round of marathon talks aimed at reaching next week's deadline for crafting an outline of a final peace accord.

By the following day, they indefinitely suspended their participation in the talks.

Also Monday, the Palestinian Authority released one of the top Hamas officials in the Gaza Strip, Abdel Aziz Rantissi. The release of Rantissi, an outspoken critic of the peace process, was widely seen as a slap in Israel's face.

On the Israeli side, there are optimistic voices suggesting that the present difficulties, like so many before, will drift away with time.

But the Palestinians are insisting that their suspension of the talks is not tactical, but reflects a real rupture of trust between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

On Tuesday, Arafat ordered his minister of agriculture to cancel a scheduled meeting with his Israeli counterpart to discuss the theft of farm equipment.

The chill in the relationship set in on Feb. 3 at a bad-tempered meeting between Barak and Arafat at the Erez Crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip.

Arafat left angrily. A joint news conference that had been tentatively scheduled to take place after the meeting was sheepishly canceled.

Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy faced reporters alone, asserting that there was "no crisis" and that the two sides were too deeply committed to let any transient problems destroy all they had built up together.

There is an abiding Palestinian suspicion that the Israeli-Syrian negotiations, though now also suspended, will resume and shunt aside their own peace process with the Israelis. They feel that Barak, given the choice, would prefer a quick deal with the Syrians to inevitably divisive negotiations with the Palestinians on a final peace accord, which both sides have agreed to reach by September. There is also the fear among the current Palestinian leadership for the future of the entire peace process, and for their own positions and futures in the hierarchy, should Arafat die or become incapacitated.

Over 70, the longtime PLO leader is likely to remain unchallengeable as long as he remains healthy. But once he dies, more radical forces within the Palestinian national movement or among religious circles could quickly come to the fore.

The Palestinians are citing three reasons for the present crisis — all of which reflect, they say, the high-handed treatment Barak has given them as Israel's partners in the peace process:

- The Palestinian Cabinet rejected Israel's maps for an Israeli withdrawal from an additional 6 percent of the West Bank because the areas involved did not include the Jerusalem suburbs of Abu Dis and a-Ram. Israel has repeatedly maintained that it has sole say in determining which lands would be turned over.

The Palestinians are also angry over suggestions that Israel does not plan to carry out an additional withdrawal that is supposed to take place before a final peace agreement is achieved. Israeli officials have been suggesting that this final withdrawal be subsumed within the final-status talks.

- The Palestinians claim that Barak's decision to defer next week's deadline for

MIDEAST FOCUS

Envoy calls for more U.S. aid

Israel's new ambassador to the United States said any U.S. security package that would accompany a peace deal between Israel and Syria must carry "a lot of compensation."

Noting that Israel would lose strategic depth if it gives up the Golan Heights, David Ivry also cited the importance of a demilitarized zone and an early-warning system.

Northern Israeli youth counseled

Israel's education minister dispatched teams of psychologists and educators to help young people in northern Israel who have been confined to shelters because of possible Hezbollah rocket attacks.

Yossi Sarid also flew to the region Tuesday to meet with residents, students and local leaders.

Chief rabbi rejects papal itinerary

Israel's Ashkenazi chief rabbi called on Pope John Paul II to meet him at his office when the pontiff visits Israel in March.

Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau rejected a planned itinerary for the pope, which called for them to meet at the Western Wall, saying going to meet him at the Wall's outdoor plaza would be demeaning for Lau. Asked what would happen if the pontiff refused to come to his office, Lau said in a television interview, "If he cannot come, we wish him all the best."

Tourism to Israel increases

Tourism to Israel increased by 17 percent in 1999 over the previous year, to nearly 2.25 million tourists, according to data released by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics.

The increase broke a slump that began in 1996, following a downturn in peacemaking. Israel's Tourism Ministry forecasts that millennium events, including a planned visit by Pope John Paul II in March, will boost tourist visits to as high as 3 million this year.

drafting a framework agreement — and, by implication, the entire effort to reach this framework — was made unilaterally.

The Palestinians point out that they were skeptical when Barak originally proposed the deadline last year. But having signed on, they now feel it was arbitrary of Barak to have canceled it.

• Palestinian officials are also disturbed by what they say is Barak's refusal to recommit himself publicly to the September deadline for reaching the final peace accord.

With all eyes focused on Israel's northern border this week — on the escalation between Israel and Hezbollah and its possible implications for the Israeli-Syrian peace track — the anger within the Palestinian leadership tended to get short shrift in the Israeli media, and perhaps less-than-adequate attention in policymaking circles.

But if the escalation in the north results in a long suspension of the Israeli-Syrian track, the government in Jerusalem will be anxious to renew movement on the Palestinian track.

It is now questionable whether the Palestinians will be prepared to set aside their doubts and return to the negotiating table. □

Northern Israel, Lebanon brace for intense fighting

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Residents of northern Israel headed for shelters after officials declared a formal state of emergency in the region.

Israeli officials made the announcement Tuesday amid indications that the fighting in Lebanon was about to escalate.

It is believed that Prime Minister Ehud Barak on Tuesday asked for Cabinet endorsement for a series of attacks more severe than those the night before. Israeli jets launched airstrikes Monday on Hezbollah targets and on three power stations in Lebanon, one of them near Beirut.

Unusual in such cases, word of Barak's telephone poll of Cabinet ministers was leaked to the media as it was taking place. This was believed to be a deliberate move to warn Lebanon that further retribution was imminent.

The state of emergency means that all residents of northern Israel must enter and stay in their air raid shelters until ordered otherwise by the military.

The move came after an Israeli soldier was killed Tuesday by a Hezbollah anti-tank missile in southern Lebanon. The incident raised to six the number of Israeli fatalities in the region during the past two weeks.

The period has been marked by a cycle of reprisals and counter-reprisals that have made it increasingly difficult for Israel to resume talks with Syria, which is widely believed to have given Hezbollah the go-ahead to launch attacks on Israeli targets.

The IDF spokesman said the missile that killed the Israeli soldier Tuesday was fired from inside the Lebanese town of Nabatiyeh. He called it an infringement of an April 1996 cease-fire agreement that called on Israel and Hezbollah not to launch attacks on or from civilian areas.

Military observers said Tuesday's missile firing, and other Hezbollah operations Tuesday, seemed to indicate that the Shi'ite gunmen — and, more significantly, the Syrians who control them — had not heeded the message implied in Israel's air attacks Monday night. Those attacks left much of the Lebanese cities of Beirut, Tripoli and Baalbek without power. Lebanese ministers assessed the damage at \$200 million — which Israeli sources said was exaggerated — and said it would take a year to repair.

Israeli ministers and army commanders said Monday's airstrikes were aimed at curbing Hezbollah's recently intensified operations.

Israeli sources indicated that the Cabinet on Monday had approved a series of graduated punitive measures against targets in Lebanon, to be implemented as required. While Israel is facing considerable criticism from Arab states, particularly Syria, for Monday's airstrikes, Israeli sources claim that U.S. officials hinted ahead of time they would turn a blind eye to a measured Israeli action. □



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JEWISH WORLD

Budget calls for Shoah exemption

President Clinton's proposed federal budget includes an item that would make all moneys received as Holocaust reparations tax exempt.

Legislation providing this exemption was first proposed in 1998.

God passes high hurdle in Indiana

Indiana's lower House overwhelmingly passed a bill allowing the 10 Commandments to be posted in government buildings and schools.

The House forwarded the bill to the state Senate, which has already approved a similar measure.

Pharmacist claims discrimination

A Florida pharmacist is suing a drug chain that fired him after he refused to sell condoms to customers.

A Chasidic Jew, Hillel Hellinger says he was following Jewish law when he refused to sell condoms. But Eckerd Corp. claims that Hellinger was fired because of poor customer service. The trial, which opened Monday, is expected to last for a week.

Aid offered to Russian community

The American branch of the World Jewish Congress plans to donate \$100,000 to the Russian Jewish community Friday to help improve security at Jewish institutions throughout Russia.

Expected at Friday's event are Moscow Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt and Leopold Kaimovsky, the victim of a stabbing attack last July at Moscow's Choral Synagogue.

Internment camp purchase urged

A Jewish group is urging Congress to approve the Clinton administration's proposal to purchase the sites where Japanese Americans were interned during World War II.

The American Jewish Committee said in a statement that the proposal, which would cost \$4.8 million according to President Clinton's 2001 budget plan, would preserve a "lesson of a tragic story of intolerance and betrayal."

Report: China official saved Jews

The Chinese consul general in Vienna saved thousands of Jews from the Holocaust by giving them exit visas at the start of World War II, according to a Chinese newspaper.

He Fengshan issued the visas against orders from the Chinese ambassador in Berlin and continued doing so after the Nazis confiscated his consulate, according to the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post, which cited a report in the Global Times.

Bradley's wife tries to dispel fears about her German history

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — In a signal that the battle is on for the Jewish vote, the German-born wife of Democratic presidential hopeful Bill Bradley is seeking to address concerns about her family's ties to the Third Reich.

In an event arranged by the Bradley campaign, Ernestine Schlant Bradley spoke Monday at one of New York's largest modern Orthodox high schools about growing up in Nazi Germany and her criticism of postwar Germany's failure to fully address the Holocaust. Although Yeshiva of Flatbush officials described Bradley's appearance as an academic lecture, her husband's presence was felt in the Brooklyn school's large auditorium.

"Given that your husband is running for president, why did you choose to come here today?" asked one student. Bradley replied, "This is not the first time I've gone to a yeshiva to speak to classes. The Jewish community deserves an answer to who Bill Bradley's wife is."

In an apparent slip of the tongue, another student asked, "Was your husband part of the Nazi Party, and did he show remorse?"

After a pause filled with murmuring and some awkward laughter, Bradley asked, "You mean my father?" and then noted that, while her parents were not members of the party, her father worked for the German air force, and she is disappointed that neither had spoken out against the Holocaust.

Born in 1935, Bradley immigrated to the United States in the 1950s and is highly critical of Germany's past.

A naturalized American citizen, she is a literature professor at New Jersey's Montclair State University, and her recently published book, "The Language of Silence," examines how postwar German authors dealt with — or failed to deal with — the Holocaust. Bradley is now on leave to campaign full time for her husband.

"My whole generation, we would all have loved if we could have said, 'My parents were in the Resistance.' Unfortunately they were not," she said.

"I never saw a yellow Star of David or the people who wore them, because I grew up in a small town and by the time the Jews were forced to wear stars, there were none left in my town," Bradley said.

She spoke of how she became more critical of her country — and her parents — after immigrating to the United States and meeting Jews.

Students for the most part seemed interested, although Bradley's talk — in which she occasionally lapsed into academic jargon — at times seemed better suited for a graduate-level seminar than a high school lecture.

While some students snapped pictures, a visible minority seized the opportunity to catch a nap. As they left the auditorium, most students said they were impressed.

"It was good to hear from a point of view that's not just Jewish," said senior Tali Fischer.

"I don't think she came specifically to promote her husband, but this is a good way" to do that, said another senior, Rachel Fulop, who said it made her more likely to consider voting for Bradley.

"Before coming in, the only thing I knew about her was she was the child of a Nazi, so I had a negative impression," said junior Mitchell Shpelfogel, who said he liked Bill Bradley. "But she understands the whole Jewish perspective on the Holocaust, and I have a total other view now."

The school's principal, Rabbi William Altshul, also declined to categorize the school's political leanings, saying that the last mock election he could remember was during the governor's race, in which George Pataki had been triumphant.

Altshul said the yeshiva had been somewhat apprehensive at first about becoming a political stump. However, the political aspect was also educational, he said. "If we can get the kids excited about the political process, that's crucial."

"If other candidates' wives want to tell us who they are, we don't have a problem with that," he added. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**'No troops, no money,' declare opponents of Israel-Syria deal***By Michael Shapiro*

WASHINGTON (JTA) — It appeared as if they were trying to defend the Golan Heights from Room 105 in the Cannon House Office Building.

A contingent of at least 100 American Jews and Christians from across the country converged on Capitol Hill on Tuesday to lobby against any U.S. aid to support a peace deal between Israel and Syria.

The lobbyists estimated such aid could reach \$100 billion although, at this point, Israel has only requested \$17 billion.

They also were voicing their opposition to stationing U.S. troops on the Golan to monitor a possible deal.

Although negotiations between Israel and Syria have broken down during the last several weeks as the sides have differed over which issues to discuss first and as violence has flared up again along the Lebanon border, those opposed to Israel giving up the Golan were not taking any chances.

From Room 105, Herbert Zweibon, chairman of Americans for a Safe Israel, commanded his troops, telling them which lawmakers' offices to visit and what to say.

"No money, no troops," Zweibon said.

"If Israel wants to do this they can, but the United States should not support" a deal, he added.

Ira Kahn, from Skokie, Ill., sounded like he was in battle.

"Stay with your units," he barked as he led his charges to a meeting in the Rayburn House Office Building.

The activists in Kahn's group and in other units had set up 100 appointments with House and Senate staffers. They planned, during their lobbying blitz Tuesday and Wednesday, to drop off information packets at every one of the 535 offices that make up the maze on Capitol Hill. They were armed with a number of talking points, which they detailed to Hill staffers.

Their position contrasts sharply with the views of most of the organized Jewish world, including the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the pro-Israel lobby, which has already begun laying the groundwork to garner support in Congress for an aid package to bolster any eventual Israeli-Syrian deal.

But this week, Capitol Hill belonged to the opponents. Among the assertions they were making to the congressional staffs:

- U.S. troops stationed on the Golan would be open to terrorist attacks;
- Polls show that Americans oppose U.S. taxpayer money going to support a peace deal; and
- Syrian President Hafez Assad is a criminal who can't be trusted.

They also carried videotapes depicting the strategic importance of the Golan Heights to Israel and wore bright orange buttons saying: "NO U.S. TROOPS ON THE GOLAN!"

During one lobbying meeting with a House Republican staffer, Richard Hellman, the president of the Christians' Israel Public Action Campaign, discussed the talking points. The staffer, who asked not to be identified, was receptive to their views, saying that his boss was skeptical of Assad.

However, the staffer said he would not rule out supporting

some kind of aid package if a deal is reached. But those who converged on Capitol Hill from Cleveland, New York, Chicago and other cities want to make sure that does not happen.

Dr. Harvey Finkelstein, a radiologist from near Louisville, Ky., said he believes Israel is making a mistake in negotiating with the Syrians about a potential withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

"I have been very disturbed, very upset by the prospects of a deal with Syria," he said. "It's just a monumental folly."

Asked how he could not trust Prime Minister Ehud Barak, Israel's most decorated soldier who helped capture the Golan in 1967, Finkelstein said: "We have the right to our independent opinion. We are Americans. We're not Israelis. But he's wrong as far we're concerned."

"There's nothing that can replace the strategic advantage of the Golan, the water supply, and there is no indication from the Syrian side that they are going to really establish peace," he added.

Mahala Glazer, one of 15 students from Cleveland associated with the Betar Zionist Youth Organization and Bnei Akiva, a religious Zionist youth movement, said she was concerned about the safety of her friend's family. They live in Kiryat Shmona in northern Israel, which regularly gets shelled by Hezbollah in Southern Lebanon.

She also was skeptical of Barak, who has spent much time since his election trying to woo Syria back to the negotiating table.

"A lot of people think he is making the wrong decision," Glazer said. "I guess that he thinks he knows what he is doing — he's been a head officer in the military — but he doesn't share his views. So we don't really know what is going through his head and why he's doing this, even though I feel a lot of Israel would be opposed to it because the Golan is so vital to the country." □

Jewish women's group sounds the alarms on 'crisis' in child care*By Sharon Samber*

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Declaring a "child care crisis," the National Council of Jewish Women has issued a report lamenting the lack of affordable, quality child care in the United States and urging more in federal funds for child care and school-age programs.

The NCJW report, issued this week, included the results of past studies in an effort designed to heighten awareness of the growing problems parents are facing.

Families spend an average of \$4,000 to \$6,000 annually on child care, and some as much as \$10,000, the report shows. In some states, the average cost of day care can be twice as much as the cost of college tuition, and, in many states, child care providers are barely earning more than the minimum wage.

Although Jewish programs and families are not expressly mentioned in the report, Sammie Moshenberg, NCJW's Washington director of operations, says the problems affect all groups.

"This impacts our community directly," Moshenberg said. "The Jewish community is in the same bind as other parents."

The NCJW is calling on public and private sectors to work together to help employers offer affordable parental leave, flexible scheduling, telecommuting, and support for on- and off-site child care. Better resource and referral services to help parents select and monitor care are needed as well, the group says. □