



# Daily News Bulletin

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83rd Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Report: Israel, Iran holding talks

Israel and Iran have been holding talks in Switzerland and other locations in recent months, according to The Washington Post.

Among the topics they discussed is the trial of 13 Iranian Jews accused of spying for Israel and the United States, the paper said, citing Iranian officials. The discussions also dealt with frozen Iranian assets held by Israel and the fate of Israeli MIAs in Lebanon.

### Anthrax scare hits Penn Hillel

An anthrax scare forced more than 30 students and staff at the University of Pennsylvania Hillel in Philadelphia to evacuate their building Monday.

The evacuation was ordered after the director of the school's Hillel chapter, Jeremy Brochin, opened an envelope that contained an anti-Semitic letter and white powder identified by the letter writer as anthrax, an infectious disease.

Brochin was quarantined for about two hours until the city's hazardous materials unit determined the powder was benign.

### U.N. nuke meeting worries Israel

Israel is worried about resolutions that may come out of a U.N. conference on the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported.

Some are concerned that the meeting, which began Monday and is expected to last four weeks, could produce resolutions to isolate Israel. The only nation in the Middle East to refuse to sign the treaty, Israel has never admitted to having nuclear weapons.

### Albright may visit Middle East

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright may go to the Middle East in the coming weeks to push for progress in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, the State Department said.

"The next six to eight weeks could well be a decisive phase" in those talks, State Department spokesman James Rubin said Monday.

**REMINDER:** Because of the Passover holiday, the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Thursday, April 27 and Friday, April 28.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Jewish moms to add their voices against weapons of hate criminals

By Brianne Korn

NEW YORK (JTA) — Loren Lieb laughed as she read a sign on her office wall drawn by her 7-year-old son, but she knows his motivation is no laughing matter.

"One way I can make a difference is by marching for no guns," wrote Joshua Stepakoff, one of three children injured by a spray of bullets leveled at the North Valley Jewish Community Center in Los Angeles last August.

Lieb sat patiently as her son recovered from two gunshot wounds, but she will stand in solidarity with thousands of others in a demonstration calling for gun control legislation.

The Million Mom March, to be held on Mother's Day, May 14, has garnered more support than originally expected by its creator, New Jersey resident Donna Dees-Thomases, who initiated the march after watching the aftermath of the JCC shooting on television. Although the protest's name rests on the reasoning that the image of mothers protesting can be a powerful, emotional weapon, both men and women will participate.

More than 100,000 are expected to descend on the National Mall in Washington in an effort to bring the issue to the forefront of election-year debates. Synagogues and Jewish organizations from around the country are sending delegations, and local communities are also planning smaller marches.

Among the issues the marchers are pushing for are:

- A "cooling off," or waiting, period as well as background checks for gun purchases;
- Licenses, registration and safety locks for all handguns;
- Limits on purchases to one handgun per month;
- Better enforcement of current gun laws.

The event seems to have bridged the gaps that often separate Jews of different streams. Endorsers include organizations ranging from the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism to the Orthodox Union.

"In the Jewish community, this is not a divisive issue," said Marc Israel, director of congregational relations for the Religious Action Center, adding that Jewish response to the march has been "tremendous."

"There was the hate crime in Chicago against Jews coming home from Shabbat services," said Reva Price, Washington representative for the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, referring to last summer's attack on six Orthodox Jews. "We've seen it touch our community very profoundly."

In Los Angeles, about 30 mothers have been meeting at the JCC every two weeks since the shooting, according to Francine Naor, whose daughters escaped the shooting unharmed. Wanting to be involved in the march, the group has raised \$10,000 to fly families to Washington.

"Something like this can't happen and then you don't respond to it," said Lieb.

Statistics say youths are at risk as potential victims of gun violence. According to a 1997 report by the Children's Defense Fund, 12 children die each day from gunfire. The FBI reports that 65 percent of all murders in 1998 were committed with a firearm.

"As long as we have guns readily available, then we have not yet, as humankind, achieved sanity in this world," said Lois Shallit, executive director of the New York City chapter of Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America.

Two days before her younger son's Bar Mitzvah in 1990, her oldest son, David

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Israel to send aid to Ethiopia

Israel is planning to dispatch aid to Ethiopians threatened by famine. Two Israeli air force cargo planes are scheduled to fly to Addis Ababa to deliver food, blankets and medicine.

### Israel demolishes Arab homes

Israel demolished five homes under construction in an Arab village near Jerusalem, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

Israeli officials said the construction activity was part of a Palestinian program to create "facts on the ground" near Jerusalem before Israeli-Palestinian negotiators resolve questions of land ownership.

### Syrian minister to visit France

Syria's foreign minister and France's president are expected to talk about the future of Lebanon on Tuesday.

Farouk al-Sharaa and Jacques Chirac are expected to discuss Israel's planned withdrawal from southern Lebanon and may also talk about Syria's withdrawal. France has angered Syria with its recent calls for Syria to withdraw its 35,000 troops after Israel pulls out its 1,500 soldiers.

### Fight breaks out over sewage

Israeli and Palestinian soldiers scuffled after Palestinians in the Gaza Strip tried to block sewage coming from a nearby Jewish settlement.

Israeli soldiers tried to stop the Palestinians from using bulldozers to pile soil on top of the sewage, which the Palestinians said causes disease.

Senior officers from both sides intervened and proposed a temporary solution preventing the sewage from reaching Palestinian areas.

In another incident Monday, Israeli police fired tear gas and rubber bullets at stone-throwing protesters in Bethlehem demanding the release of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails.

Tzvi, was shot to death during a robbery by six teen-agers. "We had a Bar Mitzvah on Saturday and a funeral on Sunday," Shallit said. On May 14, chapter members will be in Washington, marching in memory of David.

As the largest Jewish women's organization in the country, Hadassah considers it a responsibility to participate in the Million Mom March.

"Could I quote you a [biblical] text about guns? Probably not," said Tana Senn, director of Hadassah's National American Affairs/Domestic Policy Department. "But it's inherently Jewish to want to protect the Jewish community and communities at large."

Rabbi Joel Mosbacher of Temple Emanu-El in Atlanta is planning to march in Washington in the name of pikuach nefesh, the mitzvah of saving a life. His father was shot to death in January 1999.

"I lived a sheltered suburban lifestyle," said Mosbacher. Before his father's murder, he added, "the issue didn't really resonate for me." One year later, Mosbacher feels differently.

Gail Powers, Million Mom March regional coordinator for California, Nevada and Arizona, said her son, Nathan, did not suffer any physical wounds when he escaped the North Valley JCC shooting unharmed, but his emotional scars have not yet healed.

"I didn't get involved until this happened in my backyard," Powers said, but she has since learned her lesson.

Being of service to one's community and tikkun olam, or repairing the world, "are Jewish values that I learned late in life. I'd like to give those values to my children."

The coordinator for the state of Florida, Melissa Jacobson, lost two friends to an accidental shooting when she was 11 years old. Now that she has her own child, his safety is foremost in her mind. She said the lack of adequate gun control legislation has bothered her for some time yet she did not pursue any course of action until now.

"I feel I have to set an example for my kids," said Jacobson, who is expecting her second child in August. "As a Jewish parent, it's the ultimate responsibility that I have to protect them."

Powers echoed the sentiment.

"One mom is a powerful voice." □

## Attack on German synagogue coincides with Hitler's birthday

By Allison Linn

BERLIN (JTA) — Residents of an eastern German city held a vigil outside a small synagogue last week that was targeted with a Molotov cocktail on the anniversary of Hitler's birthday.

Last Friday's vigil, attended by Jewish and non-Jewish residents of the city of Erfurt, came a day after the first such attack on a German synagogue in five years.

German officials, including German President Johannes Rau, condemned the attack. Erfurt Mayor Manfred Ruge said the attack was "like a slap in the face. I am deeply shocked."

The attack caused no injuries and the synagogue was spared extensive damage because the homemade bomb was badly designed, police said.

Wolfgang Nossen, a Jewish communal leader in the eastern state of Thuringia, criticized local politicians for not doing more to discourage right-wing extremism.

"Thuringia is a marching zone and a test ground for the neo-Nazis," he was quoted as saying. "While their demonstrations are forbidden in other states, they are allowed in Thuringia."

While welcoming the outpouring of support from the area's residents, Nossen said, "I would prefer that such shows of sympathy weren't necessary at all."

German police arrested on Tuesday an 18-year-old neo-Nazi suspected of carrying out the attack. A member of the extremist National Democratic Party, the suspect denied involvement in the attempted arson during questioning by police.

A note found at the scene of the attack said, "This action is taking place on a purely anti-Semitic basis." □



## Daily News Bulletin

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## JEWISH WORLD

### Jordan's king focuses on peace during first official visit to Israel

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Concern about the slow pace of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations prompted Jordan's King Abdullah to make his first state visit to Israel since ascending the throne last year.

Jordan has a large stake in those negotiations, which touch on what to do with Palestinian refugees and on the final borders of Israel and a Palestinian state.

More than half of Jordan's population comes from Palestinian families who fled to Jordan during Israel's 1948 War of Independence. The final peace agreement Israel and the Palestinians are trying to reach will have a deep impact on Jordan's domestic politics. Abdullah traveled to Israel for a four-hour visit Sunday, steering his royal yacht from the Jordanian resort of Aqaba to the neighboring Israeli resort of Eilat.

Abdullah was accompanied by his Palestinian wife, Queen Rania, and was greeted by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak at a ceremony at an Israeli naval base in Eilat.

The king urged Barak to continue his attempt to reach peace with the Palestinians. "Land for peace has been accepted by all parties since 1991 and must continue to guide us wherever obstacles in the process emerge," Abdullah said.

He also said he is hopeful that there will be a breakthrough this year in the talks, which he said would give "the justice they seek" to the Palestinians and "the security they desire" to Israelis.

Barak said Israel considers Jordan a cornerstone in efforts to achieve regional peace.

"Israel views this current stage as a historic opportunity to arrive at a comprehensive and lasting peace with all its neighbors, and we perceive Jordan as a full partner and a cornerstone of this enterprise," Barak said.

Israel Television broadcast an interview in which Abdullah said Jerusalem should serve as a capital for both Israel and the Palestinians.

"I believe on the political levels that Jerusalem has enough room for a Palestinian and an Israeli capital," he said. "On the religious side, I believe that Jerusalem should be a city for all of us, an open city."

Israel and the Palestinians have been working to reach a framework for a final peace accord by next month, with the aim of completing the accord itself by a Sept. 13 deadline. The talks have been much on the mind of President Clinton, who met two weeks ago at the White House with Barak, and last week with Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

Despite those meetings, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators say they do not expect to meet the May deadline for reaching the framework agreement.

After holding two rounds of meetings recently near Washington, the two sides are slated to begin a new round of talks next Sunday in Eilat.

The negotiators still have to resolve issues left over from previous agreements, including an additional Israeli withdrawal from portions of the West Bank and the opening of a second safe-passage route for Palestinians traveling between the West Bank and Gaza Strip. A first route opened last year.

In addition, the two sides must tackle a host of difficult final-status issues, including the Palestinian refugee question, Jewish settlements and Jerusalem.

Haim Ramon, an Israeli Cabinet minister who is close to Barak, on Sunday reiterated his view that the two sides could reach agreement on most of these issues quickly — but added that it would be difficult to reach a complete agreement because neither side is willing to compromise on Jerusalem.

Abdullah had previously planned to visit Israel, but postponed those trips because of tensions in the Israeli-Palestinian talks. In addition to the peace track, he and Barak discussed trade and tourism projects — including a joint Eilat-Aqaba airport — in meetings that also included government ministers from both countries.

Israel Radio reported that in talks with Regional Development Minister Shimon Peres, the Jordanian officials expressed disappointment with the lack of progress in their planned joint economic projects. □

#### Poll: Coverage of religion doubled

U.S. media coverage of religion doubled during the 1990s, according to a new poll.

Most of the coverage focused on the role of religion in public policy and not on theology or spirituality, according to the poll conducted by the Washington-based Center for Media and Public Affairs. Protestantism and Catholicism accounted for almost two-thirds of all coverage, while 12 percent of the stories focused on Judaism.

#### Seder held in Shanghai

More than 100 Jewish expatriates celebrated Passover at the Ohel Rachel Synagogue in Shanghai.

Among those attending the seder, led by Lubavitch Rabbi Shalom Greenberg, were survivors of Auschwitz.

It was the third time this year that Chinese officials allowed Jewish residents of Shanghai to use the synagogue to celebrate a Jewish holiday.

#### Alleged Hitler skull to be shown

Russian archives will exhibit this week what they claim is a fragment of Hitler's skull. The fragment, which has a bullet hole through it, was kept in a secret archive for decades, officials said.

The authenticity of the claim has been questioned since Moscow first announced it had the fragment in 1993.

#### 13 Russian neo-Nazis arrested

Russian police and security agents arrested 13 people after they found neo-Nazi materials during a crackdown on a group specializing in illegal trade in arms and explosives. The group in St. Petersburg, led by members of a neo-Nazi group, operated under the cover of one of the city's youth scouting clubs.

#### Israeli rock song called X-rated

A leading Swedish newspaper called Israel's entry for this year's Eurovision song contest X-rated.

During the video for the song "Sameach," Hebrew for "Happy," two male members of the band Ping Pong kiss each other, while the group's female singer provocatively holds a cucumber.

"Israel is displaying Ping Pong's sex show," said the Swedish daily *Aftenbladet*. Two years ago, Israeli transsexual Dana International caused a stir when she won the competition.

#### Study: Israeli tech to boom

Technology will comprise 45 percent of Israel's exports in 10 years, according to a study by two Israeli economists. The Israel Democracy Institute estimates that high-tech exports will total \$37 billion in a decade, with a potential growth rate of 10 percent a year.

## Berlin's Jewish museum remains beautifully but mysteriously empty

By Allison Linn

BERLIN (JTA) — On an unusually warm day in early spring, Tom Freudenheim sat in his sparsely decorated office at the Jewish Museum Berlin, smoking a cigarette and getting frustrated.

The German-born American, who was with the Smithsonian Institution in Washington for many years — and later New York's YIVO Institute for Jewish Research — had just received a letter from an American friend that included an itinerary of the friend's group trip to Berlin. One of the scheduled events was a tour of the still-empty Jewish Museum to look at the architecture.

Freudenheim, who is the museum's deputy director and was to lead the tour, didn't know what to tell the friend.

The museum's director, former U.S. Treasury Secretary Michael Blumenthal, had just announced that the museum's collection would not be installed until at least October 2001.

Blumenthal blamed the yearlong postponement on a faulty air conditioning system whose repair might mean closing the building to visitors. That would require them to stop the wildly popular visits to see the empty museum's architecture — they've drawn 150,000 people already, including many English speakers — which would also mean Freudenheim couldn't lead the tour his friend already had planned.

Freudenheim doesn't know when or if the museum will stop offering such visits. He also doesn't know when the museum will finish installing its collection and open in earnest. And about what he might know — what the museum's collection will include, for example — he and the other museum staffers were being notoriously tight-lipped.

The much-anticipated Jewish Museum Berlin, designed by architect Daniel Libeskind, is a jarring sight of glaring metal nestled in a middle-class pocket of bland post-World War II apartment buildings.

A tall building that snakes around at harsh, not-quite-right angles, its glaring metallic exterior is broken only by odd-shaped windows and gash-like lines that symbolize a dissected Star of David. The \$60 million building, whose inside is even more unpredictable, unsettling and strangely beautiful than its outside, is so beloved that some fans would like it to stay empty forever.

On the other side of the debate are those in the art community who wonder if and when the museum will ever be filled.

Although it already has a small collection from its previous life as an arm of the Berlin City Museum, staffers are being extremely tight-lipped about what else will go in the large museum.

The secrecy has spawned a widespread rumor that the museum's grand opening has really been postponed because the staff does not have enough pieces to fill it, or a clear idea of what it wants to do. Freudenheim dismissed this rumor.

"I keep getting people saying, 'Yeah, I read about the air conditioning, but I know that's just an excuse,'" Freudenheim said. "But it really is the air conditioning."

Still, when asked about the collection, Freudenheim will only talk vaguely about borrowing and buying from collectors and museums around the world, and refuses to give more concrete details.

What he will say, however, is that the museum is going to be

less about objects than about concepts.

"This is not being seen as an object exhibit," he said. "We are starting out at the other end, with the story of Jews in Germany."

"What we're asking is, 'How do we tell a story in a museum context?'" he added.

While the Holocaust necessarily plays a role in that story, museum director Blumenthal often reminds people that this is but one part of the story of Jewish life in Germany.

To tell this story, Freudenheim said, the museum plans to rely heavily on interactive elements and technology.

"We're creating an experience rather than just being a place that houses things," Freudenheim said. The Holocaust Museum in Washington "is not necessarily our model, but it creates an experience in the same way."

The museum will offer all information in English and German. Bilingual museums are still relatively rare in Berlin, but it is expected that this museum will be especially popular with American tourists. For the time being, however, the museum's administrators are most focused on getting everything ready.

Asked whether the museum would open by its planned date in October 2001, Freudenheim said only, "We're being very cagey about definite dates right now." □

## Israel to check out lead on the burial places of MIAs

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel plans to investigate a newspaper report that an Arab official is willing to sell information about the burial places of three Israeli soldiers missing in action in Lebanon since 1982.

Just the same, Deputy Defense Minister Ephraim Sneh warned that previous claims of information about Israeli MIAs proved fruitless and that many people are willing to try to exploit the tragedy for money.

Sneh was responding to a report last Friday in the Nazareth-based A-Sinara newspaper, which quoted an Arab source as saying the remains of Zachariah Baumel, Zvi Feldman and Yehuda Katz are buried in a neighboring Arab country.

One of the sources for the report was a Palestinian official, according to the Jerusalem Post.

The three MIAs disappeared June 11, 1982, in the battle of Sultan Yakoub at the beginning of Israel's invasion of Lebanon.

The newspaper report came two days after Israel freed 13 Lebanese nationals who had been held without trial as bargaining chips for the return of Israeli MIAs. The 13 were released following a ruling by the Supreme Court that Israel could not hold detainees indefinitely if they do not present a security threat.

While abiding by the court's decision, Israel's Security Cabinet decided to initiate legislation that would give the government the legal right to hold detainees it deemed "illegal fighters" as bargaining chips. The decision to pursue such legislation was apparently aimed at keeping two Shi'ite fundamentalist leaders, Sheik Abdel Karim Obeid and Mustafa Dirani, behind bars.

Families of Israeli MIAs criticized the high court's ruling, saying it was depriving the Israeli defense establishment of a key tool in obtaining information about the missing servicemen and securing their release. □