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83rd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Jews join in Million Mom March

Members of synagogues, Hadassah chapters and Jewish mothers from across the United States joined the Million Mom March for gun safety Sunday in Washington. [Page 1]

Amnesty International slams Iran

Iran is violating human-rights treaties it signed in the way it is conducting the trial of 13 Jews accused of spying for Israel, according to Amnesty International.

The London-based human-rights group called the trial "unfair" and urged Iran to open the closed-door proceedings to the public.

Report: Hamas militant arrested

Palestinian officials arrested a Hamas militant who tops Israel's most-wanted list, according to Israel Television's Channel 1.

Palestinian officials did not confirm the report regarding Mohammed Deif.

Clashes erupt over prisoners

Dozens of Palestinians were injured, and one reportedly killed, during clashes with Israeli soldiers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The Palestinians were demonstrating for the release of prisoners jailed for security crimes against Israel.

Sunday's unrest came as Israeli and Palestinian negotiators met in Jerusalem, but were unable to agree on the prisoner release issue.

The clashes came as Israel and the Palestinians missed another deadline for reaching an outline of a final peace deal. [Page 2]

Family sues Islamic charities

The family of an Israeli-American teen-ager shot to death in Jerusalem in 1996 is suing several Islamic charities, groups and individuals for the murder, which was committed by a member of Hamas.

The action by the parents of David Boim is believed to be the first attempt by individuals to use U.S. laws against groups that raise money for terrorist groups.

The U.S. government named Hamas to its list of terrorist groups in 1995.

Gun control is a moral issue and a Jewish issue, moms say

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Jewish mothers have joined with moms from across the country to give Congress an earful in support of gun control and safety legislation.

Standing on the National Mall within view of Capitol Hill, members of synagogues and Hadassah chapters demonstrated with thousands of others on Sunday, Mother's Day, to call on Congress to enact "sensible gun control laws."

Million Mom March supporters want background checks at gun shows, registration of firearms and licensing of gun owners, as well as safety locks on handguns. Congress' inaction on the issue is unacceptable, they say, pledging to make gun policy an issue in the November elections.

"Make this moral issue political," urged Rosanne Selfon, vice president of Women of Reform Judaism, at a pre-march event. "We have a moral obligation that emanates from Torah and God. Today is the day to make our legislators listen."

The Jewish community appears galvanized and mobilized around gun control, perhaps as a result of last August's shooting at the North Valley Jewish Community Center in Grenada Hills, Calif. That incident, with the nationally televised images of a daisy chain of children being led away from the center by policemen, actually gave Donna Dees-Thomases the idea for the Million Mom March.

Legislators in Washington, however, are unlikely to do more than listen as the chance of any gun control legislation passing this session is minimal. A major bill on gun control has been languishing in Congress for more than nine months.

Nevertheless, people like Gail Powers believe the issue will be a decisive one in congressional races.

Powers, whose son was in a classroom at the North Valley JCC during the shooting, got involved because she didn't want another parent to feel like she did. She said she is "amazed and astonished" at the unity of the different Jewish movements on this issue.

Powers started out as the "e-mail person" for the march. She later got more involved, becoming the California coordinator and the western region coordinator for the march, and helped bring more than a thousand people to Washington.

When Elaine Bayer of the Chicago suburb of Homewood, Ill., heard about the march, she called up organizer Dees-Thomases and told her to get in touch with Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America.

Bayer, an executive board member of the Chicago Hadassah chapter, then decided she would organize her own family. "I said, 'I'm going to bring everybody to Washington,'" Bayer said, as she stood with seven other members of her family.

The North Valley JCC shooting also brought the issue home for Bayer. "This is not just something that happens to other people," she learned.

More than 500 Hadassah members, some wearing personalized Hadassah white and pink "Million Mom March" T-shirts, came to the march, and many others had planned to participate in some of the 73 local marches across the country.

Small groups representing synagogues or Jewish organizations from around the country came with banners and signs, dotting the mall grounds.

Gun control is a compelling issue in the Jewish community, said Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, but until now while there was sympathy, that hadn't translated into anything concrete.

"Now I hope it will make its way into the Jewish consciousness and the Jewish

MIDEAST FOCUS

Cabinet urged to study book

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak handed out copies of a book by an economist at a Cabinet meeting and told his ministers to absorb its message.

"The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy" by Anthony Giddens calls for a domestic policy that achieves a balance between an unfettered free market and state intervention.

More Hezbollah attacks expected

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak said he expects Hezbollah gunmen to step up attacks as the date for Israel's planned withdrawal from southern Lebanon nears. Barak also said he foresees "an exchange of blows" during the transition and for a certain time after it, but believes the exit from Lebanon will reduce the conflict overall.

On Sunday, Israeli jets struck Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon.

The airstrikes came after Hezbollah attacked Israeli positions in the region.

Greek leader to visit Israel

Greece's president plans to travel to Israel in what will be the first visit to the Jewish state by a Greek head of state. Constantinos Stephanopoulos is scheduled to arrive Monday for the two-day visit, during which he plans to visit the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial and the grave of Yitzhak Rabin.

Israel loses song contest

The Israeli band Ping Pong placed 22nd out of 24 competitors at the Eurovision song contest in Stockholm on Saturday night, raising uncertainty over whether Israel will qualify to compete next year. Before the competition, the band created controversy when it waved Syrian flags and made suggestive use of a cucumber during a rehearsal.

Denmark won the competition with "Fly on the Wings of Love" by the Olsen Brothers.



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legislative agenda," Yoffie told JTA. He also encouraged coalition-building on gun control. "We're too small to make the change ourselves," he said.

At the interfaith service just before the rally and march officially began, Rabbi Marc Israel of the Religious Action Center urged more action from the Jewish community, saying it is not enough to avoid violence but people must be "rodfei shalom," pursuers of peace.

"True peace can only be found when our families and our communities are complete, when gun violence no longer shatters our lives and the lives of our loved ones," he said.

Protesters around the National Mall carried signs that said, "Love Kids Not Guns," "It's Easier to Child-Proof a Gun Than to Bullet-Proof a Child," and, pointedly, "Attention Congress: How Many Americans Must Die Before You Enact Sensible Gun Laws?"

Speaking at the march, Yoffie did not shy away from forceful points, either.

"We are ready for a knockdown, drag-out, no-holds-barred battle against the NRA, which is the real criminals' lobby in this country, and which is drenched in the blood of murdered children," he said.

Rabbi Avi Magie of Temple Emanu-El of Honolulu, who had vowed to attend the march "no matter what," said his community is upset over a lack of stricter gun safety laws.

Even though Hawaii has some of the country's most stringent laws, many in the community are angry that the state legislature will not pass a law to require a license to buy ammunition. Magie believes gun control is clearly a Jewish issue because it involves the safety of families.

The Jewish community is required to do what it can to bring peace into people's lives, Magie said. "It's really quite simple." □

Another deadline comes and goes as negotiators meet out of spotlight

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel and the Palestinians have opened back-channel talks in an effort to overcome their differences.

Palestinian officials were quoted as saying Sunday that the speaker of the Palestinian legislative council, Ahmed Karia, had traveled to Sweden for talks with Israeli Public Security Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami.

Reports in Israel said that Ben-Ami was accompanied by Israeli attorney Gilad Sher, who is considered a confidant of Prime Minister Ehud Barak.

The reports about the back-channel talks came as Israel and the Palestinians missed another deadline for reaching an outline of a final peace deal. The two sides had agreed earlier this year on a May 13 deadline after missing a similar deadline in February.

As negotiators continue to make little headway, tensions have been increasing in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. For the past week, Palestinian protesters have been clashing with Israeli soldiers during demonstrations aimed at securing the release of Palestinians jailed for security crimes against Israel.

On Sunday, at least 20 Palestinians were injured during the clashes.

In Gaza, hundreds of Palestinians threw stones and gasoline bombs at Israeli soldiers near the Netzarim junction, blocking the entrance road to the Jewish settlement. Similar clashes also took place in the West Bank town of Ramallah.

Sunday's unrest came as Israeli and Palestinian negotiators met in Jerusalem, but were unable to agree on the prisoner release issue.

At the weekly Cabinet meeting, Barak briefed his ministers about the unrest.

He described the mood on the Palestinian street as "charged and tense."

Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat told reporters that the talks were in a crisis that could only be resolved with an additional prisoner release.

Israel's chief negotiator, Oded Eran, said the talks could only make progress if the Palestinian Authority quelled the current disturbances. □

JEWISH WORLD

ADL says big courtroom defeat won't keep group from doing its job

By Michael J. Jordan

U.S. urges Austria on restitution

The top U.S. negotiator on Holocaust issues called on Austria to begin resolving claims regarding Jewish-owned property looted by the Nazis.

U.S. Deputy Treasury Secretary Stuart Eizenstat is slated to be in Vienna this week to discuss Austrian plans to compensate Holocaust-era slave laborers.

Jail guard claims anti-Semitism

A prison guard in California is charging the state's Department of Corrections with anti-Semitism.

Alan Ashenfarb, who has worked at San Quentin since 1994, claims that he has suffered emotional distress from anti-Semitic jokes and comments made by other employees and prison administrators.

Ashenfarb said he has not heard from prison administrators on two previous complaints.

Russian shul vandalized — again

A synagogue in the Russian city of Borovichi was again vandalized, according to the Moscow office of the Anti-Defamation League.

Four windows were broken May 10. ADL officials had already sent a letter to local authorities urging them to investigate previous attacks on the synagogue, which was opened last year with help from U.S. Jews.

Police search Goussinsky's office

Russian newspaper editors are protesting after security officials searched the offices of the Russian Jewish Congress' leader.

Most Russian analysts believe the search conducted last week against media mogul Vladimir Goussinsky, who has criticized Russia's war against Chechen separatists, was politically motivated.

Art dealer family loses libel case

A Paris appeals court ruled in favor of an American writer who suggested that a French-Jewish art dealer collaborated with the Nazis, according to the French daily Liberation.

Three members of the New York-based Wildenstein family of art dealers had accused art historian Hector Feliciano of libel for remarks about the late Georges Wildenstein in the book "The Lost Museum: The Nazi Conspiracy to Steal the World's Greatest Works of Art."

Plaque unveiled at camp

Czech Republic President Vaclav Havel unveiled a plaque at Sachsenhausen to remember the more than 1,100 Czech students who were sent to the former concentration camp near Berlin after the Nazis closed universities in November 1939.

Havel said people should never again turn a blind eye to the forces of evil.

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Anti-Defamation League, stung by a courtroom defeat for the first time in its 87-year history, has asked the judge to review a jury's \$10.5 million verdict against it.

But while the appeals process moves forward, the ADL says it's still business as usual.

"We're going to keep on representing Jews who feel threatened or harassed, so it's not going to affect our work," said Jill Kahn Meltzer, ADL's corporate counsel.

The jury, in its April 28 verdict in Denver, found the ADL's Mountain States chapter and its director liable for violating the Federal Wiretap Act and for defaming and violating the privacy of a Colorado couple publicly accused of anti-Semitism.

The couple had been feuding with its Jewish neighbors, who had asked the ADL to intervene in 1994. In response to the motion filed May 12, the judge can lower or eliminate the damages, or throw out the April 28 verdict entirely. If he sticks by the jury's decision, ADL officials say they will appeal to a higher court.

"We have every faith in the judicial system, that the right thing will be done at the end of the day," said ADL spokeswoman Myrna Shinbaum.

"We were shocked and dismayed by the jury's decision. We don't think we did anything wrong. We think we did everything right."

With the wheels of the appeal process just set in motion, it's too early to tell what ramifications such a costly verdict would have on ADL's \$45 million annual budget and its wide range of activities.

Meltzer said the organization had taken no disciplinary action against the Denver-area ADL director, Saul Rosenthal, whose statements about the Colorado couple, the Quigleys, at a 1994 news conference were the primary bone of contention. His comments were based on the testimony of the Jewish neighbors, the Aronsons.

"We didn't determine that he said something he shouldn't have," Meltzer said. "He's been fully supported by the ADL throughout the litigation."

The long-running case was triggered by a dispute over their dogs. It escalated when Candace Aronson accused William Quigley of trying to run her over with his car in their affluent suburb outside Denver. Soon after, the Aronsons, who had a police scanner in their home, "inadvertently" overheard the Quigleys on their cordless telephone. They overheard a number of crude anti-Semitic comments — later described as "jokes" — and what they perceived to be threats against them.

The "jokes" reportedly included ideas like attaching images of oven doors to the Aronson's house — an apparent reference to the Holocaust — burning the Aronsons' children, and wishing the Aronsons had been blown up in a terrorist attack in Israel.

The Aronsons asked the ADL for help. They also probed into the legality of tapping and taping the Quigleys' phone lines to produce evidence. Meltzer said they approached their own attorney, the local district attorney, the Federal Communications Commission and the ADL. The ADL also checked with the FBI.

The go-ahead was given Oct. 20, 1994. But unbeknownst to the ADL and the Aronsons, just five days later the new law outlawing wire-tapping went into effect. Both parties only learned about it in December of that year, said Meltzer.

The local district attorney filed charges of ethnic intimidation against the Quigleys, only to later withdraw it and pay the Quigleys \$75,000 in an out-of-court settlement. The Quigleys and Aronsons also settled out of court, with no exchange of money.

The Aronsons moved from the neighborhood two years ago.

Yet, the case against the ADL remained, with the Quigleys asserting the ADL had infringed upon their civil rights. William Quigley also claimed his career with United Artists theaters had been ruined after being publicly labeled "anti-Semitic," which he said were based on the off-color remarks alone.

ADL officials are bewildered. Said Meltzer, "It's difficult to know what the jury was thinking and to understand how they reached this verdict." □

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

Dominican Jews thrive after 60 years on island*By Kimberlee Roth*

SOSUA, Dominican Republic (JTA) — Though Christopher Columbus stumbled onto the shores of the Dominican Republic more than 500 years ago, the city of Sosua, only a few miles from where he landed, is celebrating its 60th anniversary.

When a group of 40 Jews climbed ashore, bereft of their possessions and loved ones and surrounded by jungle, they couldn't help but wonder what was in store.

"I could see some houses. I was surprised when I saw lights," said Martin Katz, 82, one of the original Jews to settle in the city along the north coast of the Dominican Republic.

Two years earlier, while the Evian Conference on Refugees was taking place in France, ships carrying fleeing European Jews were being turned away from safe harbors, and the doors of asylum were slamming shut around the world.

Within a month after the conference, during which delegates from 32 countries expressed sympathy for refugees but few opened their doors to them, the Dominican Republic's dictator, Gen. Rafael Trujillo, offered to issue visas and resettle up to 100,000 Jewish refugees.

Trujillo's motivation has been the subject of much speculation over the years.

Some have said that his generosity was a veiled attempt to win favor among international leaders, since he had recently massacred thousands of Haitians.

Others claim his offer was really an effort to "whiten" the population and develop the island.

Those whose lives were spared seem less inclined to question his intentions.

"For me, the question is not why he did it. I am thankful he did it," said Katz, who lost his sister in the Holocaust.

Other residents echo his sentiments.

"The Jewish community is very thankful to the Dominican Republic, the Dominican people. The truth is, he did a good deed," said one descendant of a settler.

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee helped organize resettlement efforts and made an initial investment of \$200,000, which was to be paid back as the community became self-supporting.

The purchase agreement with Trujillo, transferring the land to the settlement association and granting citizenship and religious freedom to all refugees, was signed in January 1940.

On May 10, the first shipload of refugees arrived by Portuguese ship on the shores of Hispanola, the Caribbean island that Haiti shares with the Dominican Republic.

Over the next few years, more than 600 Jews came to Sosua, mainly from Germany and Austria.

After learning the basics of farming, settlers were given opportunity to purchase 80 acres of land, 10 cows, a mule and a horse, explained Katz, who recalled paying \$10 per month for his low-interest homestead loan.

The Sosua Jews built workshops, a sanitation system and a clinic.

They established a school and a dairy, Productos Sosuas, both of which are still in use today. They brought malaria under control too, said Katz, who managed for 29 years the dairy, which "made very good cheese."

The transition from urban sophisticate to tropical farmer was not easy, and once the war ended, many Jews emigrated to the United States.

Those who stayed have developed Sosua into a thriving tourist center, where the cultures of visitors and locals alike intersect readily — as do streets with names like Calle Dr. Rosenberg and Calle David Stern.

Tucked between a thatched-roofed resort disco and a small hotel sits a well-tended, pastel-colored building, no bigger than a one-room schoolhouse, with a crooked stained glass menorah and Star of David above the door.

The shul, built by settlers, contrasts rather sharply with Sosua's barrio of El Batey.

The grounds of the temple, shaded by palm fronds and bordered by tall hibiscus, offer respite from the brutal Caribbean sun and incessant buzzing of motorcycle taxis as they weave among cars. The beat of salsa and merengue is palpable everywhere.

A woman walks down the street out front, a laundry basket of wares atop her head. The baseball diamond across the street sits idle, ready to spring to life in the evening when local teams come out to play pelota, ball.

The small Jewish community, numbering "a few dozen," according to one resident, meets occasionally for services and for Chanukah, Purim and Passover celebrations. For the past couple of years — since a visiting rabbi and cantorial student from Buenos Aires returned home after spending a year each with the congregation — lay leaders have conducted services.

Though they're a tiny minority in a devout Catholic country, Sylvie Papernik, the daughter of settlers who met en route to Sosua, said, "Growing up as a child, I never remember a bad experience with anti-Semitism."

Locals are familiar with the synagogue and quickly offer directions.

In response to a question about Jews in his country, a non-Jewish Dominican businessman said, "We have Jews," and rattled off a few names. "Well, they are Dominicans," he said, "but their roots are Jewish."

Besides a handful of original settlers, now in their mid-80s and 90s, some children and grandchildren of settlers remain and have made their lives in Sosua.

Felix Koch, 82, still runs his guesthouse with his native Dominican wife, Gloria. Of his life he says, "The past is the past. I am here. I am at peace. I am happy." □

Poll: Lebanon withdrawal backed

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A majority of Israelis support a unilateral withdrawal of their troops from Lebanon, according to a Gallup poll for the Israeli daily Ma'ariv.

The poll also showed 55 percent of Israelis back or tend to back a permanent peace deal with the Palestinians. But support fell for a deal that would include giving up 80 percent of the West Bank and evacuating some Jewish settlements there. □