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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Court rules against prayer

Public school officials cannot let students lead prayers before high school football games, the Supreme Court ruled Monday. [Page 1]

U.N. to send more peacekeepers

The United Nations will dispatch 1,000 more peacekeepers to Lebanon next month to help patrol the border with Israel, said U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan. [Page 4]

Russia recognizes Chabad group

Russia's Interior Ministry granted official recognition to the Chabad Lubavitch-dominated Federation of Jewish Communities.

The move elevates the federation's status to that of its chief rival, the Russian Jewish Congress, and is expected to heighten tensions between the two groups.

War criminal loses right to appeal

Britain's highest court denied a convicted Nazi war criminal the right to appeal his double life sentence. Anthony Sawoniuk, 79, was found guilty last year of murdering two Jews in the Soviet Union in 1942.

The court offered no further comment when it denied his appeal Monday. Sawoniuk is the only person in Britain ever found guilty of Nazi war crimes.

Settlers protest pullbacks

Jewish settlers converged on the Knesset to demonstrate against giving any more land to the Palestinians.

Many of the demonstrators were students who were bused in after settlement leaders declared a school strike as part of the protest.

Statement warns on concessions

Thirty U.S. Jewish leaders signed a statement backing Israeli Interior Minister Natan Sharansky's recent public warning against Israel's making one-sided concessions to the Palestinians.

The signers included two past chairmen of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, and past or present leaders of such groups as the Anti-Defamation League, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee and the Zionist Organization of America.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Court spikes football prayers, leaves graduation on sidelines

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — While the U.S. Supreme Court ruled this week that students cannot lead prayers at high school football games, the issue of prayer at public school events is far from settled.

In a 6-3 decision, the court ruled Monday that student-led and student-initiated prayers violate the constitutional separation of church and state. But the court refused to use the case to decide whether prayers at graduation ceremonies are permissible.

The ruling did, however, hint at how the justices may view upcoming cases related to religion in the schools. It could also lead to a renewed push for a school prayer amendment and become a factor in the 2000 presidential campaign. Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush, the Texas governor, filed a brief in the case supporting student-led prayer.

Most Jewish groups, which have long advocated for the separation of church and state, lauded the decision on football games and said they hope the court will rule the same way on graduation ceremonies.

"I don't see how graduation prayer survives this decision," said Marc Stern, co-director of the American Jewish Congress' legal department, which filed a friend of the court brief in the case.

In 1992, the Supreme Court barred clergy-led prayers at public school graduation ceremonies. The ruling was viewed as a strong reaffirmation of the court's 1962 landmark decision banning organized school prayer.

But a year later, the justices refused to review a federal appeals court ruling that allowed student-led prayers at graduation ceremonies. That ruling conflicts with another federal appeals court's decision barring student-led graduation prayers.

In this case, Justice John Paul Stevens, writing for the majority, said that the Texas school district's policy of allowing students to lead prayers at football games "establishes an improper majoritarian election on religion, and unquestionably has the purpose and creates the perception of encouraging the delivery of prayer at a series of important school events."

Michael Lieberman, counsel for the Anti-Defamation League, which also filed a friend of the court brief in the case, noted the court's concern that minority religious views could be "effectively silenced" by such a policy.

Leonard Cole, national chair for the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, agreed. "Whatever the intention of such religious exercises, the net effect is to make children of minority faiths or no religious faith at all feel marginalized," Cole said in a statement.

The Orthodox Union is backing the court's decision, but believes there are certain circumstances where student-led prayer in school should be constitutionally protected, said the group's director, Nathan Diament.

Diament said he is worried that if the case is interpreted too broadly, people will wrongly understand that schools ought to be "religion-free zones." The O.U. did not file a brief in the case.

The Supreme Court was set to decide this week whether it will hear a case on prayer at graduation ceremonies during next year's term.

Monday's decision may have implications for school vouchers, which provides government funds for students to attend parochial or private schools.

The court rejected the school's use of a student to lead prayer as a "circuit breaker,"

MIDEAST FOCUS

Group opposes prisoners release

A terror victims association petitioned Israel's High Court of Justice to block the planned release of three Palestinian prisoners who were involved in attacks on Israelis.

The petitioners argued that freeing the Palestinians would be discriminatory after an earlier high court ruling that blocked the release of an Israeli Jew who murdered a bound Arab terrorist.

Knesset blackmail investigated

The speaker of Israel's Knesset is looking into an extortion attempt by a woman who said she had information about legislators who used escort services.

Israel Radio reported that the woman called Avraham Burg's office saying that if she were not helped with her tax problems, she would post on the Internet photos, recordings and information on Knesset members who she said used escort services.

Palestinians ready to die

The Palestinian Authority's justice minister said the Palestinians are ready to suffer thousands of casualties in the event of a military confrontation with Israel.

Foreign Minister David Levy criticized the remarks by Freih Abu Medein, saying leader have a duty to protect lives.

Bashar named Ba'ath leader

Syria's ruling Ba'ath Party named the late Syrian President Hafez Assad's son as its new leader.

As the party took the action, the state newspaper Tishrin said Bashar Assad would continue his father's firm stance toward Israel and would demand the complete return of the Golan Heights as part of any peace deal.

Assad was designated the heir apparent to the presidency by his father, Hafez, who died earlier this month at the age of 69.



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or a way to show that the school was not directly endorsing prayer. Use of a student speaker, does not turn public speech into private speech, the court said.

That same approach is often used in voucher cases, where the parent is considered the circuit breaker and the argument is made that the government is not actually giving money directly to private schools, according to Jeffrey Sinensky, director for national affairs and legal counsel at the American Jewish Committee.

Justices Anthony Kennedy and Sandra Day O'Connor, whose votes are often the deciding ones in close cases, went along with the majority opinion, which gave the decision an added strong signal.

During oral arguments in March, Kennedy had voiced concern that schools could become "forums for religious debates," while O'Connor said she was concerned that the policy could be extended to allow prayer in the classroom.

In the case decided Monday, the Santa Fe, Texas, school district policy allowed a student representative to read prayers over the school's public address system at football games. The school district maintained this policy does not violate the separation between church and state because the message or invocation can be nonreligious, and the message is decided by the student and not the school.

The school claimed that prayer served secular purposes as well because it sanctified sporting events and promoted good sportsmanship and student safety.

Chief Justice William Rehnquist's dissent took that argument even further.

Rehnquist, who was joined by Justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas, charged that the tone of the court's opinion "bristles with hostility to all things religious in public life."

The parents and students who object to the school policy argued that the policy imposes religious practices on the student body.

Any speech that is part of an official school event, even if initiated and led by a student, is under school control and therefore the government is really making the choice of whether to include prayer, they said.

Congress may decide to issue a resolution that would promote student-led prayer at football games, which would have no legislative impact but would send a political message.

There may also be a renewed push on a constitutional amendment in favor of school prayer, said David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. The amendment, sponsored by Rep. Ernest Istook (R-Okla.), would allow any kind of prayer in government-sponsored settings, government funding for religious activities and religious symbols on government property.

Saperstein, who also teaches church-state law at the Georgetown University Law Center, said the sweeping legislation would be a "disaster" for religious freedom in America and for the American Jewish community. □

African Jews to help flood victims

MAPUTO, Mozambique (JTA) — Israel and the African Jewish community have pledged their support to Mozambique after recent flooding in the southern African nation.

The chairman of the African Jewish Congress and Israel's ambassador to six African states assured Mozambique's president, Joaquim Chissano, that aid to his country will continue.

"Thank you for your concern — we are optimistic because we have this international aid," Chissano told an AJC delegation visiting Maputo over the weekend.

Chissano said Mozambique is facing "the most important period of reconstruction." The nation is trying to control the consequences of the floods, which resulted in deaths from malaria and cholera, and to relocate people to safer places on higher ground, rebuild road and railway systems and distribute seeds and cattle to those who lost everything during the floods.

Earlier on Friday, delegates to the AJC conference from the South African Jewish Board of Deputies handed over money collected from world Jewish communities — particularly in the United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand — to the Red Cross in Mozambique. □

JEWISH WORLD

Hadassah awaits new U.N. status

Hadassah: The Women's Zionist Organization of America is awaiting word this week about its bid for consultative status on the U.N. Economic and Social Council.

The new status would enable Hadassah to work with nongovernmental organizations on women's and humanitarian issues worldwide. However, several Arab members of the council, led by Lebanon, have objected to Hadassah's inclusion due to its "Zionist" leanings.

Senate to vote on hate crimes bill

The U.S. Senate is debating hate crimes legislation that would expand federal prosecution to crimes relating to sexual orientation, gender or disability. The amendment is expected to come up for a vote Tuesday.

U.S. releases wartime documents

U.S. officials are releasing some 400,000 pages of declassified records dating back to World War II.

The papers, which include materials relating to war criminals and Nazi looted assets, were made available Monday at the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, Md.

UIA to reopen Budapest office

The United Israel Appeal plans to reopen its office in Hungary before the end of the year, according to the organization's chairman. "The major task ahead for the Hungarian office will be to help organize Jewish education in Hungary," said Avi Pazner, who was in Budapest for a two-day international convention of UIA, also known as Keren Hayesod.

UIA opened its first office in Budapest in 1921, but it was shut down at the beginning of World War II.

Canada's policy on Nazis backed

Canada accepted thousands of ex-Nazis in the years following World War II because the Soviet takeover of Eastern Europe prevented it from screening out potential war criminals, according to a new book.

But Jewish groups and scholars say Howard Margolian's "Unauthorized Entry: The Truth about Nazi War Criminals in Canada, 1946-1956" is an attempt to whitewash history.

Nathan Saatchi dies at 92

Nathan Saatchi, who fled Iraq to Britain, where his sons established a leading international advertising agency, died recently at 92.

Saatchi left Baghdad in 1946 because of increasing government harassment of Iraqi Jews.

In Britain, he set up an import-export business. His sons, Maurice and Charles, later established Saatchi & Saatchi.

Jewish federations commit over \$50 million to Birthright

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — The North American Jewish federation system has voted to become a full partner in an international program that sends young Jewish adults on free 10-day trips to Israel.

The United Jewish Communities' decision to sign onto Birthright Israel came at a June 15 meeting in Chicago, where the organization also formally approved its \$41.7 million budget and the recommendations of its Overseas Needs Assessment and Distribution Committee. Leaders of the UJC, formed last year from the merger of the United Jewish Appeal and the Council of Jewish Federations, announced the decisions at a news conference last Friday.

The UJC, which announced in April that it would likely contribute \$39 million to Birthright, has in fact committed \$52.5 million over the next five years, including \$7.8 million in 2001.

Together with central Jewish fund-raising entities from Diaspora communities outside North America — which are expected to commit an additional \$17.5 million — the UJC will join 14 individual philanthropists and the Israeli government as Birthright's three prime supporters and decision makers.

The Israeli government pledged \$70 million in April and the 14 philanthropists, including co-founders Michael Steinhardt and Charles Bronfman, have pledged a total of \$70 million. Of the UJC's 2001 allocation to Birthright, \$3.1 million will come from the UJC itself, \$3.1 million from its member federations and \$1.7 million from the budget of the Jewish Agency for Israel, which is the largest recipient of the federation system's overseas dollars.

Of the 189 federations belonging to the UJC, 118 — including all the large and intermediate federations — have so far agreed to help support Birthright financially, the UJC's chief executive officer, Stephen Solender, said at last Friday's news briefing.

UJC officials declined to provide a list of the federations, citing ongoing contractual negotiations that determine individual federation contributions.

Solender said the UJA-Federation of Greater New York will contribute the largest amount, some \$600,000 in the coming year.

Birthright sent 6,000 young adults — mostly college students — to Israel last winter and 2,000 more this spring. The enthusiasm surrounding the winter launch has widely been credited with building support in the federation system, which initially had some misgivings about the program. Some feared that the program would interfere with their own local Israel programs, while others wondered how effective a 10-day program would be in accomplishing its goal of enhancing Jewish identity.

In other business at last week's Chicago meeting, the UJC approved its 2000-01 budget, which represents a \$4.4 million cut from what its predecessor organizations spent before merging.

The UJC's revenues come from dues of its member federations as well as 11 percent taken off the top of federations' overseas allocations. The new budget includes a 19 percent cut to the organization's regional offices, which are expected to lay off 15 employees, or approximately 25 percent. Although small- and intermediate-sized federations have voiced concerns about the cuts, UJC officials say they will be offset by plans to deliver services in new, more efficient ways.

The UJC's Birthright contribution will not come out of the budget, but will be raised separately from individual donors and family foundations, said Solender.

One donor family, Herbert and Elaine Gimmelstob of Boca Raton, Fla., has already committed to paying \$600 for each young adult from their region who participates in Birthright. In addition to approving the budget, the UJC's Board of Trustees approved the recommendations of the newly formed ONAD committee.

That committee, composed primarily of representatives from 18 U.S. federations, called on federations to increase their overseas giving, the bulk of which goes to help needy Jews around the world, bring new immigrants to Israel and settle them in the Jewish state. □

New efforts encourage youth work as a 'real job'

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — Jules Gutin recalls that when he was first starting out as a youth group director, “people kept asking me when I was going to grow up and get a real job.”

The experience of Gutin, who defied his questioners and eventually became director of the Conservative movement's United Synagogue Youth, was not unusual.

Engaging Jewish Teens Last of a Series

In the Jewish community, youth work has traditionally been relegated to the just-out-of-college kid willing to earn very little money for a year or two until he or she applies to graduate school or pursues more “serious” work.

Even among youth workers with master's degrees in social work or education, turnover has generally been high and salaries low.

Now, as the Jewish community looks to improve outreach to teens, the majority of whom do not participate in youth groups or Hebrew high schools, there is a growing consensus that a renaissance of quality programming will require quality professionals who are in the field for the long term and not just as a stepping stone.

At a recent conference for people working on informal Jewish and Zionist education, held in a fading Catskill Mountains resort that was once a hotspot for American Jewish vacationers and “Borscht Belt” comedians, Gutin was one of only a handful of people there old enough to remember that Catskills era.

But echoed repeatedly throughout the conference — sponsored by the four-year-old North American Alliance for Jewish Youth — was the need to stem the turnover in the field and turn youth work into a real profession — one with training, ongoing education, good salaries, a career ladder and perhaps most importantly, respect.

“We would like to have talented, informal educators whose job it is to respond to diverse needs and create compelling programs that would be like a magnet,” said Joseph Reimer, a Brandeis University professor and director of the university's new Institute for Informal Jewish Education.

“Our judgment is that amateurs can't do that work,” he added.

Created in 1999 with funds from Charles Bronfman, the mega-philanthropist who also chairs the national umbrella organization for Jewish federations and is a founder of Birthright Israel, a program designed to send young Jewish adults to Israel on 10-day trips, the institute is one of the key players in the drive for professionalization of youth work. Starting this fall, it will run a 13-month leadership seminar consisting of mentoring, networking with other informal educators and three intensive four-day retreats.

A somewhat similar plan is in the works in California's Bay Area, where the Bureau of Jewish Education will be offering stipends, leadership training and mentoring, but also grant money for teen workers to implement new programs.

The Jewish Community Centers Association of North America runs a leadership “fellows” program for 18 JCC youth workers, and is in its second two-year cycle.

“It validated that the work I was doing had professional

meaning and enabled me to sharpen my leadership skills,” said Julia Wolpov, from the first group of JCCA fellows, who now works at Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life.

In addition to the proliferation of professional development programs, several communities are also looking for ways to provide greater support and networking among people working in informal Jewish education.

In Metro West, N.J., and Boston, federation-sponsored teen initiatives are cobbling together several part-time jobs to create full-time positions with salaries and benefits. As part of a larger series of voluntary standards the JCCA is encouraging its members to adopt, it is suggesting that new youth workers be paid at least as much as area first-year teachers, said Amy Rosenberg, who staffs the fellows program and other teen services.

But some are skeptical that teen work will ever be a long-term career, no matter what is done to professionalize it.

Marissa Buchferer, a current JCCA youth fellow and coordinator of teen activities at the Samuel Field YM-YWHA in Queens, N.Y., described the fellows program as a “phenomenal way to network and program-share with people throughout the country.”

However, she said that while she loves her work with teens, it would be hard to imagine doing it indefinitely because the schedule is hard to balance with family responsibilities.

Since programs must be offered when the teens are not in school, youth professionals generally work several nights a week and most weekends, said Buchferer.

“It's giving a lot of yourself,” she said. “You can only do that for so many years before you get burnt out and tired.” □

U.N. to send more peacekeepers to patrol Israeli-Lebanese border

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The United Nations is planning to send 1,000 more peacekeepers to Lebanon next month to help patrol the border with Israel.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan made the announcement Monday despite a warning earlier in the day from Lebanon not to deploy more peacekeepers until Beirut agrees that Israel has completely withdrawn from Lebanon.

Annan also said he would like to eventually double the current 4,500-member U.N. peacekeeping force.

The force's main task, he added, will be “to help the Lebanese government restore its effective authority” along the border.

Annan's comments came after he met with Lebanese President Emile Lahoud to discuss the situation in southern Lebanon.

Lebanese officials later described that meeting as frosty because of Lahoud's opposition to a U.N. finding that Israel had withdrawn completely from Lebanese soil.

Annan said U.N. officials were investigating charges that Israel was violating the border.

Later Monday, a U.N. official said two Israeli violations had been found, but added that he expected it to be resolved by the next day.

Lebanon's refusal to accept the U.N. finding initially prompted the Security Council to delay endorsing Annan's statement that Israel is now in full compliance with a 1978 Security Council resolution. □