



Daily News Bulletin

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83rd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Barak goes to Camp David

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak survived a no-confidence vote in the Knesset that could have brought down his government.

In a vote that fell short of the 61 required, 54 legislators supported the motion and 52 opposed it.

Meanwhile, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said Barak can make peace with the Palestinians despite his political woes.

"He is not going to make an agreement that jeopardizes his people," Albright told The Associated Press. [Page 4]

Warrant issued for Iranian rabbi

Iran's judiciary issued an arrest warrant for an Iranian rabbi who emigrated to New York in 1991.

Eshaq Belanas is being portrayed by Iranian judiciary officials as the mastermind behind the 10 Iranian Jews recently sentenced on charges of spying for Israel. [Page 1]

Israeli president resigns

Israeli President Ezer Weizman submitted his resignation to the Knesset speaker.

Weizman is stepping down in the shadow of an investigation over his acceptance of cash gifts from a French billionaire friend.

The Knesset is expected to vote later this month for Weizman's successor.

Law would help Syrian emigres

A group of Syrian Jewish immigrants may soon be one step closer to U.S. citizenship as a result of legislation in Congress.

The measure introduced in the U.S. House by Rep. Rick Lazio (R-N.Y.), a candidate for U.S. senator from New York, would grant green cards for up to 3,000 Syrian Jews who came to the United States in the early 1990s.

Hitler relative served in U.S. Navy

The son of Hitler's half-brother served in the U.S. Navy during World War II, according to The New Yorker magazine.

After the war, William Patrick Hitler, who had promoted himself in the 1930s as Hitler's nephew, changed his name and dropped out of the spotlight. Three of his sons now live on Long Island.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Rallies held around the world tell 'Iran 10' they're not alone

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — Among the thousands who turned out in New York this week to show support for 10 imprisoned Iranian Jews was one woman who knows the true value of Jewish solidarity.

Sarah Benyaminova, a Jewish immigrant from the former Soviet Union, learned firsthand the importance of signaling to those who live in a totalitarian regime that they are not alone.

Benyaminova joined a number of other former Soviet refugees at a "solidarity gathering" Monday on behalf of the 10 Jews convicted of spying for Israel. They were sentenced July 1 to prison terms of four to 13 years.

This was the largest and loudest rally in the 18 months since the first Jews were arrested.

Dozens of similar rallies were held Monday across North America and Europe.

But few protesters relate to such rallies as personally as Benyaminova, who was once on the other side, in need of international solidarity.

The American campaign for Soviet Jewry in the 1970s and 1980s bolstered the morale of Jews trapped behind the Iron Curtain, said Benyaminova, a 60-something Jew from the former Soviet republic of Uzbekistan.

"I felt I had to be here, because I know what it's like to live in a totalitarian regime," she said during Monday's demonstration, which took place a stone's throw from the United Nations.

"People focus too much on whether five people or 10 people come out. When the Iranian Jews hear about this outpouring of support from around the world, it will help them emotionally and morally.

"It also puts pressure on the Iranians, that this issue cannot be ignored."

Indeed, despite being billed as a "solidarity gathering" for the 10 prisoners and the rest of the 27,000 Iranian Jews, some Jewish officials conceded the aim was also to send powerful messages to both Tehran and Washington.

From Iran, they want the verdict reversed.

Speaking on behalf of the Clinton administration, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Richard Holbrooke said, "We hope, we implore and we demand that there be a re-examination and a reopening of this process."

Joining Holbrooke on stage was Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel, half a dozen members of the U.S. Congress and a bevy of Jewish leaders, church officials and local politicians — both Jewish and non-Jewish.

Despite the outcry, Iran still seems far from backing down.

In fact, a judiciary spokesman announced Monday that an arrest warrant has been issued for Eshaq Belanas, an Iranian Jewish rabbi who settled in New York nine years ago.

The fervently Orthodox Jews of Iran view Belanas as their spiritual leader, while the Iranian spokesman painted him as the mastermind behind the alleged spy ring.

There is concern for Belanas' safety, although he is not under police protection, said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

As for Washington's role, protesters expect the handling of the "Iran 10" to be a litmus test for future U.S.-Iran relations. There were many calls Monday for the repeal

MIDEAST FOCUS

Egypt: Barak guardedly optimistic

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak is "going to Camp David with guarded hopes" for reaching a final peace accord, said Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's political adviser. Osama al-Baz made the comment after Barak met with Mubarak in Egypt to discuss the U.S.-sponsored summit.

Arab smuggling prompts arrest

A Jewish settler from the Gaza Strip is in custody after he was allegedly paid to smuggle a Palestinian worker into Israel. He was caught two months ago for a similar offense.

El Al denies murder involvement

Israel's national airline is denying involvement in the assassination of a PLO official in Paris eight years ago. A French newspaper reported that the former deputy head of the El Al office in Paris had been involved. According to the paper, the El Al official observed the PLO official's movements prior to the assassination.

Syrians OK only candidate

Syrians flocked to the polls for a referendum endorsing the presidency of Bashar Assad. The son of the late Syrian leader Hafez Assad is running unopposed in the referendum, the last hurdle Bashar has to face before taking control.

Gays protest film board

Gay and lesbian rights organizations in Israel are challenging a film board's decision not to allow anyone under 18 to see a coming-of-age film about a gay teen.

In a petition to the Supreme Court, the organizations maintain that the homosexual content of "Edge of 17" is the sole reason for the rating and that such limitations have not been imposed on other movies with more explicit heterosexual sex scenes.

of the minor trade concessions on Iranian luxury goods made in March.

"Governments like ours respond when people take to the streets," said Louise Stoll, executive vice president of the United Jewish Communities, the umbrella group of Jewish federations, which co-sponsored the rallies.

"This is to put our government on notice, that we also expect them to respond to this injustice," she added.

None of this will be welcome news in Iran.

Even the lead defense lawyer for the 10 prisoners, Esmail Naseri — whose defense has drawn mixed reviews from American Jewish observers — complained that the lobbying of Jewish groups was exacerbating their plight.

"These pressures from abroad, which have taken the form of media onslaughts to incite public opinion, will have a negative effect on the case," Naseri was quoted as saying last week.

"This is not in the interests of our clients."

With the well-being of the prisoners and the rest of Iranian Jewry in mind, rally organizers were loathe to use the terms "demonstration" or "protest" — to not antagonize Iran and further endanger its Jews.

"We're not attacking the Iranian government," said Martin Raffel, chief operating officer for the Jewish Council for Public Affairs.

"We're still responding in a moderate fashion, in hopes that Iran will show some modicum of fairness and overturn these verdicts."

Nevertheless, speaker after speaker blasted the Iranian judiciary or regime, or both. Under a blazing sun and amid blaring sirens, the protesters — estimated at 5,000 to 10,000 by Jewish organizers, pegged at closer to 2,000 by police officials — chanted "Free the Iran 10!" and cheered as speakers railed against the "tyranny" of the "rogue nation," Iran.

Wiesel — often described as the Jewish "voice of conscience" — cautioned the crowd to speak up, but to "speak without rage."

"We believe they are innocent, and innocent they are," Wiesel said. "Therefore, what happened to them is an offense to any person in the world with a sense of decency."

He then proceeded to brand the devoutly religious prisoners as "hostages, hostages in the hands of the Iranian regime."

Jewish activists vowed to step up the pressure — both in the streets and diplomatically — until Iran budes.

"Our purpose is not to overthrow the government," said Hoenlein.

"It is to demonstrate that we will not be silent until these 10 men are back home with their families. If we need to raise our profile higher, we will raise our profile higher."

Among the other rallies held around North America, a crowd of 300 people attended protest in downtown Toronto.

The crowd assembled in front of the Old City Hall, a late-19th-century building that now functions as a courthouse — a detail that speaker Eddie Greenspan said was "particularly appropriate."

"It is ludicrous and farcical that the investigator, the prosecutor and the judge in this trial be all the same person," said Greenspan, a criminal lawyer and vice president of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association.

"I know something about criminal trials, and this was no trial, it was a circus. It was mainly an expression of anti-Semitism. The conviction was a foregone conclusion," he said.

He called upon the prime minister, Jean Chretien, to recall Canada's ambassador to Tehran and to expel Iran's charge d'affaires from Canada "until the Shiraz 10 are freed."

Noting that President Clinton said he was "deeply disturbed" by the Iranian verdict, Greenspan said that "words are not enough." The Iranian prisoners "must be released and they must be released now."

"No Spanish Inquisition, no tsar, no pogrom, no Nazis, no closed minds and no amount of anti-Semitism will ever destroy the Jewish people," Greenspan said. □

(JTA correspondent Bill Gladstone in Toronto contributed to this report.)



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JEWISH WORLD

Bush criticized on Jesus Day

The American Jewish Congress is criticizing Gov. George W. Bush (R-Texas) for proclaiming June 10, 2000, as Jesus Day in Texas.

The group says that while the Republican presidential candidate's proclamation did not have the force of law, it breached the constitutional separation between church and state.

Reform leader resigns as scout

The top professional of the Reform movement's rabbinic arm resigned his rank as Eagle Scout to protest the Boy Scouts of America's policy of not allowing openly homosexual men to be scout leaders.

Rabbi Paul Menitoff, whose Central Conference of American Rabbis recently affirmed the right of rabbis to officiate at same-sex unions, said in a letter to the Boy Scouts' president that he cannot be "associated with any organization that engages in discrimination against homosexuals."

The U.S. Supreme Court recently upheld the Scouts' policy.

Exhibit features virtual shuls

Visitors to an art exhibit in Germany can virtually tour 14 synagogues destroyed on the eve of World War II.

Three of the synagogues in the Bonn exhibit are presented in animated film, while 11 can be seen in various stages of virtual reconstruction.

All 14 of the synagogues in the exhibit, which runs through Oct. 1, were destroyed in November 1938 during Kristallnacht.

SS officer charged in Germany

German prosecutors charged an 82-year-old former SS officer with killing seven Jewish prisoners in 1945.

Julius Viel, a retired journalist arrested last October, is accused of shooting the prisoners as they dug anti-tank trenches near the Czech town of Leitmeritz. The prisoners were inmates at Theresienstadt.

Atomic spy dies at 93

Ruth Werner, who helped atomic spy Klaus Fuchs in the 1940s, died last Friday in Berlin at the age of 93.

Werner, born Ruth Kuczynski to a Jewish family in Berlin, joined the Communist Party after seeing veterans of World War I begging on the streets of her native Berlin.

Werner was never caught for her work in aiding Fuchs, who served nearly 10 years in a British prison for revealing U.S. and British atomic secrets to the Soviet Union. She reportedly remained committed to the Communist cause until her death.

Israel is thirsty for solutions as the Galilee's waters run dry

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Every summer, Israeli water officials alert the public to the same dry reality — the nation is suffering water shortages.

But this year, the officials are more worried than ever. If current usage continues, they warn, the country will run out of water. The level of Israel's main water reservoir, the Sea of Galilee, is well below the danger line.

The water issue has important political implications. Those who oppose giving away land for peace with the Palestinians argue that Israel should never give up the vital water sources located in the West Bank and Golan Heights.

Last year, the region suffered its worst drought in 120 years.

Natural resources supply an annual yield of 1.6 billion cubic meters of water, but the average usage is 2 billion cubic meters annually — and the shortfall increases every year.

According to the World Bank, the deficit between the current water supply and the actual water needs of Israel, Jordan and the Palestinians will be more than 1 billion cubic meters annually by 2015.

Environment Minister Dalia Itzik warned recently that 40 percent of the water in Israel is undrinkable because it contains large amounts of dangerous pollutants.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat often threatens Israelis who do not agree with him "to go drink water from the sea."

The truth is that in the long run, both Arabs and Jews will have to do this — literally — because in the long run desalinated sea water will provide the parched region with the only dependable supply of water.

Critics say this option is far too costly, but this is disputed.

According to the estimates of former Water Commissioner Meir Ben-Meir, the cost of desalinating water should not exceed 70 cents per cubic meter. This is lower than a price currently being quoted for Israel by Turkish officials.

The Center for Middle East Peace & Economic Cooperation in Washington suggests an even lower cost — 55 cents per cubic meter, 10 percent of the cost 20 years ago.

The center recently published full-page ads in Israeli newspapers, calling for cooperation among Israel, Jordan and the Palestinians to solve the problem.

As part of a recent water-shortage alert, Israel's water authorities told Israelis to stop watering their gardens and washing their cars.

They recalled how during a previous water shortage crisis, former Agriculture Minister Rafael Eitan recommended that couples take showers together to save water.

While couples are left to work that one out for themselves, the search is on for less drastic measures.

Professor Arye Issar of Ben-Gurion University in Beersheba, suggested, for example, to forget about Turkey and the desalination of seawater. He claims he has discovered a treasure — 1 billion cubic meters of salt water in a southern Negev aquifer that could be desalinated and shipped to the north at a much lower cost.

Others propose curtailing the wasteful use of water for agricultural purposes.

Nehemia Strassler, the economic editor of the Israeli daily Ha'aretz, argued this week that rather than importing 50 million cubic meters of water from Turkey, officials should stop allocating the same amount of water for fishponds in the coastal plain.

One possible way to save water would be to have farmers change the crops they raise. For example, Israel produces water-thirsty plants like cotton, which is later exported to Europe.

Some point to the subsidies farmers get for their water. Farmers pay an average of 20 cents per cubic meter. By contrast, an urban customer or an industrial plant pays almost 35 cents per cubic meter.

Cheap water leads to wasted water, say critics.

Several months ago, the government proposed to cut water subsidies to the farmers by 20 percent — but so far, nothing has been done. □

Poll finds some Israeli support for Barak's summit participation

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Despite the glum political picture facing Ehud Barak this week, the besieged prime minister could draw some encouragement from the results of a new poll.

According to the survey published Monday, 55 percent of the respondents thought Barak should go to the Camp David summit, while 45 percent did not.

Similarly, 53 percent thought he had a mandate to make concessions to the Palestinians, while 44 percent disagreed. The poll, which was carried out for the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot, questioned 502 people and had a 4.5 percent margin of error.

The poll was published before Barak set off for the U.S.-sponsored peace summit Monday night bearing what he termed the "mandate of the people," after surviving a no-confidence motion in the 120-member Knesset.

Barak delayed his departure for the United States by several hours to participate in the Knesset session, during which the opposition Likud Party failed to muster the 61 votes needed to topple Barak's government.

However, the opposition did receive more votes than the government. The final tally was 54 in favor of the no-confidence motion, 52 against and seven abstentions.

Barak called the opposition's refusal to agree to let absent legislators take part in the vote "childish."

The vote came a day after three right-leaning parties — Yisrael Ba'Aliyah, Shas and the National Religious Party — resigned from Barak's coalition over the concessions they fear Barak may be willing to make to the Palestinians at Camp David.

In a further blow, Foreign Minister David Levy on Sunday turned down an invitation to accompany Barak to the summit.

Levy, who has also raised reservations about the handling of the negotiations, did, however, vote with the government in Monday's no-confidence motion.

Despite being left with a legislative minority of 42 as a result of the three parties' defections, Barak told the Knesset on Monday he had an overwhelming mandate from the public to pursue the peace process.

"I am not going alone. With me are almost 2 million voters — citizens who want peace, who want to give change a chance, and hope for a different Israel at peace with its neighbors," he said.

Barak has rejected calls to form a national unity government or a coalition that relies on the support of Israeli Arab parties.

Instead, he repeated Monday that he must do everything possible to seek peace. Should the summit fail, he added, the nation would know that every avenue had been exhausted.

During the Knesset debate, opposition leader Ariel Sharon assailed Barak's claim of representing the majority.

"You are alone," Sharon said. "The prime minister who wanted to be prime minister of everybody, within a year has become a prime minister of almost no one."

Commentators said the resignations of the three coalition members resulted from their unease over being associated with the still-unknown outcome of Camp David.

Depending on the results of the summit, they said, those parties may always find a way back into the government.

For this reason, Barak is currently not interested in forming a narrow coalition. Similarly, observers say, it is too early to speak of a national unity government as long as a peace option is still being explored. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Final borders, fate of settlements will weigh heavily at peace summit

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Among the biggest obstacles facing Israeli and Palestinian leaders as they meet this week at Camp David is the question of final borders.

The Palestinians are demanding a total Israeli withdrawal to the borders that preceded the 1967 Six-Day War — that is, turning over eastern Jerusalem, all of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Israel in turn wants to keep Jerusalem united under Israeli sovereignty and to annex two blocs of Jewish settlements in the West Bank.

Following the Six-Day War, Israel annexed the Golan Heights and eastern Jerusalem, but the West Bank and Gaza Strip remained under military government.

The Palestinian Authority was created following the 1993 Oslo Accord. Israel subsequently withdrew from the main population centers in the West Bank.

It turned over most of Gaza, but some Jewish settlements still remain there.

The West Bank is now divided into three categories — Area A, under total Palestinian control, which includes the urban centers and their rural environs; Area B, under civilian Palestinian control and joint Israeli-Palestinian security control; and Area C, under total Israeli control, which includes the Jewish settlements and main traffic arteries in the West Bank.

So far, Israel has handed over to the Palestinians some 40 percent of the West Bank. But the Palestinians complain that the self-rule areas are not connected, and that they only have islands of sovereignty in the West Bank.

The Palestinian Authority controls relatively large areas in the northern part of the West Bank, around Jenin and Nablus. Farther to the south, their main centers are in Tulkarm, Ramallah, Jericho, Bethlehem and Hebron.

Israel controls the Jewish neighborhood in the heart of Hebron and the adjacent streets.

Most of the Jewish settlements are located in large blocs, such as the Etzion Bloc and settlements in the greater Jerusalem area. The Gush Katif bloc lies in the heart of Gaza.

There are now about 190,000 Israelis living in 125 settlements that range in size from towns to smaller rural communities.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak recently said that under his proposal, some 80 percent of the settlers would remain under Israeli sovereignty. This would mean that some 38,000 settlers would be faced with the choice of living under Palestinian rule or giving up their homes.

Among those who will probably have to leave will be 5,000 settlers living in 15 settlements in Gaza, the 14,000 Israelis living in the Jordan Valley and Hebron region and thousands of others living in small settlements north of Jerusalem and in the northeastern areas of the West Bank. □