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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Neo-Nazis convicted of murder

Three neo-Nazis in Germany were convicted of murder for beating an Mozambican immigrant to death in June.

One of the defendants, a 24-year-old, was sentenced to life in prison for his role in the incident, while the two teen-age defendants were given sentences of nine years each.

The murder is one in a series of recent violent attacks against immigrants in Germany, including one in which several immigrants from the former Soviet Union were injured.

Lieberman asked to quit group

A group that monitors religious liberties called on Democratic vice-presidential candidate Joseph Lieberman to resign from an honorary position in the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews.

Americans United for the Separation of Church and State claims the group criticizes public schools for allegedly suppressing students' religious activity and makes a number of false charges against public education. [Page 1]

David Duke visits Russia

Former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke recently began a one-month trip to Russia by telling a crowd at a Moscow museum that "the Jews have brought us to our knees." Duke's trip to Russia appears to be a sign of increasing cooperation between Russian extremists and their ideological counterparts abroad.

Religious leaders pledge peace

Religious leaders at a U.N.-sponsored summit presented a document to U.N. General-Secretary Kofi Annan that outlines ways in which they can play a role in reducing conflict around the world. [Page 3]

Philanthropy gets Web airing

A live discussion about Jewish philanthropy and the synagogue will be broadcast over the Internet on Sept. 6 at 9:45 p.m. Eastern Time.

The discussion, part of a "summit" by Synagogue Transformation and Renewal, a new philanthropy created by mega-donors Charles Schusterman, Michael Steinhardt and Edgar Bronfman, can be accessed on a number of Jewish Web sites, including www.zipple.com/star/webcast.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Some Jews tell Lieberman: too much, already, with God

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Ever since he was selected to run for vice president on the Democratic ticket, Sen. Joseph Lieberman's faith has been a source of curiosity for non-Jews — and pride for Jews.

Now, some Jews are beginning to get uncomfortable with how much Lieberman is playing up his religion in the pursuit of votes. The first complaint, in fact, came from a Jewish organization.

The Anti-Defamation League sent a letter to Lieberman on Monday calling on him to keep religion out of the presidential campaign.

"Appealing along religious lines, or belief in God, is contrary to the American ideal," said the ADL letter signed by National Chairman Howard Berkowitz and National Director Abraham Foxman.

The letter came a day after Lieberman, an Orthodox Jew, told an audience at an African American church in Detroit on Sunday that Americans need to renew the "dedication of our nation and ourselves to God and God's purpose."

The ADL sent a similar letter last year to the eight Republican and Democratic candidates for president after several candidates made statements emphasizing their religious beliefs.

Political pundits have chided Lieberman, the first Jew to run on a major national party ticket, for overusing biblical quotations and references to God. However, polls have indicated that most Americans believe in God, and many have said they want religion to play a larger role in public life. At issue with Lieberman, however, is whether his public pronouncements of faith as a personal moral compass may occasionally alienate those who do not hold the same beliefs.

Foxman told JTA that some people believe Lieberman had already crossed the line in earlier speeches, but the degree and intensity of Lieberman's remarks Sunday and at an interfaith breakfast Monday forced the issue for the ADL. The public chastising from the ADL surprised some Jewish leaders and organizations.

"They have confused the violation of church-state separation with spiritual and faith issues," said Dr. Mandell Ganchrow, president of the Orthodox Union.

He said Lieberman has not crossed the line of inappropriate use of religious beliefs in a public campaign.

Agudath Israel of America, a fervently Orthodox organization, agrees. Its executive vice president for government and public affairs, David Zwiebel, wrote in a letter to Foxman that most Americans admire Lieberman for his public expressions of faith.

"At a time when perhaps the greatest crisis America faces is a crisis of values, a candidate for national office who speaks unashamedly of his own religious faith and of the positive role religion can play in strengthening our society is to be commended, not condemned," Zwiebel wrote.

Lieberman, himself, keeps trying to make the distinction between the personal and the political.

"I hope people understand the difference between separation of church and state and an individual's right, including a public individual's right, to express matters of faith," he said in a recent interview with the Jewish media.

Asked if he thought his openness about his faith made people uncomfortable, he said, "I hope it doesn't." He added there are points at which his faith is personal and has

MIDEAST FOCUS

Barak denies report on Old City

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak is denying a report that Israeli and Palestinian officials discussed a proposal to divide the Temple Mount in Jerusalem's Old City into four areas.

The proposal, reported by the Israeli daily Ha'aretz, would be among the ideas raised to help resolve the issue of sovereignty over Jerusalem, which was one of the main causes for the failure of last month's Camp David summit.

Soldiers wound two at border

Israeli soldiers wounded two Lebanese civilians along the Israel-Lebanon border.

The shootings apparently came after the Lebanese threw rocks across a barbed-wire fence that separates the two countries.

Web site lists nonprofits

A Web site lists what is believed to be the first-ever Internet resource containing all 27,300 nonprofit organizations registered in Israel.

The site, located at www.givingwisely.org.il, was developed by a professor at Hebrew University.

Shas leader to be jailed Sunday

The president of the Israeli Supreme Court rejected a request from Aryeh Deri to allow the former Shas Party leader to delay his jail sentence until after the Jewish holidays.

Deri is slated to begin serving his sentence on Sunday, and Shas Party supporters are vowing to accompany Deri and set up a makeshift yeshiva outside the jail.

Police: Charge papers for sex ads

Israeli police recommended that charges be brought against two Israeli tabloids, Ma'ariv and Yediot Achronot, for publishing advertisements for sexual services in the main pages of the papers.



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"nothing to do with my public responsibility." A Lieberman campaign spokesman said the senator "has great respect for the role faith has played in the lives of so many Americans. He has often expressed his views on the importance of the separation of church and state and he believes that the ADL has done a lot of good work, but in this case he respectfully disagrees."

Lieberman's use of his religious beliefs is not necessarily a problem, according to the National Jewish Democratic Council.

The time to worry would be if a candidate's religious views work to exclude people or translate to policies that are inappropriate, said David Harris, the council's deputy executive director.

But a religious liberty watchdog group is taking Lieberman to task for his use of religious rhetoric.

Americans United for Separation of Church and State wrote a letter to Lieberman on Tuesday urging him to stop using religion as a political tool.

"Presenting yourself to the nation as a religious man is both understandable and expected," wrote the Rev. Barry Lynn, the group's executive director. "However, it appears that what began as an introduction to the nation has unfortunately become standard campaign rhetoric."

Lynn said the more Lieberman uses religion in his campaigning the more difficult it will be for voters to ignore religious matters at the ballot box.

The group also called on Lieberman to resign from an honorary position in the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews. Americans United for the Separation of Church and State claims the fellowship criticizes public schools for allegedly suppressing students' religious activity and makes a number of false charges against public education.

Sen. Lieberman serves as an honorary chairman of the fellowship's Center for Jewish and Christian Values.

However, since Lieberman had more explaining and educating to do about his religious beliefs than most candidates, he ought to be cut some slack, said Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Reform Movement's Religious Action Center.

Now that he has made the point of who he is, Lieberman has to be careful not to overuse his religious language and make people feel like outsiders, Saperstein said.

"The last thing he would want to do is make people feel left out." □

Group ups ante on Liechtenstein

BERN (JTA) — The forerunner to the CIA suspected a Liechtenstein-based businessman of laundering assets from Nazi leaders, according to documents obtained by JTA.

The release of the documents about Martin Hilti come as international Jewish groups are increasing pressure on the European principality to form an independent commission to investigate its companies' dealings with the Nazis.

Hilti, who died in 1997, was a supporter of Hitler during World War II. He edited a Nazi newspaper in which he called on Liechtenstein's government to order members of the local Jewish community — which numbered several dozen — to wear yellow Jewish stars. But the government rejected his demand.

After the Swiss media uncovered his Nazi past in 1995, Hilti admitted that he served an "inhuman regime," but he never publicly renounced his anti-Semitism.

A spokesperson for the Hilti Corporation, which has more than 12,000 employers in more than 120 countries, said the documents obtained by JTA are accurate, but that an investigation has not turned up any evidence of money laundering from the Nazis.

The World Jewish Congress is calling for an independent commission, along the lines of Switzerland's Bergier Commission, to investigate the allegations.

Liechtenstein, a country of 30,000 that sits between Switzerland and Austria, has appointed a task force to prepare for talks with the WJC in December and ordered the two Liechtenstein banks in operation during World War II to search its archives for evidence of money laundering.

"Liechtenstein is very interested to know its history, especially during World War II," the prime minister of Liechtenstein, Mario Frick, told JTA. □

JEWISH WORLD

Cleveland congregants save rabbi

Congregants at an Orthodox synagogue in Cleveland saved their rabbi's life during Shabbat services last week by giving mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and pumping his chest.

According to the Cleveland Jewish News, Rabbi Yisroel Grumer, 74, collapsed after Shabbat morning services and was quickly taken to the hospital where he will have bypass surgery.

The shul, Congregation Shomre Shabbos, now plans to organize CPR classes for the Orthodox community in the area.

Plea made in Montreal bomb trial

One of two men accused of making bomb threats at the Israeli Consulate in Montreal pleaded guilty to possessing explosives in the March incident.

Two of the three charges against Ayman Bondok were dropped in exchange for his cooperation in the case against Tarek Khafagy, a 30-year-old recent immigrant from Egypt.

The two allegedly said they would blow up the consulate unless Israel released Lebanese prisoners.

Florida won't give on kashrut

Florida commissioners will continue regulating kosher food, despite concerns by one official that government involvement on this matter violates the separation of church and state.

Broward County's decision to continue ensuring that restaurants and grocery stores that advertise themselves as kosher adhere to Orthodox requirements — which is seen as a way to protect kosher consumers from fraud — comes a month after a federal judge in Brooklyn struck down New York's kosher food regulations as unconstitutional.

Court rules against lawmaker

The Russian Supreme Court struck down a lower court decision that said a Communist lawmaker known for his anti-Semitic statements should have been allowed to run in the country's 1999 parliamentary elections, according to the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews.

A ruling in favor of Gen. Albert Makashov would have forced the election to be held again.

Owner to miss football final

An Australian rules football team is in the finals for the first time in more than 35 years — but its owner will not watch the match because he is an Orthodox Jew and the final is being played during the Sabbath.

"The Sabbath is supposed to be a time of prayer and bonding together with your family," said Rabbi Joseph Gutnick, who is also a mining magnate.

Create the environment for peace, rabbi says at U.N. Millennium Summit

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — At the U.N.-sponsored Millennium Peace Summit here this week — an event with all the potential to be a photo-op for the 1,000 religious leaders who attended — at least one participant was hoping for something a bit more substantive.

Rabbi A. James Rudin, who recently retired as the director of interreligious affairs for the American Jewish Committee, was particularly interested in attending panel discussions focusing on the environment and bioethics — issues that potentially unite rather than divide people of different religious faiths.

"When it comes to war and peace, everyone's for peace — it only depends on how you define it," Rudin said Monday, as the summit kicked off.

"And religious leaders may not be able to get together and resolve issues with borders and refugees.

"But all groups have a stake in conserving the environment.

"It would be nice if we only breathed Jewish air or Muslim air or Christian air, but it's just not that way."

This approach to conflict resolution has been tried elsewhere. In the Balkans, for example, counselors brought together rival groups to focus not on the source of conflict, but on the common ground they share.

Once the groups develop some spirit of cooperation, then they ease into the more contentious areas.

At the four-day summit, the religious leaders from 15 major faith traditions were expected to pray and discuss how to resolve conflicts and achieve peace.

The summit's agenda acknowledged the important role religious leaders play in both domestic politics and world affairs.

"Forgiveness and Reconciliation" in the Middle East was on the agenda for Wednesday.

Summit participants presented a document to U.N. General-Secretary Kofi Annan that outlines ways in which they can play an active role in reducing conflict around the world.

The Commitment to Global Peace, which the leaders expect to sign in the next few days, condemns all violence in the name of religion and calls on all religious, ethnic and national leaders to respect freedom of religion.

This four-day summit precedes another U.N. millennial summit next week, in which political leaders from approximately 170 countries will participate.

Attendees of the religion summit included Francis Cardinal Arinze of the Vatican; Samdech Preah Maha Gosananda, the Buddhist Nobel Prize nominee; Mustafa Ceric, the grand mufti of Bosnia; Secretary-General of the Muslim World League Abdullah Salaih Al-Obaid; and Kuniaki Kuni, who has never appeared outside of Japan in his official capacity as the Jingu Daiguji (chief priest) of the Grand Shrine of Ise.

Jewish invitees included Yisrael Meir Lau, Israeli's chief Ashkenazi rabbi, plus the chief rabbis of Russia, Great Britain and Chile.

U.S. Rabbi Arthur Schneier, president of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, in his opening address to the assembly, called on his colleagues to "marginalize the religious demagogues who ignite national, ethnic and religious passions with their preachings and practices."

Recalling his own Holocaust experience, Schneier added: "The source of conflict between men lies not in their faith but in the failure of the faithful."

The most prominent summit no-show was the Dalai Lama, the exiled spiritual leader of Tibet.

His absence was due to politics.

The United Nations bowed to the Chinese, who say the Dalai Lama is a political leader.

In lieu of the Dalai Lama, other spiritual leaders of Tibetan Buddhism addressed the gathering. □

NEWS ANALYSIS

Parched Israel digs for solutions to severe water shortage problem*By Avi Machlis*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — It has been a long, hot summer in Israel, and the country's scarce water supplies are being squeezed past their limits.

After three years of drought, Israeli water authorities have watched in trepidation this summer as the country's three main water sources — the Sea of Galilee, the coastal aquifer and mountain aquifer — have been rapidly sucked below danger levels.

With no alternative solutions in place, there was little they could do except launch a big public campaign, showing Israelis how every extra toilet flush drains the Sea of Galilee, which has now dropped 13 centimeters below the red line of 213 meters below sea level.

Yet authorities know that the impact of publicity on water consumption habits is only a partial remedy, and solutions are needed to provide a long-term answer to this ongoing problem.

So last month, the government pushed through a long-awaited comprehensive plan recommending a series of solutions, ranging from desalinization to importing water from nearby countries such as Turkey to recycling more sewage for agriculture and industry.

But it will still take time for these projects to come to life, and even if the plan is pushed through quickly, the first desalinization plant will probably not come on line for more than two years. In the interim, rain is of the essence.

"If in the coming winter we will have an average rainfall or a dry year, we will be forced to cut the quotas of water for agriculture," said Shimon Tal, Israel's water commissioner.

"A rainy winter will allow us to get through the next year or two," he added. "However, over the next two years we are dependent on the mercy of heaven."

Those heavens have been far from merciful over the past decade. Even though the rainfall was average in Israel last winter, the last three years have been very dry overall.

During the past decade, there has only been one extremely rainy winter, in 1992. At the same time, 1 million immigrants came to Israel from former Soviet Union countries, further straining meager resources.

As part of a peace deal with Jordan, Israel agreed to transfer 55 million cubic meters of water a year to its Eastern neighbor, and water is on the agenda of the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks as well. Meanwhile, as Israel's standard of living has steadily climbed, water use has increased.

But although the signs of an imminent crisis are clear, the government only decided to implement solutions last month.

Part of the problem is that the agricultural industry is the biggest consumer of water in the country, and its lobby is one of the most powerful pressure groups in Israel.

Water for agricultural use is heavily subsidized — costing 55 percent less than water for consumers — and farmers have successfully thwarted any attempt to raise the prices. They warn that more expensive water would make their products more expensive on world markets, and could be the kiss of death to an already-struggling industry.

"For years, the biggest mistake is that the water system in

Israel has been run by the agricultural lobby, which has its own interests," said Yossi Inbar, deputy director general of Israel's Ministry of Environment.

Inbar also blames the Finance Ministry for blocking approval of water programs over the years. The treasury, he said, did not worry about an imminent crisis since it calculates water projections and needs based on a multiyear rainfall average. This, he explains, is irrelevant because Israel's water sources have limited capacity, and one dry year knocks off the positive impact of a particularly wet year.

The Finance Ministry has argued that before building desalinization plants, which will end up raising the cost of water to all consumers, subsidies for farmers should be reduced.

"When you have a vital and scarce resource, and not only don't you sell it at a realistic price but subsidize it heavily to the biggest consumer, you intensify the shortage greatly," said Zohar Yinon, director of the water and sewage unit at the Finance Ministry's budget division. "The real reason that our water sources have been overpumped is because water is not sold at a price that reflects its true value."

Critics say the Finance Ministry was unrealistic in insisting on breaking the agricultural lobby. "It is a politically unlikely scenario," said one businessman involved in the water issue. "The Finance Ministry's argument is only correct if you ignore the social implications of abandoning hundreds of thousands of acres of land."

With the rapidly deteriorating situation, the future of Israeli agriculture may no longer rest in the hands of water subsidies, but rather with the rain clouds that Israelis hope will come their way this autumn.

"If we have another dry year," says Inbar of the Environment Ministry, "Israeli agriculture may not survive." □

Second Israeli dies of West Nile

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An 80-year-old Israeli woman has died from infection of the West Nile virus, the second confirmed case reported in Israel.

Health officials in Israel believe there may be more instances of the illness, which is transferred to humans who are bitten by mosquitos that have bitten infected birds.

Israeli officials destroyed 3,000 geese Tuesday because they feared they might be infected. □

Jewish groups go green

NEW YORK (JTA) — A Conservative synagogue in Connecticut and a group of Jews who biked across the United States this summer to raise awareness for environmentalism have been recognized with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star Awards.

The synagogue, Beth El Keser Israel, installed timers so that lights and heating are only used when needed on Shabbat and recently upgraded its lighting, windows and air conditioning to make them more energy-efficient.

In addition to these Jewish groups, 28 small businesses and religious groups around the country received awards for energy-saving efforts. □