



# Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 78, No. 174

Thursday, September 14, 2000

83rd Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Swiss settlement may face delay

Payments from a historic \$1.25 billion Swiss bank settlement could be delayed if a Miami lawyer proceeds with his plan to appeal the settlement.

Sam Dubbin, who said he filed an appeal last Friday, provided Reuters with a copy of a letter he wrote to the judge overseeing the case in which he called the money to be paid to Holocaust survivors "distressingly paltry."

The judge is slated to hold a public hearing about the settlement Nov. 20.

Meanwhile, copies of a distribution plan issued this week are being mailed to the more than 650,000 people who submitted an initial questionnaire about the settlement.

### Israel slams end to sanctions

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak criticized the European Union's decision to lift the sanctions it imposed on Austria after the extremist Freedom Party of Jorg Haider joined the country's government in February.

Barak said Tuesday the sanctions should continue as long as a party with "neo-fascist tendencies" remains in the government. [Page 3]

### Hate crimes resolution passes

The U.S. House of Representatives passed a nonbinding resolution that could pave the way for national hate crimes legislation.

The 232-192 vote, which keeps keep hate crimes language in a bill currently under consideration, is seen as a last-ditch effort to pass such legislation before the end of the year.

### Minister warns of terror at Games

The Sydney Olympic Games and the Israeli athletes competing there are likely terrorist targets, according to Israel's deputy defense minister.

In an interview carried in major Australian newspapers Wednesday, Ephraim Sneh identified Saudi terrorist Osama bin Laden and the Hamas movement as likely perpetrators.

Sneh said Hamas has recently been given funding by bin Laden and also been offered suicide bombers trained by his followers.

The Sydney Olympics begin Friday and run through Oct. 1.

## AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

### Jewish center opens in death camp's shadow

By Ruth E. Gruber

OSWIECIM, Poland (JTA) — A prayer and study center honoring Jewish life has opened near the place that for more than half a century has been the paramount symbol of Jewish death.

Jordan's Prince Hassan joined Roman Catholic clergy, Polish, U.S. and Israeli officials and Holocaust survivors in an emotional ceremony Tuesday dedicating the Auschwitz Jewish Center in Oswiecim — the town outside which the infamous Nazi death camp was built.

The center complex, which includes study, prayer and educational facilities, encompasses the lone remaining synagogue in Oswiecim — the Chevra Lomdei Mishnayot Synagogue — which has been fully restored. It is the only active Jewish institution near the site of the Auschwitz death camp.

"There is in today's ceremony a message of hope, of tikvah," said Hassan, who attended the ceremony in his capacity as moderator of the World Conference of Religion and Peace. "After survival comes revival. The message here is that death is not the end of life."

Hassan, the brother of the late King Hussein, noted that he was aware of the "delicate nature" of his participation in the ceremony. But, he added, "further understanding through sharing in our common humanity is a duty of conscience."

Former Knesset speaker Shevach Weiss, a Holocaust survivor from Poland who is now the chairman of the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem, hugged Hassan warmly and welcomed his presence.

"The fact that you are here with us is a symbol of the continuity of making peace," he said. "It means solidarity with the present time and understanding of what happened in the past."

The \$10 million Auschwitz Center project was conceived and sponsored by the New York-based Auschwitz Jewish Center Foundation, founded in 1995 by philanthropist and businessman Fred Schwartz. Its aim is to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust and mourn their loss, not by showing how they died — but how they lived, focusing on the life, culture and history of the prewar Jewish community of Oswiecim as a microcosm of destroyed European Jewry.

"The camps represent the anonymity and mechanics of death," Schwartz — known from U.S. television commercials as "Fred the Furrier" — told JTA before the ceremony. "Our center counters this anonymity."

The center also hopes to establish itself as a positive, living Jewish presence near the place that is the world's biggest Jewish cemetery and the ultimate symbol of the Shoah. There are more than 40 Catholic institutions in the area.

"This synagogue is a testament to the vibrant souls who lived life to the fullest within its walls," said Michael Lewan, chairman of the U.S. commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage abroad, a co-sponsor of the project.

"Today, Oswiecim has reconciled with its past in an act of love, an act of peace," he said.

The Chevra Lomdei Mishnayot Synagogue was restored to how it looked in the 1930s, when the town's 7,000 Jews made up more than half of the local population and Oswiecim was widely known among Jews by its Yiddish name, Oshpitsin.

The building attached to the synagogue, once the home of local Jews, includes an

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Israel, Palestinians renew talks

The chief Palestinian negotiator demanded that Israel comply with past agreements.

During a meeting Tuesday with Israeli officials, Saeb Erekat called on the Jewish state to withdraw from additional portions of the West Bank.

Erekat also said Israel should release more Palestinian prisoners.

On Wednesday, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak's office said there were contacts between Israeli and Palestinian negotiators but that formal talks had not resumed.

### Minister to propose full weekend

Israeli Cabinet minister Michael Melchior plans to propose giving Israelis a day off on Sundays as well as Saturdays.

The proposal, aimed at reducing tensions between religious and secular Jews, would enable Israelis to avoid doing shopping and other weekend chores on the Jewish Sabbath.

### Status of women an 'outrage'

Jewish women around the world should help Israeli women gain equality, said a female Israeli Cabinet minister.

The status of women in Israel is "really an outrage," Absorption Minister Yuli Tamir told a conference of female donors to the United Jewish Communities in Tel Aviv this week.

### Micronesia's leader visits Israel

The president of the Pacific island nation of Micronesia began a four-day visit to Israel.

President Leo Falcam vowed Tuesday to continue supporting Israel in important votes in the U.N. General Assembly.

Micronesia is the only country that has voted along with the United States and Israel against U.N. resolutions harshly critical of the Jewish state.



## Daily News Bulletin

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JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at [www.jta.org](http://www.jta.org).  
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auditorium, an exhibition on Jewish life in Oswiecim and a family history center, where people can trace their ancestry through computer databases.

Historic photographs of Oswiecim Jews, and of prewar scenes of the town, hang on the walls of the complex.

"My grandparents came from Oswiecim and had a most marvelous childhood here," said Lucia Goodhart of Baltimore, who attended the ceremony.

"Opening this center represents not only a rejuvenation but a restoration of relationships. During the ceremony I felt my heart beating out of my chest," she said. "It is a justification that we lived here. From despair, I have serious feelings of hope."

The opening of the center took place against a background of controversy over the establishment last month of a discotheque in a local building that had been used for Nazi-era slave labor. The Polish government joined Jewish groups in criticizing the opening of the disco and urged the owners to move it to another location.

At the dedication of the Auschwitz Center, Oswiecim Mayor Jozef Krawczyk welcomed the new Jewish presence.

He said he hoped that the center would serve as an aid to reconciliation and called on Jews to be sensitive to the day-to-day problems of the city and its citizens. □

## Israeli university to launch center that will study topic of assimilation

By Avi Machlis

RAMAT GAN, Israel (JTA) — Assimilation, the eternal fear of Jewish leaders around the world, tops the agenda for Jewish communities in the Diaspora.

But for Israelis, who feel mostly immune to the phenomena and are also experiencing a growing gap with Diaspora Jewry, assimilation is rarely in the public eye.

This week, Bar-Ilan University attempted to raise awareness of the issue in Israel with an academic conference on assimilation. Bar-Ilan is also about to establish the world's first research center dedicated solely to the study of assimilation, which the university hopes will be a bridge between academic research on the causes of assimilation and practical solutions to it.

Yet although trips to Israel and programs such as Birthright Israel — which sends young Jewish adults on free 10-day trips to Israel — are considered by some to be important tools in strengthening Jewish identity and combating assimilation, the question remains open whether Israel and Israelis can play a role in addressing the issue.

Israelis are undergoing an ongoing identity crisis of their own. At the same time, their understanding of Diaspora Jewish life is limited.

"With a correct understanding of what is going on, they can make a contribution," said Lawrence Schiffman, a professor of Hebrew and Judaic studies at New York University, and the only non-Israeli participant in the conference.

However, he added, the conference showed that Israelis are "just learning" what their counterparts in the U.S. Jewish community discovered long ago: the need to address assimilation. It also appeared, he said, that participants were not fully in touch with "the specifics" of American Jewry.

Schiffman rejected the concept of fighting assimilation by trying to stop intermarriage. "Intermarriage is a symptom of no Jewish education or commitment," he said. "You cannot prevent intermarriage, you have got to teach Judaism, because if it's meaningless to you then preventing intermarriage just becomes racism."

Ya'acov Eliav, director of the International Center for Jewish Identity at Bar-Ilan University, said Israel can play a role in strengthening Jewish identity in the Diaspora.

He points out a Jewish identity competition run by Bar-Ilan's Jewish identity center in recent years attracts 100,000 mostly nonreligious youth throughout the Diaspora.

At the same time, Eliav concedes that Israelis are also contributing to the worldwide Jewish population decline in contrast to conventional wisdom.

"At least 500,000 Israelis live all over the world," he said. "The great majority of them are not connected to any Jewish community whatsoever. They send their kids to public schools and they try to assimilate into society immediately." □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Jewish groups are mixed on lifting of Austria sanctions

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — Jews are voicing mixed reaction to the European Union's move this week to lift sanctions it had imposed on Austria after the extremist Freedom Party joined the country's government.

The 14-member body imposed the sanctions in February, three months after the Freedom Party — led by the charismatic Jorg Haider — had won 27 percent of the vote. Haider routinely spoke of "Austria for real Austrians" and had made public statements sympathetic to Nazi Germany.

The E.U.'s modest, mostly symbolic sanctions, said European leaders, were a defense of "European values" and stemmed from concern that the Freedom Party's ascendancy would feed the far right across the continent.

But three E.U. officials — known as the "three wise men" — appointed to review the situation in Austria had recently recommended that the sanctions be lifted, which the body did Tuesday.

Critics, though, see the E.U.'s decision as a retreat, saying the sanctions had provoked claims of hypocrisy, debate about national sovereignty and had fanned nationalist, anti-Europe sentiment in several countries, like Denmark.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak condemned the E.U.'s move Tuesday, saying sanctions should remain in place as long as a party with "neo-fascist trappings" remains in the Austrian government.

Officials said the Jewish state would continue to keep its ambassador to Vienna at home.

Meanwhile, the American Jewish Committee will maintain its policy of refusing to meet with Austrian officials.

"We cannot do business as usual with Austria as long as the Freedom Party is part of the coalition," said AJCommittee spokesman Kenneth Bandler.

"We're disappointed" the sanctions were lifted, Bandler said, "because we're extremely concerned about the impact Haider's rise is having on extremist movements across Europe.

"Thus, it requires continued vigilance."

Bandler noted with approval a French proposal to create a monitoring system that would keep an eye on Haider's influence in Austria and the country's treatment of minorities and immigrants.

Across the aisle is the Anti-Defamation League.

In February, the ADL stood alone among Jewish groups when it opposed the sanctions, warning that Austria's isolation might backfire and further inflame extremism.

"We believed that diplomatic and economic sanctions were not the most constructive way to deal with this phenomenon," ADL National Director Abraham Foxman reiterated in a statement Tuesday.

"Instead, ADL encouraged grass-roots engagement with the 73 percent of the Austrian voting public who did not vote for Mr. Haider."

For example, the ADL has sponsored programs to make Austrian teachers aware of anti-Semitism and other forms of prejudice.

The ADL is one of the few American Jewish groups with an office in Vienna, and the ADL leadership has relied heavily on the insight of its local analyst during this controversy.

But even among Austria's 6,500 Jews, reaction seems mixed.

The president of Austria's Jewish community, Ariel Muzikant, agreed Wednesday that sanctions had proven "counterproductive."

"Austrians felt stigmatized," said Muzikant, who was in New York on Wednesday.

On the other hand, said Muzikant, the sanctions had sparked discussion about common European values and parameters for acceptable political behavior.

Moreover, he said, "if something were to happen tomorrow in Italy or Hungary, for example, now we have a precedent" for European reaction. □

#### Russia acquits environmentalist

Russia's Supreme Court acquitted an environmental whistle-blower who has faced charges of spying since 1996.

International Jewish human rights groups have closely monitored Alexander Nikitin's case.

#### Find may bolster Flood account

U.S. explorers made a discovery that may provide confirmation for the biblical flood account. A National Geographic expedition found evidence of human habitation hundreds of feet below the Black Sea. Explorers said the area had been widely populated before a catastrophic flood some 7,500 years ago.

#### Latvia urged to pursue cases

The Simon Wiesenthal Center urged Latvia to prosecute two suspected war criminals now living in Australia who are natives of the Baltic state.

Efraim Zuroff, the head of the center's Jerusalem office, issued the call Wednesday as an international panel of experts was planning to meet Thursday and Friday in Latvia to discuss the cases of Konrad Kalejs, 86, and Karlis Ozols, 87.

"This week's meeting is basically the last chance for justice" in their cases, Zuroff said.

#### Pact reached on funeral prices

The umbrella group for Orthodox congregations joined with a Jewish funeral home in New York to create a fixed price of \$2,495 to \$2,795 for funerals.

The agreement between the Orthodox Union and Parkside Memorial Chapels follows a report issued by a New York consumer panel criticizing the funeral industry for charging \$6,700 on average and noting that Jews, who must bury their dead as soon as possible, are hit particularly hard by the high rates.

#### Neo-Nazis attack Jew in Sweden

Neo-Nazis in Sweden recently beat and robbed a visiting Jewish businessman as they shouted Nazi slogans at him.

Police are investigating the incident, which left the Norwegian businessman in a hospital for one night.

#### Forger of 'Hitler diaries' dies

The man who admitted to forging the "Hitler diaries" published in 1983 died of stomach cancer Tuesday at 62.

A gallery owner and painter, Konrad Kujau gained notoriety 17 years ago after it was revealed he had counterfeited 60 volumes purported to be Hitler's personal diaries. Stern magazine paid \$4.8 million for the volumes, believing them to be authentic.

## Statement on Christianity emerges from years of debate

By Neil Rubin

Baltimore Jewish Times

BALTIMORE (JTA) — Finalizing the text of what is being billed as the first document on the Jewish view of Christianity was, not surprisingly, filled with tension and controversy.

"This is the first major statement by a group of Jewish scholars, congregational rabbis, leaders of national organizations, which acknowledges the changes that have come about in Christian theology of Jews and the Jewish people," said Rabbi Michael Signer, a professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame and one of four drafters of the statement.

"There's never been a kind of overarching statement saying that it's not the same Christianity that existed in the 19th century. It's not even the same Christianity of the Eisenhower era," Signer said of the document that took five years to create and was published over the weekend.

The statement, printed in The New York Times and other publications, is titled "Dabru Emet," Hebrew for "Speak Truth" — a reference to Zachariah, chapter 8, verse 16, that reads, in part, "Speak each person the truth to his neighbors."

More than 150 Jewish thinkers affixed their name to the text.

Rabbi David Novak of the University of Toronto, another "Dabru Emet" drafter, put it this way: "I want Jewish readers to clearly realize that Christians are not necessarily our enemies. Quite the contrary, they can be very good friends to Jews and Judaism. Some of them have demonstrated this not just out of good will, but out of Christian belief.

"That being the case, a Jewish response is called for. We respond to significant threats, why not positive developments?"

"Dabru Emet" is the work of independent scholars speaking for themselves, say its backers.

"It's a Jewish statement. It's not called the Jewish statement," said Rabbi David Fox Sandmel, a scholar at the Baltimore-based Institute for Christian and Jewish Studies.

"It's the beginning of a conversation, not the end of one."

Not surprisingly, who signed and who didn't is creating a buzz. Many leading Reform, Reconstructionist and Conservative thinkers endorsed it, as did a handful of Orthodox rabbis.

But there are noticeable absences, including Rabbi Ismar Schorsch, chancellor of the Conservative movement's Theological Seminary, and veteran interfaith activist Rabbi A. James Rudin, recently retired as head of the American Jewish Committee's interfaith office. For Rudin, a section on Nazism was problematic — a sentiment shared privately by some signers who felt nonetheless that the project should not be stalled.

In one section, "Dabru Emet" declares: "Nazism was not a Christian phenomenon." It goes on to say, "Too many Christians participated in, or were sympathetic to Nazi atrocities against Jews. But Nazism itself was not an inevitable outcome of Christianity."

Rudin said such wording is a problem.

"There's a direct correlation between modern anti-Semitism and what I call the seedbed that created the poisonous weeds of anti-Semitism," he said.

But he added of the statement in general: "It's a pioneering effort and I give praise to it."

Countered Novak, "We're not whitewashing. We're saying that when Christians used Nazism, it was not authentic Christianity. That has to be the case because if Nazism was an inevitable outcome of Christianity, then we cannot have anything to do with Christians."

In another section, the document states, "Christians know and serve God through Jesus Christ and the Christian tradition." By not writing Jesus of Nazareth, some Jews are likely to be offended because Christ literally means messiah. The phrasing was chosen, Novak said, because the section addressed the belief of Christians.

"We're not describing our attitudes here," he said. "The difference is that for Jews the Torah is the way to the God of Israel, and for Christians it's what they call Jesus Christ, and you cannot do both. What makes it interesting is there's both a commonality and difference."

Those Orthodox rabbis endorsing the document are well-known for interfaith work, such as Rabbi Irving "Yitz" Greenberg, Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein and Rabbi Joseph Ehrenkranz.

Most Orthodox rabbis have generally avoided interfaith theological discourse since the mid-1960s dictum of the late Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, whose writings remain an authoritative voice. He permitted joint work on social problems, but not theological exploration.

The authors of "Dabru Emet" are experienced with internal Jewish differences, thus they had to deal creatively with their own divergent beliefs. "There were some rough and tumble moments," said Novak. "When you're trying to agree on what you think about someone else, you find that you have some pretty big disagreements amongst yourselves."

Some examples, he said, were sexism and homophobia — and the role of authority in Judaism.

Signer, a Reform rabbi, put it this way: "The truth of the matter is that David Novak and I can disagree about what gets said in the public square, but we certainly agree that Jewish-Christian dialogue is an important part of what needs to be said and that Jews need a more nuanced understanding of the Christian world." □

*The following excerpts are from the eight-section, 1,100-word "Dabru Emet" (Speak Truth) statement that was issued this week by a group of Jewish thinkers:*

- "Jews and Christians worship the same God. While Christian worship is not a viable religious choice for Jews, as Jewish theologians we rejoice that, through Christianity, hundreds of millions of people have entered into a relationship with the God of Israel."
- "The humanly irreconcilable difference between Jews and Christians will not be settled until God redeems the entire world as promised in Scripture. Christians know and serve God through Jesus Christ and the Christian tradition. Jews know and serve God through Torah and the Jewish tradition. Jews can respect Christians' faithfulness to their revelations just as we expect Christians to respect our faithfulness to our revelation."
- "A new relationship between Jews and Christians will not weaken Jewish practice. It will not change traditional Jewish forms of worship, nor increase intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews, nor persuade more Jews to convert to Christianity, nor create a false blending of Judaism and Christianity."

The full text of "Dabru Emet" is available on the Web sites [www.icjs.org](http://www.icjs.org) and [www.jewishtimes.com](http://www.jewishtimes.com). □