



# Daily News Bulletin

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## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Talks suspended, then resumed

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak reversed course and said contacts with the Palestinians that he had suspended just hours before would resume Wednesday.

Earlier Tuesday, an Israeli official said Barak had "decided on a temporary suspension because of a hardening in the Palestinian positions."

### Russia urged not to sell lasers

The United States is pressing Russia not to sell Iran laser technology that can be used to make fuel for nuclear weapons, The New York Times reported.

According to U.S. officials cited in Tuesday's report, President Clinton has raised the issue twice since July with Russian President Vladimir Putin, most recently during the U.N. Millennium Summit earlier this month.

### Albright downbeat on early peace

Madeleine Albright appeared to express some resignation that a final Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement may not be reached during her tenure as secretary of state.

But "I believe in my heart — and in my head — that the parties will find a way to break the chains of history and forge the bonds of peace," Albright said at a tribute Monday in New York to former Israeli Premier Shimon Peres.

For his part, Peres said it was "a mistake" to ensnare peace negotiations in the issue of sovereignty over the Temple Mount.

"Politics are about compromise, but religion is uncompromising," he said.

### ADL, Shas leader discuss uproar

The spiritual leader of the fervently Orthodox Shas Party told Anti-Defamation League officials during a meeting in Jerusalem that his recent controversial comments seen as disparaging to victims of the Holocaust and to Arabs were misinterpreted.

Responding to Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, ADL National Director Abraham Foxman said at Tuesday's meeting that Yosef should be careful because his words reverberate throughout Israel and the world.

Foxman added that the Shas leader had convinced him that his remarks had indeed been misinterpreted.

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

### Donors discuss how to spread word of the Jewish day school alternative

By Julie Wiener

WHITE PLAINS, N.Y. (JTA) — Carol Nemo vividly remembers the day almost 20 years ago when her son came home upset from a Shabbat "honors" retreat for teenagers from various Atlanta Jewish schools.

As they were pulling his bag out from the luggage compartment of the bus, Dan stopped and said to her, "Mom, why didn't you send me somewhere where I'd learn something?" He hadn't known any of the Shabbat prayers or the blessing after meals and "felt like a fool the entire weekend."

For Nemo, the comments of her son — who attended Hebrew school at a Reform temple — were "like a dagger in my stomach."

"He was saying in that one sentence what I'd felt all my life," said Nemo, who had always felt her own religious education was insufficient. "I figured out something had to be done."

Soon after, Nemo became enamored of day schools, which offer a more intensive Jewish education than congregational schools.

Although it came too late for Dan — who his mother proudly says "only dates Jewish girls" — Nemo played a key role in founding Atlanta's Reform day school, the Alfred and Adele Davis Academy, and went on to help create the New Atlanta Jewish Community High School.

Both schools are among the scores of non-Orthodox day schools that have sprung up around the country in the past decade.

Nemo was one of almost 300 major donors — people who had made a recent gift of \$100,000 or more to Jewish day schools — gathered this week at a first-time national "donor assembly" sponsored by one of the leading forces in the day school movement, the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education. The group, known as PEJE, was founded three years ago by 12 partners — including Michael Steinhardt, Edgar Bronfman and Charles Schusterman, who also recently came together for a philanthropy devoted to synagogue transformation and renewal — each committing \$1.5 million over five years.

PEJE has largely focused on fostering the growth of new day schools, providing grants and expertise to 41 schools.

It is now looking to step up support for existing schools as well, and is planning to provide a consulting network for day schools as well as assist them with fund raising.

Day schools vary in terms of operating costs and tuition, but according to a 1997 study commissioned by one of PEJE's partners, the Avi Chai Foundation, most function with far less money budgeted per pupil than is used in public schools.

Many day schools — which are generally funded through a combination of tuition, fund raising from individuals and allocations from federations — are struggling with deficits while others survive only by charging tuition that middle-class families find prohibitively high. A number of foundations, including Avi Chai, have experimented with providing tuition subsidies to encourage people who would not be eligible for financial aid to consider day schools.

This week's assembly was the first time day school donors — who mostly support local schools — met their counterparts from around the country.

Many were energized by the networking. Before coming to the assembly, "we thought we were alone" in the various challenges day school leaders face, like garnering

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Israeli truckers protest fuel costs

Israeli truckers protesting fuel price hikes slowed traffic on the major highways between the port cities of Haifa and Ashdod on Tuesday.

But they did not carry out threats to block the roads entirely.

The truckers, who adhered to a prior agreement with police to travel in a slow convoy in the right lane, called the convoy a "warning action."

Concerned about the planned action, Israeli commuters hit the roads well before the usual morning rush hour.

### Israel may redesign passports

Israel is planning to revamp its passports to make them more difficult to counterfeit. It may add a hologram or silver stripe.

The decision follows complaints from police that the Israeli passport is considered one of the easiest to forge.

### Israeli kids deemed overweight

One in three Israeli children is overweight, according to a report by the nation's Clalit health fund. The problem was attributed to poor nutrition and not enough exercise.

### Baby kidnapped during car theft

A 3-month-old baby kidnapped in a car stolen on Tel Aviv's Dizengoff Street was found unharmed.

Police, who had mounted a massive manhunt for the car, were directed to the site Wednesday after a man, presumably the thief, called to say he had left the car near a Palestinian refugee camp outside Jerusalem.

The car had been stolen the previous evening, when the baby's mother was removing the baby's stroller from the trunk and a man jumped into the driver's seat and drove away with the boy still strapped in his car seat.



## Daily News Bulletin

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allocations from federations, said Scott Robinson, a donor to the Denver Campus for Jewish Education, a community day school from kindergarten through high school.

Central to the discussions in and out of the workshops was the need to raise additional funds and greater awareness for day schools.

Rabbi Joshua Elkin, executive director of PEJE, estimates that 80 percent of American Jews have no connection to and little awareness about day schools.

"It's a message that needs to be brought out," he said. "People need to visit day schools and be brought closer."

About 40 percent of American Jewish children receiving a Jewish education attend day schools, a number that has steadily increased in recent years. But among liberal Jews, the vast majority attend Hebrew schools.

In a keynote speech to the donors, Jack Wertheimer, provost of the Conservative movement's Jewish Theological Seminary, urged day school leaders to make greater efforts to sell their cause to Jewish family foundations, which currently give less than half of their money to Jewish causes and about 2 percent to day schools.

In finding ways to build their ranks, day school leaders may draw some lessons from the experiences of Nemo and the other donors assembled.

Like Nemo, most did not attend day schools. But either through a desire for their children or grandchildren to get a better Jewish education than they had, general concern about Jewish assimilation and intermarriage or talking to friends who donate, they joined the cause.

Denver's Robinson, who is Reform, attended public school but got interested in day schools when it was time to send his children to school.

"Public school was more of an option when I was growing up," he said, adding that once he and his wife decided on a private school, Jewish day schools — with their emphasis on teaching values — stood out.

His second grader already knows more Judaically than he does, he said.

Steve Schanes, of suburban Detroit, also has been surpassed by his Jewish day school-educated daughters, one of whom is a freshman at a just-opened high school, the Jewish Academy of Metropolitan Detroit.

With 52 students, the school has the largest first-year enrollment of any non-Orthodox high school.

Now vice president of the Jewish Academy, Schanes said he initially sent his daughters to the local Conservative day school, Hillel Day School, because he and his wife wanted them to have a stronger Jewish education than they had received.

"When we were making that decision, I thought about what I had in the afternoon programs in the synagogue, and I wanted my kids to be able to speak and understand Hebrew, to know how to pray and the meaning of the prayer, versus just knowing how to read Hebrew and things like that," he said.

Now, they believe Jewish education should continue into the high school years and beyond. Schanes has added to his motivations a desire to increase the chances of future grandchildren being Jewish. "We went in with reservations because we were both public school graduates," recalled Schanes. "We said, 'Let's give it a year.' That year became a few years, then both kids graduated from Hillel."

Shirley Kotler of Los Angeles said her commitment to day schools stems from her interest in "perpetuating Judaism."

"I'm frightened about assimilation," said Kotler, who funds the modern Orthodox Shalhevet school, which her grandchildren attend, and created an endowed faculty position at the Milken Community School, said, "I have a strong belief that my heritage must continue. Being born Jewish is one thing, but in these day schools children learn what it is to be Jewish, understand their heritage and are proud."

Some of the donors were swayed simply by the recommendation of a friend.

Harold Grinspoon — one of the 12 partners in PEJE — successfully solicited a friend, Irwin "Mark" Chase, who says he funds the local Jewish day high school "only because I was asked by the right people."

At the High Holidays, said Chase, Jews are urged toward "prayer, penitence and charity."

"On the first two I come up a little short, so I've got to do something that balances it out," he laughed. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Report: Russia rights picture dim

Anti-Semitism persists and progress in human rights has stagnated in Russia, according to a new report from several groups.

But at the same time, human rights groups in Russia have expanded their scope, according to the report released by the Union of Councils of Soviet Jews and other groups.

The report was presented to the U.S. House of Representatives on Tuesday.

### French compensation plan scored

A group representing former Resistance fighters criticized a French government plan to compensate Jewish orphans whose parents died in Nazi death camps.

The group, known by the initials FNDIRP, said the plan that was agreed to in July discriminates against Jews and non-Jews who lost their parents during the Nazi occupation of France.

### WJC: Swiss guard deserves cash

A former security guard who prevented one of Switzerland's biggest banks from shredding Holocaust-era documents should receive an award from the \$1.25 billion settlement being paid by Swiss banks, according to the World Jewish Congress.

"We certainly support an award to Christoph Meili from the bank settlement in recognition of his courageous and selfless act," the WJC said.

Meili embarrassed the Union Bank of Switzerland in January 1997, when he rescued the documents from the shredder and turned them over to a local Jewish organization in Switzerland.

Meili, who is now living in the United States, said at the time that he took the action weeks after seeing Steven Spielberg's movie "Schindler's List."

### Woman to lead Warsaw services

For what is believed to be the first time, a female rabbi will conduct High Holiday services this year in Warsaw.

Conservative Rabbi Cynthia Culpeper, who is American, is being brought to Warsaw for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur by Beit Warszawa, a new liberal Jewish group recently established in the Polish capital by expatriate and Polish Jews.

### Auctioned artifacts called fake

Ninety-five percent of Holocaust artifacts sold on Internet auction sites are fake, according to the author of a recent book titled "Counterfeiting the Holocaust."

The majority of such counterfeit items are produced in Europe, and most are distributed in the U.S. Midwest, says Alec Tulkoff, whose Web site is [www.holocaustartifacts.com](http://www.holocaustartifacts.com).

## Israel fears it may take hit at U.N. from new adviser on human rights

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — Israel may now be getting good vibes from the U.N. General Assembly, but Jewish observers expect continued hostile treatment from another prominent U.N. organ, the Geneva-based Commission on Human Rights.

The Jewish state is no longer the only U.N. member not to be included in one of five regional groupings in the world body, plus it has been lauded for "going the extra mile" to achieve peace in the Middle East.

But in what could be a sign of trouble for Israel, Palestinian legal and human rights expert Mona Rishmawi was named special adviser to Mary Robinson, the United Nations' high commissioner for human rights.

Rishmawi's past activities and academic writings have displayed clear antipathy for Israel and its policies toward Palestinians, observers say.

Robinson's office, which carries out the will of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights and is mandated to fulfill its duties without bias, is already notorious among Israeli officials.

Rishmawi, who has earned praise for her work as the U.N.'s human rights monitor for Somalia, is the former executive director of Al-Haq, a Palestinian human rights group that focuses primarily on what they view as Israeli violations in the "Occupied Territories" of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In the past, Rishmawi has written of Israel's "Judaization" and "colonial interests" in the territories, and compared Israeli policy there with Nazi laws in the lands Germany controlled during World War II.

Israeli diplomatic sources expressed concern over her appointment earlier this month, and reportedly tried to block it. The Israelis said they had objected not simply because Rishmawi is a Palestinian, but because they believed she will lack sufficient fairness and objectivity whenever Israel comes up for discussion.

"Ms. Rishmawi has been known for several years as a harsh critic of Israeli policies," said one Israeli source.

"We express the hope that Ms. Rishmawi will be able carry out her responsibilities in the required manner."

The human rights commissioner's office, also based in Geneva, apparently believes she will.

"The selection committee, in doing its work, takes into account standards of impartiality and neutrality that all prospective U.N. staff must fulfill to work for the organization," said spokesman Jose Diaz.

Messages left by JTA at Rishmawi's office and home were not returned.

She is also director of the Geneva-based Center for the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, an arm of the International Commission of Jurists.

Israel deems both groups to be one-sided in their assessments of the Middle East, though the ICJ Web site indicates the group has also criticized the Palestinian Authority and various Muslim states for repressive policies.

The ICJ was awarded the Council of Europe's first European Human Rights Prize in 1980 and the United Nations Award for Human Rights in 1993.

Both the 53-member human rights commission and the office of High Commissioner Robinson, the former president of Ireland, are notorious among Israelis for what is seen as their relentless criticism of Israel.

The commission's history of anti-Israel resolutions, Jewish observers say, rivals that which was directed at South Africa during the apartheid era.

At its annual spring sessions, the commission basically discusses two agenda items, said David Harris, the executive director of the American Jewish Committee.

"Item one is the Israeli-occupied territories; item two is everything else, literally," said Harris.

"Every other human rights violation in the world, whether in Chechnya, Sierra Leone, Congo or Iran, is all subsumed under one agenda item, while the other item is country-specific. To think this goes on, year after year, with the acquiescence of countries that should know better, is mind-boggling." □

## AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

**New Russian Chabad center signals growth of Jewish life**

By Lev Gorodetsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — Russian President Vladimir Putin's appearance at this week's dedication of a \$10 million Jewish community center here is being seen as an unprecedented show of Kremlin support for Russian Jewry.

But the ceremony, and the building itself, represent other developments in the life of Russian Jewry that are perhaps just as significant.

Monday's dedication of the Chabad-Lubavitch-sponsored building — the first of its kind in the region — is a shot in the arm for that movement as it engages in an internal struggle for control of Russian Jewry.

The group's chief rival, the Russian Jewish Congress, has postponed until November the laying of the cornerstone of its own new community building.

The Chabad center — a still-unfinished seven-story, 45-room structure that includes a large synagogue and two mikvahs — also represents a fixture in Russian Jewry's battle to survive, despite the mass exodus of the past decade.

Putin himself, who since coming to power last year has used every opportunity to express sympathy for the country's estimated 600,000 Jews, seemed to echo that sentiment.

Putin said the spiritual revival of Russia is impossible without a "multicultural" approach and that "the revival of the Jewish Russian community is an organic part of the national revival of Russia."

The Russian president appeared to feel at ease with the Chasidic officials. In a symbolic moment, Putin accepted a shofar from one of Israel's former chief rabbis, Mordechai Eliyahu, who had blessed him.

Just as significantly, Putin went out of his way to praise the Lubavitch, whose internal struggle with the RJC has led to charges and countercharges as well as speculation that the Kremlin is engaging in favoritism in the Jewish community.

The president called the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia, a Lubavitch-dominated group, a "highly constructive and influential organization."

The new center, open to all Jews, is just one of the group's accomplishments in Russia and the former Soviet Union.

According to Rabbi Avraham Berkowitz, the American-born, Moscow-based executive director of the Federation of Jewish Communities of the Commonwealth of Independent States, which spans most of the former Soviet Union, the federation has created a wide network of synagogues, day schools, preschools and kindergartens and summer camps.

The organization is also involved in providing hot meals to the elderly, musical and theatrical groups, youth and sport clubs, circumcision centers and burial societies.

The Lubavitch-led federation is simultaneously dedicating a synagogue in the center of Ukraine, clashing with a Reform group in Western Ukraine, opening a day Jewish school in the Russian Far East, opening a kosher restaurant in St. Petersburg, struggling with the authorities over an old synagogue in the capital of Georgia and trying to hinder Jews for Jesus activity in Siberia.

Chabad's success stems from several factors.

Many Jews across the former Soviet Union are searching for spiritual and educational sustenance after decades of atheistic communism.

While other Jewish groups have a presence in Russia and the other former republics, none appear to be as well-financed or able to match the zeal and determination of Lubavitch.

Indeed, some Russian Jewish activists aren't happy with what they see as Chabad's overaggressiveness.

"I can't accept their methods. When they move in they try to seize and capture everything, and to squeeze the others out," Michail, a young Jewish activist from the city of Saratov on the Volga, told JTA.

Rabbi Berel Lazar, the leader of Chabad of Russia, is credited with being one of the main forces behind the Lubavitch movement's success.

The late Lubavitcher rebbe, Menachem Schneerson, sent the Italian-born and U.S.-educated rabbi to Russia in 1990, with the instruction that he should become chief rabbi.

Lazar, now 36, fulfilled the instruction in June, when the Russian federation's overwhelmingly Lubavitch rabbis elected him to that post.

Of course, that election created a stir because Russia has long had a chief rabbi, Adolph Shayevich, who continues to serve in that post — and is connected with the RJC.

The long-standing intrigue involving the two groups and their relationship to the Kremlin took a new twist this week, when the president of the RJC, media magnate Vladimir Goussinsky, said he would not abide by a deal he had signed that convinced the Russian government to drop charges against him because it had been signed under duress.

In the deal, Goussinsky, who had been arrested and detained in June and now lives abroad, agreed to sell his newspaper and broadcasting businesses.

In this battle between the two groups, Putin's administration has consistently supported the federation, whom they appear to consider, as one high Moscow official put it, "the most authentic Jews."

This growing relationship has led to charges that the federation is in the Kremlin's pocket.

Even Joel Golovensky, head of the Moscow office of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, which is financially supporting some programs at the JCC, told JTA that he doesn't like "Lazar's inclination to excessive politicization."

Some of Chabad's Jewish rivals even claim that the administration's support for the federation is linked to the increased business success of Lev Levayev, a Soviet-born Jewish diamond tycoon who will reportedly purchase Armenia's state diamond-cutting business. For its part, Chabad denies these charges, and points to its widespread activities as reasons for its actions.

But with all the intrigue and infighting, the backstabbing and bad-mouthing that seem to characterize Russian Jewish communal life today, the new community center here bolsters the view that the Russian Jewish community has a long-term future.

Once it is complete, it will also feature a library, restaurants, gymnasium, classrooms, youth halls, computer lab, exercise room, and theater hall.

As Anna, a 22-year university student attending the dedication, put it: "It all means to me we Jews are here to stay." □