



Daily News Bulletin

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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Annan vows to discuss hostages

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan vowed to discuss with Lebanese authorities the "situation" of three Israeli soldiers kidnapped over the weekend by Hezbollah gunmen.

"The soldiers should not be harmed," Annan said, adding that the Red Cross should be given immediate access to Staff Sgt. Avraham Binyamin, Staff Sgt. Omar Suad and Sgt. Adi Avitan.

Indyk's clearance reinstated

The full security clearance of the U.S. ambassador to Israel was reinstated in light of the ongoing violence in the Middle East, according to the U.S. State Department.

Martin Indyk, whose clearance was suspended recently because of "suspected violations" of security standards, will now have access to classified information.

But once the situation in the region stabilizes his clearance will be re-evaluated.

Fighting described as 'civil war'

Jewish and Arab civilians attacked one another in various parts of Israel, including Tel Aviv, Jaffa, Haifa and Acre.

Israel's Army Radio said the scenes of violence Monday night looked like "civil war."

Palestinian boy dies in Gaza

A 12-year-old Palestinian boy was declared brain dead after he was wounded Tuesday by a live bullet to the head.

The boy was wounded during a renewed outbreak of violence in the Gaza Strip.

Fire destroys school building

A fire gutted two floors of a Jewish school building in Harrisburg, Pa.

No one was injured in the Yom Kippur fire and an adjacent synagogue was not damaged.

An agent of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms said the fire was deliberately set. [Page 2]

Because of the Sukkot holiday, the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Monday, Oct. 16.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Jewish groups mobilize forces to show solidarity

By Peter Ephross

NEW YORK (JTA) — The organized North American Jewish community's reaction to the violent events in the Middle East can be summed up in a few words: solidarity with Israel.

As displeasure with the Jewish state's response to Palestinian rioters mounted across the world, the Jewish community — mainly through op-eds and advertisements in newspapers, and in community-organized rallies — sprang into action.

To be sure, there were scattered attempts at fence-mending — as in New York, where Arab and Jewish community leaders signed a statement of unity.

But for the most part, talk of coexistence and peace has taken a back seat to defending the Jewish state in the face of what is seen as unfair criticism.

Local Jewish communities — including federations and community relations councils — were sponsoring pro-Israel rallies slated for later in the week.

The largest of the rallies was expected to be held Thursday outside the Israeli Consulate in New York, but communities across the United States and Canada — from Boca Raton, Fla., to Calgary — were planning to hold similar demonstrations later in the week. The immediate goal of the rallies "is to try and reach across the ocean and give the people of Israel a sense that the American Jewish community is with them in this difficult time," said Martin Raffel, the associate executive vice chairman of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, an umbrella group of community relations councils.

Ads in The New York Times this week expressing solidarity with Israel and announcing the New York rally were sponsored by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations as well as by the United Jewish Communities, the JCPA and the UJA-Federation of New York.

Leaders of all these groups participated in a conference call Tuesday — with 250 participants — in which activists across North America were encouraged to send op-eds to local newspapers and urged to hold rallies.

The demonstrations "send a strong message to the American government and the American public that the Jewish community is deeply concerned about these developments and feels strongly about the need to press Yasser Arafat to act responsibly," Raffel said.

Some 700 people attended a rally outside the Palestinian mission to the United Nations in New York organized by the Coalition for Jewish Concerns — AMCHA on Sunday in support for Israel, according to Rabbi Avi Weiss, the president of the group.

AMCHA sponsored a smaller rally on Tuesday at which it called on President Clinton to find those responsible for the death of Rabbi Hillel Lieberman, a U.S.-born Jew living on the West Bank who was murdered over the weekend.

Meanwhile, other Jewish activists are staging rallies to express a different sentiment. In New York, longtime Jewish peace activists were planning to hold a counter-rally at the Israeli Consulate.

The need for a counter-rally stemmed from a need some Jews felt to stand up against some of the abuses that they believe Israel has committed, said Donna Nevel, one of the rally's organizers.

"As Jews, we do not support what the Israeli government is doing," she said, referring to the more than 80 Palestinians killed in the recent clashes.

At a similar rally outside the Israeli Embassy in Washington on Sunday, the eve of

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel extends 2-day deadline

Israel extended the 48-hour period it gave the Palestinians to end nearly two weeks of rioting. Under pressure from the United States, Prime Minister Ehud Barak's Cabinet gave the Palestinians "another few days" to end the violence.

Barak also said he is willing to attend a U.S.-sponsored peace summit. Barak told Army Radio that he had reached the decision after speaking twice by phone with President Clinton.

Egypt's foreign minister rejected the idea of holding an emergency summit in Egypt that would bring Clinton together with Barak and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat. Amre Moussa said Egyptian officials would instead focus on convening an Arab summit Oct. 21 in Cairo.

Lieberman unaware of relation

Democratic vice-presidential candidate Joseph Lieberman said he is unaware that he is related to a rabbi who was killed in the West Bank. Rabbi Hillel Lieberman, who was born in the United States, was found dead in a cave near Nablus after he had been beaten and shot, allegedly by a Palestinian mob.

Members of the rabbi's family told The New York Times that he was the senator's second cousin.

Canada's U.N. vote attacked

Canada committed a "grave error" by supporting a U.N. Security Council resolution that obliquely blames Israel for using "excessive force" against the Palestinians, said the leader of the Canadian Alliance, the official opposition party of the Canadian Parliament.

The resolution, which passed Saturday with the approval of Canada and 13 other Security Council members, "is clearly slanted with an anti-Israel bias," Stockwell Day said. "I am not sure we will further the cause of peace if we as a nation join in the finger-pointing."



Daily News Bulletin

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Yom Kippur, organizers atoned for "justifying the use of excessive lethal force" and called for "an improvement in this year which has begun so tragically."

"We're not pointing fingers," said David Shneyer, one of the vigil's organizers. "We're expressing our anguish, our frustration and our hope for a peaceful solution."

The tragic events in the Middle East — and the world's reaction to them — also prompted several organizations to take out newspaper advertisements.

In advertising for the New York rally in the Times, the Conference of Presidents said it deplored "dangerous and exploitative use of violence by the Palestinian Authority to achieve political gains."

A similar view was expressed by Hadassah and the American Jewish Committee in their ads.

In an advertisement that by Tuesday had run in The New York Times and the Chicago Tribune, the AJCommittee attacked the Palestinian leadership for having "deliberately overblown" Likud Party leader Ariel Sharon's Sept. 28 visit to the Temple Mount, which sparked the violence.

The ads are read not only by the American government, but by diplomats and their staffs as well. The AJCommittee was also reacting to the U.N. Security Council's resolution passed over the weekend that condemned the "excessive use of force" against Palestinians without mentioning Israel by name.

The group said it was sending letters expressing its displeasure with the resolution to foreign ministers from the 15 countries on the Security Council.

"We were just stunned that when Israel is under attack," that hours later the "Security Council could pass a resolution focusing on excessive use of violence against the Palestinians," said AJCommittee spokesman Kenneth Bandler, referring specifically to Hezbollah's taking three Israeli soldiers hostage on Saturday.

"There's a feeling that Israel is under assault." □

(The Washington Jewish Week contributed to this story.)

Shul torched on Yom Kippur morning; too early to say if it was a hate crime

By Barbara Trainin Blank

HARRISBURG, Pa. (JTA) — Mel Woolf returned from his daily walk on the morning of Yom Kippur with deeply troubling news.

Temple Ohev Sholom, the synagogue to which the Harrisburg native and his family have belonged for years, had been torched.

A fire, later labeled an arson, had been set in the early hours of the morning on the holiest day of the Jewish calendar. Jewish community members are speculating that it was probably a hate crime.

"Coming on Yom Kippur, how can you think it was anything else?" asked one member.

Federal, state and local investigators joined forces to search for those responsible, but said it would be premature to declare the fire a hate crime. Authorities did note that the blaze was set during escalating tension between Israelis and Palestinians in the Middle East — widely reported in the local and national media.

No major incidents of anti-Semitic violence was reported over Yom Kippur, although in New York, police patrols around synagogues were stepped up and the local Jewish community relations council and Anti-Defamation League issued advisories urging vigilance and special security precautions during Yom Kippur.

In other incidents across the country:

- A bomb threat was called in to the Arizona State University Hillel;
- A burned Israeli flag was left on the steps of Congregational Emanu-El — B'ne Jeshurun of Milwaukee sometime early Monday morning.

The Harrisburg fire destroyed new construction under way at the city's first synagogue and one of the oldest Reform congregations in the country.

Also largely decimated was the Mary Sachs Educational Extension.

The center provided space for offices and classrooms for the temple's Hebrew school. □

JEWISH WORLD

Violence reaches Paris streets

The crisis in the Middle East spilled onto the streets of Paris. In a suburb north of the French capital, a group of Arabs yelled "dirty Jews" at synagogue attendees. A Molotov cocktail was reportedly thrown at a kosher restaurant in Paris.

And at a Paris protest, several marchers cried, "Death to the Jews."

Court to hear church-state case

The U.S. Supreme Court said it will decide whether a Christian youth group should be allowed to meet on public school property during after-school hours. The high court agreed Tuesday to hear the case, which involves the constitutional separation between church and state, early next year. A decision is expected by the end of June.

Campaign adviser sparks concern

Some U.S. Jewish groups are concerned that an Arab American leader who has made some anti-Israel statements is now serving as an adviser on ethnic affairs for the Gore-Lieberman presidential campaign. James Zogby, the president of the Arab American Institute, advises the Democratic Party on how to reach out to ethnic communities and will have no policy-making role in the campaign, a Gore-Lieberman spokesman said.

Fire razes Uzbek shul

A fire set by vandals razed a synagogue in the former Soviet republic of Uzbekistan and destroyed five of its eight Torah scrolls. Nobody was injured in Monday night's incident at the Bukharan Synagogue in Tashkent. The synagogue has received financial support from Lev Levayev, an Israeli diamond mogul from the former Soviet Union. Police are investigating the attack.

Building begins over cemetery

Authorities in a Ukrainian city are building an apartment building on top of a Jewish cemetery there, according to the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews.

A local court ruled that construction in the city of Vladimir-Volynsky could proceed despite protests from human rights groups.

Japanese wartime envoy honored

Japanese officials unveiled a plaque in Tokyo to commemorate a Japanese diplomat who saved thousands of Jews when he served as a consul in Lithuania during World War II.

"We praise Chiune Sugihara's courageous and humanitarian act, conducted in an extreme situation amid the Nazi persecution of Jews," Foreign Minister Yohei Kono said at Tuesday's ceremony.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Kidnapping of three soldiers marks latest Hezbollah attack

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Hezbollah's kidnapping of three Israeli soldiers this week was its first operation against the Jewish state since the Israeli army withdrew from southern Lebanon in May.

But the action marked the latest in the Shi'ite fundamentalist group's two-decade war on Israel.

Following Hezbollah's success in Lebanon's recent parliamentary elections, Israeli officials had hoped — vainly, as became evident after Saturday's abductions — that the group would focus on Lebanese politics rather than heat up the border with Israel.

After the Israel Defense Force failed to stop the kidnappers from advancing north, efforts to rescue the kidnapped soldiers shifted to the diplomatic front.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan went to Beirut on Tuesday to help secure the release of Staff Sgt. Avraham Binyamin, Staff Sgt. Omar Suad and Sgt. Adi Avitan.

Israeli leaders have refrained from commenting on whether negotiations are being conducted with Hezbollah via intermediaries.

But the appointment of Ya'acov Perri, a former head of the Shin Bet domestic security service, as the head of the team dealing with the issue indicated that the Jewish state may indeed be willing to negotiate a prisoner exchange, which Hezbollah has demanded.

"The soldiers should not be harmed," Annan said after meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, adding that the Red Cross should be given immediate access to the three.

Judging by lab tests at the scene of the kidnapping, Israeli army officials said the soldiers were wounded, but they did not know how seriously.

For his part, Annan said Tuesday that to the best of his knowledge the soldiers were in "good condition."

Hezbollah leader Sheik Hassan Nasrallah said Saturday night that he is ready to negotiate a prisoner exchange.

Mediation efforts are continuing under a thick veil of secrecy, with the hope that some deal could be worked out between Israel and Hezbollah.

The group has demanded that Israel release more than a dozen Lebanese prisoners, among them Shi'ite leaders Sheik Abdel Karim Obeid and Mustafa Dirani, if it wants to see its three soldiers returned.

Israel also holds scores of Palestinian prisoners.

Perri has been directly responsible for negotiations aimed at securing the release of navigator Ron Arad, who bailed out of his fighter plane over Lebanon in 1986 and is believed to have been held by pro-Iranian troops there.

Israel has also been seeking information about three soldiers missing in action in Lebanon since 1982.

Zachariah Baumel, Zvi Feldman and Yehuda Katz disappeared June 11, 1982, in the battle of Sultan Yakoub at the beginning of Israel's invasion of its northern neighbor.

Obeid, a Hezbollah leader, and Dirani, a leader of the Amal movement, have been held without trial since their seizure by Israel in 1988 and 1994, respectively. Israel has been holding the two in hopes of securing Arad's release.

Obeid and Dirani top the list of prisoners Hezbollah wants Israel to release.

Although Hezbollah now operates a large network providing health, education and cultural services in Lebanon, it was established as a purely military organization in 1983 to act against the Israeli occupation of Lebanon.

It carried out a number of violent attacks against Israeli and American targets. Among its most deadly operations, the group was responsible for a twin attack on Oct. 23, 1983, when Shi'ite Muslim suicide car bombers simultaneously blew up a U.S. Marine base and French paratroopers headquarters in Beirut, killing 241 American and 58 French soldiers. □

Depth of Arab outrage, violence shakes Jews across the spectrum

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — At Yom Kippur services on Monday, Norman Podhoretz was approached by half a dozen fellow congregants at his synagogue, all of whom said basically the same thing: "I have to tell you, you were right all along even though I didn't agree with you before."

Podhoretz, editor at large of Commentary magazine, has long been critical of the Israel-Palestinian peace process, asserting that the Palestinians cannot be trusted.

Amid the escalation of violence in Israel and the Palestinian destruction of Joseph's Tomb, a Jewish holy site in Nablus, some of Podhoretz's longtime critics were visibly disillusioned about the chances for peace. He wondered, he says, whether it was just a "heat of the moment" thing or a genuine shift.

Calls to a sampling of prominent American Jewish thinkers from across the political spectrum revealed that most are shaken, if not despondent, about the depth of Arab violence and deeply discouraged that Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat has taken no action to quell the unrest.

Writer Cynthia Ozick, long an outspoken critic of the Palestinians, said she envisions the future "very darkly," and is "feeling emotionally close to the way I felt in 1967 — it was a time of great, great horror because then it seemed as if there was going to be no Israel."

"I think the Jews have to unashamedly defend themselves in any way they can," she said.

Menachem Rosensaft, one of five Jewish activists ostracized for meeting with Arafat and other Palestinian Liberation Organization leaders in 1988, long before Israeli leaders recognized him as a negotiating partner, was also critical of the Palestinians.

"It's troubling when listening to the Palestinian leaders speak that you found no sense of trying to calm the rioters," he said. "You want to accuse Israel of using excessive force? That's a discussion to be had once the stone throwers have stopped throwing rocks and once people have ceased sniping."

Those who never felt peace with the Palestinians was possible are, not surprisingly, saying the violence is vindication of what they've been saying all along.

That Palestinians have reacted with violence to Israel's offer of "far-reaching concessions," said Podhoretz, means that "there is no desire for peaceful coexistence, no matter where Israel's borders are drawn or whether or not there is a Palestinian state or even whether or not the Palestinian state shares sovereignty over Jerusalem."

Podhoretz predicts "a big war in the future involving all the Arab states."

But on the left, some of the most disillusioned are still arguing that the recent violence underscores the necessity of a lasting peace agreement. Robert Freedman, a professor of political science at Baltimore Hebrew University and a board member of Americans for Peace Now, said he is both discouraged and worried and fears "we may have a bloody war coming up."

However, he still believes that the only solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is establishment of a demilitarized Palestinian state, giving control of the Temple Mount to neutral international authorities and removing Jewish settlements in the middle of

densely populated Palestinian communities such as Nablus.

"My worry is it may take one more war to convince the Palestinians that that's the way to go," he said, adding that he would not be surprised if Israel intensifies armed force against the Palestinians and even forces Arafat into exile. "I have real doubts now about the Palestinian leadership."

Rabbi Alexander Schindler, the former president of the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations, said from his home in Connecticut that he is "heartbroken and dismayed" by the violence.

"Wherever you turn people are disheartened and dispirited and hoping against hope that the leaders of the Arab world will look over the precipice and draw back," he said

"It's quite clear that Arafat was waiting for an excuse," he said of the Arab rioting that has engulfed the region, comparing it to Kristallnacht in 1938 when "Hitler really wanted to firebomb all the synagogues and was just waiting for the right moment to do it."

"I hope and pray with all my heart that the peace process will go forward because the return to the status quo is unthinkable," he said.

Most troubling to Schindler is the recent violence among Israeli Arabs, calling it "the most serious problem confronting Israel right now."

Rabbi Harold Schulweis of Valley Beth Shalom, a large Conservative synagogue in suburban Los Angeles, said his reaction — and that of his congregants — to the violence was "very, very profound." The rabbi said one of his greatest fears is that "the vision of Rabin and Barak has been damaged."

Although still so critical of opposition leader Ariel Sharon as to call him "pathological," Schulweis, like Schindler, blames Arafat for the violence. Recent events have convinced him that Arafat "is not a very strong leader."

"I had higher hopes that the reality principle would strengthen his spine and that the economic advantages and unusual generosity of Barak would make a difference and that was disappointing," Schulweis said. Although not surprised by the "simmering hatred" on the Arab side, Schulweis "thought there'd be a greater amount of self-control."

Nonetheless, rather than drive Schulweis away from the peace process, the violence "has confirmed my belief that the peace process must go on because the alternative is suicidal."

"I don't expect idealism from anyone," said Schulweis. "I do expect people don't want to see their children killed. If not, we're dealing with a desperate situation."

But Letty Cottin Pogrebin, a founding editor of Ms. magazine and the past president of Americans for Peace Now, is more discouraged — and less willing to place the blame squarely on Arafat — than others on the left.

Pogrebin said she hasn't "been this sad and depressed about the Middle East since the late 1980s," the time of the Palestinian uprising. The fact that "peace was so close and slipped away" is "deeply depressing," she said.

Although critical of Arafat's unwillingness to accept a deal at the Camp David summit in July, Pogrebin said it was the overreaction of the Israeli army to Palestinian protests that led the violence to spin out of control.

"Anyone who cares about the survival of Israel should be in mourning," she said. "I can't imagine what's going to happen next. We're going to look back on this and think — how did we let this get away?" □