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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Summit enters second day

Diplomatic efforts to end the violence in the Middle East spilled over into a second day as Israel and the Palestinians failed to reach an agreement.

President Clinton delayed his departure from the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheik late Monday night amid reports of "animated discussions" that produced no results. Clinton shuttled back and forth between meetings with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

Violence in the region continued, as clashes erupted when Israeli soldiers confronted Palestinian militiamen and rock-throwers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

A 14-year-old Palestinian boy was pronounced clinically dead after he was shot in the head during fighting Monday near Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem, according to local hospital officials.

Syracuse shul fire ruled arson

Authorities said a fire that gutted a synagogue in Syracuse was the work of arsonists. Last Friday's blaze at Temple Beth El had raised fears that it was set in reaction to the violence in the Middle East. [Page 3]

U.S. Jewish leaders fly to Israel

A solidarity mission of several dozen Jewish federation and organizational leaders was scheduled to travel to Israel on Monday night.

The two-day mission, organized by the United Jewish Communities and co-sponsored by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, is slated to include meetings with Israeli Jewish and Arab leaders. Meanwhile, Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, plans to send its own mission on Thursday.

Israel: Iran behind kidnapping

Israeli officials accused Iran of orchestrating the Hezbollah kidnapping of an Israeli businessman and reserve officer. The abduction is part of "a worldwide campaign of terrorism orchestrated by Iran," Deputy Defense Minister Ephraim Sneh told CNN on Sunday.

Israeli officials identified the man as Elhanan Tannenbaum, 54, but denied Hezbollah claims that he is an Israeli agent. Israeli sources say Tannenbaum was abducted in Switzerland, but Swiss officials have not been able to confirm his disappearance.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Israelis set aside bickering for now, but still disagree on future of peace

By Avi Machlis

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Customers at an Israeli supermarket wince at photos of a Ramallah mob lynching two reserve soldiers who accidentally turned into the West Bank town.

"They are barbarians and they hate us. That is the problem," says Orit, a cashier. "Now there is nothing left to do, no chance for peace."

The horrific lynchings and the deadly violence has left Israel as it usually is during times of national crisis — briefly unified.

People across the political spectrum have come together if only in their disgust, as many saw the lynching as a personification of the deep enmity Palestinians feel towards Israelis.

Now, in the streets or on TV talk shows, the tone of the public debate is different. Israeli Jews are no longer shouting at each other and are instead trying to unite to face the challenges ahead.

During the Sukkot holiday this week, usually an upbeat time throughout Israel, the feeling of despair has become more tangible in the public mood.

Several annual festivals were canceled due to the situation.

And the streets of downtown Jerusalem are much more somber than usual for a holiday week.

Even though there has been no public panic, Yediot Achronot, Israel's biggest daily newspaper, reported that, according to one supermarket chain, Israelis are stocking up on canned goods and mineral water.

The chain, Supersol, reported a 50 percent increase in sales of both, and snack foods have been selling twice as fast as usual, apparently since Israelis are spending long hours watching television coverage of the crisis.

On Monday, the Dan bus company said it would cancel two lines that run through Jaffa, a mixed Jewish-Arab city adjacent to Tel Aviv, since the buses on that route had been stoned several times.

Even though the crisis has not changed the day-to-day lives of most Israelis, the constant flood of news has created a feeling of war and an atmosphere of confusion and despair.

Public opinion polls show some contradictions in what the recent events have done to Israeli opinion.

A poll taken by the Israeli daily Ma'ariv before the lynching showed that 62 percent of Israelis no longer believe there is a Palestinian partner to make peace with.

However, 63 percent of Israelis said they would still be willing to return to the negotiating table.

Although that figure had fallen 5 percentage points from the previous poll, it appeared to indicate that residents of the Jewish state are frightened of the war they see unfolding.

"I still support making peace with them, since they are our neighbors and we must find a way to live together," says Tzahi Sharabi, 46, who owns a real estate agency in Jerusalem and describes himself as a centrist.

"But we must strike back at them harder."

Outside of Sharabi's agency, by the Pat junction, a gateway to some of Jerusalem's poorest Jewish neighborhoods and a stronghold of the right-wing Likud Party, many

MIDEAST FOCUS

Soldiers shot from Jordan

Gunmen in Jordan shot and wounded two Israeli soldiers, according to a Jordanian official.

The official added that a search is under way to find those responsible.

The shots slightly wounded two Israeli border guards at Moshav B'tzael, a Jewish cooperative farm north of the West Bank town of Jericho.

Shots across the Jordanian-Israeli border are rare.

U.S. legislators slam Arafat

U.S. House members introduced a resolution condemning Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat for the recent violence in the Middle East and encouraging strong support for Israel.

The resolution says the Palestinian leader did "too little for far too long" to control the dashes and actually encouraged the violence.

Poll: Israel has no peace partner

Most Israelis believe they have "no peace partner."

But they nevertheless want to continue peace talks with the Palestinians, according to a poll released last Friday by the Israeli daily Ma'ariv.

About 70 percent of the poll's respondents said they supported a national emergency government and are dissatisfied with the way Barak has handled the crisis.

Jewish-Arab coexistence backed

The speaker of the Israeli Knesset called on American Jews to support Jewish-Arab coexistence within Israel as strongly as they support Jewish unity there.

Speaking at the UJA-Federation of Greater New York last Friday, Avraham Burg also said the peace process would resume eventually, but that the Palestinians are not ready for it now.



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people agree that Israel must be tougher. Few feel that the scores of Palestinians killed by Israeli soldiers are Israel's responsibility.

Neither are they concerned about international public opinion that tends to turn against Israel the harder it hits back at the Palestinians.

"We must hit them harder," says David Shalom, a 48-year old car dealer. "Not the civilians, but we must teach the Palestinian police a lesson. They started this at a time when Barak wanted to sit down at the negotiating table."

In the more liberal Emek Refaim neighborhood, coffee shops were full last Friday, the day after the murder of the two Israeli soldiers and the Israeli strikes against Palestinian targets.

But even here, there were plenty of peace supporters who backed Barak's decision to launch strikes inside Palestinian-controlled territory.

"As far as I know, the strikes were on Palestinian police targets, and attempted to avoid civilians," says Esther Nadav, an accountant from Jerusalem and an ardent supporter of the peace process.

"After what I saw yesterday," she adds, referring to the lynching, "I did not feel that it bothered me."

In fact, the lynching of the two Israeli soldiers so shocked Nadav that she found herself even willing to consider proposals by Rehavam Ze'evi, from the extreme right-wing National Unity Party.

"I don't accept his policies about transferring the Arabs," she says. "But I heard him speaking on the radio about cutting off Palestinian water and electricity, and suddenly what he was saying made sense."

Shalom Cohen, a Likud Party supporter who owns a specialty wine store in the neighborhood, also has views that demonstrate the confusion in the country's public opinion.

"We should not be so merciful," he says, calling on Barak to launch even tougher strikes against the Palestinians.

But, he adds: "I don't believe that Arafat is a partner in peace, but he is their elected leader and we must negotiate with him."

Yaron, a 29-year-old-electrical engineer and ardent peace supporter, says his fundamental views have not been changed by the violence, although he too backed Barak's tough response.

"The romantic vision of peace may have disappeared," says Yaron, "But maybe now the right wing will become more realistic and understand the price of the alternative." □

Australian police probe attacks

SYDNEY, Australia (JTA) — Australian police are investigating two incidents in Sydney and Canberra, where gasoline bombs were thrown at Jewish targets during Sukkot.

Also in Sydney, some 2,000 demonstrators marched on the U.S. Consulate, where they burned Israeli and American flags and set fire to posters of Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak.

The demonstrators called for "Death to Israel" and "Victory to Allah" before attempting to storm a police barricade. □

Argentina beefs up security

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — Argentine officials have strengthened the police presence near Jewish and Arab institutions in response to the conflict in the Middle East.

Security was also beefed up at the U.S. Embassy in the Argentine capital and at border crossings.

In addition, Argentine President Fernando de la Rúa convened the heads of the security forces and met with Jewish and Arab community leaders, who had written a joint statement calling for a cease-fire in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. □

JEWISH WORLD

London Jew stabbed aboard bus

An Orthodox Jew is in serious but stable condition after being stabbed aboard a London bus Monday in an incident that the police are treating as racially motivated. A 27-year-old man "of Mediterranean appearance" is in custody, police said.

In another development, Jewish leaders in Britain said Islamic militants there should be prosecuted for distributing leaflets calling for the death of Jews. The Board of Deputies of British Jews said Monday the militants distributed anti-Semitic leaflets in London, Manchester and Birmingham in response to the ongoing violence in the Middle East.

"The final hour will not come until the Muslims kill the Jews," one leaflet said, according to the board.

The leaflets are "illegal and absolutely unacceptable in our society," said board President Jo Wagerman. "Unless stopped now, this will inevitably lead to violence."

More Paris shuls attacked

Attackers set fire to more synagogues in France, bringing the number of anti-Semitic incidents over the last few weeks to nearly 100, police said. Jewish community leaders suspect the attacks are mostly the work of disgruntled youths of Arab descent who have no ties to organized Islam.

Farrakhan targets Lieberman

Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan repeated his charge that Democratic vice presidential candidate Joseph Lieberman is more faithful to Israel than the United States.

Farrakhan, who summoned supporters around the country to Washington on Monday for his Million Family March, also repeated Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press" that Jews control black artists, athletes and the media.

Remembrance tree disappears

U.S. officials are investigating the disappearance of a tree that had been planted in front of the Agriculture Department's headquarters in Washington to commemorate Holocaust victims.

Planted in the spring, the tree was uprooted earlier this month, a spokesman for the Agriculture Department said. A plaque that had been placed in front of the tree was not disturbed.

Lithuanian judge orders trial

A Lithuanian judge ordered that a 93-year-old man be tried in absentia on war crimes charges.

Kazys Gimzauskas is suspected of having handed scores of Jews over to death squads in the capital of Vilnius during World War II, when he was deputy head of the Nazi-sponsored Lithuanian security police.

Anti-Jewish violence, arson has U.S. communities worried

SYRACUSE (JTA) — Police investigating isolated acts of anti-Jewish violence and arson across the country are urging the public not to jump to any conclusions, but local Jewish communities suspect the incidents are linked to the violence in the Middle East.

In one of the latest attacks, a fire seriously damaged Temple Beth El in Syracuse last Friday. More than 60 federal agents are looking into the incident, which investigators have labeled an arson.

Meanwhile, in Chicago, police are investigating three separate attacks that took place in the largely Jewish neighborhood of West Rogers Park on the night of Oct. 12.

The incidents, in addition to earlier incidents at synagogues in Harrisburg, Pa., New York and Toronto, among others, are heightening concern among Jews.

Fears are greatest among residents who live near the places where attacks have already occurred, said the national director of the Anti-Defamation League.

"If the incident happened in your town, in your shul, in your community, it's a high-level concern. If it happened 500 miles away, less so," said Abraham Foxman.

In Syracuse, the main office of the temple was gutted and the second floor was heavily damaged. The main sanctuary and the chapel were not directly affected.

The Torah scrolls and other sacred books are all intact, said Rabbi Irvin Beigel of Temple Beth El. He added that while the smoke-damaged Torah mantles will most likely have to be replaced, it is not yet known whether the parchment will need repairs.

Beigel and law enforcement officials urged the community not to rush to any hasty judgments on why the fire was set.

"I would discourage people from speculating," Beigel said. "Until we have the facts from the appropriate law enforcement, we must all be very cautious about jumping to conclusions."

The heavy law enforcement response, however, testified to concerns that it was a hate crime and Syracuse Mayor Roy Bernardi immediately ordered police patrols to all area synagogues.

"The fire is suspicious in origin, and in the climate of the world today we must proceed with caution," Bernardi said.

The Syracuse Jewish Federation may take additional security precautions.

That's what everyone needs to do, said Foxman. People "need to be alert that there's a security problem" and not treat suspicious incidents and threats cavalierly, he said.

In Chicago, three Palestinian American teen-agers were arrested in connection with two of the attacks, which are being investigated as hate crimes.

Also, Chicago police are searching for a gunman who shot at a rabbi in his car. According to police, the rabbi was pulling away from the curb when someone in a dark sport-utility vehicle pulled up to his car and fired four to five shots inside, shattering the car's front and rear windows, but missing the rabbi. He was not injured.

The incident is not being classified as a hate crime because no words were spoken before the attacker fired the shots, according to police.

Two separate attacks took place in Chicago only a few minutes earlier, just a few blocks away. Chicago police spokesman Patrick Camden said two 17-year-olds and a 14-year-old — all of whom identified themselves as Palestinians — are in custody in connection with these attacks.

The three could be charged with committing a hate crime and aggravated assault against two people. Police said no one was injured in any of the attacks.

Police increased safety precautions in Chicago during the Jewish holiday season and in light of escalating violence between Palestinians and Israelis overseas.

"We're aware of the situation in the Middle East, and we've intensified patrols throughout the city," Camden said. □

(Judith S. Huober of *The Jewish Observer of Central New York*, Cindy Sher of the *JUF News in Chicago* and JTA staff writer Peter Ephross in New York contributed to this report.)

NEWS ANALYSIS

Do the people follow Arafat, or is it the other way around?

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — When Israel and the United States repeatedly call on Yasser Arafat to quell the violence, they assume he has the power to reign in the rock-throwers.

But now, some are questioning whether the Palestinian Authority president has the power to quell the violence that has raged for more than two weeks in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

If you ask Israeli officials, there is no doubt about it. Arafat can control the ongoing violence “with a few telephone calls,” Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak said in an interview Monday. “He can put an end to it in 12 hours, and that’s it.”

It’s a view shared by many U.S. lawmakers.

Last week, members of the U.S. House of Representatives introduced a resolution condemning Arafat for the violence, which began after Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon and other Likud Party members visited Jerusalem’s Temple Mount on Sept. 28.

The resolution says the Palestinian leader did “too little for far too long” to control the clashes and actually encouraged the violence. If it is correct to assume that Arafat has the power to quell the violence, then it inevitably leads to another question: Does he want to?

According to many Israeli officials, Arafat is more comfortable with the role with which he began his career — that of “freedom fighter.” They also say he has difficulty making the necessary decisions for peace when crucial opportunities present themselves, citing his long series of negotiations with the late Premier Yitzhak Rabin, with whom he played hard to get time and again, acquiescing only at the last minute.

They note the Cairo Agreement of May 4, 1994, when Arafat walked out of a signing ceremony.

Arafat returned to the stage only after a group of world leaders managed to convince him that he should sign the agreement — which officially gave the newly created Palestinian Authority control over portions of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The officials say Arafat displayed a similar bent at the Camp David summit in July: Just when Barak offered him a Palestinian state in most of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with unprecedented Israeli concessions in Jerusalem, Arafat backed off — in effect throwing his lot in with the militant wings of the Palestinian political community.

Along with Hamas and the Islamic Jihad, those militants also include the Tanzim, the military wing of Arafat’s ruling Fatah Party. Arabic for “organization,” the Tanzim was established in 1983.

It achieved its political power during the 1990s, when, with the frequent setbacks in the peace process, it pushed for a more militant line with Israel.

The group’s leader is Marwan Barghouti, 41, chairman of the Supreme Steering Committee of the Fatah in the West Bank and Gaza Strip — and the man Israeli officials accuse of orchestrating the Palestinian riots.

Following his “success” in those riots, Barghouti is now considered a potential heir to Arafat.

Some Palestinians argued this week that this speculation is

being deliberately spread by Israel, which wants to create a situation in which Arafat himself will get rid of Barghouti.

For the time being, though, there is no evidence of any conflict between the two.

Throughout the present crisis, Arafat maintained direct contacts with Barghouti and the Tanzim commanders in the various fronts, according to Israeli officials.

It is not clear, though, whether Arafat gave specific orders to shoot.

Analysts maintain that Arafat has been pleased to resume the role of freedom fighter.

Just why he is attracted to the role remains something of a riddle, though, considering that it led him to several resounding defeats in the past.

In 1970, Arafat launched assaults against Israel from Jordan, ultimately prompting King Hussein to stage an all-out war against Arafat, who had to be smuggled out of Amman.

In his next host country, Lebanon, Arafat meddled in internal politics, rallying his Fatah faction along with the Druse militia against the Christian forces.

In 1976, Arafat’s activities eventually turned his Syrian allies against him. Syrian troops entered Lebanon and had their new Christian partners stage massacres in Palestinian refugee camps.

In 1982, the Palestinian buildup in Lebanon, particularly in Beirut, ended with the Israeli siege of Beirut. Arafat was forced to quit the city for yet another exile, this time in Tunisia.

Arafat’s decision to embark with Israel on the Oslo peace process in 1993 represented a dramatic turning point in his career.

Despite strong Hamas opposition, despite the ups and downs in the peace process, Arafat seemed to be in full control.

Last week, however, when Arafat instructed his people to calm down, the Palestinian riots continued. Israeli officers who contacted their Palestinian counterparts received only vague responses when they asked what happened. But the significance was clear: Arafat’s wishes are not always followed.

Just the same, official Palestinian spokesmen argue that Arafat is in full control. They also say he had to respond to Sharon’s visit to the Temple Mount late last month.

Israeli analysts, on the other hand, believe that Arafat initially lit a small fire — and got caught up against his will in the conflagration that ensued.

Rather than telling the Palestinian populace of the need to make painful concessions, they say, Arafat is now allowing the populace to dictate to him. □

ANC organizes pro-Palestinian rally

JOHANNESBURG (JTA) — Local Jewish leaders criticized South Africa’s ruling party for organizing a Palestinian solidarity rally in Cape Town.

The South Africa Jewish Board of Deputies plans to meet with officials from the African National Congress to discuss the ruling party’s “behavior, or rather misbehavior,” according to the board’s national chairman, Russell Gaddin.

A spokesperson for the ANC said the demonstration was held to send a clear message that the party is “shocked and horrified at the ongoing violence in the Middle East, and in particular the killing of a large number of Palestinians.” □