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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Clashes erupt after summit

Clashes were reported Tuesday in the West Bank and Gaza Strip after regional leaders agreed to a cease-fire at an emergency summit in Egypt.

And on the outskirts of Jerusalem, Palestinian militiamen shot at homes in Gilo, a Jewish neighborhood.

One Israeli border policeman was in critical condition after being shot. [Page 3]

U.N. to hold emergency session

The U.N. General Assembly plans to hold an emergency session Wednesday to deal with the violence between Israel and the Palestinians.

Arab nations requested the meeting because they want the U.N. body to issue a resolution harshly critical of Israel.

U.N. panel focuses on violence

Speaking at a session of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, a Palestinian official charged that Israel is guilty of "military aggression on the Palestinian people and the deliberate killing of unarmed civilians and children."

Israel's ambassador to Geneva, Ya'akov Levy, defended the nation's security forces, saying Tuesday that they had "returned fire only when absolutely necessary."

When the commission met for a second day of sessions Wednesday, Arab countries were expected to present a resolution condemning Israel for "crimes against humanity."

Attacks blamed on 'delinquents'

French Interior Minister Daniel Vaillant blames juvenile delinquents, not a rise in anti-Semitism, for the recent wave of attacks on synagogues and other Jewish sites there.

In a radio interview, Vaillant called the attacks a "phenomenon of a sad fashion."

He also said security around potential targets has been increased.

Because of the Simchat Torah holiday, the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Monday, Oct. 23.

NEWS ANALYSIS

The desecration of holy sites could prove most fateful acts

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The desecration of holy sites, rather than atrocities committed against people, may turn out to be the most resounding disaster of the past weeks of violence in the Middle East.

Even if the international community succeeds in dragging the Israelis and Palestinians back to the negotiating table following Tuesday's cease-fire agreement in Sharm el-Sheik, Egypt, the acts of sacrilege may prove a huge new obstacle to any final peace accord.

True, what is being referred to here as the "Al-Aksa Intifada" will go down in history as the first time this nation witnessed a lynching live on television. The sight of two of its soldiers beaten and bludgeoned to death in Ramallah on Oct. 12 has been seared onto the consciousness of the Israeli people forever.

Similarly, the televised image of the 12-year-old boy dying in his father's arms in the Gaza Strip, under a hail of Israeli army bullets, has become the collective nightmare of millions of Palestinians.

It, too, will linger long in their national consciousness and will doubtless make efforts to resume a peaceful dialogue all the more difficult.

But humankind has proved itself almost infinitely resilient in its ability to, if not forgive, then at least put out of mind terrible atrocities and acts of cruelty perpetrated in wartime.

The aftermath of World War II is one obvious example.

The flourishing American-Vietnamese relationship is an even more recent illustration of the capacity of nations to start over and collectively repress scenes of carnage and devastation in the interests of striving for a brighter national and international future.

But while human memory may be notoriously short and fickle, such is not true of the collective memories of religions.

They are much, much longer.

Acts of violence carried out against religions are sometimes assimilated by the victim-religion — and indeed sometimes, too, by the aggressor-religion — into the theological or mystical ethos of that religion.

The recent weeks have witnessed unprecedented acts of sacrilege by Muslims against Judaism, and by Jews against Islam:

- In Nablus, the Tomb of Joseph, traditionally the site of the burial place of Jacob's favorite son, was sacked and set on fire by a Palestinian mob after the Israeli army pulled out, following a week of incessant gun battles around the site. Subsequently, the Hamas militants attempted to turn the site into a mosque, though this has been stopped for the moment. Again, the fact that the desecration was committed live on camera may have made it infinitely more potent and destructive.

- In response, a Jewish mob twice tried to torch an old, nonfunctioning mosque in the center of Tiberias.

- Last week, Palestinian youths set light to the ancient Jewish synagogue in Jericho. Here, there had been no fighting, no violence, no unrest at all. There was no provocation or pretext; it was an act of pure desecration of the other side's religion.

- For the Palestinians, of course, the fatal shooting of between five and seven demonstrators on the Temple Mount by the Israeli police on Sept. 29 was itself an act

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel: Arrow 2 is operational

The Arrow 2 anti-missile system is operational, Israeli military officials said.

The project, begun in 1990, is designed to protect Israel from surface-to-surface missile attacks from Syria, Iraq and Iran.

Pentagon may buy from Israel

The Pentagon may purchase Israeli military technology for use in the U.S. armed forces, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

Among the items U.S. officials are considering are photography and sensor systems for the air force, and atomic and biological protective suits, the paper said.

Arad's disappearance marked

Israel marked the 14th anniversary since an Israeli pilot went missing after he bailed out of his fighter plane over Lebanon.

Ron Arad is believed to have been held by pro-Iranian troops there.

Amnesty group blames Israel

An Amnesty International mission found that Israel used excessive force in riots across Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The human rights group on Monday faulted the Israelis and Palestinians for failing to investigate the events.

Appeal issued for Israeli's release

The daughter of an Israeli kidnapped this week by Hezbollah appealed for his release. Elhanan Tannenbaum is "sick and needs medical attention," daughter Keren said.

She added that her family hopes "he will return home safe and well."

Israeli officials say Tannenbaum is an Israeli businessman and reserve officer. Hezbollah says he is an Israeli agent.

of desecration. Their blood flowed out upon the sacred stones of what the Muslims, for 1,300 years, have called the Haram As-Sharif, or Noble Precinct, the third holiest site in their faith.

The demonstrators were violent.

They threw stones over the Western Wall, seeking to hit the Jews in the plaza below.

They threw stones at the police.

Possibly, a better disciplined police force would have been able to control them without killing some half-dozen of them and wounding 200 more. It was in response to that carnage that the new uprising broke out across the Palestinian territories and inside Israel, too.

But the shooting, unfortunate though it was, was not deliberately directed against the faith of Islam.

The shooting was directed against persons who were thought to be endangering Jews' lives.

In the West Bank town of Nablus, in contrast, the young men with hammers and crowbars smashing at the stones of Joseph's Tomb's rounded roof were smashing at the Jewish religion.

So were the arsonists in Tiberias attacking the Islamic faith.

And so were the unprovoked assailants in Jericho when they set the old synagogue alight.

The series of desecrations is doubly noteworthy because these two faiths, Judaism and Islam, have never been theological enemies.

Unlike Christianity, which for centuries professed to replace Judaism as God's elected religion, Islam broadly respected the older religion — and was accorded respect in return.

Maimonides, the leading medieval Jewish codifier, ruled that Islam is not to be seen under Jewish religious law as a form of idolatry.

Christianity, in contrast, was — even though Jews through much of the last two millennia were careful not to say so openly.

Indeed, it is ironic that just months after Pope John Paul II's March visit to Israel did much to heal the ancient bitterness between these two religions, a new and ominous rift should threaten to open between Judaism and Islam.

"I'm not at all religious," said one leading Israeli newsman speaking privately. "I thought Joseph's Tomb meant nothing to me.

"But when I saw them violating it," he said, "I experienced feelings I did not know I had inside me. These things are very deep."

On the practical plane, the acts of sacrilege will make it hard for the two sides to trust each other to guard each others' holy places in any future peace agreement or interim arrangement.

The attacks in Nablus, Jericho and Tiberias were all betrayals of that religious trust which, it had been hoped, transcended even political enmity.

Israelis were reminded of the wilful desecration that the Jordanians perpetrated in the Jewish synagogues and cemeteries of eastern Jerusalem and the Old City after the Israeli War of Independence in 1948.

It is also uncertain if the religious resentment created by this behavior will not make the Jewish and Muslim protagonists too bitter to restart negotiations. □

Birthright selects 7,500 for trip

NEW YORK (JTA) — A program that offers young adults free 10-day trips to Israel has selected 7,500 people from North America to travel there this winter.

The Birthright Israel participants, mostly college students, were selected by lottery from more than 25,000 applicants, more than double the number who applied for the program's pilot trip last fall.

Birthright officials say it is "too early" to determine how, if at all, the recent violence in Israel will affect the trips, which are scheduled to take place in December and January.

Some 12,000 people applied for last year's trips. □



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JEWISH WORLD

NEWS ANALYSIS

Meaning of cease-fire questioned as violence continues in the region

By Mitchell Danow

NEW YORK (JTA) — The cease-fire reached at an emergency summit in Egypt this week has left many questioning whether it has any real meaning.

Just hours after Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat agreed to restore law and order on Tuesday, violence shook the region, much as it has for the past several weeks.

Both Barak and Arafat seemed to be waiting for the other to take the steps called for in the agreement, including a public call for the end to violence.

Instead the streets again erupted Tuesday with the violence that has all but destroyed any sense of trust that either side may previously have had for the other:

- On the outskirts of Jerusalem, Palestinian militiamen shot at homes in the Jewish neighborhood of Gilo. Israel responded with machine-gun fire from tanks stationed in the area. One Israeli border policeman was in critical condition after being shot, and one Israeli civilian was slightly injured as Israeli security forces evacuated residents from their homes.

- In the Gaza Strip, hundreds of Palestinians threw rocks and firebombs at an Israeli military checkpoint. During the ensuing fighting Tuesday, a Palestinian policeman was killed by a bullet to the chest and 10 Palestinians were injured, according to local hospital officials.

- In Ramallah, scene of some of the worst violence in recent days, about 300 Palestinians marched to protest the cease-fire agreed to at the summit in the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheik.

- In Nablus, Jewish settlers killed a Palestinian and wounded three others as they picked olives near the West Bank city. The settlers reportedly said they fired the shots because the land belonged to them.

The Nablus incident took place before Middle East leaders agreed at the summit to end the violence that has killed at least 103 people, all but seven of them Arabs, since Sept. 28. Still, the repercussions of the Nablus shootings — along with those that took place later Tuesday — are likely to be felt in the coming days.

When the two leaders returned home Tuesday, neither took any of the “immediate steps” to end the violence they had agreed to at the summit’s conclusion. Neither of them issued a statement condemning the violence; neither spoke of backing off.

Instead, Arafat said the “important thing” of the Sharm el-Sheik summit “is the implementation.” Barak repeated his oft-spoken warning that Israel “will know what to do” if Palestinian violence persists.

In announcing the agreement at the end of the summit on Tuesday, President Clinton said the two sides would act immediately to return the situation to what existed before the crisis erupted. This included restoring law and order; Israel’s redeploying its forces from, and ending its closure of, major Palestinian population centers in the West Bank; enhancing security cooperation between the two sides; and working to eliminate points of friction.

The agreement also calls for a U.S.-led committee to investigate the causes of the violence. But it will not be an international inquiry, as the Palestinians had wanted.

The agreement does not establish a timetable for a return to peace talks, but calls, as Clinton said Tuesday, for a “pathway back to negotiations” to reach a permanent-status agreement.

Among Israelis, the news that an agreement had been reached was greeted with skepticism and suspicion. In normally bustling downtown Jerusalem, the atmosphere was relatively quiet and the mood subdued.

Still, the city’s annual Sukkot parade attracted thousands of marchers who paraded through the city center.

Ruben Makover, 32, a photographer, said of the agreement, “It’s not worth the paper it’s written on.

“Everyone sees that Arafat has lost control” of the Palestinian street, he said. □
(JTA staff writer Michael J. Jordan in Jerusalem contributed to this report.)

Settlement reached for looted oil

A New York art dealer will send at least one art work or cash to the Seattle Art Museum to settle a disagreement over a Matisse painting looted by the Nazis.

The museum acquired “Odalisque” in 1991 from collectors who purchased it from the dealer Knoedler & Co. in 1954.

The museum returned the painting to the heirs of Paul Rosenberg, a Jewish art dealer who fled France in 1941 during the Nazi occupation.

ADL launches new database

The Anti-Defamation League is launching a database of extremist symbols to help parents, educators and police identify the influence of hate groups in their communities. Accessible on the organization’s Web site, www.adl.org, the database provides information about more than three dozen hate symbols commonly used by neo-Nazis, white supremacists and other organized hate groups.

Rome deportations marked

A stone plaque was unveiled Monday honoring the memory of Rome’s Jews, whom the Nazis deported from the city on Oct. 16, 1943.

Mayor Francesco Rutelli joined about 50 Jews, including Holocaust survivors, at the city’s Tiburtina train station, the site of the deportations.

Of the more than 1,000 Jews who were deported, only 17 survived the Nazi death camps.

Women’s prayer book published

A Reform Jewish women’s group is publishing its second compendium of prayers, poetry, meditations and reflections composed by women.

“Covenant of the Soul,” a companion volume to a 1993 book, is designed for use at women’s gatherings for study and worship, Sabbath services and as a source of reflection for women in their daily lives, according to Women of Reform Judaism.

Internet resource center funded

The Jewish federation system’s national education arm received \$1 million to create an Internet resource center providing educators with information on topics such as day schools, congregational education and professional recruitment.

The Jewish Education Service of North America’s resource center will debut this spring by offering information that will include links to Web sites with relevant materials on Judaic studies and school management.

The center is slated to expand to serve other constituencies.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**Aid to Palestinians debated as Congress supports Israel***By Sharon Samber*

WASHINGTON (JTA) — U.S. aid to the Palestinians is in jeopardy as Congress continues to send strong signals of support for Israel.

While the Clinton administration is working to maintain its position as an "honest broker" to help resolve the situation that has engulfed the Middle East, many lawmakers have made clear that they blame Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat for the recent violence in Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

U.S. Rep Tom DeLay (R-Texas), the House Majority Whip — who is not considered a strong supporter of the peace process or aid to the Jewish state — said last week that the United States should strengthen its commitment to Israel. DeLay also faulted Arafat for the current crisis.

"Yasser Arafat may now present himself as a repentant terrorist, but he is a terrorist nonetheless, and a responsible American foreign policy for the region cannot ignore Mr. Arafat's despicable record of murderous violence," he said.

Lawmakers are making their views known in acts both symbolic and legislative.

At least 96 members of the U.S. Senate signed on to a letter to President Clinton expressing solidarity with Israel and condemning Arafat for waging a "deliberate campaign of violence" in recent weeks. The letter also urged the administration to help secure the return of three Israeli soldiers kidnapped in Lebanon earlier this month. Two senators who have refused to sign are Spencer Abraham (R-Mich.), an Arab American who is in a very tight race for re-election, and Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.).

In other action, members of the U.S. House of Representatives introduced a resolution last week condemning Arafat for the recent violence in the Middle East. The resolution, introduced by Reps. Benjamin Gilman (R-NY.) and Sam Gejdenson (D-Conn.), says the Palestinian leader did "too little for far too long" to control the clashes and actually encouraged the violence.

Beyond the rhetoric and the symbolic acts, the most concrete — and more controversial — moves are legislative initiatives that threaten to cut off Palestinian aid.

The looming deadline for the end of Congress' legislative session and administration opposition to some congressional initiatives could prevent some congressional efforts from going forward. Congress may adjourn for the election season by the end of the week.

The foreign aid bill, which has yet to be passed, includes approximately \$100 million for the Palestinians. The aid does not go directly to the Palestinian Authority but rather it is distributed through nongovernmental organizations and used mostly for humanitarian purposes.

U.S. Jewish groups had worked diligently to initiate the funding in the aftermath of the early Israeli-Palestinian agreements, arguing that economic support would help bolster the peace accords.

Now that aid is in jeopardy. The House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed legislation last month that would terminate U.S. aid to the Palestinians and downgrade the status of the

Palestinian diplomatic office in Washington if Arafat unilaterally declares a Palestinian state.

The legislation came before the recent violence, but when the peace negotiations were already clearly in trouble.

The United States and Israel have made clear that such a unilateral declaration — promised by the Palestinians for September and then postponed — would violate the agreements that have been reached.

The Clinton administration strongly opposes the bill.

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the pro-Israel lobby, has strongly pushed for the legislation.

"The upgraded relationship between the United States and the Palestinians and U.S. aid are important leverage tools and an important way of keeping the Palestinians in the peace process," said Kenneth Bricker, a spokesman for AIPAC.

The administration says it prefers to make the same arguments diplomatically rather than through laws.

A congressional vote to end the aid would make it more difficult to convince the Palestinians to make concessions, an administration official said. If the legislation to end aid passes in the Senate, the administration wants significant changes made, such as ensuring that the president will have the right to waive any sanctions for reasons of national security.

The Senate version of the bill has a good chance of passing this week, according to sources close to the process.

There may also be a sense of immediacy about the legislation. When lawmakers were working on the legislation in September, the peace process, though deadlocked, was still considered viable — and continued peace negotiations were more likely than unilateral moves. But since relations between Israel and the Palestinians have deteriorated so dramatically, Arafat could be more likely to declare a state.

While AIPAC has lobbied hard for this legislation, it does not support cutting off aid to the Palestinians unless they declare statehood. But some Jewish organizations say Congress should go even further and consider revoking the aid that is included in this year's foreign aid bill.

In a rare alliance among groups that often sit at opposite ends of the political spectrum, the American Jewish Congress and the Zionist Organization of America are both taking this position.

"However much we agree that economic aid is an important component to peace, it is not entirely unconditional," said Phil Baum, executive director of the AJCongress. "If you are engaged in a war-like attitude, it is something that needs to be taken into account."

Baum said he was surprised more Israeli supporters are not broaching the subject.

Morton Klein, national president of the ZOA, advocates cutting off all aid to the Palestinian Authority immediately because legislation that is tied to Arafat's unilateral declaration of a state implies that the United States should support Arafat otherwise.

"It's time to do something real," Klein said, calling congressional resolutions "toothless."

He said he believes Congress is "ready to be tough on Arafat."

A senior official at another Jewish organization disagreed with the approach of both groups.

"Cutting off Arafat's aid now might have the unintended consequence of giving him the excuse to abandon the peace process altogether," the official said. □