



# Daily News Bulletin

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## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

## Growing pessimism accompanies participants on solidarity mission

By Michael J. Jordan

### Arafat angry at call for 'timeout'

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat responded to Israel's call for a "timeout" in peace talks by saying that anyone blocking the Palestinians' path to a state can "go to hell."

Meanwhile, the Israeli army rocketed the Palestinian village of Beit Jalla, the Palestinian village from which Palestinians fired their machine guns into the nearby Jerusalem neighborhood of Gilo.

Palestinians fired shots at an Israel Defense Force checkpoint near the Jewish community in Hebron, lightly wounding one soldier, Israel Army Radio reported. [Page 4]

### Barak, Sharon fail to form gov't

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Likud Party leader Ariel Sharon failed to agree on terms for a national unity government.

But a spokesman for both men said that more talks would be held late Tuesday. [Page 4]

### Bomb detonates in Gaza

No one was injured during a roadside bomb attack near the Netzarim junction in the Gaza Strip.

But a spokesman for Israel, which has warned that Islamic militants were planning attacks against Israeli targets in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, called the blast "very powerful."

### Israel closes Gaza airport

Israel shut down the Gaza airport because Palestinian policemen there were armed, which is a violation of Israeli-Palestinian agreements, sources told Israel Radio.

Meanwhile, part of the Jordan Valley's main highway was closed because of burning fires.

### Clinton: Don't give up on peace

President Clinton urged Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak not to give up on peace efforts, although in a telephone call he reportedly expressed understanding that no negotiations could take place while violence continued.

Meanwhile, a group of Labor Party ministers, headed by Justice Minister Yossi Beilin, was scheduled to meet to discuss joint action against the prime minister's intention to take a "timeout" in the peace process.

JERUSALEM (JTA) — It was 36 hours into their hectic solidarity mission to Israel, and, after ingesting a heavy diet of gloomy prognoses by Israeli politicians and analysts, the 80 or so mostly North American Jewish leaders were increasingly pessimistic.

Not only about the prospects for peace in the Middle East, but even the prospects for averting all-out war.

Then the news hit that a busload of Israeli settlers, heading toward Joseph's Tomb in Nablus — recently decimated by Palestinian rioters — had come under fire.

According to the Israelis, a gun battle had ensued between the Palestinian shooters and Israeli soldiers trying to airlift out the injured settlers.

Israelis were questioning the wisdom of allowing such a trip to happen. But in a meeting with Deputy Defense Minister Ephraim Sneh, the visitors didn't question the causes of the incident, only Israel's reaction to the violence that followed it.

After repeated assurances that Israeli security forces have shown "great restraint" in clashes, several in the crowd wanted to know when Israel would hit back harder.

"If they're going to do something, now I would understand why they're going to do it," Susan Greene, president of the Birmingham Jewish Federation in Alabama, said after the meeting.

"The people of Israel cannot live like this. They've gone every step" in the peace process, said Greene, "and it just doesn't seem like it's working."

Greene was not alone.

The two-pronged purpose of the mission was to express solidarity with the Israelis and take their message back home, but over the course of the two days there was a palpable hardening of the crowd's attitude about the prospects for peace.

Perhaps the hardening of views was inevitable, said participants on the trip, which was sponsored by the United Jewish Communities with the support of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. Their visit pierced the filter of an international media seemingly tilted against Israel.

And the more they learned of the on-the-ground reality of the conflict that has engulfed the region over the past month, seemingly destroying seven years of peacemaking efforts, the harder-lined they became.

This lurch to the right may be a sign of things to come: As pundits talk of "the death of the left" in both Israel and the West, the shift among mission members who once considered themselves doves may presage a similar shift within American Jewry as a whole.

The chairman of a national U.S. organization, who did not want to be identified, conceded: "One more day of this kind of news, and I might become an unforgiving hawk."

Speaker after speaker drilled home the message that Israel, throughout the process of negotiating with the Palestinians, took a leap of faith and willfully overlooked the failure of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat to implement numerous agreements.

The most prominent of which, it now seems clear, was to stop inciting hatred against Jews — in schools, in mosques, on state-controlled television, and by the "peacemakers" themselves.

Speakers included Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, acting Foreign Minister

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Arab League blames Israel

The Arab League ended its summit with a declaration that blamed Israel for the violence in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip but stopped short of calling for severed relations with the Jewish state.

The summit was denounced across the Arab world, where anti-Israel protests called for harsher action. Thousands of Egyptian students vented frustration at the summit's failure to cut ties with Israel and repeat calls for a holy war against Israel.

### Morocco severs ties

Morocco said it would sever diplomatic ties over the ongoing violence in the Middle East.

The move by the North African nation that was instrumental in the Oslo peace process comes after ministers at an Arab summit over the weekend called for Arab countries with diplomatic relations with Israel to close their offices.

### Israel investigates settlers' trip

The Israeli army is investigating who authorized a day trip of Israeli settlers that turned into a bloody battle that killed an Israeli and a Palestinian.

Both sides charge the other with firing first in the several-hour skirmish that occurred when the hikers passed close to a Palestinian refugee camp in the West Bank. Palestinian officials called the settlers' trip to view the recently destroyed Joseph's Tomb a provocation.

### Israel won't cooperate in inquiry

Israel is refusing to cooperate with a United Nations inquiry into alleged human rights violations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The U.N. Human Rights Commission condemned Israel for recent violence, describing some of Israel's actions as war crimes that are "hostile, unbalanced and unnecessary."

The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs rejected the U.N. resolution.

Shlomo Ben-Ami, opposition leaders Ariel Sharon and Natan Sharansky, and the U.S. ambassador to Israel, Martin Indyk. Interspersed were several visits to the scenes of recent clashes.

In Gilo, for example, they visited a hilltop community on the outskirts of Jerusalem that over the past few days has seen heavy exchange of gunfire with a Palestinian village in the valley below.

The mission arrived just after Israeli security forces had erected 7-foot concrete barriers and bulldozed mounds of dirt and gravel to shield hillside apartment buildings from gunfire — perhaps the first step in what Barak warns could be a "unilateral separation" from the Palestinians.

The day before, on Oct. 17, an Israeli police officer had been shot and critically wounded a few feet away from where the mission now stood.

"They shot from that house — there — with the red roof," a resident told the group, pointing into the valley.

Two Israeli tanks now stood watch over the valley. But gunfire continued the next day, and the day after that.

"It's very sad to see that Jews are still living in fear — in their own state," said Jeanette Leiser, a mission participant and first-time visitor to Israel.

"I think if I were living here, I'd dig my heels in," said Leiser, whose husband, Harry, is the campaign chairman for the Jewish Federation of New London, Conn. "Why do Jews always have to give in, to say we're sorry?"

Leiser and others agreed that if the peace process is to continue, Arafat and the Palestinians must make tangible concessions each step of the way.

Not that the process is sure to continue. As Israeli President Moshe Katsav told the mission: "Now I'm not sure that the path of peace is irreversible. It does not depend on us. We don't see any determination among the Palestinian leadership."

The mission itself couldn't have come at a more critical time, said the Israelis.

The fact that 18,000 hotel rooms are currently unoccupied — many of them due to cancellations by American Jews — has fueled the sense of abandonment and isolation that now pervades Jewish Israel.

But Israel is not under siege by the Palestinians, as many perceive through media reports.

Ronald Lauder, who as chairman of the Conference of Presidents, has greater access on Israel to information than most Diaspora Jews, conceded to fellow mission participants that his wife feared that he was "going to the battlefield."

The mission's arrival was widely reported by Israeli media, as was the vow by the UJC that a steady stream of missions will flow over the next month or two.

The next is planned for Oct. 29.

"Many more missions will come, not only to show our solidarity with you, but to make sure that our government is well aware of the response of the American Jewish community," Robert Schroyer, national chairman of the UJA Federation Campaign of UJC, said at an Oct. 18 news conference in Jerusalem.

Many Israelis cheered this and future visits.

"If you just watch the news, you could easily get the impression that the whole world is against us," said Reuven Makover, a 32-year-old photographer in Jerusalem.

"It's good when they come show us support, so that we feel we're not alone. They'll see things the way things really are, and we hope they will become our spokesmen and ambassadors."

Makover was not alone in appealing to Diaspora Jewry for help. Throughout the visit, Israeli hosts referred to the delegation as "brothers and sisters" and "family" and "our commanders in the field."

Indeed, aside from the show of solidarity, the participants were there to arm themselves with the facts — as Israel is explaining them.

"We don't expect others to draw a parallel between us and the Palestinians, because we have acted in the right," Barak told the participants just before they departed for home Oct. 19.

Upon their return home, participants planned to press the Israeli case within their local Jewish communities and congregations, and especially through the local news media and their political representatives in Washington. □



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## JEWISH WORLD

### Bomb shatters shul window

A gas bomb that crashed through a synagogue window in Marseille, France, on Sunday did not cause any injuries. Meanwhile, a 20-year-old Moroccan man was sentenced to 18 months in prison, all but seven of them suspended, for his role in vandalizing a Jewish butcher shop in the city of Toulon.

The sentence is the first after more than 55 people were arrested in 80-plus incidents in France in the past month, apparently linked to the violence in the Middle East.

### Anti-Arafat bill introduced

Several U.S. lawmakers introduced a bill to cut off all nonhumanitarian aid to the Palestinian Authority until Yasser Arafat renounces the ongoing violence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee and other Jewish groups support the legislation, which was introduced in the House of Representatives.

### Ukrainian: I arrested Wallenberg

A Ukrainian man claimed he arrested in January 1945 a Swedish diplomat who saved thousands of Jews during World War II.

Bogdan Tarnavsky's claim on Russian national television that he arrested Raoul Wallenberg, conflicts with the generally accepted account that Wallenberg disappeared after he drove off with Soviet guards, saying he wanted to discuss protection for Jews after the Soviet army liberated Hungary.

During the Soviet era, the government claimed that Wallenberg died of a heart attack in 1947.

### S. African leaders reassured

Jewish leaders in South Africa said they feel "reassured" following a meeting last week with their government officials about what they see as a pro-Palestinian bias in the current Middle East conflict.

After the meeting, a joint statement was issued, reiterating both sides' commitment to peace and appealing to South Africa's Muslim and Jewish communities to not let the Middle East violence "lead to disturbances of the public peace" in South Africa.

### House drops Turkey genocide bill

The U.S. House of Representatives dropped a resolution that would have blamed Turkey for a genocide of Armenians 85 years ago. The Turkish Jewish community asked U.S. lawmakers to consider the ramifications of the resolution after Turkey, an ally of Israel and the United States, threatened trade sanctions and withdrawing military cooperation with the United States. President Clinton and U.S. Jewish groups voiced concern over the timing of the House action in the wake of violence in the Middle East.

## Raid on Moscow synagogue linked to attacks on Jewish media tycoon

By Lev Gorodetsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — A Russian Interior Ministry's search of the Moscow Choral Synagogue without a warrant is being seen as part of the government's ongoing campaign against Russian Jewish tycoon Vladimir Goussinsky.

The Oct. 19 search of the synagogue, where Goussinsky's Russian Jewish Congress has its offices, came while RJC leaders were visiting Israel on a one-day solidarity mission. The search was stopped after 10 hours when media crews showed up to film the incident, and one of the three investigators involved in the incident has apologized twice.

Still, the search was a "rude violation of the law" and a "totally unprofessional action," Henry Reznik, the chief lawyer for the RJC, said last Friday.

Goussinsky, a political opponent of President Vladimir Putin, has been living abroad since he was briefly arrested and released during the summer.

Since the government's attacks on Goussinsky began earlier this year, the campaign against him has carried a certain amount of worry for Russian Jews — if only because Goussinsky, who operates the Media-Most financial and media empire, is so involved with and linked to the fortunes of Russian Jewry.

Last week's bizarre events were no different.

The investigators were apparently interested in two different things. First, they claimed to want to check the "status" of the security guards at the synagogue, who are paid for by Goussinsky.

Second, they were interested in the synagogue's financial records to see whether Goussinsky, who has lived in Europe since the summer, is laundering any money through the synagogue. Both of these justifications are "nonsense," said Lev Krichevsky, the director of the Moscow office of the Anti-Defamation League.

Goussinsky is one of the main financial supporters of the synagogue and Moscow's Jewish community but the sums are too small — \$400,000 to \$600,000 per year — to be a serious channel for money laundering, say observers.

Human rights groups dismiss the possibility that the ongoing violence in the Middle East is connected to the incident — and the fact that the mission was specifically in Israel is a coincidence, they say.

But that the move was taken while RJC officials were abroad is not, they add.

During the search, those affiliated with the synagogue in Russia called Israel to inform Goussinsky and the other leaders of what was taking place. They, in turn, contacted local media crews and attorneys, who apparently flustered the investigators. They eventually called off the search.

The investigators apparently left with a few relatively unimportant photocopied documents. Some are saying the incident again calls into question the commitment of Putin to fight anti-Semitism.

"There's a big gap between Putin's extremely generous and counter-anti-Semitism rhetoric and his failure in following through with actions," said Micah Naftalin, the national director of the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews.

"It's another example that people under Putin — the people whom he has leverage over — continue to behave in anti-Semitic ways with impunity."

Incidents like these heighten the uneasiness of the average Russian Jew, said Krichevsky.

"I'm not saying that every Russian Jew associates him or herself with Goussinsky, but these persistent attacks on Goussinsky do not help the security of the Russian Jewish community in general," he said.

But if there's a silver lining in the incident, these groups say, it's that Russian Jewish leaders were able to muster the attention necessary to halt the search.

"It shows how connected the Jewish community is now," said Mark Levin, the executive director of the NCSJ: Advocates on Behalf of Jews in Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic States & Eurasia. □

(JTA staff writer Peter Ephross contributed to this report.)

## Barak tries to cobble together government on ruins of peace

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's major political parties were talking about forming an emergency unity government this week as violence continued in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak asked the Likud Party to join him in a unity government, but met initial resistance.

Knesset Member Limor Livnat said the offer was not "serious."

Meanwhile the leader of the fervently Orthodox Shas Party, Eli Yishai, said his party would permanently not join a unity government. But Yishai said it would consider joining "an emergency Cabinet for a limited time."

Barak was also facing strong criticism within his own party's ranks for his statement over the weekend that Israel was taking a "timeout" from the peace process.

Former Prime Minister Shimon Peres told the Voice of Israel on Monday that Israel cannot ignore the Oslo and Camp David agreements and could not detach itself from the peace process.

"When there is shooting, one must return the fire," said Peres, "but one must continue the peace process."

Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat responded to Barak's call for a "timeout" in peace talks by saying that anyone blocking the Palestinians' path to a state can "go to hell."

Israel tightened its closure of population centers in the West Bank. Palestinians threatened to break the blockade on Tuesday by staging massive demonstrations to confront the soldiers.

The official Palestinian publication Al-Hayat al-Jadida published detailed instructions on how to stage demonstrations to break closures, particularly in the Jerusalem area.

Meanwhile, gunfire was heated Sunday night. Israeli gunships caused power outages when they rocketed the Palestinian village of Beit Jalla, the area from which Palestinians fired their machine guns into the nearby southern Jerusalem neighborhood of Gilo.

Palestinians continued attacks against Israeli targets, both army and settlers, throughout the territories.

Palestinians fired shots at an Israel Defense Force checkpoint near the Jewish community in Hebron, lightly wounding one soldier, Israel Army Radio reported.

There were also reports of shots being fired at Israeli forces Monday at Mount Eval, the area where a bus carrying settlers was attacked last week.

"The situation is really deteriorating. The worst hasn't happened yet," Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat told Reuters.

Israel shut down the Gaza airport because Palestinian policemen there were armed, which is a violation of Israeli-Palestinian agreements, sources told Israel Radio.

Meanwhile, part of the Jordan Valley's main highway was closed because of burning tires.

The army warned it would hit back harder if provoked.

Brig. Gen. Ya'acov Zigdon, a senior officer at the IDF's central command, warned Monday that the Palestinians intended to escalate the situation in Gilo even further.

Zigdon told Israeli President Moshe Katsav, who visited the neighborhood Monday, that the attackers in Beit Jalla were not local residents, but people from outside the neighborhood. □

## AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

### Slovak Jews get German hearing to reclaim stolen wartime money

By Magnus Bennett

PRAGUE (JTA) — Germany granted Slovakia's Jewish community a hearing to reclaim millions of dollars the wartime Slovak government allegedly stole from Jews and paid to the Nazis to deport tens of thousands of Jews to concentration camps.

The Central Union of Jewish Religious Communities in Slovakia is to put its case forward in a Berlin regional court next spring. The group claims up to \$3.9 million was paid to Germany by the Nazi-puppet Slovak state.

In 1942, 57,800 Slovak Jews were deported to concentration camps. All but a handful were murdered.

A price of 500 Deutschmarks was placed on each head, but the group says official Slovak state records show that only a portion of the overall sum changed hands.

"This is not just a legal but a moral problem," said the Central Union's director, Jozef Weiss. "Slovakia was the only country during the war to actually pay for Jews to be sent to camps. Germany does have a responsibility."

According to Weiss, the money used to pay the Nazis did not come from the Slovak state budget but from assets confiscated from the country's Jewish community.

"The money was stolen from Jewish families in Slovakia," he said.

The court move was in part prompted by Slovakia's exclusion from the lion's share of the German government-supported \$5.2 billion slave and forced labor compensation fund.

While Poland, the Czech Republic, Belarus, Ukraine, Russia and the Claims Conference were recognized as official negotiating partners with the German industry-sponsored fund, Slovakia's Foreign Ministry failed to win direct participation in talks.

As a result, Slovakia was designated as one of the "Other Countries" that will have to share a smaller award of just \$3.5 million.

The exclusion angered the Slovak coordination committee, which is handling claims on behalf of an estimated 6,000 Slovak citizens, almost one-third of whom are Jewish. It claims Germany reneged on a promise to negotiate directly with Slovakia over its claims.

"This committee was not approved as a partner, and this is one reason why this legal action has begun," said Fero Alexander, chairman of the coordination committee, who also acts as the union's executive chairman.

"The court case is not just about money. We are talking about satisfaction and rehabilitation," he added.

But money does remain an issue for Slovak Jews, Weiss said. "The Jewish community was destroyed" in the war, "but there is a huge heritage in Slovakia," he said. "There are dozens of synagogues which are falling apart and we don't have the money to repair them."

The Slovak Foreign Ministry and the union are both stressing that the Berlin case is a separate issue from the question of slave and forced labor compensation.

The regional court in Berlin is slated to start considering the lawsuit on March 28, 2001. □