



# Daily News Bulletin

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## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Unity government talks fail again

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and opposition leader Ariel Sharon failed again to forge a unity government. The two met at Barak's home on Sunday, one day before the Knesset was slated to resume its winter session.

With Barak having only a minority of legislators behind him, the Knesset is expected to vote soon on a motion of no-confidence if the premier is unable to create a unity government before then. [Page 3]

### Clashes enter second month

Palestinians threw firebombs and shot at Israeli soldiers during clashes in the West Bank town of Nablus. The soldiers responded Sunday with gunfire that left two Palestinians dead.

In the Gaza Strip, at least one more Palestinian was shot dead when Israel used tanks to clear a road blocked by Palestinians protesting the presence of Israeli armor at the Karni Crossing into Israel.

The fighting in Gaza occurred as Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat proclaimed that the "blessed" intifada, or Palestinian uprising, "will continue."

In another development, Israel's army pulled its tanks off a hilltop on the edge of Jerusalem.

But army officials said Sunday that the "army will know how to retaliate" if Palestinians resume firing from the Arab town of Beit Jalla on Jerusalem's Gilo neighborhood. [Page 3]

### Vandals attack Efrat synagogue

A synagogue at a West Bank settlement was vandalized, and Israeli police suspect Palestinians are at fault.

The vandals sprayed graffiti and swastikas, flooded the building and stole money from the charity boxes of the Efrat synagogue last Friday.

### Pro-Palestinian rally held in D.C.

More than 1,000 pro-Palestinian demonstrators gathered near the White House on Saturday to protest what they charge is President Clinton's bias toward Israel.

Some protesters held photos of victims of the violence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and most of the demonstrators wore stickers that said, "Stop Funding Israeli Terrorism."

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Jewish-Arab coexistence groups tested during these tense times

By Avi Machlis

NEVE SHALOM, Israel (JTA) — In the playground outside the mixed Jewish-Arab school of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam, Arabic and Hebrew weave together indistinguishably as children swing and seesaw during the late morning recess.

But these days, even a school that symbolizes coexistence and is located at a unique community of 20 Jewish and 20 Arab families, and whose name means "Oasis of Peace," cannot remain isolated from the turmoil that has engulfed the region over the past month.

Most of the 300 children in the school are not from Neve Shalom, a village perched above the Latrun monastery midway between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, and some Jewish parents have suddenly expressed concerns about having their children being exposed to Arabs.

On particularly difficult days, when Israeli troops killed many Israeli Arab or Palestinian rioters, some Arab teachers had trouble facing their Jewish colleagues.

And sometimes, during recess, the children here play intifada, hurling pine cones at one another.

Although Jewish kids do not necessarily challenge the Arabs — more often, it is boys against girls — it is a chilling depiction of the new regional reality. Chants of "Death to the Jews" or "Death to the Arabs" have also been heard.

It may all just be child's play, but for Boaz Kitain, the school's Jewish co-principal who has spent a lifetime working for coexistence, it is an alarming sign of the times.

"I do not see this as a failure on the part of our school; rather, it is an opportunity for the school, teachers and parents to talk about the meaning of these things and what we have to say about them," says Kitain.

"We are a clear alternative to what is happening outside, and we must try and show ourselves and others that it is possible, even in these times. That is our mission."

For Neve Shalom and other organizations that have flown the banner of coexistence for years, the breakdown of the peace process and the eruption of violence have been particularly difficult to swallow.

Yet like Kitain, many activists involved in Jewish-Arab dialogue feel the latest events have created an even greater urgency for their services, although the game plan needs to be tailored to address the new reality.

For example, the School of Peace at Neve Shalom, an institute that promotes dialogue between Arab and Jewish Israelis, has temporarily put its programs on hold because tensions are too high for face-to-face encounters.

But at the same time, community members have decided to take a more active approach in the public arena.

"We realize now how important this place is," says Abdessalam Najjar, development director at Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam.

"As a community, our experience is necessary both in easier and more difficult times. During difficult times like now, when Jews and Palestinians are motivated by fear, our job is to keep some hope alive."

Some peace organizations have found a friendly venue at Neve Shalom to map out a strategy for the new situation.

On Oct. 21, community members formed a motorcade that visited bereaved families of Arab Israelis killed in clashes in the Galilee, as well as several "peace sukkahs" that

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Jewish groups show solidarity

Several American Jewish organizations sent representatives on three-day solidarity missions to Israel on Sunday.

The United Jewish Communities, Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and the Jewish National Fund, together with some smaller Jewish groups, are planning to have their delegations meet with top political and military officials in Israel.

### Army on high alert for terror

The Israeli army, on high alert for suicide strikes in Israel, says it fears violence will continue and make 2001 a "year of unrest."

Thousands of supporters of Islamic militant groups damored for new suicide attacks in Israel after a Palestinian detonated explosives strapped to his back last week near an Israeli army base in Gaza. "We want a big bomb," Hamas supporters chanted as they marched through Nablus last Friday.

### Israel said to eye closer U.S. ties

In the final days before the U.S. presidential elections, Israel hopes to secure a commitment from President Clinton to upgrade bilateral relations to the level of "strategic ally," the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported. The paper said Prime Minister Ehud Barak raised the matter in a phone conversation with Clinton.

### Orchestra performs Wagner work

A musical taboo in Israel was broken when the Rishon leZion Symphony Orchestra performed a work by Hitler's favorite composer, Richard Wagner.

Efforts by Holocaust survivor groups to block last Friday's performance failed after the Supreme Court refused to intervene, citing freedom of expression. But the performance was not without disruption: As the first notes of Wagner's "Siegfried Idyll" filled the hall, a Polish-born survivor swung a noisemaker in protest.



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popped up spontaneously as places for dialogue near various Jewish and Arab communities.

Many people who have built these sukkot have turned to Sarah Ozacky-Lazar, head of the Jewish Arab Center for Peace at the Givat Haviva Educational Institute of Advanced Studies, for advice. In addition, the center has received dozens of requests from various organizations and workplaces with Jewish and Arab employees for guidance.

"These things give me some optimism," says Ozacky-Lazar. "It's just a shame we needed these events to arouse interest."

Ozacky-Lazar says she was not surprised by the eruption of rage among Israeli Arabs, although she did not expect the explosion to be so powerful.

At first, Ozacky-Lazar felt that perhaps her efforts for coexistence had all been futile.

"I cannot say we failed," she says. "The point is that, when dialogue is put to the test, it is simply not strong enough."

"There are much stronger forces at play here."

In the short term, Givat Haviva, an education center that focuses on Jewish-Arab issues, is amending some of its programs due to the crisis.

It has decided that it would be useless to bring high school students to joint seminars without first preparing the teachers, since they themselves have undergone trauma.

The depth of that trauma, says Salem Jubran, an Arab writer, intellectual and lecturer for Givat Haviva, does not justify throwing in the towel and giving up on coexistence.

For the past seven years, Jubran has taught Arab history to Jews and the Holocaust to Arabs, believing that the study of each people's suffering makes more of an impact than teaching the other's culture.

The latest round of violence, he believes optimistically, may help deliver that message more effectively.

"There are difficult questions being raised, but people are starting to realize that there are parallel concerns on both sides," he argues.

"Arabs for example, say they are afraid to travel to Jewish areas — or even go to a hospital — for fear of getting stoned."

The fact that both sides can understand the tremors felt by the other may actually be an impetus for coexistence.

"This," he explains, "is a foundation for building a social contract, despite all of the horrors we have seen."

For members of Seeds of Peace, the U.S.-based nongovernmental organization that runs summer camps for Israeli Jews and Arabs, those horrors have hit home particularly hard.

Participants in the group's programs were shocked when they learned that Asel Asleh, a 17-year-old Israeli Arab who had been to the camp three times, had been shot dead by Israeli police in his village of Arabeh in the Galilee during the early days of the rioting.

But Adam Shapiro, director of the Seeds for Peace Center for Coexistence in Jerusalem, says the tragedy has reinforced the drive for dialogue.

"Among those who knew him personally, it made them recommitted and rededicated to Seeds of Peace," he says.

Of course, there have been problems for the Seeds of Peace program since the violence began.

It has been difficult to arrange dialogues between Israeli and Palestinian youth since Palestinians cannot leave the West Bank or Gaza Strip.

Campers have kept in touch via e-mail, although at first there was plenty of tension. "Now, they are frustrated by the situation and want to meet their friends to talk about it," says Shapiro.

"During the past few years, many people took these programs for granted. This situation has only heightened awareness that there was still a lack of understanding on both sides.

"Our programs are even more necessary now." □

## JEWISH WORLD

### No unity government planned as violence enters second month

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A wave of violence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip that shattered efforts to make peace in the Middle East has entered its second month with a fury that shows no signs of abating.

As the clashes continued Sunday, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and opposition leader Ariel Sharon failed again to forge a unity government.

The two met at Barak's home one day before the Knesset was scheduled to resume its winter session. With Barak having only a minority of legislators behind him, the Knesset is expected to vote soon on a motion of no confidence if the premier is unable to create a unity government before then.

Barak had previously expressed optimism that he was close to forming a government with Sharon to grapple with the Palestinian unrest. But on Sunday, the two were unable to agree on Sharon's demand that Barak change his stance on the peace process.

Sharon, who opposes the reported concessions Barak was willing to make to the Palestinians at the Camp David summit in July, has said he will only join the government with guarantees that no political action will be taken without his prior consent.

Barak has refused to grant Sharon veto power over political or security decisions. A union with Sharon would extend Barak's political life.

His government lost its parliamentary majority over the summer when three parties walked out over the Camp David summit.

For the time being, though, Barak is not in immediate danger of having his government toppled in a no-confidence vote.

The fervently Orthodox Shas Party, a former coalition partner, has promised him a "safety net" as long as the emergency situation with the Palestinians continues.

The most serious clashes Sunday were near the Karni Crossing in the Gaza Strip.

At least one Palestinian was shot dead when Israel used tanks to clear a road blocked by Palestinians protesting the presence of Israeli armor at the crossing into Israel.

The fighting in Gaza occurred as Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat proclaimed that the "blessed" intifada, or Palestinian uprising, would continue until a "Palestinian child plants a Palestinian flag" on Jerusalem.

The Israel Defense Force said that its soldiers shot in the air to disperse the rioters, and that they used only pinpoint fire against Palestinian gunmen or those throwing firebombs. An IDF commander in Gaza accused the Palestinian police of ignoring his calls to calm the protesters and allowing the situation to deteriorate. He said Palestinian children were sent forward as cover for gunmen.

Near the West Bank town of Nablus, two more Palestinians were reported killed, and an Israeli soldier was wounded by Palestinian fire.

Exchanges of gunfire between Palestinians and Israeli troops were reported elsewhere in the territories Sunday. Near the settlement of Morag, in the Gaza Strip, a bomb was detonated next to a bus carrying Israeli civilians. No one was hurt.

On Saturday, Israel's army pulled its tanks off a hilltop on the edge of Jerusalem.

But army officials said Sunday that the "army will know how to retaliate" if Palestinians resume firing from the Arab town of Beit Jalla on Jerusalem's Gilo neighborhood. The last Palestinian attack came last Friday night.

In addition to dealing with the ongoing clashes in the territories, Israeli security forces are on heightened alert for attempts by Islamic militants to carry out terrorist attacks against Israeli targets in the territories and inside Israel.

Commenting on media reports that two Hamas terrorist cells have already infiltrated Israel, Deputy Defense Minister Ephraim Sneh said the public must be extremely vigilant.

Despite the ongoing disturbances, Barak said Sunday that Israel remains committed to the understandings brokered by President Clinton at a recent summit in Sharm el-Sheik. The premier said Israel would continue to strive toward peace if the violence subsides, even if he forms a government with Sharon. □

#### Bush: No change on embassy

A former U.S. congressman said Texas Gov. George W. Bush has changed his mind about moving the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and he encouraged Muslims to vote for Bush for president.

Paul Findley (R-Ill.), who was viewed by many Jews as one of the most anti-Israel congressmen, posted his message on the Web site of the American Muslim Alliance. The Bush campaign denies any change in the governor's views on the embassy.

#### Hillary 'outraged' by new charges

Senate candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton said she is "outraged" that New York Republicans, in a telephone campaign to New York voters, are linking her with the recent terrorist bombing of the USS Cole in Yemen.

The state Republican Party refused to apologize and promised Saturday to continue the calls, which began after the Clinton campaign last week returned \$50,000 from a fund-raiser sponsored by a U.S. Muslim group whose leader supports Hamas terrorism.

#### Report on O.U. due soon

A commission investigating the Orthodox Union's handling of complaints that a high-ranking youth group employee had sexually harassed and molested teens is expected to present its report in the next few days.

According to the New York Jewish Week, sources close to the investigation say the report will provide abundant evidence of Rabbi Baruch Lanner's abuses and will strongly criticize the O.U. It is not clear whether other employees or lay leaders will be singled out for blame.

#### Aryan Nations march in Idaho

About 35 neo-Nazis marched through the streets of an Idaho city to protest a judge's decision to uphold a \$6.3 million verdict against the Aryan Nations.

The marchers, who were outnumbered by nearly 400 counterdemonstrators, walked Saturday through Coeur d'Alene led by four men carrying a sign that stated, "Jewish Treason Governs America."

#### Vatican's sainthood plan blasted

Five Israeli historians are calling on the Vatican to halt its plans to make a Slovak Catholic bishop a candidate for sainthood. The historians charge that the late Bishop Jan Vojtassak played an active role in the Holocaust as a senior official in the wartime Slovak government, which was sympathetic to the Nazis.

During a visit to Slovakia in 1995, Pope John Paul II suggested that Vojtassak could be a suitable candidate for sainthood because he had suffered at the hands of the Communists.

## U.S. lawmakers want to know why Holocaust claims rejected

By Gayle Horwitz

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Some members of Congress are wondering why so many insurance claims from Holocaust survivors are being rejected.

Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) and 45 other members of Congress wrote a Sept. 29 letter to Lawrence Eagleburger, chairman of the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims, expressing concern that insurance companies are rejecting about three of every four processed claims.

Created in 1998, ICHEIC is an international organization that aims to settle survivors' claims on policies purchased from European insurers between 1930 and 1945.

The reason for the majority of the denials is a combination of insufficient proof and suspected postwar settlement, according to a report issued by ICHEIC on Sept. 4.

To date, ICHEIC's six insurance companies have ruled on 667 claims. Another 241 are pending. All claims must be filed by 2002.

Waxman also criticized a provision of the German Foundation Fund, a June 12 agreement among the United States, eight European governments and industries, designed to protect the companies from American lawsuits in exchange for a \$5 billion settlement for Nazi-era slave and forced laborers.

One part of the agreement capped the amount of money that German insurance companies could pay to survivor claims at \$150 million.

The measure sparked concern that the sum would be insufficient to cover all claims, and that it would unfairly restrict legal action against the insurance companies.

"These companies should not be immunized without full accountability for paying what they owe," Waxman said.

Eagleburger, a former U.S. secretary of state who has chaired ICHEIC since its inception, responded in a letter last week.

"It was never, and is not now, intended that decisions taken by the companies on the fast-track cases would be ICHEIC's last word on those claims," he said.

"Fast-track" cases are those that were settled before ICHEIC was created.

Eagleburger promised that all denied claims would have a right to appeal the decision, and that the process would be in place "very soon."

ICHEIC's media campaign and Web site has resulted in more than 50,000 completed claims forms, though many cannot name specific insurers and lack evidence of an existing policy, Eagleburger said.

Elan Steinberg, executive director of the World Jewish Congress, an ICHEIC member, called the letter "well intentioned, but misdirected." Steinberg said he worried that altering the German fund settlement now would only further delay payment to aging survivors and their heirs, and in the worst-case scenario, dissolve the entire agreement.

"I don't disagree with taking out the insurance component, but politically, it is not possible," he said. "Do you scuttle the entire German fund to raise the [insurance] cap?"

Though its effect remains to be seen, Waxman's letter taps into questions of how best to resolve survivor insurance claims that

have divided Jewish groups, state governments and political leaders on the front lines of the issue.

"The letter really reflects the anger of many survivors who believe they do have potential claims against these insurance companies," said Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center. Prohibiting lawsuits against these companies under the German agreement is only the most recent in a succession of obstacles to survivors' receiving payment on insurance claims, he said.

There is persistent concern that ICHEIC is not doing enough to pressure its five member-companies to release the names and personal information of Holocaust-era policyholders, he said. The ICHEIC site currently posts about 19,000 names, far fewer than Cooper and others believe could be made available.

The organization has no formal power of enforcement over the participating insurers, which are Allianz of Germany; Assicurazioni Generali of Italy; AXA Group of France; and Winterthur and Zurich, both of Switzerland. These companies wrote about 35 percent of European policies between 1930 and 1945. Many other European insurance groups declined to join the organization.

Some states are taking their own steps to speed up the claims process. This April, Minnesota joined California, Florida, New York and Washington state, which have all enacted laws restricting the ability of European insurers to practice in their states, without first settling Holocaust-era claims. The laws also allow state insurance agencies to compile their own registry of potential Holocaust-era claimants from company disclosures. Only the insurance commissions of California, Florida and New York are formal members of ICHEIC.

"In large part, the [Washington] law has not been successful, because of extreme company resistance," said Danny Kadden of the Holocaust Survivors Assistance Office of the Washington State Insurance Commission.

Many insurers have cited European privacy laws that prevent them from releasing the names of policyholders, he said.

There have been no sanctions so far against noncompliant companies, though they have been asked to appear for an "dialogue" before the commission, he said.

The laws are a "way of supporting the ICHEIC process," Kadden said. "But if it fails to deliver on its promises, then the insurance commissioner has a right to exercise the authority given to her by the law."

In California, the state insurance commission last year launched an unfair trade practices investigation against one German insurer, and was looking into pursuing several other companies. A challenge to the California law from one of those insurers is pending in the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. Last year in Florida, 40 subpoenas were given to companies that had not complied with the Holocaust claims law.

U.S. State Department and Treasury Department officials have asked that companies cooperating with ICHEIC not face another investigation from individual states. New York, Washington and Minnesota statutes do include a provisional "safe harbor" measure to protect these companies.

Neal Sher, chief of staff for ICHEIC, said that the state laws "will have no real effect," though he does support measures that furthers the mission of ICHEIC.

Those companies "that cooperate with ICHEIC in good faith deserve protection from state laws," he said. □