



# Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 78, No. 220

Thursday, November 23, 2000

83rd Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Bomb in Hadera kills at least 2

A car bomb exploded in the northern Israeli town of Hadera, killing at least two people and wounding at least 25 others.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak said he is holding the Palestinian Authority responsible because the self-rule government recently released Islamic militants from jail.

Also on Wednesday, Israeli soldiers killed four Palestinian militia members near the Jewish settlement of Morag in the Gaza Strip on Wednesday morning.

Among the dead was a militia leader, Jamal Abdel Razek, whose death may provoke a new round of Palestinian retaliation.

The army said soldiers trying to arrest Razek opened fire when he tried to crash his car through an Israeli roadblock close to the settlement. [Page 3]

### Jewish leaders blast State Dept.

U.S. Jewish leaders criticized a State Department statement that reprimanded Israel for retaliating with missile attacks on Gaza City on Monday after the terror bombing of an Israeli school bus elsewhere in Gaza.

"The U.S. has to distinguish between those who are responsible for the violence" in the West Bank and Gaza Strip "and those who respond to it," the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations said in a letter to the State Department.

### Judge OKs Swiss settlement plan

A U.S. judge approved a plan for distributing a \$1.25 billion Swiss bank settlement to Holocaust survivors.

Payments from the settlement, first agreed to in August 1998, could begin early next year if some remaining legal hurdles are soon overcome.

Gideon Taylor, the executive vice president of the Claims Conference, which will be distributing some of the funds, welcomed the court's decision.

"After so much time, we are gratified that the survivors will finally get a measure of justice," Taylor said Wednesday.

REMINDER: The JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Friday, Nov. 24.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Amid Mideast crisis, students struggle with lure of Israel trip

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — Steven Postal was eager to explore the Jewish state after he heard about the Birthright Israel program from friends who went last year.

But a few weeks ago, when he was accepted to the program and offered a free 10-day trip to Israel this winter, he politely declined.

"I've never been abroad before and I thought this time, given all the violence over there, it wouldn't be a good time for it to be the first time," said Postal, a senior at George Washington University.

Amid renewed tensions between Israelis and Palestinians, Birthright officials are hoping Postal's stance is not the dominant one as they prepare for what is supposed to be the program's largest trip yet.

Last December and January, Birthright snagged headlines and praise with its debut trips, credited with energizing thousands of young, primarily North American, Jews, many of whom had been largely uninvolved in Jewish life.

But this year, trip organizers are worried that potential participants will follow the lead of many American tourists — and heed a U.S. State Department advisory warning against travel to Israel — and will cancel in large numbers.

Program officials are insisting that the Birthright trip — which will bring 8,000 North Americans through a variety of programs — will not be canceled even if numbers are reduced, and that it will be safe.

To that end, Birthright officials are stepping up security, hoping it will be enough not only to ensure no one is harmed on the trip, but to reassure jittery parents and travelers.

Of those slated to go, "several hundred" have opted out of the trips, according to Marlene Post, Birthright's North American chairwoman.

All have been replaced from the large waiting lists formed of the 17,000 people who applied, but were initially turned down due to limited space.

But the real test for this winter's round of Birthright trips — in which the college students and 20-somethings, most of whom have never been to Israel, are slated to tour the country — will be in the coming weeks, as departure dates loom and participants face deadlines for having their \$250 deposits returned.

The deposit, which ensures a spot on the trip, is returned at its conclusion.

Students have until three weeks before their trips leave — Dec. 2 for those on the first trip, scheduled to depart Dec. 23 — to cancel.

A particular crucible, at least in the minds of many trip organizers, is Thanksgiving weekend, when they fear that students may back out after talking to nervous parents.

"We are expecting some additional families probably saying to the kid, 'Look it's not worth it,'" said Post.

Another crucial determinant will be whether the violence in the region remains mostly limited to the West Bank and Gaza Strip — areas that Birthright trips avoid — or if terrorist activities, such as suicide bombings, start occurring regularly within Israel proper.

Some, like Postal, may reason that they can apply again for a Birthright trip in the future, when the situation in Israel appears calmer.

Birthright officials say that people who turn down the winter trip will not be penalized if they apply for future trips. "Hopefully the situation on the ground will get

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### U.S. warns against escalation

U.S. Defense Secretary William Cohen warned that violence between Israelis and Palestinians could spin out of control, taking with it remaining hopes for peace.

"We have to get back to the bargaining and negotiating table to secure a fair and just and lasting peace," Cohen said before talks Wednesday with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak.

Earlier in the day, before meeting in Cairo with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Cohen maintained on Egyptian television that the United States does not have a pro-Israel bias, as Arabs have claimed.

### Sniper victim dies of wounds

An 18-year-old Israeli died of head wounds sustained a day earlier when a Palestinian sniper fired at him in the Gaza Strip.

Itamar Yefet was to be buried later Wednesday.

### Arafat blames U.S. weapons

Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat attacked the United States for supplying Israel with weapons used to kill Palestinians.

"The responsibility for this is with America, the main sponsor of the peace process," Arafat said Wednesday after meeting in Cairo with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

### Turkish journalists spark alert

An emergency security alert was briefly declared at the Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem when three Turkish journalists trying to enter the compound were found with defused grenades and empty cartridges in their possession.

The Prime Minister's Office said later Wednesday that an initial inquiry found that the three did not intend to carry out an attack, but wanted to show the prime minister the munitions being used by the Israeli army in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.



## Daily News Bulletin

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JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at [www.jta.org](http://www.jta.org).  
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easier, not worse, and fear will give way to reason," said Richard Joel, president of Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, which is the largest provider bringing students on a Birthright trip, a total of 4,000 students.

While insisting that the trips will be safe, Joel and other organizers are careful to avoid pressuring anyone, particularly if their parents are leery.

"I don't think anything we offer should be something that separates young people from their parents," said Joel.

As part of beefed-up security precautions, individual trip organizers will be required to submit detailed itineraries to the Birthright office and will be checking daily with Israeli government officials to ensure that the planned routes are still considered safe.

Students will have less free time to wander on their own than they had last year, and when they do have free time, will likely be given the choice of a few destinations, rather than free rein, said Post.

In addition, buses transporting Birthright participants will be guarded when empty.

"We're heavily invested in this project and will take no risk in performing these coming trips," said Gideon Mark, Birthright's director of marketing and development, who is based in Jerusalem. However, he added, "people should understand that life in Israel is going virtually normally."

"These are very sad events, but most Israelis do not see them except for on television," he said.

Some students, like Scott Factor, a junior at the University of Kansas, say their interest in the trip is unwavering.

Factor said he is "99 percent sure I'm going."

Factor is going with fellow counselors from Beber Camp, a summer camp run by B'nai B'rith. Originally, the group was supposed to be 15 to 20 people, but now stands at seven or eight, he said.

"The trip's still going to be amazingly fun," he said, but added that "if it scares people away there's nothing wrong with that, because what's going on is scary. But it's not full-scale war."

Factor did say, however, that if the violence spreads, he may reconsider his decision. Others are less certain and are closely following the news, as well as consulting friends and family.

Like Factor, many face uneasy parents who are not forbidding them from Israel, but are certainly not encouraging them to go.

In an interview with JTA, Alexis Leventhal, a junior at Ohio State University, first said she is "still not sure," but then a few minutes later resolves, "As of now I feel pretty comfortable going."

Leventhal said her mother, concerned by the State Department advisory, is "not excited about me going." But then Leventhal talked to an Israeli friend who told her "there's always something going on in Israel and it's just a different way of life. You always have to be careful."

Not all parents are discouraging their children from going.

Alan Potash, the Hillel director of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, said two mothers called him after returning from the General Assembly, a convention last week sponsored by the United Jewish Communities, the North American federation umbrella organization, and said they "feel strongly that their kids should be going."

The G.A. featured various speeches urging American Jews to visit the Jewish state as a sign of solidarity, leading one parent to tell Potash, "Even though there's a danger, I walked out with the feeling that we should be sending people to Israel." □

## Committee calls for book ban

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's Knesset Education Committee has called on the Education Ministry to ban a controversial modern history book that critics say ignores seminal events in the history of Israel, including the Holocaust, Zionism and the founding of the state.

The ministry's director general said she would create a team to examine the complaints and suggest corrections. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Federation helping Falash Mura

UJA-Federation of New York made a \$250,000 grant to provide food and other humanitarian aid to more than 16,000 Falash Mura in Ethiopia.

The grant was made to the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, which is assisting the Falash Mura, who are descendants of Ethiopian Jews who converted to Christianity.

### ADL: Review U.S. aid to Egypt

The United States should reassess the aid it gives Egypt if Cairo does not soon return its ambassador to Israel, the Anti-Defamation League said. The U.S. aid was "predicated on Egypt's continuing commitment to diplomacy," the ADL said Wednesday.

Egypt's ambassador to Israel, Mohammed Basiouny, returned home for an unspecified period of time Wednesday after Cairo recalled him to protest Israeli air strikes on Gaza City earlier in the week.

### Man arrested in shul fire

Pennsylvania police arrested a man in connection with a fire that gutted part of a synagogue under construction on Yom Kippur, but said there is no evidence the blaze was a hate crime.

Ira Ted Gibson, 40, acknowledged throwing a lit cigarette on the floor where the fire began, but has not admitted starting the blaze that caused about \$1 million in damage to a building at Temple Ohev Sholom in Harrisburg.

He was charged Tuesday with six counts of burglary and one count each of causing and risking a catastrophe and institutional vandalism.

### School seeks vandals' arrest

Binghamton University in New York is offering a \$3,000 reward for information leading to the arrest of those responsible for several acts of anti-Semitic vandalism that occurred on campus this fall.

Reacting to several swastikas scrawled in the dorms and mezuzot stolen from Jewish students' doorways, the university has invited the Anti-Defamation League to facilitate educational programs. The school is also urging students and faculty to show solidarity against hate crimes by wearing green and white ribbons.

### Detroit philanthropist dies

David Hermelin, a Detroit Jewish philanthropist and former U.S. ambassador to Norway, died Wednesday of a brain tumor at the age of 63.

Hermelin also served as vice chairman of the United Jewish Appeal, president of the World ORT Union and vice president of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit, where he created a multimillion-dollar endowment for local synagogue projects.

## Bomb blast in northern Israel ushers in new vow of retaliation

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — With each new day, there is added reason to believe that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is spiraling out of control.

Hopes that the two sides may step back from the brink become increasingly dim as each new round of violence brings vows of retribution.

Such vows have repeatedly come from Palestinian sources, and this week they began to be sounded from Jerusalem as well. For weeks, Prime Minister Ehud Barak has been adhering to what he called a "policy of restraint." But following a terror bombing of an Israeli school bus Monday in the Gaza Strip, Barak was promising Israeli retaliation "to ensure that the violence stops."

And on Wednesday, following a second terror attack — a car bombing in the northern Israeli town of Hadera — Barak was again promising to "settle accounts" with those responsible.

The premier also said the Palestinian Authority is "totally responsible for the attack" because it was releasing terrorists and "encouraging them, guiding their people, to carry out terror attacks." He spoke after the car bombing killed at least two people and wounded at least 25 others.

The Hadera bombing, which took place in the crowded downtown shopping area, came during evening rush hour Wednesday. A witness told Israel Television that a bus emerging from the town's central station passed the bomb-rigged car.

The blast was so powerful that the bus slammed into a nearby store. Several stores in the vicinity caught fire, and the explosion could be heard from several blocks away.

Barak, who condemned the attack as a "barbaric act against innocent civilians," convened the Security Cabinet for urgent consultations. He also repeated his call for the creation of a national unity government to deal with the ongoing crisis.

In the political establishment, there were growing calls in favor of such a move.

Eli Yishai, political leader of the fervently Orthodox Shas Party, urged Likud leader Ariel Sharon to heed the call. He also said Israel can respond forcefully to the Palestinians only if all political parties are part of the government.

But Sharon continued to oppose a unity government, instead decrying Barak and his policies at a right-wing demonstration in Jerusalem on Wednesday night.

"The problem is with the leadership and decision-makers, who have tired out. The battle against the rising terrorism has until now been waged hesitantly," Sharon said.

Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat "is not a peace partner but a savage enemy," he continued, to rousing cries from the crowd.

Settler leaders organized Wednesday's demonstration before the car-bombing took place, wanting to protest the overall security situation. The massive crowd filled Zion Square, spilling into surrounding streets and snarling traffic.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the Hadera bombing, but earlier in the day the military wing of Hamas said in a statement it would bring death to every Israeli home.

The Palestinian Authority, which denied any part in the attack, lashed out at Barak's "false accusations" against the self-rule government.

On Wednesday, Arafat's mainstream faction vowed to avenge Israel's retaliatory strikes Monday in Gaza City, issuing a statement vowing to "burn the ground beneath the feet of the Israeli occupation."

That same day, Israeli soldiers killed four Palestinian militia members near the Jewish settlement of Morag in Gaza. Among the dead was a militia leader, Jamal Abdel Razek, whose death may provoke a new round of Palestinian retaliation.

The army said soldiers trying to arrest Razek opened fire when he tried to crash his car through an Israeli roadblock close to the settlement.

Palestinian officials said the soldiers shot without provocation.

Mohammed Dahlan, the Palestinian security chief in Gaza, called the killings a "barbaric assassination."

Israel's army, which had been tracking Razek, said he was responsible for a number of shooting and bombing attacks on Israeli targets in Gaza. □

NEWS ANALYSIS**How to fight an enemy  
who is also your partner?***By Gil Sedan*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — These are good days for the followers of Meir Kahane, the militantly anti-Arab rabbi who was murdered 10 years ago in New York by a Palestinian.

Although Kahane's Kach movement has been outlawed here for several years, Kach veterans, reinforced by young followers, have recently staged open demonstrations demanding a tough response from the Israel Defense Force to the ongoing Palestinian violence.

Walls throughout the country have been smeared with the slogan, "Kahane Was Right," decorated with the movement's emblem, a fist inside a yellow Star of David.

Noam Federman, one of the movement's leaders, has been visiting Jewish settlements in the West Bank, encouraging settlers to go out and fight.

"You should know that if the IDF does not protect you, you must protect yourselves," he said at a recent meeting with settlers in Beit El.

"You must go out and shoot," he said.

Although Kach is still a marginal force, even among Jewish settlers, the re-emergence of the ultranationalists after many years of underground activity reflects a frustration and confusion widespread in Israeli society.

Many Israelis, particularly settlers living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, feel that the country has lost its sense of direction and that its leaders ignore the recommendations of the military for operations that would tilt the balance in Israel's favor.

Some of their frustration boiled over Monday after a terror bombing of an Israeli school bus in the Gaza Strip killed two Israelis and wounded nine others, including five children.

Many Israelis were soon calling on Prime Minister Ehud Barak to drop what he has been calling his "policy of restraint" when dealing with the ongoing Palestinian violence.

The mounting frustration was evident when settlers who gathered to pray at the site of the attack attached a sign to the bus' shattered windshield: "Prime Minister, You Have Blood on Your Hands."

The Palestinians are calling the violence the Al-Aksa intifada, harking back to when Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon visited the Al-Aksa Mosque on Jerusalem's Temple Mount in late September.

Israelis, by contrast, are now calling it a war of attrition.

But is it really a war?

U.S. Middle East peace envoy Dennis Ross met separately last week with Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

Ross reportedly made some progress in getting the two sides to agree to talks aimed at not only reducing the violence, but also leading back to negotiations.

Even after Israeli helicopters retaliated Monday for the bus attack by striking targets in Gaza City, there were reports of behind-the-scenes contacts taking place between Israeli and Palestinian officials about a possible resumption of the peace process.

In the light of such reports, Israel and the Palestinians seem

like a married couple that has exchanged blows — and yet are still discussing ways to fix the marriage.

This has had a direct military implication: For all its might, the IDF has been unable to stage an all-out war against people who could still be Israel's partner in peace.

This has led Israeli critics to charge that the government has tied the army's hands.

Government officials respond that they have adopted a policy of restraint because they believe that a stronger response could lead to an escalation that may prove uncontrollable.

Even if the IDF were given the go-ahead for an all-out war, it would be virtually impossible to fight, given that it would not be facing an army, but rather a combination of armed street gangs and children throwing stones.

At least for now, the government has opted for a mostly defensive policy.

The Palestinians have marked the settlements and the army in the territories as their prime targets.

The army's chief task has been to protect itself and the settlements.

As a result, a thick veil of military defense blankets the settlements, and movement between the settlements is often done with military escorts.

The army has also gone on the offensive from time to time, as it did with Monday's retaliatory helicopter strikes in Gaza City.

While such actions may help the national morale, they are not likely to tip the scale in Israel's favor.

Is there anything that could?

Military experts speak of massive bombings, cutting off electricity and water to the Palestinians and limiting the movement of Palestinians within the self-rule areas: In other words, make the Palestinian civilian population a target.

But this is exactly the sort of escalation that Israel has been trying to avoid.

"We must exert pressure on the Palestinians until they call for a cease-fire," the IDF chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Shaul Mofaz, said this week.

He did not, however, spell out how this could be achieved.

In recent days, the government began to withhold millions of dollars in tax receipts from the Palestinian Authority. Some officials feel that such economic sanctions may ultimately help end the violence.

Although most top Israeli army officials share the prime minister's view that a military escalation would be counterproductive, there have been differences regarding just how far the army should go.

The IDF's deputy chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Moshe Ya'alon, is reportedly a driving force in the army for more drastic and daring actions against the Palestinians.

After Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat ordered Palestinian gunmen last Friday to stop firing at Israelis from Palestinian-ruled areas, Ya'alon was among the first to warn that Arafat had thereby given implicit approval for Palestinians to shoot from areas under Israeli control.

Despite the differences within the top military echelons regarding how to proceed, the army has stuck to its mostly defense posture.

As a result, the strongest army in the Middle East now waits for politicians to save the day. □