



# Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 78, No. 223

Wednesday, November 29, 2000

83rd Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Barak OKs new elections

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak told the Knesset that he is ready to hold new elections to choose a prime minister and legislators. [Page 4]

### Egyptian called spy for Israel

Egypt charged one of its citizens with spying for Israel. Shereef Fawzi Mohammed el-Falali allegedly provided Israel with "political, economic and military information that harmed national interest," according to the indictment sheet made public Tuesday.

The case could worsen already-chilly relations between Israel and Egypt.

### Israeli army denies killing boy

A 12-year-old Palestinian boy killed during a gun battle in the Gaza Strip two months ago was most likely shot by Palestinian gunmen, not the Israeli army, according to an army inquiry.

The head of Israeli forces in Gaza, Maj. Gen. Yom Tov Samia, said the report's findings about the death of Mohammad al-Darrah were not conclusive due to a lack of cooperation by the Palestinian Authority.

Televised images of the boy and his father cowering against a wall during a gun battle drew widespread condemnation of Israel at the time.

### Cantor charged in sex ring

Members of Chicago's Jewish community are expressing shock and dismay about the arrest of a former temple cantor and his wife of a few weeks.

The two were charged in connection with a prostitution ring.

Joel Gordon, 51, who previously served at several Chicago-area synagogues, was charged Nov. 21 with keeping a house of prostitution after a police raid on three massage parlors.

His wife, Alison Ginsberg, 23, was charged with prostitution and keeping a house of prostitution.

### Red Crescent violations alleged

A Jewish congressman is urging the International Committee of the Red Cross to investigate recent reports that individuals used Palestinian Red Crescent ambulances and buildings to attack Israeli civilians and communities.

Rep. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.) said the violations of international law must end.

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

### U.S. Jewish divisions resurface as peace groups launch initiatives

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — Reports of the peace camp's demise have been greatly exaggerated.

Although weeks of Middle East violence stunned them into silence, self-doubt and soul-searching, those American Jews most out front in promoting the peace process are rediscovering their voices.

Groups like the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations and Americans for Peace Now are launching new campaigns to promote their vision of the way out of the current crisis.

In contrast to the view of many American — and Israeli — Jews that the peace process is dead and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat is no longer a negotiating partner, these groups are focusing less on the Palestinians and more on what they believe Israel should be doing to bring the two sides together.

The Reform movement, for instance, is calling for dismantling Jewish settlements buried in the heart of Arab populations and reaching out to Israeli Arabs, some of whom erupted into violence against Israeli forces in the early days of the latest fighting.

By speaking out, the peace camp may wipe away the veneer of "unity" and "solidarity" that has enveloped the Jewish community since violence broke out two months ago. It may also re-expose the deep communal fissures that emerged along the rocky road in search of peace.

Ever since the Oslo peace process began seven years ago, American Jews — like their Israeli brethren — have been at odds over what concessions, if any, should be made to the Palestinians.

Following the May 1999 election of Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, many Jews applauded Barak's peace-seeking efforts, while others denounced him for a perceived willingness to achieve peace at all costs. But since this new outbreak of violence erupted in late September, American Jewish backers of Barak have been generally muted as Diaspora Jewry rallied behind Israeli efforts to quell the insurrection.

Early on, peace advocates were wracked with anger, confusion and disillusionment. They say they were "forced to look in the mirror" and "ask themselves hard questions" about whether they had been wrong all along about talking peace with Arafat. At the same time, their rivals on the other end of the political spectrum crowed, "I told you so."

Even a group historically at the forefront of promoting the peace process, the American Jewish Congress, took out a full-page advertisement in *The New York Times* on Nov. 12 titled "It Takes a Big Organization to Admit it Was Wrong."

The text of the ad itself was more nuanced, however, asking Arafat to prove that those who supported the peace process weren't wrong.

"It's not easy to recognize that a purpose or ideal in which you heavily invested so much time and energy and emotion may not be possible," Phil Baum, executive director of the AJCongress, said in an interview. "Who can give that up? I can't give that up. I don't want to say we were wrong. I want to be able to say that these events of the last seven weeks were a big mistake, an aberration, and that we were right all along."

But of late, members of the peace camp has become newly emboldened, in part because they say hard-liners have failed to come up with a viable solution for ending the conflict.

While peace activists feel betrayed by Arafat and agree that there must be greater

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Roadside bombs explode in Gaza

Two roadside bombs exploded near Israeli army troops in separate locations in the Gaza Strip.

There were no Israeli injuries in Tuesday's blasts, which occurred near the Morag settlement and near the Rafah crossing on the border with Egypt.

### Knesset approves Jerusalem bill

Israel's Knesset approved legislation requiring an absolute majority of 61 legislators to approve any changes to the status of Jerusalem or its boundaries.

The house also gave initial approval to an opposition bill requiring a special majority for any legislation allowing Palestinian refugees to resettle in Israel.

### Coexistence programs get funds

In response to current Arab-Jewish tensions in Israel, the umbrella organization for 180 Israeli community centers — 30 of which serve Israeli Arabs — allocated some \$600,000 for Jewish-Arab coexistence programs.

The Israel Association of Community Centers is using the money from private foundations and the Israeli government to establish a special committee that will plan encounters, dialogue groups and other Jewish-Arab activities, as well as offer Jews subsidized courses in the Arabic language and culture.

### U.S. mayors to visit Israel

Six American mayors planned to leave Wednesday on a four-day mission to Israel, where they will assess whether Americans can safely travel to the Jewish state during the ongoing clashes with the Palestinians.

During the visit, which is co-sponsored by the American Jewish Congress, the mayors will meet with their Israeli counterparts and present letters calling for an end to the violence and a resumption of peace negotiations.



## Daily News Bulletin

Shoshana S. Cardin, *President*

Mark J. Joffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*

Lisa Hostein, *Editor*

Howard Levy, *Managing Editor*

Lenore A. Silverstein, *Business Manager*

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).  
© JTA      Reproduction only by previous arrangement.

insistence that Arafat fulfill his commitments, they assert that he is still the man to deal with.

"It may take longer, it may be harder, but the notion that we can continue with the status quo and reject the idea of a negotiated settlement is exceedingly dangerous for the Jewish state," said Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the UAHC, which represents some 900 Reform congregations.

"I have no problem pointing the finger at Arafat. He is responsible for the violence, he is responsible for stopping it. But we still want a negotiated settlement."

Yoffie and others have no regrets for gambling on Arafat's good faith.

"There were always risks to the process," said Michael Sonnenfeldt, chairman of the Israel Policy Forum, a group that was formed to promote the peace policies of the Labor government headed by Yitzhak Rabin, the former prime minister assassinated in 1995 by an Israeli extremist opposed to the peace process.

"I think those risks were well-taken and there's disappointment that they didn't come to fruition. I have no reason to second-guess the calculations."

He predicted that a current survey of American Jews, if taken, would find "a lot of disappointment and some confusion," but "I still think there'd be a basic and deep support for a diplomatic solution, if it can be achieved."

For its part, the UAHC campaign, conceived as a three-year project, intends to create a "glimmer of hope" for peace, said project director Esther Lederman.

It will be unveiled within the next couple of weeks and strive to atone for "tactical errors" after Oslo by pro-peace activists, who failed to sufficiently inform their constituency about the need for peace and the challenges blocking the way, Lederman said.

The project will "educate and mobilize" Reform Jews specifically, and American Jews generally, about the core issues of contention between Israel and the Palestinians. It aims, in part, to explain "where the Palestinian anger comes from," said Lederman, as well as the "social justice" deprived Israel's Arabs.

"I think it's possible to talk about the need for negotiations and a negotiated settlement at the same time that you condemn the violence and the methods that are being used," said Lederman.

Other Jewish leaders were less than enthusiastic about the initiatives by the UAHC and Peace Now.

"I do agree that there is no alternative to peace in the long term," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, an umbrella group that includes the UAHC and Peace Now.

"But the question is under what terms and what road will lead to it, and a precondition is to have a real partner for peace who will live up to his commitments. The evidence now would appear to be that, unfortunately, Israel does not have a partner there."

Hoenlein hinted that any new initiatives may be premature while the death toll continues to mount on both sides: "I think the events are going to dictate what all of us will do. Facts on the ground are changing so quickly that what we may have suggested yesterday may not be relevant tomorrow," he said.

As for what happens to unity and solidarity as these public campaigns for peace initiatives move forward, the terms themselves seem subjective.

There are those in the community who believe that at this time, American Jews must be in lock-step support of Israeli actions. Veering from this path may be seen as nothing short of betrayal.

"There've always been differences of opinion, but at this time we ought to not be proposing or imposing our views on the Israeli government," said Hoenlein.

"We should do our part, which is addressing the distortions in the media, strengthening Israel's position in Washington and educating the American public about the issues — like Jerusalem and Israel's military restraint — to create a context for them to understand what's happening."

Lederman doesn't see it that way.

"I think it's OK to say you stand with Israel and say you believe in her right to exist and flourish, and still say you have problems with what's occurring with some of Israel's policies," she said. "What's key is how that dissatisfaction is addressed. There are respectful ways of doing it and disrespectful ways of doing it." □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Activist rabbi says Jews should rally for the recount

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Minority voters in Florida have been disenfranchised, says a Jewish activist.

That, he said, makes the presidential vote recount a civil rights issue — and, therefore, a Jewish issue.

"Jews should be helping others," said Rabbi Steven Jacobs, spiritual leader of Kol Tikvah in Woodland Hills, Calif., who has traveled to Florida for rallies and events over the past few weeks.

Jacobs and the Rev. Jesse Jackson, a leading black civil rights leader, held a prayer vigil Tuesday outside the Florida Supreme Court to protest what they view as the disenfranchisement of voters.

Jacobs said thousands of people, including a "terrific" Jewish presence, heard a powerful Jewish message: Each person's vote should be counted.

Jacobs objects to the suggestion that the election must be decided as quickly as possible despite the lingering questions.

"I reminded people that when Moses was in Egypt he didn't say to the children of Israel, 'Let's get it over, let's concede,'" he said.

Jacobs and other activists planned to hold a rally Wednesday at the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue in New York. Jacobs and Jackson maintain there was a concerted effort to keep blacks and Haitian Americans away from the polls in Florida on Election Day.

A veteran of the civil rights movement, Jacobs said many Jews were confused by ballots in Palm Beach County, but were denied assistance.

Democrats claim Palm Beach County's fold-out "butterfly ballot" was so confusing that votes meant for Democrat Al Gore were accidentally cast for Reform Party candidate Pat Buchanan.

At an event Monday night at Florida A&M University in Tallahassee, Jackson urged U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno to investigate alleged voting irregularities in Florida. Florida's secretary of state certified Sunday that Republican George W. Bush had won the state by just 537 votes, giving him the Sunshine State's critical 25 electoral votes. Gore is contesting the results.

Jacobs says it has been difficult to galvanize the organized Jewish community.

Jacobs rejects what he says is the claim by some Jewish organizations that it's a partisan issue — something Jewish organizations should shy away from.

The American Jewish Committee has not taken a position on the issues surrounding the recount so far, but would look into the situation if it determines civil rights abuses have occurred, said spokesman Kenneth Bandler.

If voting rights were violated, that should be pursued, but it is not necessarily an issue for the Anti-Defamation League, said Kenneth Jacobson, the organization's assistant national director. The ADL would be involved if Jewish voters were targeted, but there is no evidence so far of anti-Semitism, Jacobson said.

The Jewish community's consciousness needs to be raised, Jacobs said, and he indicated there was increasing support for his cause.

"There are growing numbers of Jews who are interested," he said. □

### U.S. man sentenced for racist graffiti

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — A U.S. judge has sentenced a man who spray-painted an Egyptian immigrant's house with swastikas and white supremacist symbols to 10 months in prison.

The judge also ordered Joshua Hass, 20, to participate in a tolerance counseling program affiliated with the Simon Wiesenthal Center. Hass was also ordered to perform 100 hours of public service, some of it in programs benefiting the Arab American and Jewish American communities.

Hass previously pleaded guilty to the January 1998 attack on the immigrant's home in a Los Angeles suburb. □

### Orthodox rabbis: Set an example

Leading fervently Orthodox rabbis in the United States called on the community to improve its reputation for integrity.

Addressing a Nov. 23 convention that brought together thousands from the community, Rabbi Avrohom Pam and Rabbi Yaakov Perlow, both members of Agudath Israel of America's Council of Torah Sages, lamented the fact that recent years have seen a number of Orthodox individuals and institutions involved in illegal financial activity.

While stating that in many cases the media exaggerate cases in which Orthodox Jews are accused of wrongdoing, Perlow said observant Jews are no longer seen as "paragons of ethical virtue."

### STAR to make grants soon

A new philanthropy devoted to improving North American synagogues received 150 applications for its first round of grants.

STAR, an \$18 million effort that is expected to announce its first grant recipients in late December, will give up to \$100,000 over three years to projects that "make the synagogue a compelling point of connection for large numbers of Jews throughout North America."

### Nazi guard faces trial in Germany

German state prosecutors said they will bring murder charges in mid-December against a former Nazi SS guard who served at the Terezin transit camp in what is now the Czech Republic.

Anton Malloth, 88, has been in custody in Munich since May on suspicion of shooting a laborer at the camp who had hidden a cauliflower inside his jacket.

### Court rules against congregation

An Orthodox congregation in Baltimore was barred by a local court from turning its residential property into a synagogue, according to the Baltimore Jewish Times.

Leaders of the congregation, Bais Haknesses, told the paper they will appeal the decision, which came in response to a lawsuit filed by 37 nearby residents — many of them Jewish — who expressed concern that the synagogue would create problems of privacy, traffic, parking, noise, litter and property devaluation.

### Israeli mayor visits rabbi's tomb

Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert recently visited the tomb of revered 19th-century Rabbi Chatam Sofer during a visit to the capital of Slovakia.

A mausoleum costing up to \$1 million is to be built around the tomb in Bratislava next year with the help of private donations, mainly from the United States.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

**Heading for elections, Barak must steer between diplomacy and war***By David Landau*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Prime Minister Ehud Barak has launched an election campaign amid violent conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

He hopes to conclude the campaign some time in the spring with renewed peace hopes, or, better yet, with a draft peace agreement that he can submit to the public as his election platform.

If Barak achieves a deal with Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, he may yet pull back from the brink of political defeat and win the election.

If he fails — and the odds at this time have to be on his failure, given the Palestinians' present and recent intransigence — it is hard to see Barak defeating the presumptive Likud candidate, former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who currently leads Barak by 20 percentage points in public opinion polls.

After acceding Tuesday night to the Knesset majority's obvious desire for early elections, Barak made it clear that vigorous diplomatic efforts would continue during the coming months of "lame-duck" government.

In a television interview, Barak bemoaned the Palestinian rejection of ideas put forward by Israel and the Americans at July's Camp David summit and in subsequent diplomatic contacts.

But, he added, "It may not be over."

Barak insisted that his diplomatic efforts would continue alongside the Israel Defense Force's efforts to contain and reduce Palestinian violence.

Israeli military sources reported a sharp decline Tuesday in the number and intensity of violent incidents in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

If this reduction was orchestrated by Arafat and was intended to help Barak out of his parliamentary predicament, it plainly came too late.

But there is no doubt that the Palestinians are closely following Israel's intricate political drama.

And they will have to recognize the fact that their behavior — on the "war" front and in the peace talks — could directly and critically influence the outcome of Israel's domestic contest.

This confluence of domestic and diplomatic circumstances could therefore become a catalyst, driving Israel and the Palestinian Authority toward a comprehensive or partial agreement before the election deadline draws near.

On the other hand, some skeptics contend that the Palestinians are not genuinely interested in a peace agreement and would prefer to face a harder-line Likud government that would take the international blame if peace talks founder.

In any case, events between Israelis and Palestinians on the ground could prove to have a negative and even dangerous impact in the election run-up.

The prime minister seemed aware of this danger in his televised interview, when he vowed that the army, under his direction, would not "play to the gallery" by overreacting to violent Palestinian provocations.

Too often, Barak said, Israeli governments pandering to the public's natural urge for revenge have ordered the army to

overreact to Arab violence, only to regret the harmful effects to Israel's international standing and overall strategic strength.

As the election campaign moves forward, Barak will be tempted to strike back ever harder after Palestinian acts of terror or violence because he cannot afford to be perceived by sections of the electorate as soft and hesitant.

For its part, the Likud will be tempted to criticize Barak for his perceived softness and hesitancy, and demand ever harsher military measures.

The election probably will take place in May, but who will the candidates be?

Barak announced on Tuesday that he would run as the Labor candidate.

He appeared to share the widespread assumption that Netanyahu will be back to head the Likud, noting that he had beaten Netanyahu before and would beat him again.

But Barak's candidacy is not a foregone conclusion, however unconventional and messy it is for a party to dislodge a sitting prime minister and party leader.

Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami, for one, certainly sees himself as prime ministerial material.

There may yet be other candidates.

Israel Radio reported Tuesday night that the speaker of the Knesset, Avraham Burg, would also contend for the Labor leadership.

Burg has been something of a dissident figure in Labor since Barak's May 1999 election victory, when he ignored Burg's great popularity within the party and declined to offer him a Cabinet seat.

Burg then ran for the largely ceremonial role of Knesset speaker, defeating an effort by Barak to block him.

As speaker, Burg has shied away from the hurly-burly of party politics, steering clear of public controversy.

But he has not neglected his standing in the party, taking care to visit party branches around the country and keep up contact with the thousands of field workers and activists who are the backbone of any political movement.

As a yarmulka-wearing man whose late father was leader of the National Religious Party, Burg has appeal among traditional and some moderate Orthodox voters.

Furthermore, as a consistent dove — he was a leader of Peace Now in his younger years — he is well-liked on the left.

Such a resume might allow Burg to unite diverse Labor factions behind his banner.

He also is a charismatic public speaker and a tough and experienced political infighter, skills he would need against Netanyahu.

Yet his dovish views also could become a liability if Palestinian violence continues and the public clamors for a strong response.

In the Likud, chairman Ariel Sharon shows little willingness to vacate the party leadership for the more popular Netanyahu.

To the contrary, Sharon is to be heard disparaging Netanyahu in private conversations.

Indeed, much of the failed negotiation between Sharon and Barak on the creation of a national unity government was predicated on their joint desire to keep Netanyahu out — so much so that political wags joked that Sharon might prefer to serve as Barak's No. 2 rather than as Netanyahu's. □