



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 78, No. 225

Friday, December 1, 2000

83rd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Barak floats partial accord

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak said Thursday he would back a partial agreement with the Palestinian Authority.

The agreement would include the recognition of a Palestinian state and the Israeli annexation of some settlement blocs, but delay the questions of Jerusalem and refugees.

But Palestinian officials rejected the idea, saying Barak's comments show he is not ready to make peace.

Report: Egypt proposes summit

Egypt is proposing a summit meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat in Cairo or Amman, Jordan, Israeli media reported.

There was no immediate reaction on Thursday from Israel, which is apparently waiting for Arafat's response.

U.N. observer idea circulated

Palestinian supporters circulated a draft resolution Wednesday to the 15-member U.N. Security Council that would authorize a U.N. mission of 2,000 unarmed military observers for the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The United States has indicated it would likely veto the proposal if it came up for a vote because Israel would not agree to the mission.

Israeli Justice Minister Yossi Beilin responded to the resolution by saying international efforts should focus on getting the Palestinians back to the negotiating table. [Page 3]

Accord may lead to art return

An agreement reached between American art museums and a U.S. presidential Holocaust commission could pave the way for the return of some Nazi-looted artworks to rightful heirs.

Under the agreement, the museums must disclose on their Web sites the background of all art works acquired between 1933 and 1945 in an effort to determine whether their collections include Nazi-looted works.

Details of the agreement, which reportedly still needs to be finalized, are expected to be released later this month.

Federations launch missions as way to show support for Israel

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — Heeding a call from Israeli officials to visit the Jewish state, the Jewish federation system has launched its first of 10 "solidarity missions."

The first such mission left shortly after Thanksgiving with 80 people, the majority from San Francisco and Dallas.

Future trips are scheduled through January.

So far, 1,000 people are signed up, but organizers say they expect to recruit considerably more in the coming weeks.

The new effort comes in the wake of the recent General Assembly of the United Jewish Communities, at which Israeli government officials appealed to American Jews to show support for Israel amid its ongoing conflict with the Palestinians.

Prior to the G.A., as the recent convention is called, three other solidarity missions had gone to Israel, composed mainly of top leadership from federations and other Jewish organizations.

The five-day trips — which cost \$850 to \$900 for those departing from New York — include meetings with top Israeli government and military officials and visits with Israelis in Partnership 2000 regions, communities that have been paired with North American Jewish federations for people-to-people exchanges and joint projects.

The missions come as Israelis are reporting a sharp drop in tourism, particularly from the United States, where the State Department has issued an advisory warning against travel to Israel.

Several previously scheduled federation missions were canceled in October and November as a result of concerns about violence, and Israeli officials report that American Jews have canceled trips in far greater numbers than evangelical Christian groups.

In addition to expressing solidarity with Israelis and bolstering tourism, the solidarity missions aim to "show the situation as it is, not through the eyes of the media," said Nechemia Dagan, executive director of the UJC's overseas programs and missions.

The umbrella organization for North America's 189 federations, the UJC is subsidizing the trips — paying approximately \$200 for each participant — and El Al and the other service providers are offering discounted rates, said Dagan.

Dagan, who spends two weeks of each month working in Israel and two weeks working in New York, said mission participants will "come back loaded with information" so that they can explain Israel's perspective to other Americans and the media. Recruitment for the missions is being conducted both nationally and locally, and varies from community to community.

Some communities are sending large enough groups to have their own tour buses, while others will be traveling with people from other communities.

One debate surrounding the solidarity missions is whether they should also include solicitations on behalf of the federation system. Robert Schroyer, UJC's national chair of campaign and financial resource development, said most federations are making donation requests a component of the missions.

"We No. 1 encourage solicitations and No. 2 are available to help in solicitations, but at the end of the day it's up to the community itself to let us know whether they want it or not," said Schroyer.

The debate about soliciting stems from the lack of consensus right now as to

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israeli electoral reform backed

A growing number of Israeli legislators are calling for canceling the direct election of the prime minister and reverting to the previous system of casting a single ballot for a political party by the next elections, which could take place next year.

The Israeli daily *Ma'ariv* reported that 60 Knesset members, from both sides of the political spectrum, have signed a petition calling for the reform.

Students burn U.S., Israeli flags

Palestinian and Lebanese students and others in Lebanon and Syria burned Israeli, American and British flags at demonstrations.

At one of Wednesday's demonstrations, students tried to break into the U.S. Embassy compound in Beirut.

Bereaved families want inquiry

The families of five Palestinians killed by Israeli soldiers in one incident this week are calling for an international inquiry.

Israeli soldiers opened fire after they "identified an armed gang of terrorists" that had opened fire on an Israeli vehicle traveling toward a Jewish settlement, according to an army statement. Palestinians say the five were unarmed civilians.

Israel criticizes Vatican

Israel is criticizing the Vatican for planning to accept a visit later this month by an extremist Austrian politician.

The Vatican should reject the Dec. 16 visit by Jorg Haider to present a Christmas tree because of the Vatican's commitment to "struggle against anti-Semitism" and the "worrying resurgence of anti-Semitic incidents in Europe," said an Israeli statement.

The European Union recently lifted sanctions it had imposed on Austria after Haider's Freedom Party joined the government earlier this year.

whether the violence engulfing the region means Israel will need more money — and if so, how that money might best be spent.

"I think that people who go on solidarity missions at the end should be asked to make a commitment to the annual campaign," said Jeffrey Klein, executive vice president of the Jewish Federation of Palm Beach County.

"It's not just a subsidized vacation or trip but an opportunity to stand up and be counted," he added.

The Palm Beach federation plans to send a solidarity mission, but has not yet scheduled one, he said.

The Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago is requiring a \$500 minimum campaign gift for participants on its 50-person solidarity mission, which is scheduled to depart Dec. 2.

The Chicago federation also sent people on the national missions before the G.A., and required \$5,000 minimum gifts for those trips.

But some federations, such as the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit and Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston, have decided not to combine the missions with fund raising.

Robert Aronson, the Detroit federation's executive vice president, said the mission should not be about money, but "to express our concern and meet with people we know and care about."

Detroit's federation has 190 people signed up for its mission, which is scheduled for Jan. 14, and Aronson is hoping to recruit a total of 400.

Not all the participants are federation donors, he said, noting that local rabbis and other Jewish organizations are also mobilizing members for the trip.

Boston's federation is planning a smaller mission for January, building it around an already-scheduled meeting with activists in Haifa, Boston's sister city in the Partnership 2000 program.

The Boston mission also will avoid solicitations and is not requiring a minimum gift.

"These are our most committed people, and they always do the right thing," said Barry Shrage, president of the Boston federation. "This mission is going because what we were told and what I firmly believe is that the Israelis need to see us."

Not all communities planning missions to Israel are doing them explicitly as solidarity missions.

The Jewish Federation of Greater Houston is instead continuing with previous plans for a 400-person mission in February.

So far, no one has canceled, although 90 percent of the participants have never before been to Israel, said Lee Wunsch, executive vice president of the federation.

"We told them it was safe to travel to Israel, and we're keeping that message going to them as often as we can," he said.

"People are very excited about this trip." □

Partnership aims to boost Jewish schools

NEW YORK (JTA) — A committee of the umbrella group for North American Jewish federations focusing on such issues as adult Jewish learning and supporting day schools has formed a partnership with the federations' education arm.

Under the agreement, the Jewish Education Service of North America will provide consulting and staffing for the United Jewish Communities' Renaissance and Renewal Pillar. □

Baltimore senior facility sued

NEW YORK (JTA) — An 8-month-old Baltimore Jewish assisted living facility is being sued for more than \$5 million, according to the Baltimore Jewish Times.

The family of an elderly blind woman who died after falling down a stairwell last March asserts that the Weinberg Park facility was negligent in leaving the woman without proper supervision. □



Daily News Bulletin

Shoshana S. Cardin, *President*

Mark J. Joffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*

Lisa Hostein, *Editor*

Michael S. Arnold, *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.
© JTA Reproduction only by previous arrangement.

JEWISH WORLD

Defeat leaves 27 Jews in House

Republican Dick Zimmer's concession to Rep. Rush Holt (D-N.J.) in a New Jersey congressional race leaves the number of Jews in the U.S. House of Representatives at 27 for the 107th Congress.

The number of Jews in the Senate will either be nine or 10, depending on whether Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) becomes vice president or remains in the Senate.

Nazi loses appeal in Costa Rica

A Costa Rican court rejected an appeal by a convicted Nazi war criminal to remain in the country.

The decision could pave the way for the Central American nation to deport Bohdan Koziy, who was convicted in 1982 of committing atrocities against Jews in Ukraine during World War II.

Panel: Return Austrian paintings

An Austrian committee this week recommended the return of two paintings looted by the Nazis from Austrian Jews.

The two paintings by Gustav Klimt include "Lady With Hat and Boa," valued at up to \$9.5 million.

Poland gives Israel saved Torah

Poland's foreign minister gave Israel's chief Ashkenazi rabbi, Yisrael Meir Lau, a Torah hidden during World War II by a Polish family.

During his visit to Israel, Wladyslaw Bartoszewski is also scheduled to meet with other top officials.

Netanyahu cancels Calif. lectures

Former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu canceled his remaining lectures in the San Francisco area after protesters in Berkeley, Calif., forced him to call off a speech on Tuesday.

A message on the answering machine of the group that arranged the lectures said the talks were canceled out of concern for attendees' safety.

Russian Forward turns 5

The Russian edition of a leading American Jewish newspaper is marking its fifth anniversary next month. The Russian Forward, published in New York, has a circulation of 12,000.

Teacher loses U.N. appeal

The U.N. Human Rights Commission dismissed a complaint from a Canadian teacher and publisher of anti-Semitic tracts who was removed from his teaching duties in 1991. The conviction of Malcolm Ross, who claimed his freedom of speech and freedom of worship had been violated, was upheld by the Supreme Court of Canada in 1995.

Palestinians intensify push for U.N. observers; Israel balks

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — Pressure is mounting on Israel to allow the "internationalization" of the Middle East crisis.

Supporters of the Palestinian cause renewed their push this week for the U.N. Security Council to send a force of 2,000 unarmed military observers to the West Bank and Gaza to "protect" Palestinian civilians.

Meanwhile, the U.N. Economic and Social Council passed a resolution Nov. 22 supporting the creation of a "human rights inquiry commission" to investigate the past two months of Mideast violence.

Jewish observers suspect that Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat is attempting to "internationalize" the crisis to both impose — rather than negotiate — a resolution to the Mideast conflict, and to dilute Washington's role as the "honest broker."

Proposing the observer mission is inherently contradictory, Israeli Justice Minister Yossi Beilin suggested.

Beilin added that the proposal raises doubts about the Palestinians' true intent.

"Do they really believe that in order to protect the Palestinians, they need now an international presence without weapons who will do nothing?" asked Beilin. "For me, it is a big, big red herring."

The United States has indicated it would likely veto such a proposal if it ever came to a vote because the mission would not have Israel's consent.

Beilin said international efforts should instead focus on getting the Palestinians back to the negotiating table.

"What we really need is a peace treaty," he said.

Meanwhile, the council's resolution follows three other denunciations of the Jewish state by U.N. organs: by the Security Council, on Oct. 7; by the Switzerland-based Commission on Human Rights, on Oct. 19; and by the General Assembly in New York, on Oct. 20.

None of the resolutions has faulted the Palestinian side for any of its actions, while the human rights commission went so far as to accuse Israel of "war crimes" and "crimes against humanity."

Analysts predict that if the historic pattern of U.N. behavior toward Israel holds true, the proposed on-the-ground inquiry would conclude that blame for the current bloodshed rests entirely with the Jewish state. □

Docs: Stop using kids as shields

NEW YORK (JTA) — A new group of U.S. pediatricians is calling on the Palestinians to cease using their children as "forced foot soldiers" in the current crisis in the Middle East.

Palestinian families send their children "off into battles on the streets of Palestinian-controlled areas to clash with Israeli soldiers at the edges of their communities," said Dr. Pejman Salimpour, one of the founders of Doctors Opposed to Child Sacrifice.

The group hopes to advocate on behalf of children who are purposefully being exposed to violence and neglect. □

State Dept. reviews travel advisory

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The U.S. State Department is reviewing the warning it issued on travel to Israel and other parts of the Middle East.

A department spokesman said Wednesday that the travel advisory will be lifted once U.S. citizens are not at risk in the region, adding that the decision will not be affected by the warning's political and economic impact.

Some Jewish groups are pressing for the advisory to be revised or lifted. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**Is Israel using 'excessive force'?
Officials deny rights abuse charges***By Avi Machlis*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Streams of words have been written and spoken about the Israeli-Palestinian violence that erupted in late September.

But none stand out as much as one phrase, "excessive force," in describing how badly Israel's international image has been tarnished.

Although the conflict evolved from popular Palestinian riots into a far more complicated guerrilla-style campaign, the debate over Israel's use of force against Palestinian demonstrators and rioters is still on the international agenda. Since the beginning of the crisis, more than 200 Palestinians have been killed, including dozens of children.

The issue came up again Monday, when the U.N. human rights commissioner, Mary Robinson, accused Israel of using excessive force against the Palestinians.

In a report to the U.N. General Assembly, she called for an "international monitoring presence" to be set up in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Along with the conflict itself, the "excessive force" discussion is heading into new territory.

As Palestinian attacks intensify, and Israel's ever-harsher retaliations expose the enormous imbalance of military power in Israel's favor, questions are being raised about the legal limits of Israel's response in a warlike conflict that falls short of an all-out war.

B'Tselem, the Israeli human rights group in the West Bank and Gaza, says it is better qualified than international organizations to investigate Israel's human rights record during the current conflict.

"We have a better ability to see the complexity of the situation than international organizations," says Tomer Feffer, spokesman for B'Tselem.

"We are not trying to say which side is right, but to examine from a human rights perspective how each side is violating or not violating human rights."

The group's reporting includes criticism of Palestinians for not keeping children away from flashpoints, and unequivocal support for the right of Israeli soldiers to shoot to kill any armed Palestinian firing at them.

Nevertheless, B'Tselem criticizes Israel for never having invested seriously in nonlethal methods of crowd control — such as water cannons — despite years of demonstrations and riots in the West Bank and Gaza.

It also says, based on extensive field work, that Israel's widespread use of rubber-coated metal bullets is inappropriate for dispersing riots because the bullets are lethal ammunition and have caused the deaths of many unarmed Palestinians.

According to the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, 9,093 Palestinians had been injured in the conflict through late November, including 3,649 by rubber-coated bullets. B'Tselem says there are no official statistics on how many of the deaths were caused by rubber-coated bullets.

"Rubber-coated metal bullets do not disperse riots; they kill

people," says Feffer, adding that despite the problems Israel faces, it cannot fire freely at rioters.

"According to international law, it is forbidden to mix armed people with unarmed civilians since this endangers the unarmed people. However, the fact that there are gunmen in a crowd does not give Israel the right to fire indiscriminately into the crowd."

Col. Daniel Reisner, head of the Israel Defense Force's international law department, disputes B'Tselem's criticism.

He says the army developed nonlethal weapons to deal with the 1987-1993 Palestinian uprising, when riots were rarely accompanied by gunfire.

But these are inappropriate in the current situation, he says. Water cannons, for example, could not be used because the driver would be exposed to gunfire.

In recent weeks, military representatives have fruitlessly scoured the globe for long-range nonlethal riot control equipment. "No such equipment exists anywhere in the world," Reisner says.

Reisner defends the use of rubber-coated bullets, saying they are meant to cause harm, but not to kill, if used properly.

He admits that when they're shot less than 150 feet from their target, they can be lethal.

But statistically speaking, Reisner argues, the damage inflicted by this ammunition may not be as bad as the raw numbers indicate.

According to the IDF, there have been 4,832 disturbances involving stone-throwing since the conflict erupted. Even compared with the Red Crescent's figures of 3,649 injured by rubber-coated bullets, this amounts to less than one injury per incident.

"If that's the ratio, then they are getting off lightly," says Reisner. "The numbers do not coincide with the claim that the IDF is firing freely because if we were, the number should have been significantly higher."

B'Tselem has not yet given its official opinion on the use of Israeli helicopter gunships to retaliate against Palestinian attacks.

It does, however, say that in anything short of a full-scale armed conflict between two sovereign states, the use of force must be proportional.

This would mean that, according to B'Tselem's interpretation of international law, Israel would not be entitled to use helicopters to strike at lightly armed Palestinians.

The definition will be critical to determine what exactly constitutes excessive force.

"It is complicated to define, and we are taking advice from international legal experts," says Feffer of B'Tselem.

Reisner agrees that this question is critical.

"We are now in a state of armed conflict short of war," he says. "The modern definition of armed conflict is extremely wide. Helicopter gunship attacks are exactly one of the few changes we've made in terms of our outlook on the conflict."

For Israel to justify its use of such methods in the international arena will depend in part on the intensity of the violence coming from the Palestinian side.

Ironically, says Reisner, a unilateral Palestinian declaration of independence could legally give Israel a freer hand to unleash more force, since it would technically be fighting a sovereign state.

But even the best lawyers the Jewish state can buy will not help it win the battle for international public opinion that will likely become far more critical if Israel hits the Palestinians harder than it is now. □