



# Daily News Bulletin

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84th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### More talks slated in Washington

Israel and the Palestinian Authority decided to send negotiators to Washington in the next few days, but U.S. officials downplayed the possibility that an Israeli-Palestinian peace accord could be hammered out before President Clinton leaves office.

Israel reached the decision at a meeting Wednesday of the Security Cabinet, after Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat gave conditional acceptance to Clinton's proposals for an accord.

Israeli officials questioned whether Arafat is courting world opinion, not wanting to appear as if he is torpedoing Clinton's 11th-hour peace effort.

### Paper: Wallenberg deal was nixed

The Soviet Union was willing to trade captured Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg after World War II for Soviet citizens who had defected to Sweden, but Sweden turned down the offer, a Swedish newspaper reported.

Wednesday's report is based on a Swedish-Russian panel's investigation into the fate of Wallenberg, who helped save tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews during World War II.

The panel plans to issue its finding later this month.

### Shells fired from Lebanon

Mortar shells fired from Lebanon landed near an Israeli army frontier post in the disputed Shabaa Farms area, but caused no casualties or damage. An Israeli army spokesman called Wednesday's cross-border attack "a severe incident."

A day earlier, an Israeli worker was wounded in the stomach by sniper fire from Lebanon elsewhere along the border.

### Israel courts world opinion

Israeli officials are holding meetings with diplomats from several countries to present the Jewish state's position in the ongoing attempts to reach a peace agreement with the Palestinians.

Danny Yatom, the prime minister's security adviser, met with Russian officials Wednesday in Moscow, and he is slated to visit London and Rome later this week.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami met with an Indonesian official in Sweden on Wednesday.

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

### Eizenstat: Holocaust restitution not on Bush team's radar screen

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — With the Clinton administration fast drawing to a close, Deputy Treasury Secretary Stuart Eizenstat appears to be less concerned about his future than about the Holocaust restitution efforts he has directed for the last five years.

The administration's point man in the restitution battles, Eizenstat is concerned that the issue has not been a priority for the Bush transition team.

"It's not an issue that, so far as I know, is on the radar screen of the incoming administration," Eizenstat told JTA in an interview.

As President Clinton's special envoy on Holocaust issues, Eizenstat has overseen dramatic changes in the area of World War II-era restitution, from negotiating major settlements worth some \$7 billion with the Swiss banks and German and Austrian governments to helping set up a 10-country task force on Holocaust education that promotes national memorial days and programming in schools.

The efforts made by the U.S. government have been bipartisan and nonpolitical, Eizenstat said, and it is important that countries think the new U.S. leadership will continue to make the issue a priority. The Bush team should build on the momentum of the last few years and have a point person who will get the attention of foreign governments, he said.

"There's no reason the next administration shouldn't grab it and give as much emphasis to it as we have," Eizenstat said, the trace of a Southern accent from his Atlanta boyhood still evident in his slow, measured speech.

Eizenstat's record on restitution makes those involved in the issue all the more concerned about his imminent departure.

Under Eizenstat's leadership, a number of political negotiations got under way and ultimately bore fruit. Preparations now are being made to disburse money from a fund established by Swiss banks that misappropriated Jewish assets during the Holocaust, as well as from a settlement with Germany that covers slave labor and "Aryanized" property, and which earmarks \$350 million for Holocaust education projects.

Interestingly, Eizenstat is proudest of some of the less-publicized successes of the restitution efforts, such as the fact that 17 countries have established historical commissions to examine their roles in handling Holocaust-era assets.

These commissions are important, Eizenstat explained, because at some point the settlement moneys are going to evaporate, but Holocaust education must continue.

"The real question is what memory will be left," he said. "I think it's important that the last memory of the Holocaust not be money, but memory and lessons learned."

For Eizenstat, 57, his most important accomplishment is having "brought back the unfinished business of World War II and the Holocaust to the public's eye, of doing some measure of justice to the elderly survivors, and creating a greater sense of memory for those who perished."

He hopes that restitution efforts have put "a nail in the coffin of historical revisionism." He also hopes they have helped people understand the "horrific dimensions not only of the loss of life but the incredible effort to destroy the entire culture," and how the Nazis confiscated property to finance their war effort.

"It adds a whole new dimension to what we already knew," he said.

As the restitution process gained momentum, questions arose about Jews and other Holocaust victims pursuing money and spurring a Holocaust "industry." Eizenstat said

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Ezer Weizman supports Sharon

Former Israeli President Ezer Weizman threw his support behind opposition leader Ariel Sharon in the nation's race for the premiership. Weizman said Wednesday the country needed "some order."

### Israel arrests Islamic militants

Israeli police said they had uncovered a cell of the militant Islamic Jihad group that was planning car bomb explosions in Israel.

The cell's members were arrested two weeks ago, but an Israeli court on Wednesday permitted publication of the arrests in the Nablus area. Israeli security sources suspect Israeli Arabs may have helped the cell members obtain bomb-making materials.

### Israel to settlers: Use buses

Israel's army is encouraging settlers to use public transportation more frequently as a safety measure.

The Israeli daily *Ma'ariv* reported that army officers are presenting a security plan to settler leaders that includes stepping up the number of reinforced buses serving the settlements.

### Ministry OKs mock school vote

Following an outcry from students and educators at Ramat Gan's Blich High School, Israel's Education Ministry reversed a decision to bar the school from holding mock elections later this month. The school's mock vote during election years always draws public attention because the students successfully predicted changes of power in 1977, 1992 and 1999.

### Researchers: Eat more hummus

Eating hummus, the popular Middle East chick-pea spread, can help keep you healthy, according to researchers at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

The researchers said hummus contains antioxidants that contribute to the prevention of heart disease and cancer.

he considers such criticism misplaced. People have a right to recover their property and assets, he said. Furthermore, lawyers are not getting rich off the settlements, even though their class-action lawsuits grabbed the attention of governments and companies.

Eizenstat criticized some lawyers' threats of boycotts and sanctions against countries that refused to negotiate with Jewish groups, and said he feels that lawyers sometimes use Holocaust victims as props at their settlement news conferences.

Even before he took over the restitution issue, Eizenstat was respected by Jewish leaders for his work on other issues of concern to the community. As domestic policy adviser to President Carter, Eizenstat worked on the American response to the Arab economic boycott of Israel and on Soviet refugee policy, among other issues.

Between Democratic administrations, Eizenstat worked as a lawyer.

From 1993 to 1996, he was U.S. ambassador to the European Union in Brussels, and from 1997 to 1999 served as the State Department's senior economic official, advising Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on international economic policy. Jewish groups also appreciate his leadership on human rights and terrorism issues.

A Conservative Jew, Eizenstat decorates the anteroom to his office with colorful Andy Warhol prints of famous Jewish personalities such as U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, actress Sarah Bernhardt, the Marx Brothers, Albert Einstein and Golda Meir. Inside his cluttered office, the atmosphere is quieter and more sedate.

Thin and balding, with a studious expression and a serious tone, Eizenstat sketches out the state of restitution efforts on different fronts and in different countries.

In the United States, the Presidential Commission on Holocaust Assets is set to deliver a report soon that will assess restitution efforts thus far and recommend funding for Holocaust education projects.

Some countries already have set up funds to make reparations. France, for example, set up a \$350 million foundation and an uncapped claims fund to pay the fair-market value of properties confiscated by the wartime Vichy regime, an unusual move that Eizenstat said was "very welcome."

Museums around the world are researching thousands of artworks that could have been looted or handled by known Nazi dealers. A number of pieces are being returned to their owners or their heirs, and Eizenstat noted Russia's recent decision to open its archives and permit claims from families and religious institutions whose art was confiscated.

Eizenstat also has pushed the insurance claims process via the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims, which is dealing with charges that European insurers refused payments on policies taken out by Jews who later perished in the Holocaust. The first big step came last month when Italian insurer Assicurazioni Generali agreed to pay \$100 million to settle Holocaust-era insurance claims and provide humanitarian assistance to survivors.

State insurance commissioners, who wanted to launch their own restitution efforts, criticized Eizenstat's insistence that all insurance issues be channeled through ICHEIC.

Some negotiations, particularly the German settlement, were very emotional and difficult, Eizenstat said.

Eizenstat plans to work on these issues to the very last days of his term, as negotiations are still under way with Austria on a broad range of Holocaust-era issues. Austria already has agreed to pay approximately \$395 million to roughly 150,000 former slave and forced laborers and at least \$300 million for property restitution, but the total funding isn't finalized. Eizenstat plans to visit Vienna in January to tie up as many loose ends as possible.

Eizenstat first showed his interest in Holocaust issues in 1978 when, under Carter, he helped lay the groundwork for the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Twenty-three later — and after five years as special envoy for property claims in Central and Eastern Europe — Eizenstat said it gives him a "sense of satisfaction" that he helped bring justice to survivors and helped people understand the dimensions of the Nazis' property confiscation.

Though he is unsure whether he will move on to a law or consulting firm, Eizenstat doesn't want to leave the restitution field entirely. After stepping down, he plans to spend several months at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars writing a book on Holocaust restitution issues. □



## Daily News Bulletin

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## JEWISH WORLD

### Yahoo! backs off on Nazi artifacts

Yahoo! said it will stop carrying online auctions of Nazi artifacts and other hate-related materials.

The restrictions, announced Wednesday and slated to take effect Jan. 10, could satisfy a French court's November ruling requiring the Internet portal to block French users from such auctions.

"I believe we have won the battle," said Marc Knoble, an activist for the Paris-based International League against Racism and Anti-Semitism, which led the legal battle against Yahoo! in the French courts last year.

### Schools pressed on Israel credit

U.S. universities should not discourage their students from studying in Israel, said an umbrella group for American Jewry.

The statement by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations came after several schools considered denying credit to students studying in Israel next semester because of a State Department advisory warning U.S. citizens against traveling there.

### EI Al office bombed in Zurich

A small bomb exploded at the entrance of an EI Al Airlines office in Zurich.

The explosion early Wednesday morning destroyed the glass entrance doors, but no one was injured.

In a message faxed to The Associated Press, an anarchist group calling itself "Revolutionary Perspective" claimed responsibility.

### Suspects linked to radical Islam

Two Arab men arrested in connection with the October firebombing of a synagogue in Dusseldorf, Germany, have no links to radical Islamic groups, Germany's top prosecutor said.

The two, arrested in December, allegedly carried out the attack because they were angry at Israeli policies toward the Palestinians, the prosecutor said Wednesday.

### William Rogers dies at 87

William Rogers, a former U.S. secretary of state who proposed an unsuccessful Middle East peace plan after the 1967 Six-Day War, died Tuesday at the age of 87.

Both Israel and Egypt rejected the so-called Rogers Plan, under which the Jewish state would have withdrawn to its prewar borders with minor modifications.

Before serving under President Nixon, Rogers was also attorney general from 1957 to 1961 in the Eisenhower administration.

## Jewish groups see no problem with Arab American Cabinet choice

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The only Arab American in the Senate for the last six years, and a lawmaker with a mixed record on Israel issues, will join President-elect George W. Bush's Cabinet as secretary of energy.

In November, former Sen. Spencer Abraham (R-Mich.) lost a tight race to Rep. Debbie Stabenow for a second term. The former senator was praised by several pro-Israel activists, who noted his strong support for immigration reform and nuclear non-proliferation.

"We had a good working relationship with him," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. "He had a close relationship with the Jewish community in Michigan, and his voting record was good on Israel-related issues."

In accepting the Cabinet post Tuesday, Abraham, 48, referred to his Lebanese heritage. He is an Eastern Orthodox Christian.

"I just want to say that I think it is a testament to the special place that America is that the grandson of four Lebanese immigrants can have the opportunity to serve in the Cabinet of the president of the United States," he said. "I'm very proud to have been given this opportunity."

In the Senate, Abraham co-sponsored legislation to crack down on oil money headed toward Iran and Libya.

He also opposed U.S. recognition of a unilateral Palestinian declaration of independence.

Yet Abraham's record at times has not always pleased Jewish groups.

He was one of only two senators not to sign a letter to President Clinton this fall condemning Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat for the latest violence in the Middle East.

Abraham's appointment to the energy post surprised many, who considered him better suited for the Department of Transportation because of his work on the Senate's transportation committee and because of Michigan's auto industry.

In Michigan, the Arab community is three times the size of the Jewish community. Still, Abraham maintained good relations with the Jewish community, according to David Gad-Harf, executive director of the Jewish Community Council of Metropolitan Detroit.

The two men worked together on immigration reform, part of Abraham's job as chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee's immigration subcommittee.

"He took the lead in trying to work for more fair immigration policies and to raise the limits on the number of legal immigrants," Gad-Harf said.

Abraham also made sure that he and his staff were available to the local Jewish community.

"You would think that on Middle East issues, there would be problems," Gad-Harf said. "But we were able to work with him on issues that were supportive of the peace process."

In any case, Gad-Harf noted that as head of the Department of Energy, Abraham will not venture deeply into the Middle East peace process.

However, he will oversee the influx of oil to the United States from the strategic Persian Gulf region. □

## Peace activists press Arafat on return

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A group of 33 Israeli peace activists called on Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat this week to stop insisting on the Palestinian "right of return" and accept President Clinton's proposals for a final peace accord.

In a front-page ad in the Israeli daily Ha'aretz, the group said that under the proposals, Palestinian "refugees will have the right to return to their homeland, Palestine, and settle there." □

## NEWS ANALYSIS

**Jerusalem proposals push Israelis to re-examine core Zionist beliefs**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The angry, anguished cry of “Uganda” is filling the air in Israel these days.

It doesn't mean much to the uninitiated. But for those schooled in the fundamentals of Zionist history, this esoteric code word says it all.

Uganda was where the Zionist movement, back in 1903, considered setting up a Jewish homeland. But the plan was considered and rejected, as the majority of the movement overruled founder Theodor Herzl and held that only Zion — the biblical name for Jerusalem — could be the legitimate and practical goal of Zionism.

From the Knesset plenum to coffee shops to private homes, Israelis are again conducting a wrenching, back-to-basics argument over the heart and soul of their national project.

The negotiations with the Palestinians — accompanied as they are by terror and bloodshed — and the upcoming election inextricably linked to those negotiations are forcing every Israeli to examine anew the tenets of the Zionist credo.

The Temple Mount and the walled Old City of Jerusalem, focal points of Jewish longing over the centuries, have been placed squarely on the negotiating table. Most people here find that shocking, after 33 years of assurances from politicians of all stripes that Israeli sovereignty over the Holy City is nonnegotiable.

The Camp David summit in July, for example, appeared to founder over Prime Minister Ehud Barak's unwillingness to give up Israeli control of the Temple Mount.

In addition, while his flexibility on Jerusalem went far beyond the Israeli consensus, Barak still appeared to be searching for ways to give the Palestinians a say in running Arab neighborhoods without divvying up sovereignty in the city.

Now, the turnabout by Barak and his depleted governing coalition has come so suddenly that it is hard to gauge the public reaction with any accuracy.

Polls published last weekend show that Barak is trailing badly behind Ariel Sharon, the Likud Party's candidate for prime minister in the Feb. 6 election. The polls give Barak the support of one-quarter to one-third of the electorate.

However, President Clinton's peace package, which envisions deep Israeli concessions in Jerusalem, does significantly better in the polls than Barak does. Close to half the country voices support for the proposals, though they still have to be precisely defined.

When asked to articulate their concerns, many Israelis say they are unhappy with the thought of Jerusalem being carved into a latticework of sovereignties. Fewer seem overly perturbed by the idea of ceding sovereignty over the Temple Mount, the site of the

biblical Jewish temples and today home to the Al-Aksa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock.

According to the polls, even fewer Israelis seem concerned by the prospect of giving the Palestinians military and civilian control over such sacred sites as the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron or Rachel's Tomb just outside Bethlehem.

Interestingly, the fault line between right and left does not correspond precisely to the religious-secular divide. While the Orthodox communities are profoundly attached to the Tomb of the Patriarchs, Rachel's Tomb, Joseph's Tomb and the ancient Peace on Israel synagogue — the latter two defiled and burned by Palestinian rioters in recent months — the Orthodox are profoundly ambivalent about the holiest site of all, the Temple Mount.

This reflects the prohibition in Jewish law forbidding Jews from setting foot on the Temple Mount. Jewish law, or halachah, regards everyone today as ritually impure and requires a process of purification that can only be undertaken, according to most halachic authorities, when the Temple stands.

The view is not unanimous, however, and a few Orthodox rabbis contend that Jews may indeed visit the mount, avoiding only a particular patch where it is believed that the Temple's Holy of Holies once stood.

Still, the mainstream halachic prohibition dovetailed nicely with Israel's political decision just after the 1967 Six-Day War to leave civilian control of the Temple Mount in the hands of the Muslim religious trust, and to prohibit Jewish prayer at the site so as not to provoke Muslim anger.

Barak this week said he would not sign the Temple Mount over to the Palestinians, but left open the possibility that sovereignty could be transferred to a third party. Leaders of the religious Zionist movement, which largely abides by the halachic prohibition on visiting the mount, regard Barak's readiness to bargain over the area as heretical.

The differences within Orthodoxy were evident this week when Zionist rabbis failed to obtain the backing of ultra-Orthodox rabbis for a campaign against Temple Mount concessions.

In contrast, non-Orthodox rightists, whose ties to the holy places are less religious than national and emotional, put the Temple Mount at the top of their loyalties and political priorities.

Ultimately, Barak believes, Israel's secular majority will be prepared to forgo control over the holy sites, including the Temple Mount, for a peace treaty. Any such treaty would contain detailed provisions ensuring rights of access and worship for Jews at these shrines. However, history raises questions about the credibility of such provisions.

The past three months of Palestinian violence, replete with acts of wanton sacrilege against Jewish shrines — and some reprisals by Jews against former Muslim mosques inside Israel — have eroded any confidence Israelis might have had in the Palestinian commitment to honor such provisions.

Would that lack of trust cause secular Israelis to oppose a peace accord, assuming its security-related aspects — the army's right to overfly Palestinian areas, to maintain listening posts on key mountaintops and to deploy tanks near the Jordan River if threatened from the east — are satisfactory?

That is difficult to assess. The perennial tension between religious and secular in Israel may undermine the secular majority's sympathy for the sensibilities of the religious minority regarding the holy sites. □

**CORRECTION:** A story in the Jan. 3 edition of the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN on the Orthodox Union's convention should have stated that the physical and sexual abuse charges against Rabbi Baruch Lanner are only allegations. Lanner denies the charges, but admitted to some inappropriate conduct in a statement submitted to an O.U. commission that investigated the matter.