



# Daily News Bulletin

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84th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Report: 'Iran 10' appeal denied

The Iranian courts rejected an appeal by 10 Iranian Jews imprisoned on charges of spying, according to the French news service AFP.

U.S. advocates for the 10 have not been able to confirm the reports, but they said the denial was expected.

The next step for the 10 may be an appeal for clemency to Iran's supreme ruler, Ayatollah Khamenei.

### Talks suspended after slayings

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak recalled his top negotiators from peace talks with the Palestinians after the bodies of two slain Israelis were discovered in the West Bank.

Palestinian sources said the two men had entered a restaurant to eat when they were attacked by gunmen who took the two to an area outside the center of Tulkarm and shot them in the head. [Page 3]

### Consul general faces recall

The Israeli consul general for the Southeast region of the United States will likely be recalled for allegedly allowing an Iraqi friend to live with him.

While no decision has been announced yet, Israeli diplomats close to the situation said they expect Jacob Rosen to be "removed gently" from his Atlanta-based post some time this summer.

Over the past few weeks, Rosen had been under investigation for allegedly allowing Hisham Bahalul, 29, an Iraqi friend he met during his six-year posting in Jordan, to live with him and his family in the official residence of the consul general in Atlanta.

### Embassy decision delayed

The U.S. State Department said Tuesday that plans to move the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem will not be evaluated until May.

The State Department's announcement came despite comments from President Bush during the election campaign that the action would be taken soon after he became president.

A State Department spokesman said Tuesday that President Clinton signed a waiver in December delaying any decision on the issue for six months because of the political situation in the region.

The Bush administration is expected to re-evaluate the situation when the waiver expires.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Jews split over Bush moves on education, overseas abortion

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — If the election had turned out differently, it might have been Vice President Joseph Lieberman unveiling an education plan in the East Room ceremony.

Instead, President Bush offered his education blueprint — which he hopes can be implemented for the next school year — to Congress, while Sen. Lieberman (D-Conn.) offered a competing package at a news conference at the Capitol.

Introducing his education package was one of Bush's first actions in office as he launched his agenda this week, making important policy moves on education and abortion that concern many in the Jewish community.

On the first work day of his presidency, Bush on Monday barred federal funds from being given to international family planning groups that offer abortion services and counseling. On Tuesday, he introduced an education plan that calls for school accountability, more local school control, annual student testing and school vouchers.

The Jewish community is closely watching Bush's initial moves to see how forcefully he will move to translate contentious campaign issues into policy.

The use of vouchers, which provide government funds for students to attend parochial or private schools, remains a divisive issue among Jewish organizations. Many groups oppose vouchers on church-state separation grounds, but others support them because believe parents could use the money to send their children to Jewish schools.

Lieberman came under fire during the presidential campaign for his support of experimental voucher programs. On Tuesday, Lieberman, Sen. Evan Bayh (D-Ind.) and other moderate Democrats unveiled legislation that would streamline federal school programs and make resources available to disadvantaged students, but would not include vouchers.

"There is a lot of room for collaboration" with Bush, Lieberman said, while admitting there also were differences between the two programs, and not just on vouchers.

Nevertheless, Lieberman said the priorities in his bill — which calls for an additional \$35 billion for education over the next five years and which promotes charter schools and public school choice — overlap significantly with Bush's.

Both sides are anxious to find common ground on education reform, according to Richard Foltin, legislative director for the American Jewish Committee.

Bush's limited plan, which would allow vouchers for students in schools that fail to meet standards three years in a row, suggests that Bush's motivation is in the right place, Foltin said, but added that any voucher system would not fix the problems of failing schools.

Voucher initiatives were defeated in Michigan and California in November, and a federal appeals court in December ruled that a voucher plan in Cleveland was unconstitutional.

There is concern that the issue of vouchers could lead to legislative gridlock in the narrowly divided House of Representatives and the evenly split Senate.

It is hard to find potential points of compromise on vouchers, said Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

Many in the Jewish community will continue to oppose vouchers, even if more

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Barak, Powell confer on peace

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak spoke by phone Monday night with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell and briefed him on the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

Barak's office said he outlined Israel's positions in the talks during his first contact with the newly inaugurated Bush administration.

### Sharon won't discuss 1982 war

Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon refused to answer questions from students about his role in the 1982 war in Lebanon when he visited an Israeli high school Tuesday.

The previous day, Sharon was taken by surprise when a student blamed him for the shell shock her father suffered after the war. The student is active in Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak's campaign, which prompted Likud officials to charge that the Barak campaign is planting questions with students. Barak's camp denied the accusation.

### 1967 Temple Mount move blasted

Israel's chief Ashkenazi rabbi said the country made a "major historic mistake" when it returned control of Jerusalem's Temple Mount to Muslims after the 1967 Six-Day War.

In a message to Prime Minister Ehud Barak, Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau said Muslim authorities are destroying archeological remains at the site, Lau's spokesman said Tuesday.

### Barak wins school election

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak defeated opposition leader Ariel Sharon by 57.7 percent to 42.3 percent in mock elections held Tuesday at a Ramat Gan high school.

The mock vote at Blich High School draws media attention because it has correctly predicted outcomes in several previous elections.



## Daily News Bulletin

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parents are sending their children to Jewish schools, Saperstein said.

Opponents say vouchers will siphon money away from the public schools, but supporters say they are a way to hold schools accountable for progress.

"The only way accountability works is to have consequences," said Nathan Diament, director of the Orthodox Union's Institute for Public Affairs.

Diament said he hopes Bush will stick to the voucher plan, and believes states should be allowed to set up voucher demonstration programs.

Bush's plan provides the possibility of meaningful school reform, and vouchers deserve a try, said Abba Cohen, director and counsel of the Washington office of Agudath Israel of America.

The fervently Orthodox group would prefer a more far-reaching voucher plan. But even a limited voucher plan at the federal level has symbolic value, and it could filter down to state legislatures that can pass broad forms of school choice, Cohen said.

Aware that his voucher plan does not sit well with Democrats and some moderate Republicans, Bush met with key members of both parties to push his ideas before introducing his plan. Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), the ranking minority member on the Senate's Education Committee, said there are "overwhelming areas of agreement" between the Bush plan and the Democratic one.

The Bush team has been trying to put the voucher concept in the most acceptable light, presenting it as just one part of a larger approach to school choice.

The administration also is waging a campaign of semantics, using the term "parental choice" instead of the more politically volatile "vouchers."

"We want to be concerned about the results, not about the structures and not about the systems," Education Secretary Rod Paige said.

While consensus might be found on education reform, Bush's order on Monday stopping federal funding of programs that offer abortion services abroad was much more polarizing.

Pro-choice Jewish groups condemned the move, saying it will harm women's health programs and infringe on free speech.

The American Jewish Congress said it hopes the "distressing" act does not indicate that Bush will retreat from Clinton's policy of protecting reproductive choice.

The AJCongress denounced the move, saying existing regulations on U.S. funding are strict and the benefits of family planning programs clear.

The action is "particularly ironic since funding of international family planning reduces abortions," Lois Waldman, director of the AJCongress' Commission for Women's Equality, said in a statement.

Current law bans the use of U.S. funds for abortions in foreign countries. In 1984, in what is often referred to as the "Mexico City policy," President Reagan further banned U.S. aid to international groups that use their own money to support abortion.

President Clinton suspended Reagan's measure in one of his first acts in office. Bush's order reverses Clinton's move.

The National Council of Jewish Women said the order was "a clear infringement of free speech" because it allows the U.S. government to tell international organizations how to use their private funds.

"Such restrictions will surely have dire consequences for the continued success of these critically needed health programs, which save the lives of thousands of women and children every year," NCJW President Jan Schneiderman said in a statement.

Cohen of Agudath Israel said the Orthodox group opposes abortion and identifies with the pro-life movement, but does not comment on abortion-related issues, such as waiting periods or funding. The Orthodox Union had no comment on the order.

Pro-choice groups also have criticized some of Bush's appointments — such as Attorney General-designate John Ashcroft and Health and Human Services Secretary-designate Tommy Thompson — because of their anti-abortion stances.

NCJW formally opposes the Ashcroft nomination.

On Monday, thousands of anti-abortion protesters rallied in Washington to mark the 28th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision, which legalized abortion.

"We share a great goal: to work toward a day when every child is welcomed in life and protected in law," Bush said in a statement read to the rally. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Shoah victims file new lawsuit

Holocaust victims are seeking damages that could run into hundreds of millions of dollars from a class-action lawsuit filed against several German banks.

The lawsuit, filed Monday in New York, charges that Nazi officials, aided by the German banks, took control of Jewish-owned assets in Austrian banks.

### Europe court to hear Papon plea

The European Court of Human Rights agreed to consider a plea for release by convicted war criminal Maurice Papon.

Papon, who was found guilty by a French court of helping deport some 1,500 Jews to Nazi death camps during World War II, made the appeal on the grounds that keeping a 90-year-old in jail is inhumane.

It could take until the middle of next year before the court rules whether incarceration at his age violates European rights conventions against inhumane and degrading treatment.

The court can advise but not order France to free him.

### Putin vows to help peace process

Russian President Vladimir Putin said he would work to ensure continuity in the Middle East peace process despite the change of administration in Washington and the upcoming election in Israel.

Putin made the comment after meeting Tuesday in Moscow with Israeli President Moshe Katsav, who said Russia's good relations with the Arab world could be used to help the peace process.

### Romanian killings remembered

Romanian President Ion Iliescu joined Jewish survivors of World War II earlier this week to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the killings of Jews by Romanian fascists during a failed coup.

From Jan. 21-23, 1941, the Iron Guard robbed and tortured hundreds of Jews, of whom 120 perished. Some 25 synagogues and temples were ransacked.

### Israeli firm to invest in spa town

An Israeli company plans to invest more than \$20 million in the Czech spa town of Karlovy Vary, its mayor told JTA. The Daniel Group company wants to reconstruct one of the town's spa treatment facilities and build a casino, shops and a swimming pool.

### Neo-Nazis' sentence reduced

Latvia's Supreme Court recently reduced the sentences of a group of neo-Nazis who bombed a Soviet war memorial in 1997, according to the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews. The court also said the members of the Thunder Cross group will not have to pay \$32,000 for the damage they caused.

## Progress in Taba peace talks cut short by West Bank murders

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The state of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks seems to vary by the hour, with reports of progress overtaken by word that talks have been suspended.

When the talks began Sunday at the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Taba, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak held no illusions about the likelihood of reaching an agreement, considering the distance separating the two sides on issues such as Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees.

Palestinian negotiators were equally pessimistic. But by Tuesday negotiators were describing the talks as some of the best that had been held in a long time.

That changed before the day ended.

Later Tuesday, Barak recalled his top negotiators from the talks after two Israelis were pulled from a restaurant in the West Bank city of Tulkarm and shot. Hamas claimed responsibility for the murders. It was unclear when the negotiators would return to Taba, but the talks were not expected to resume at least until after funerals for the two Israelis were held Wednesday.

The talks had been expected to last about 10 days, meaning they would end just before Israel holds elections for prime minister on Feb. 6.

Both sides had expressed doubt it would be possible to conclude an agreement before the elections. Yet before the two bodies were found Tuesday, the sides described the discussions as "serious" and conducted in a good atmosphere.

"I am a realist. It would be very, very difficult," Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami, the chief Israeli negotiator, said Tuesday when asked about prospects for finalizing an agreement in the coming days.

"We cannot talk about substance because nothing of substance has been resolved yet," Palestinian Authority official Nabil Sha'ath said.

Despite the skepticism, the talks were reportedly substantive, with the two sides reviewing maps and going into details on all the main issues.

The Israeli daily Ha'aretz quoted an Israeli source as saying it was unlikely that the two teams could draft an agreement before the elections, but they nonetheless hoped to come up with guidelines that could serve as a basis for discussions following the election.

One member of the Palestinian team, Ahmed Karia, said separate committees had been formed to address Jerusalem, security, borders and Palestinian refugees — the toughest unresolved issues.

On Tuesday, there were reports that Israel had put forward a proposal to resolve the sovereignty issue over holy sites in Jerusalem's Old City, which has emerged as one of the main stumbling blocks to an agreement.

According to the reports, Israel had suggested that special arrangements be developed for the holy sites to ensure free access by members of all religions.

According to some reports, these arrangements would amount to shared Israeli-Palestinian sovereignty over all the sites, including the Western Wall and other Jewish sites.

Israel's chief Ashkenazi rabbi, Yisrael Meir Lau, decried the move and said he was assured by a senior political source that no such proposal was put forward.

The Israeli Prime Minister's Office said in a statement that under any agreement, Jewish holy sites would remain under Israeli sovereignty.

In any event, Palestinians were unenthusiastic about the idea. Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat called it a "nonstarter."

The Israeli team includes Ben-Ami, Barak aide Gilead Sher and Cabinet ministers Yossi Beilin and Amnon Lipkin-Shahak.

Sha'ath, Erekat, legislative speaker Karia and Information Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo are leading the Palestinian team.

Tuesday's West Bank slayings provided the latest setback to the diplomatic efforts.

According to initial reports, two Israeli restaurateurs had traveled to the West Bank city of Tulkarm with an Israeli Arab acquaintance to shop. □

## Top O.U. official resigns, but critics say it's not enough

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — The executive vice president of the Orthodox Union has resigned — apparently under pressure — in the latest development in a case that has gripped the centrist Orthodox group for months.

Rabbi Raphael Butler had come under fire for not disciplining Rabbi Baruch Lanner, a high-ranking professional in the O.U.'s youth group who has been accused of sexually harassing, molesting and physically abusing scores of teen-agers.

Lanner, who had served as director of regions for the O.U.'s National Conference of Synagogue Youth, resigned in July, shortly after an article detailing the allegations against him appeared in the New York Jewish Week.

Butler, who became the O.U.'s top professional in 1994 after more than 13 years of work in the organization, submitted a resignation letter last Friday.

High-level Orthodox officials said Butler had the support of a majority of the O.U.'s executive committee, which was to vote Feb. 4 on his employment status. But the Orthodox rabbinic arm and the O.U.'s immediate past president exerted strong pressure to push Butler out, the officials said.

Butler's resignation came three and a half weeks after an O.U.-appointed commission released an executive summary of a report that found "profound errors of judgment" in the way the organization's leaders dealt with Lanner.

O.U. officials have apologized for Lanner's behavior, and hosted a public forum on the topic at the organization's biennial convention over New Year's weekend.

Butler's departure is the first concrete change at the Orthodox Union since the completion of the report, which was based on interviews with 175 people.

Lanner refused to be interviewed for the commission report. His lawyer submitted a 10-page document stating that Lanner denies committing any crime but "acknowledges that in the past his conduct, on occasion, was inappropriate."

Butler will remain for a transition period while the board searches for a replacement.

O.U. officials would not disclose details of Butler's severance package. Several sources close to the situation said they expect that he will easily find another job in the Orthodox world.

A number of people in the organization, as well as some of Lanner's alleged victims, have argued that the commission's executive summary implicates Butler for not responding to red flags, though it does not mention names.

Butler's resignation letter, which was released to the public, does not acknowledge any wrongdoing.

It indicates that he is leaving "to prevent the divisiveness and rancor that threaten the mission" of the Orthodox Union.

The decision to quit, Butler wrote, is "intended to shift the focus away from personalities and toward addressing the Orthodox Union's charge of Avodat Hakodesh," or holy work. The letter also alludes to an "outpouring of support" from within the "movement" and from people on a 13-member committee that is deciding how to implement the report's recommendations.

In a short letter "reluctantly" accepting the resignation, O.U.

President Harvey Blitz praised Butler for work that has "resulted in the exceptional growth and development" of the Orthodox Union.

According to high-level Orthodox officials, former O.U. President Mandell Ganchrow and Rabbi Steven Dworken, executive vice president of the movement's Rabbinical Council of America, pushed for Butler's resignation.

When asked about Butler's departure, both would only say they thought it would help the Orthodox Union to move forward.

"Hopefully this is the beginning of a necessary process to re-establish the trust, commitment and involvement of the community," Dworken said. "I believe it truly shows a clear-cut willingness to take responsibility for the entire affair."

Some critics of the Orthodox Union took issue with what they called Butler's failure to acknowledge any guilt.

"It didn't sound to me as if this was a case of the O.U. holding anyone responsible, which was what we'd been asking for," said Murray Sragow, a leader with the New Jersey region of NCSY and the administrator of an e-mail list focusing on the Lanner issue.

Sragow said he nonetheless assumes that Butler indeed was forced out behind the scenes, and that Butler's letter was simply an effort by the organization to be "pleasant" and allow him to save face.

Butler did not return phone calls from JTA seeking comment.

Blitz, who became O.U. president at the end of December, said the organization's executive committee was scheduled to discuss the employment status of Butler and other people mentioned in the full Lanner report at a Feb. 4 meeting.

However, he said, Butler "had substantial support within the organization for remaining in a significant programmatic position," and probably would not have been fired.

One executive committee member suggested that Butler is "taking the fall for a lot of people."

But Sragow said that "if they'd wanted a fall guy, they wouldn't have chosen" Butler. Butler was "more valued" by O.U. officials than any other employee, Sragow said, so the fact that he is leaving "gives me the sense that anyone else who needs to be dealt with, will."

Blitz also denied that Butler had become the fall guy.

"I don't think he's taking all the blame, and even if he were doing that, we shouldn't let him," he said. "We need to have an honest evaluation of what needs to be done."

Elie Hiller, one of the first alleged victims to go public with his accusations against Lanner, said he is pleased to see Butler go, despite the fact that, in Hiller's opinion, he is being allowed to save face by resigning without acknowledging wrongdoing.

However, Hiller said he would like to see the Orthodox Union take stronger action, such as releasing the full 332-page commission report and condemning Butler.

Since Lanner's alleged abuses were publicized last summer, "all that's happened is the criminal resigned and the person who oversaw the criminal resigned," Hiller said. "It doesn't look like any strong action was taken by the O.U."

A committee of 13 board members, among the few people who have seen the full report, is expected to make recommendations to the executive committee in February on implementing the report.

In addition, Blitz has announced plans to overhaul virtually all aspects of the O.U. management, and is currently appointing committees to do so. □