



# Daily News Bulletin

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84th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Powell meeting 'frustrating'

Jewish leaders were "frustrated" by U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell's answers to questions about moving the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, sources told JTA.

The leaders said Powell, whom they met at the State Department in Washington on Wednesday, was not forthcoming with details of Bush administration policy on moving the embassy, as Bush promised during the election campaign.

But Powell "expressed great understanding of the situation Israel is in" and placed the onus on the Palestinian Authority to cease violence before peace negotiations can resume, said sources who attended the meeting.

During his testimony earlier in the day before the Senate Budget Committee, Powell said he supports the admission of Magen David Adom, Israel's emergency relief group, into the International Red Cross.

Responding to a question from Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.), Powell said he hopes that diplomatic progress already made on the issue could be continued after violence in the region decreases.

### Sharon: I won't turn over taxes

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon told a visiting delegation of European Union officials that he will not release tax revenues owed to the Palestinian Authority because it would be "akin to paying the murderers of our children."

Sharon said Tuesday that if the money were turned over to the Palestinian Authority, it would be used to pay the salaries of Palestinian security forces, which have been involved in terrorism against the Jewish state.

### Y.U. president to step down

The president of Yeshiva University announced that he will step down in August 2002.

One of the longest-serving university presidents in the United States, Rabbi Norman Lamm has stood at Y.U.'s helm for the last 25 years.

In a similar development, the president of the Reconstructionist movement's seminary is resigning effective summer 2002.

Rabbi David Teutsch, who says he wants to devote more time to scholarship, teaching and writing, has led the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College since 1993.

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

### Pressure mounts for Washington to take harder line with Palestinians

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Members of Congress are urging the Bush administration to review its diplomatic treatment of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat and the Palestine Liberation Organization in light of the violent uprising against Israel.

Pro-Israel lobbying groups and lawmakers want a review of the current diplomatic privileges the Palestinian Authority and the PLO receive, including freedom of travel to the United States and a consulate in Washington.

Some lawmakers believe that if the violence continues, the PLO or Arafat could be again placed on the State Department's lists of terrorists.

They were taken off the list in 1993.

The State Department is "not aware" of congressional efforts to review the Palestinians' status, a department spokesman said, but the subject was broached when Jewish leaders meet with Secretary of State Colin Powell on Wednesday.

A spokesman from the PLO's Washington office was unavailable for comment.

Rep. Anthony Weiner (D-N.Y.) sent a letter to President Bush on Monday, asking him not to invite Arafat to the White House until Palestinian violence against Israel ends.

Weiner told the JTA that the White House and Congress need to reassess commitments made to the Palestinians after Arafat signed the Oslo peace accord with Israel on the White House lawn in 1993.

"I believe we have overlooked many transgressions on the part of the Palestinians in trying to keep the embers of the peace process burning," Weiner said.

"There's going to be a lot tougher line taken by Congress and, hopefully, the administration."

Several bills are circulating in the House of Representatives that would cut off nongovernmental aid to the Palestinian territories and downgrade the PLO's Washington office from an "intersector" office — which has no formal ambassador but carries out most diplomatic tasks — to a mere information office.

Some left-wing groups appear not to agree with the proposed strategy, however.

The Bush administration should think "long and hard" about how cutting off diplomatic ties would affect America's ability to influence the situation on the ground, said Lewis Roth, assistant executive director of Americans for Peace Now.

"It's in the United States' best interest to maintain a healthy line of communication with the Palestinians," Roth said. "The current structure of that relationship diplomatically allows us to do that."

The current diplomatic treatment of the Palestinians was revised in 1993 following the agreement signed between Israel and the PLO on the White House lawn.

At that time, Palestinian groups were removed from the State Department's list of foreign terrorist organizations, and Arafat and other Palestinian leaders were allowed to enter the United States without restriction.

In fact, Arafat visited President Clinton's White House more than any other foreign leader.

But after nearly six months of violence, lawmakers and pro-Israel activists want America to pressure Arafat and the Palestinians.

They see the Washington perks the Palestinians have enjoyed in recent years as one likely lever and say the current violence shows the Palestinian disregard for the agreements worked out under the Oslo peace process, and question therefore whether

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### State Dept. announces nominee

The Bush administration plans to nominate William Burns to serve as assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs. Burns, who has been ambassador to Jordan since 1998, is "highly regarded" as a diplomat, an Israeli official in Washington said.

### Demonstration held in Ramallah

Hundreds of Palestinians took part in a "Day of Rage" demonstration in Ramallah to protest Israel's closure of the West Bank city. The protesters briefly seized an Israeli army checkpoint Wednesday before Israeli soldiers, firing rubber bullets and tear gas at the crowd, retook the position.

### Israel blasts Lebanon water move

Israeli security sources expressed concern over work to build a water-pumping station on the Lebanese side of the Hatzbani River, one of the main feeders into the Jordan River and a major supplier of Israeli drinking water.

The French news agency quoted Israeli security sources as saying a large-scale project to divert water from the Hatzbani River could provoke an Israeli response.

### Pope to visit Syria

Pope John Paul II will deliver a speech to Muslims when he visits Syria on May 5-9, a senior Catholic official in Damascus said Wednesday. His travels are intended to retrace the steps of the Apostle Paul, who converted to Christianity in Syria and preached in Athens and Malta before arriving in Rome.

### Susan Sontag gets literature prize

American author Susan Sontag is the 2001 recipient of the Jerusalem Prize for Literature.

Sontag is expected to travel to Israel to receive the \$10,000 award, which will be given during the International Book Fair in Jerusalem this May.



## Daily News Bulletin

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the U.S. needs to continue coddling the Palestinians.

The State Department will soon release its semi-annual report on PLO compliance with its commitments to the United States.

Under the Palestine Liberation Organization Commitments Compliance Act, Palestinian actions from June 16, 2000, to Dec. 15, 2000, will be reviewed.

Some think the report may spur changes in Washington's treatment of the Palestinians.

As part of its annual agenda of priorities, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee has expressed the need to reaffirm that the U.S.-Palestinian relationship is "conditional upon sustained P.A. and PLO compliance with commitments made to Israel and the United States."

Members of Congress have approached AIPAC, the pro-Israel lobby, with concerns about the current violence and have consulted about how to get their point across to the Palestinians, AIPAC spokesman Kenneth Bricker said.

"These members have suggested, and we are inclined to agree, that if something is not done about the Palestinian-initiated violence, the United States must seriously consider a significant change in relations between the U.S. and Palestinians," Bricker said.

These words indicate a sharp departure in policy for the lobbying organization, which just last year was hesitant to support a House-passed measure to cut off aid to the Palestinian territories.

But a lot has changed since last September: almost half a year of continuous violence, new leadership in Israel and America and widespread recognition that the Oslo process is dead.

AIPAC now hopes Congress will show the Palestinians that it holds them accountable for the violence that has engulfed the region.

The timing of these measures is significant.

Both Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Powell are slated to speak at AIPAC's annual policy conference next week. As part of his first visit to the United States as prime minister, Sharon also will meet with Bush.

The Bush administration has expressed strong support for Israel, but has held Israel partially responsible for the violence, urging it to end the process of "targeted killings" of Palestinian militants.

Jewish leaders want the Bush administration to stop letting the Palestinians "have it both ways."

"Too often, we send the wrong message by not holding people accountable to their commitments," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. "They are getting the aid, but not doing anything to earn it."

It's debatable, however, whether cutting off foreign aid to the Palestinian territories will accomplish the intended goal.

The money sent to the West Bank and Gaza Strip is funneled through the U.S. Agency for International Development, which ensures that the dollars are used for humanitarian purposes.

Many observers believe that a symbolic gesture such as downgrading the PLO's Washington office or cutting off access to the White House will hit the Palestinian leadership harder.

Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.) is planning to introduce legislation that would scale the PLO's Washington office back to an information office, removing a large portion of its diplomatic role.

That bill, which passed the House last year, said such measures should be taken if the Palestinians declare an independent state through means other than the peace process.

Given the latest violence, Nadler is considering widening the scope of his bill, Nadler spokesman Eric Schmeltzer said.

In addition to the letter he sent to Bush, Weiner also introduced legislation that would cut off nongovernmental aid sent to the Palestinian Authority until Arafat clearly condemns attacks on Israel.

"The Palestinians have effectively walked away from the bargaining table," Weiner said.

"There's no reason the American taxpayer should stay there holding the bag." □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Bill will exclude charitable choice

U.S. Senate supporters of President Bush's faith-based initiative are set to introduce legislation on the issue next week.

But the bill will not include an expansion of "charitable choice," which allows religious groups to receive government money for social service programming. Many Jewish organizations, as well as Christian conservatives and civil rights groups, have voiced opposition to that provision of the Bush administration's plan.

The proposed legislation in the Senate will include less controversial initiatives, such as allowing tax filers who don't itemize to claim a deduction for contributions to charity.

In another development, a poll shows that two-thirds of Americans support President Bush's plan to give religious groups federal funding for their social services.

But they do not want the money going to organizations such as the Nation of Islam or the Church of Scientology.

The New York Times/CBS News poll also showed that almost half of the respondents favor allowing parents to use school vouchers to send their children to private or religious schools, but only 30 percent say a voucher plan is acceptable if it takes money away from public schools.

### Hillel opens Latin America branch

Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life is opening its first branch in Latin America.

Funded by the Jewish Agency for Israel, local donors and mega-donors Michael Steinhardt and Charles Bronfman, the center at Uruguay's Universidad de la Republica will serve an estimated 1,500 Jewish students.

Hillel currently has affiliates at universities in North America, Europe, Israel, Australia and the former Soviet Union.

### Schindler advocate dies at 87

Holocaust survivor Leopold Page, whose crusade got the story of death camp rescuer Oskar Schindler made into a book and a movie, died last Friday at the age of 87.

For four decades, Page cornered every writer who entered his Beverly Hills, Calif., leather goods store to tell the story of German industrialist Schindler, who saved his life and those of 1,200 other Jews during World War II.

"Were it not for Leopold Page, Oskar Schindler would only be known by those survivors of the Shoah whom he saved and by scholars and historians," said Steven Spielberg, whom Page convinced to direct "Schindler's List."

## New poll: Despite intifada, Americans remain pro-Israel

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — American support for Israel is remaining strong during the current conflict with the Palestinians, according to a new poll commissioned by a coalition of Jewish organizations.

The findings contradict the perception among many American Jews that the Palestinians are crushing Israel in the battle for public opinion.

The poll, said to be the broadest of its kind, strengthens Jewish activists when they seek to rally Congressional support for Israel and pinpoints the precise areas where the activists must focus their P.R. efforts, Jewish leaders say.

The pollsters surveyed 450 "elites" and opinion-makers — defined as those with high income and education levels or those working as journalists, legislators or business people — 400 American Jews as well as 600 members of the general public. The margin of error was plus or minus 3 percent.

More than two-thirds of the general public and three-quarters of the elites view Israel favorably, according to the survey.

Two-thirds of the general public and elites also said the United States should help defend Israel militarily, if need be.

Only 18 percent of the general public has a favorable attitude toward the Palestinian Authority, and 28 percent are favorably inclined toward the group's president, Yasser Arafat.

A majority of all respondents believe Palestinian leaders are inciting the current Mideast violence to get what they failed to achieve through negotiations.

"This poll tells me that across the board, Israel has a bedrock of support," said Zev Furst, president and CEO of First International Resources, one of the firms that conducted the poll.

"Any politician would be happy with these numbers," said Furst, whose firm has polled for Republican and Democratic politicians.

The positive results should "calm the angst" of many American Jews, said Shula Bahat, acting executive director of the American Jewish Committee.

The results surprised some Jewish leaders.

While editorial pages of U.S. newspapers generally have been supportive of Israel, Jewish leaders feared television coverage had made a more negative — and lasting — impression.

"The American people get it to a greater degree than we'd assumed," Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, said at a news conference Tuesday announcing the results.

A large majority of those interviewed said they follow the Middle East situation closely and consider it a major issue.

Yet there is concern among Jewish leaders that when the questionnaire scratched the surface, it found that Americans don't have a profound grasp of details of the Israeli-Arab conflict.

Only 22 percent of all respondents and 36 percent of the elites are aware that Israel already has turned over some 40 percent of the West Bank to Palestinian control.

Nearly half of the respondents thought the West Bank and Gaza remain "almost completely under Israeli control."

Only 58 percent of American Jews know about Israel's land concessions. "There's always a need to explain more," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League.

Of some concern to Jewish leaders, who are considered more hard-line than the general Jewish community, is that one-third of respondents believe Jerusalem should be divided.

Division of Jerusalem is among the most explosive issues in negotiations between Israeli and the Palestinians.

Even a third of American Jews support a division of Jerusalem.

Speakers at the press conference attributed the level of Jewish support for division to the fact that former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak backed such a proposal. □

## Two Jewish men convicted in massive London vote fraud

By Richard Allen Greene

LONDON (JTA) — Two observant Jews who served as elected London officials face up to 10 years in jail after being convicted of vote fraud.

Detective Inspector Robert Garratt, the investigating officer, called the case "the largest attempt to subvert the democratic process that I am aware of."

In a trial that lasted nearly two months, a court found that the two fervently Orthodox defendants, Isaac Leibowitz, of the Conservative Party, and Zev Lieberman, a Liberal Democrat, fraudulently added names to the electoral rolls, resulting in a 2,000 percent increase in proxy votes in their ward in the May 1998 election to the local council.

According to the prosecuting attorney in the case, the fraud was massive enough to deprive Labor of a council majority in London's East End borough of Hackney.

The men are scheduled to be sentenced April 6.

During the trial, the court heard that Leibowitz, 36, and Lieberman, 29, had registered 88 voters from a yeshiva that only had room for 30 students.

They also registered American and Yemenite citizens as eligible to vote. Leibowitz was accused of having registered his brother, Yisroel Baruch Leibowitz, as two separate voters — Yisroel Leibowitz and Baruch Leibowitz.

Uninhabitable properties were given as voters' addresses, and at least one long-time Labor voter said she was tricked into signing a proxy vote for the Liberal Democrats.

"This is not about the odd bit of cheating here and there," prosecutor John Bevan said. "The effect may have been to deprive Hackney of the council the electorate truly voted for."

There were 241 proxy votes cast in the ward, up from 12 in the previous election. About 75 percent of the 1998 proxy votes were for Liberal Democrats.

Another defendant, Mesifita Talmudical College caretaker Chananya Gross, 22, was acquitted.

The court accepted the prosecution's stance that Gross, who drew up the list of 88 potential voters at his yeshiva, was an "unwitting dupe" of the politicians who organized the vote fraud.

Gross, like many current and former yeshiva students who took the stand during the trial, testified in Yiddish.

At one point he described Leibowitz as "mishgunah."

There was amusement in the court as his translator explained that the word meant "crazy, stupid, retarded, wild, a madman. A mixture of crazy and wild."

A number of yeshiva students who testified said they did not speak or read English well and did not understand British voting regulations.

One said he had voted twice because he did not know it was not allowed. He had received proxy vote registration forms at both his home and his yeshiva.

Another student said he had voted "as a joke," though he was not eligible.

An American citizen who has lived in Britain since age 10 said he thought of himself as British and did not realize he was not registered to vote in the United Kingdom.

Lieberman and Leibowitz were both found guilty of conspiracy to defraud an electoral official and of two counts of forgery each.

Leibowitz was also convicted of a second conspiracy charge.

Both men were acquitted of a number of other forgery and conspiracy charges.

Two other defendants, who cannot be identified according to a court order, may face retrial after the jury failed to reach a verdict in their cases. □

## Rabbis hold service in Germany after Shoah memorial is defaced

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — Dozens of North American rabbis conducted an open-air memorial service this week at a Holocaust monument in Berlin that was desecrated the night before their gathering.

"Our response to desecration is consecration; our response to destruction is construction," Rabbi Marc Schneier, president of the North American Boards of Rabbis, said at Wednesday's service at the massive monument.

The service formed an unexpected — and emotional — part of the board's three-day annual conference, which was held this year in the German capital.

About 50 rabbis from congregations around the United States and Canada attended the conference.

It was the first time the group, established two years ago as an umbrella organization for North American rabbis of all religious streams, met in Berlin.

The aim was to present a model of rabbinical unity and cooperation to German Jews, whose fast-growing community — estimates range up to 100,000 — is marked by conflicts among Orthodox, Reform and secular Jews.

Germany has two dozen rabbis, most of them Orthodox. The arrival of tens of thousands of Jews from the former Soviet Union, many of whom have little knowledge of Judaism or Jewish traditions, has swelled the German Jewish community during the past decade.

In a telephone interview, Schneier told JTA that the centerpiece of the conference took place Tuesday evening, when three board members — one Orthodox, one Conservative and one Reform — jointly conducted a Torah study session for local Jews.

During their stay in Berlin, the group met with German President Johannes Rau, Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer and other senior government officials.

Schneier said that the group repeatedly urged German officials to create a mechanism under which a \$5 billion fund for Nazi-era slave laborers could begin making payments before full legal closure on the issue is achieved.

On Tuesday, a German industry foundation said it would finally gather its half of the fund. But it is not clear when the payments will start. The companies first insist on what they call full legal closure — that is, the dismissal of all class-action lawsuits against them that are related to the Holocaust.

The desecration of the Holocaust monument, located on the site of a synagogue that was used during the war as a collection camp from which 37,500 Jews were deported to their deaths, was discovered Wednesday morning.

It was the latest in a wave of anti-Semitic and other hate crimes to occur in Germany.

According to official statistics, the number of hate attacks in Germany rose to 13,753 between January and November 2000 — an increase of 45 percent over the same period in 1999. □