



Daily News Bulletin

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84th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Bush calls for restraint

President Bush called on Israel and the Palestinians to show restraint and halt the escalation of violence.

"The tragic cycle of incitement, provocation and violence has gone on far too long," Bush said Thursday at a White House news conference. Bush also called on the Palestinian Authority to speak out "publicly and forcefully" against terrorism.

Earlier, the State Department responded to Israel's rocket attacks on Palestinian security targets in the West Bank and Gaza Strip by saying it saw no military solution to the conflict and urging all sides to end the bloodshed.

Jews want P.A. on terror list

Several U.S. Jewish groups called on the Bush administration to place the Palestinian Authority back on the State Department's terrorist list because of the ongoing terror attacks in Israel.

The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and the Orthodox Union have been joined by several lawmakers urging Bush to consider closing the Palestinians' office in Washington and withholding all U.S. aid to them.

Rep. Sisisky dies at 73

Rep. Norman Sisisky, a Jewish Democrat from Virginia, died Thursday at age 73 after a battle with lung cancer.

An advocate of a strong national defense, Sisisky, who was serving his 10th term in the House of Representatives, was hailed by the National Jewish Democratic Council as "a role model" who worked with Republicans as well as Democrats.

Schroeder meets Jewish leaders

German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder promised Jewish leaders he will press German officials to begin making payments to Holocaust slave labor victims. He made the vow during a meeting in Washington on Thursday with officials of the Claims Conference before meeting with President Bush.

In a related development, lawyers are withdrawing a class-action lawsuit they filed last month against IBM for its role in aiding the Nazis. The move follows Germany's complaint that the lawsuit was preventing payments to the slave laborers. [Page 4]

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Six months into intifada, Israeli soldiers remain highly motivated

By Avi Machlis

JERUSALEM (JTA) — As Israeli-Palestinian violence hits the six-month mark, Israeli military officials report that soldiers remain motivated to serve in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Senior military officials report that reservists, who account for 70 percent of the army's 639,150 troops, are said to be reporting for duty at higher rates than before the intifada began.

This contrasts with past years, when reservists often found excuses to evade their service.

According to Brig. Gen. Avinoam Laufer, head of the Israel Defense Force's planning and logistics division, about 95 percent of reservists who have recently been drafted have reported for duty.

This compares to about 85 percent who reported for duty before Palestinian violence began last September.

"The feeling among reservists, like in the public at large, is that something must be done," Laufer said, adding that in recent years soldiers' motivation has tended to rise when times got tougher.

The army does not yet have clear indications about how the intifada is affecting new recruits or conscripted soldiers.

Soldiers currently being drafted were polled about their attitudes last year, before the wave of violence began.

Those polls indicated that there had then been a 4 percent decline in the motivation of young Israelis to serve in combat units.

That decline came on the backdrop of political developments in which Israel appeared to be on the brink of peace deals, Laufer said.

"When there is a feeling that we are moving toward a good peace, motivation tends to decline," he said.

"When the situation deteriorates, motivation goes up."

Nevertheless, Laufer admits that during the first intifada, between 1987 and 1993, there was a clear deterioration in the motivation of reservists to serve as the conflict dragged on and soldiers were called repeatedly to police the Palestinians.

The apparent increase in motivation, as measured in terms of reserve turnout, comes amid a rising death toll.

Since the violence began in late September, 67 Israelis — 38 civilians and 29 soldiers — have been killed by the Palestinians.

Israel has killed at least 348 Palestinians over the same period.

For the Jewish state, the death toll is very high when compared with the number killed by Hezbollah gunmen during the last five years of the Israeli presence in southern Lebanon.

Between 1995 and 1999, for example, about 25 Israeli soldiers were killed in Lebanon.

Even that death toll was enough to break the Israeli consensus over maintaining a presence there.

Palestinians were jubilant when Israel withdrew from Lebanon last year, citing Hezbollah's war as a model the Palestinians themselves should follow.

Israeli military officials, however, said the Palestinians are making a "crude miscalculation" if they hope to copy Hezbollah tactics and wear down Israeli society and

MIDEAST FOCUS

Tank fires on Hebron Arabs

An Israeli tank fired Thursday on a Palestinian neighborhood in the West Bank city of Hebron that was reportedly the source of Palestinian sniper fire Monday that killed a 10-month-old Jewish girl.

The army said it fired after spotting a Palestinian gunman at the window of one of the houses. Earlier, Israeli soldiers reportedly entered the Abu Sneineh neighborhood, which is under the control of the Palestinian Authority. Israeli military sources said the soldiers went in to remove two settlers.

In the Gaza Strip, Israeli forces shot dead a Palestinian security official. Israel said the man was a member of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's guard, who was firing on army positions.

P.A. arrests infant's killer

Palestinian security sources said they arrested a Fatah activist who shot and killed an Israeli infant in Hebron this week — but not for the killing.

Ha'aretz quoted the sources as saying that a Palestinian intelligence officer who killed 10-month-old Shalhevet Pass had been arrested on unrelated charges connected with internal Palestinian politics.

TWA stops N.Y.-Israel flights

TWA suspended all flights on its New York-Israel route, citing business considerations having nothing to do with the security situation in Israel.

The move left people stranded at JFK and Ben-Gurion Airports, and left many wondering how they would get to Israel for Passover.

U.S. reviews Israel travel warning

The U.S. State Department is reviewing the travel warning it issued on travel to Israel shortly after Palestinian violence erupted last September.

On Thursday, the assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, Edward Walker, acknowledged the impact the advisory has had on tourism to Israel.

military morale through a war of attrition. If the Palestinians concluded from the Lebanon case "that with a big enough pile of bodies we will go home or go somewhere else," they misunderstood Israeli policy, said one military official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"If that's the logic, if they think they will pile up the numbers and get a Lebanon outcome, it's a historic confusion of the accidental and the existential," the official added.

Military assessments of Israel's staying power come amid reports that the Palestinians may be reassessing their strategy.

Some Palestinians are said to be calling for public protests with a lower level of violence, alongside the guerrilla-style warfare by armed militias that has been the staple in recent months — and that has cost the Palestinians a degree of international sympathy. As recently as Sunday, however, another Israeli was wounded in a drive-by shooting in the West Bank.

While the continued violence appears to have rallied Israeli soldiers and society behind the national unity government's refusal to negotiate under fire, there are some signs of cracks in the consensus.

Yesh Gvul, the movement that supports soldiers who refuse to serve in the West Bank or Gaza Strip, says it has handled 10 cases of conscripted soldiers and fielded calls from up to 80 reservists who refuse to help suppress the current intifada, including a "high proportion" of junior officers.

Yesh Gvul — Hebrew for "there's a limit" — was created to protest Israel's presence in Lebanon.

The leftist group says 168 reservists went to prison during the 1982 Lebanon War for refusing to serve, while another 200 went to prison during the first Palestinian intifada.

Even the relatively small numbers are significant, however, since in the past, young conscripted soldiers almost never dared to challenge military discipline by refusing to serve, according to Peretz Kidron, a Yesh Gvul activist.

Kidron also said that most reservists who refuse to serve in the territories have been given other assignments instead of jail time — as the army wants to avoid public controversies that might affect morale.

"Outright refusal is the tip of the iceberg, and that has an enormous impact on army morale far beyond the numbers involved," Peretz said. "They know that every time they throw one guy in jail, another 10 get the idea."

Peretz also said Yesh Gvul has found in the past that many reservists will heed the call of duty the first time around — but will think twice if called up again.

Tamar Hermann, director of the Tami Steinmitz Center for Peace Research at Tel Aviv University, said Israelis from across the political spectrum are rallying around the flag.

"Even those Israelis who supported unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon are now much more skeptical of such a move so close to home in the West Bank," she said.

But Hermann's polls also show that, while Israelis have a high level of confidence in the Israeli army, 50 percent of the respondents do not believe there is a military solution to the current conflict, compared with only 41 percent who think more force would help.

"Israelis think some force should be used to suppress rising Palestinian violence, but they do not see it as a way out of the conflict," she said. □

U.N. agency criticized on Israel

NEW YORK (JTA) — An American Jewish leader called on the U.N. Commission on Human Rights to stop singling out Israel for special examination and to stop presuming that Israel is guilty of violations.

"The abuse of the commission for transparently political purposes frustrates the defense of human rights and complicates still further the quest for peace," David Harris, the executive director of the American Jewish Committee, told the U.N. panel in Geneva.

Israel and American Jewish leaders have long criticized the United Nations and its member agencies for what they see as their unfair treatment of Israel. □



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JEWISH WORLD

ADL wants Egypt aid in escrow

The Anti-Defamation League on Thursday proposed placing \$100 million of U.S. aid to Egypt in an escrow account until Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak takes steps to halt anti-Semitism in the Egyptian media. Mubarak is slated to meet in Washington with President Bush on Monday.

Group says it turned down Rich

Financier Marc Rich offered a donation to the American Jewish Congress with the understanding that the group would write to President Clinton in support of a pardon, according to the group's executive director.

However, the AJCongress refused to write the letter of support for Rich, nor did it receive a donation, Phil Baum said Tuesday.

Seminary hires acting president

The Academy for Jewish Religion, a nondenominational rabbinic and cantorial seminary with campuses in New York and Los Angeles, hired a new acting president who is expected to be approved as permanent president in the coming months.

Rabbi David Greenstein, who was ordained at the academy, but holds additional graduate degrees in Judaic studies from Yeshiva University and New York University, will replace Rabbi Shohama Wiener. Founded in 1956, the AJR has 100 students.

14 from Kiryas Joel indicted

Fourteen members of a fervently Orthodox community in a New York suburb were indicted for cheating individuals, banks and insurance companies out of millions of dollars, federal prosecutors said Thursday. The 68-count indictment alleges that the defendants, who live in Kiryas Joel, carried out "a myriad" of financial frauds since 1996.

U.S. pressed on war criminals

The Simon Wiesenthal Center submitted to the U.S. Justice Department a list of 31 suspected Lithuanian Nazi collaborators living in the United States. The center said Wednesday the list included people suspected of serving in local police units that persecuted Jews in Lithuania and Ukraine during World War II.

Youth festival opens in Moscow

The Fifth International Jewish Children's and Youth Art Festival opened Wednesday in Moscow, bringing together some 500 participants from Israel and the former Soviet Union.

The three-day event, sponsored by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, includes performances by choirs, folk-dancing troupes and theater groups, as well as a painting exhibition.

ARTS & CULTURE

Jazz musicians from Israel make the scene in the Big Apple

By Barry Davis

NEW YORK (JTA) — Falafel. Regional conflict. High-tech. These are three things one normally thinks about when it comes to Israel.

Now Israel has a new product: jazz.

During the past decade, Israel has begun exporting increasing numbers of jazz musicians to New York — and has become the venue for some high-profile concerts.

The Israeli jazz scene began around 40 years ago and, for the first couple of decades, was largely sustained by drummer Arele Kaminsky and reed player Roman Kuntsman.

In recent years, however, Israeli exports have made quite a splash.

Since arriving in the Big Apple in 1992, bassist Avishai Cohen has played with numerous top artists, released three well-received albums and contributed production skills on several colleagues' recordings.

Cohen, 30, currently plays with pianist Chick Corea's band.

Fellow bassist Omer Avital and trombonist Avi Lebovich landed in New York on the same day as Cohen.

Avital has established himself as one of the sweetest-sounding jazz bassists in the United States. He enjoyed a four-year tenure at New York's Smalls jazz club — although he now spends more time touring North America and Europe than playing New York clubs.

Meanwhile, Lebovich has collaborated with stars such as trombonist Slide Hampton and is frequently on the road in the United States and Europe.

Then there is saxophonist Eli Degibri who, until recently, was a member of pianist Herbie Hancock's band.

A relatively recent Israeli arrival in the United States, a trumpeter also named Avishai Cohen, is already in great demand.

Israel also has provided New York with some avant-garde talent.

Reed players Assif Tsahar and Ori Kaplan are wowing audiences at the famous Knitting Factory and other venues on a regular basis.

Lebovich says Israel's love of culture explains the success of its musicians.

"For a small population, Israel is probably the most intense culture on the planet, and the musicians are as well-trained as musicians anywhere," he said.

The fast pace of Israeli life makes it an ideal place to nurture jazz, he added.

"The tempo of Israel life, certainly in Tel Aviv, is very close to the way things are in New York," he said.

What's true of Israelis is also true of Jews more generally, as their interest in culture has led many American Jewish musicians to gravitate to a form created by African Americans.

At the same time, Israel also is importing more jazz.

Israel now hosts several prominent international jazz events, such as the annual Red Sea Jazz Festival in Eilat, which attract some of the top names in world jazz.

Since its inception in 1987, the Eilat event has played host to numerous stellar jazz musicians, including Corea, trumpeter Clark Terry and the late French violinist Stephane Grappelli.

Israel is a small country, however, and at the end of the day there are only so many events and venues aspiring young musicians can play before they begin looking toward the broader horizons of the United States.

As it has been for three-quarters of a century, New York is still the mecca of the jazz world.

But like countless American musicians who moved to New York, Israeli musicians generally take a while to get in the groove.

"I was totally in shock for the first year," says Kaplan, who moved to New York in 1991.

"New York scared me a bit so I spent most of my time in a rehearsal room. Today, I thrive on the intense energy of the place. I know it's a bit mad, but I love it." □

Slovak Jews vow to fight on after losing WWII case in Berlin

By Magnus Bennett

PRAGUE (JTA) — Slovakia's Jewish leaders are vowing to appeal a Berlin court's decision to reject a multimillion-dollar lawsuit claiming compensation for Slovak victims of the Holocaust.

In a lawsuit brought this week in a Berlin courtroom, the Central Union of Jewish Religious Communities sought to reclaim up to \$63.4 million for payments the wartime pro-Nazi Slovak state made to the Third Reich to transport more than 57,000 Slovak Jews to death camps.

The Central Union said the money used to pay for the transports was taken from seized Jewish property and assets.

But the German court rejected the lawsuit Wednesday, arguing that the Central Union did not have a legitimate right to seek compensation.

The court's presiding judge also said the lawsuit should not have been brought before the Berlin court.

He added that the problem could only be resolved within an international legal framework.

"We are, of course, disappointed," said Fero Alexander, the Central Union's executive chairman. "But on the other hand, we did not expect a positive result in the first hearing."

In a statement, the Central Union said it had "serious concerns" that the German court had not taken into account that the Slovak Ministries of culture and foreign affairs had indicated that the Jewish group could be considered a legitimate seeker of compensation from Germany.

It said the German Embassy in the Slovak capital of Bratislava had verified this view.

The Central Union filed the lawsuit after talks broke down with Germany about including Slovak Jews in international negotiations for compensating Holocaust victims.

The Central Union's argument is that it is the only group that can hope to reclaim money from Germany.

"This was not about claiming individual payments," said Alexander. Some "99.9 percent of those who were transported did not survive the war, and of the 282 who did survive, only two or three dozen are still alive."

The Central Union's lawyer argued in court that the group suffered from severe financial problems that left it unable to care for several hundred Jewish cemeteries and dozens of dilapidated synagogues.

There are approximately 4,000 Jews in Slovakia today, most of them elderly.

The most pressing problem for the Central Union, according to Alexander, is maintaining the House of David, Slovakia's only retirement home for Holocaust victims.

"Two weeks ago, we only had enough money to keep the home going for the next five weeks. As of today, we have enough money to run it for four months. It really is a very serious situation," he said.

Alexander said the Central Union would appeal once it has studied the decision of the court.

Asked if he felt the Central Union could still win its case, Alexander said: "Whatever happens, we cannot lose from a moral point of view." □

IBM Holocaust lawsuit dropped, removing barrier to restitution fund

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A class-action lawsuit against IBM for its role in aiding the Nazis is being withdrawn following German complaints that the suit impeded restitution payments to Holocaust victims.

The lawsuit, filed Feb. 12, charged that IBM provided technology that aided Hitler in the persecution and genocide of millions during the Holocaust. IBM was intimately involved with the actions of its German subsidiary, profited from the work and covered up its actions, the lawsuit alleged.

The U.S. State Department said Germany indicated that the lawsuit endangered the "legal peace" condition of an agreement reached last year under which German companies created a fund to pay Holocaust victims. The agreement stated that firms who paid into the fund — including IBM's German subsidiary — would not face further legal claims for their activities during the Holocaust.

Soon after the IBM lawsuit was filed, the State Department approached Michael Hausfeld, lead attorney for the plaintiffs, to try to negotiate an agreement between the parties.

"The dismissal of this lawsuit should alleviate" any concern that the issue could be used to delay payments, Richard Boucher, a spokesman for the State Department, said in a statement.

Hausfeld said the lawsuit was being withdrawn so Germany would have "no excuses whatsoever" to withhold payments.

Hausfeld called the German complaints "pure blackmail," and said that if IBM's archives are not opened the lawsuit could be refiled.

Recent months have seen a renewed focus on the potential culpability of American companies that helped Germany during World War II. The filing of the IBM lawsuit coincided with the release of "IBM and the Holocaust," a book arguing that custom-built IBM technology helped the Nazis by generating lists of Jews for deportation.

IBM was pleased by news of the lawsuit's withdrawal, and had always believed that the suit had no merit, spokesperson Carol Makovich said. The company hired a full-time archivist in 1998 to examine its documents, and in 1999 started donating relevant World War II documents.

IBM has donated material to New York University's Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies and to Hohenheim University in Stuttgart, Germany. □

Jewish Teach for America planned

NEW YORK (JTA) — The University of Judaism plans to launch a Jewish version of Teach for America, an 11-year-old program that recruits recent college graduates to teach in low-income communities.

Details and funding are still under discussion, but the Los Angeles-based university would recruit and train Jewish college students and alumni of the Birthright Israel program to teach in North American Hebrew schools and Jewish day schools, which currently face severe teacher shortages.

The program also would aim to dramatically increase enrollment at North American graduate schools of Jewish education, said Ron Wolfson, university vice president. □