



# Daily News Bulletin

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## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### **Palestinians take to the streets**

Thousands of Palestinians took to the streets Tuesday to mark "Al Nakba" — Arabic for "the catastrophe," which is what Palestinians call the creation of the State of Israel.

At least four Palestinians were killed and more than 100 wounded in widespread clashes with Israeli troops in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Capping the day of widespread violence, a Palestinian gunman shot and killed a 28-year-old Israeli woman and wounded her father in a car ambush near the West Bank city of Ramallah. Traveling with her father and brother to a wedding in Jerusalem, the woman was shot in the neck. [Page 1]

### **Israel: Arafat ran to avoid blame**

Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat said there would be no peace or stability without an Israeli withdrawal of troops and settlers to the borders that existed before the 1967 Six-Day War — as well as the right of millions of Palestinians to return to homes they fled in Israel in the 1948 war.

In a prerecorded address broadcast while he was spending the day in Egypt, Arafat said Tuesday that Israel's use of force and blockades against the Palestinians would not bring security.

Israeli officials said Arafat left for Egypt to avoid being blamed for the violence that erupted during Al Nakba commemorations.

### **Israeli blasts Mitchell report**

Israel's attorney general said he is disappointed with the report on Mideast violence made by a U.S.-led commission, particularly its call for a freeze on Israeli settlement construction.

The Mitchell Commission's resurrection of the settlement issue is "beside the point. It's irrelevant," Elyakim Rubenstein told the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations on Monday in New York. "The right thing to do is telling Arafat, 'You're not going to win by violence.'"

### **Doctors defrost twins**

Israeli doctors have for the first time produced twins from eggs that were frozen, defrosted and then fertilized by the father's sperm. The boy and girl were born to a couple from eastern Jerusalem at Hadassah University Hospital on Mount Scopus.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### **Israeli Arabs louder than ever in commemorating 'catastrophe'**

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — At noon Tuesday, life among Israel's 1 million Arab citizens came to a standstill.

For the first time in the history of the state, Arabs in Israel stood up for a moment of silence — commemorating Al Nakba — Arabic for "the catastrophe," which is what Palestinians call the 1948 creation of the State of Israel.

The Supreme Guidance Committee, the leaders of Israel's Arab community, chose to commemorate the event on the anniversary of the official declaration of Israel's independence, May 15. To them, the commemoration was away of emphasizing that one people's independence meant the other's tragedy.

Gone are the days when Israel's Arab citizens joined the country's independence celebrations. They no longer adopt the passive stand of not celebrating, but also not spoiling the party.

In recent years they have made a point of telling their Jewish compatriots that the Palestinians paid a price for Israel's independence as a Jewish state. This year, they voiced that point louder than ever. Commemorating the Nakba was another expression of solidarity with the Palestinian uprising that has raged since September.

As barriers are lifted between Israel's Arabs and their brethren in the Palestinian territories, another wall is being built between them and Israel's Jews.

In the last elections to the premiership, only 15 percent of Arab voters showed up at the polling stations — a huge decrease from earlier elections.

"Boycotting the elections was but the first step to say that we understand the depth of the crisis," said Professor Nadim Ruhana, of the sociology department at Tel Aviv University. He spoke at a symposium held this week at the Truman Institute at the Hebrew University, discussing the crisis among Israel's Arabs following the outbreak of the Intifada.

"The only possible solution for the crisis is a binational state," he added.

In simpler language, that means an end to Israel as a Jewish state.

Among his Jewish colleagues who were shocked at the comment was Rafi Israeli, a historian at the Hebrew University.

He rose up and replied, emotionally, to Ruhana, "You Arabs have 22 countries, you Palestinians will soon have your own state and eventually you will control Jordan as well, why can't you accept Israel as a Jewish state?"

Indeed, this was the theme this week in Nakba ceremonies throughout the Middle East. Fifty-three years after the establishment of the state, 23 years after the peace with Egypt, seven years after the peace with Jordan, Arabs are less inclined to accept Israel as a legitimate Jewish state than they had been up until the outbreak last September of the Al-Aksa Intifada.

According to Yehoshua Porat, professor emeritus at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, a leading expert on history of the Palestinians, the Palestinians' latest tactic is to insist on "reopening the 1948 files," including the demand that Palestinian refugees be allowed to return to what is now Israel.

Not surprisingly, hardly a Palestinian leader will disagree. Hadash Knesset Member Issam Mahoul said Tuesday that Israel should accept the Right of Return.

"Its implementation will be subject to negotiations," he added, trying to soften the impact of the statement for the Jewish listener. The Palestinians in the territories marked the "catastrophe" with violent demonstrations in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip,

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Israel plans Arabic broadcasts

Israel plans to begin airing radio broadcasts in Arabic in Palestinian areas of the West Bank to combat what it calls "incitement" on official Palestinian stations. "I think that we need to talk, to show Israel's side and explain it," Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon told a Knesset committee earlier this week.

### Students to get more God

Israeli Education Minister Limor Livnat decided to add Jewish religious studies to the middle school curriculum.

The program will include studying the weekly Torah portion and preparing for Bar and Bat Mitzvahs.

Opposition leader Yossi Sarid, a former education minister, protested the move, calling it nationalistic brainwashing.

In another move, the Education Ministry plans to require schools in the fervently Orthodox sector to include such subjects as mathematics, English and science.

### Riot panel to resume hearings

The Israeli state commission investigating the killing of 13 Israeli Arabs by police during riots last October plans to resume its deliberations at the beginning of June. The hearings were suspended in March after a police officer was assaulted by a bereaved father while giving testimony.

New security measures are being implemented, including the installation of a glass divider between the witness stand and the gallery and providing an additional hall where the public can view the proceedings on closed-circuit television.

### Israeli AIDS hospice closing

Israel's only hospice for AIDS patients is reportedly closing down. The deputy director of Sheba Hospital Hashomer attributed the decision to changes in the treatment of AIDS and staffing shortages.



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demanding "an end to occupation" and the dismantling of Israeli settlements. Their brethren within Israel proper commemorated the day in a much quieter fashion.

They staged rallies, visited some of the 400 Palestinian villages that were destroyed during the War of Independence and observed moments of silence.

But their message was loud and clear — not only did they want to "reopen the 1948 files" and negotiate the return of their relatives from their exile overseas, they also insisted on full equality with Jewish citizens in Israel.

Lutfi Mash'ur, editor of a popular Arabic newspaper published in Nazareth, believes there is no contradiction between Tuesday's actions and the desires of Israeli Arabs to become an integral part of Israeli society. "Acts of protest like the Nakba revolt are part of the Israelization process of the Arabs," said Mash'ur.

He noted that paradoxically the now-suspended negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians intensified local Palestinian demands.

"At the time, when an agreement seemed to be in the making, Israel's Arabs felt that they were still a part of the problem, but were not treated as part of the solution."

Mash'ur, like many others, anticipates that negotiations will be renewed, sooner or later — and then, what about the local Palestinian population?

"Each of our protests is geared to say we are here. We don't want to join the territories, but rather to prove our legitimacy here in Israel." □

## New Rosh Chodesh program helps girls with their self-esteem

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — Since the 1970s, growing numbers of Jewish women have popularized the ancient new moon ceremony of Rosh Chodesh, turning it into a monthly opportunity for women to study together, pray together and schmooze.

Now, with funding primarily from two women's foundations, Rosh Chodesh is being tailored for girls and teen-agers.

The holiday is being used to boost self-esteem and provide a supportive all-girls environment at a time when stick-thin magazine models and peer pressure make many girls feel bad about themselves and their bodies.

Under the auspices of a pilot project called Rosh Chodesh: It's A Girl Thing!, 50 Jewish girls ranging in age from 11 to 14 meet in four groups — led by women in their 20s and 30s — each month in the Philadelphia area. In its first year, the project — created through Kolot: The Center for Jewish Women's and Gender Studies at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College — is hoping to spread nationally.

Plans are currently under way for additional girls' Rosh Chodesh groups in Baltimore and Chicago. Although the curriculum is being developed at the Reconstructionist seminary, the groups are for girls from all streams of Judaism.

"The idea was to give the girls a gift of a holiday that already belongs to them," said Lori Lefkowitz, academic director of Kolot.

"There's something therapeutic and valuable about celebrating in a community and having a mentor who's a little bit older," she said.

A typical meeting starts with an opening ritual, in which girls introduce themselves using their own name and their mother and grandmother's name, tell about a favorite Jewish heroine and light candles together. Then they do a activity like reading and discussing a biblical story, do a hands-on activity and part with a closing ritual.

All four groups got together with their mothers shortly before Passover, where they wrote poems together, watched a performance on the history of Jewish women in America, and made tambourines to commemorate how Moses' sister, Miriam, led the women in singing and dancing during the Exodus from Egypt.

Issues like body image and friendships are woven throughout the meetings. For example, the curriculum for the month of Kislev suggests that girls read the story of Judith and discuss how they feel about a woman using her beauty to get what she wants.

The Rosh Chodesh groups represent one of the few "opportunities for single-sex education in the liberal Jewish community," said Sally Gottesman, chair of Kolot.

"You can discuss certain things that would kind of be uncomfortable around guys," said Ronya Gordon, an eighth grader in one of the groups. "You don't have to feel self-conscious." □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Day schools get special aid

Day schools in small North American Jewish communities are being targeted for special aid through the Boston-based Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education.

The new assistance — \$10,000 grants and 10 days of free consulting to seven schools each year — is intended to compensate for the fact that schools in areas with 15,000 or fewer Jews generally receive less expertise and support than those in major metropolitan areas.

### Anti-Semitism mars Russia rallies

Anti-Semitic incidents took place during demonstrations across Russia at the recent May Day and World War II Victory Day rallies, according to the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews.

At the May Day rally in Moscow, some marchers held signs that read "Down with Jewish Fascism and Bandit Capitalism!"

That same day in Novosibirsk, one demonstrator with a megaphone claimed that local authorities are "Yids who have robbed everybody."

### Arafat to be 'waxed' from N.Y.?

Taking the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to a new level, New York politicians are trying to have a rendering of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat removed from Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum in Times Square.

"There amongst many of the world's historical and contemporary figures, it is grievous to find a smiling Yasser Arafat," Assemblyman Dov Hikind said. "For the last seven months, Arafat has orchestrated a campaign of premeditated violence against Israeli citizens."

### Agency finds Jewish village

A Jewish community of 50 people recently discovered in southwestern Ukraine by the Jewish Agency for Israel is preparing to move to Israel.

Residents of the village of Konetspol, about 150 miles north of Odessa, were discovered after several Jews from the village approached a Jewish Agency representative, expressing an interest in learning Hebrew and moving to the Jewish state.

### Croatian leader blasts past

The president of Croatia condemned anti-Semitism and said his nation had left behind a period in its history when it was "flirting with the Nazi-fascist ideas."

Speaking recently after Israel's new ambassador to Croatia, David Granit, presented his credentials, President Stipe Mesic vowed not to forget the Balkan country's history as a Nazi puppet state.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Principals struggle to interpret judge's ruling in Nazi labor case

*JTA Staff Report*

BERLIN (JTA) — Hopes persist that Nazi-era slave and forced laborers will receive German funds starting in July, despite conflicting views about the latest decision by a U.S. judge whose previous rulings delayed the money.

In a dramatic reversal of her earlier rulings, Judge Shirley Wohl Kram last week dismissed class-action lawsuits that had been preventing payments from a \$5.2 billion fund Germany created to compensate the former laborers. German officials have been unwilling to release the cash until their lawyers can ensure "legal closure" — that is, a promise that no more lawsuits relating to the Nazi era will be filed.

When Kram, who had been hearing such lawsuits, dropped the cases May 10, German officials initially believed she had granted legal closure, enabling the German Parliament to approve payouts from the compensation fund before going on summer break July 7.

But by the weekend — after they had read the judge's order — German officials were complaining about wording they said could force them to use the fund to pay out claims in Austrian cases as well.

According to advocates for the laborers, however, German officials are raising new hurdles in order to postpone the payments.

But the officials contend that if Germany does not extend the slave labor fund to cover Austrian cases, the lawsuits before Kram could be reinstated.

These concerns prompted the officials to predict further delays before payments from the fund can begin.

"Whoever says they don't see assumptions or conditions" in the judge's decision "is not able to read, or not willing to read," said Wolfgang Gibowski, spokesman for the German firms that contributed to the fund.

The timing of the first payouts may now hinge on a U.S. appeals court hearing slated for this week. That court could force Kram to alter her decision in order to satisfy German concerns.

At a news conference in Berlin on Monday, Otto Graf Lambsdorff, the German government's chief negotiator for the fund, said payments could begin this summer — if the appeals court removes all conditions from Kram's decision.

Meanwhile, lawyers and others advocating on behalf of the former laborers claim there is nothing in Kram's May 10 ruling that imposes new conditions on the German government or on German businesses, which jointly created the slave labor fund in February 1999.

All legal claims against Germany "have been dismissed," Konrad Matschke, the spokesperson in Germany for the Claims Conference, said Monday after reading the Kram decision. The conference was among the groups that negotiated on behalf of the laborers. "Our point of view is that the German Parliament can confirm legal closure now," he said.

Matschke said the Claims Conference soon would present its point of view to German legislators, who are due to decide later this week whether requirements for legal closure have been met.

German legislators have received a letter from Lothar Evars, director of the Dusseldorf-based Federation for Information and Support for the Survivors of Nazi Persecution, similarly confirming legal closure.

Evars said he is only "50 percent sure" that the July 7 deadline will be met for releasing funds.

"Industry would like to get more time, and the best way is to pretend the cases are not closed," Evars said.

The German government and a group of German businesses agreed in February 1999 to create the \$5.2 billion fund to compensate slave and forced laborers.

Under the terms of an agreement reached in March 2000, some 240,000 slave laborers — about 140,000 of whom are Jewish — would receive up to \$7,500 each. More than 1 million forced laborers would get up to \$2,500 each. □

## Bills would force PLO, Lebanon to shape up — or lose some funds

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Two pieces of legislation under consideration in Congress could change the way the United States interacts with Israel's neighbors.

The first bill, sponsored by Rep. Gary Ackerman (D-N.Y.), would require the State Department to assess whether the Palestinian Authority is complying with its obligations under peace agreements with Israel — and, if not, to impose sanctions.

Also under consideration is a bill to limit nonhumanitarian aid to Lebanon if it does not secure its border with Israel.

Ackerman's bill, the Middle East Peace Commitments Act, would add teeth to current State Department reports that chronicle Palestinian actions but do not make judgments about their compliance with peace agreements, and do not impose consequences.

His bill "goes a mile further," Ackerman told JTA. "This helps us all to see clearly what the facts are and whether or not there have been violations."

Currently, the State Department issues several reports that touch on Palestinian actions. The most direct is the Palestine Liberation Organization Commitments Compliance Act, which twice a year chronicles Palestinian actions against Israel.

The latest PLOCCA report, released last month, aroused controversy by reporting that Palestinian Authority "security forces instigated and participated in anti-Israeli violence" — without directly linking the violence to P.A. President Yasser Arafat.

Other State Department reports that assess Palestinian violence are the Patterns of Global Terrorism Report, released earlier this month, and the Foreign Terrorists Organization list, due in October.

The Foreign Terrorists Organization list is one vehicle that could be used to impose sanctions on the Palestinian Authority and PLO, if it deems them terrorist groups. Ackerman's bill calls for similar sanctions, such as downgrading the status of the PLO's Washington office and cutting off nonhumanitarian aid to the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Ackerman said legislation is needed to impose sanctions because he does not believe the State Department will impose sanctions on its own.

"I would suspect, rather strongly," that the Foreign Terrorists Organization list "is not going to declare the PLO a terrorist organization," Ackerman said.

His bill, opposed by the White House and the State Department, also provides a waiver for the president to avoid issuing sanctions, in the interest of national security. Presidents Clinton and Bush used a similar waiver to avoid moving the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

The Bush administration opposes the bill out of concern that the legislation might harm the U.S. role as a mediator in Middle East peace negotiations.

The heart of the issue, Ackerman said, is not the punishments imposed but the need for the president to take a strong stand on Palestinian actions. "We want him to be able to call a spade a spade," Ackerman said.

Speaking to the Senate Appropriations Committee on Tuesday, Powell reiterated the need to send funds to Palestinian-controlled areas.

"I think we have to be a responsible partner for the parties in the region at this time of high stress, this time of high violence, in

order to get them back to a situation where we can pursue a negotiating track," Powell said.

The Lebanon bill, up for consideration Wednesday as an amendment to the State Department Authorizations Bill, would give the Lebanese government six months to deploy forces to the border and assert its authority in the area — or risk losing some \$35 million in nonhumanitarian aid from the United States.

Lebanon long demanded, in accord with U.N. Security Council Resolution 425, that Israel withdraw troops from the security zone it occupied in southern Lebanon in 1982. Since the Israeli withdrawal last May, however, Lebanon has refused to secure the border region — as it is obligated to do under Resolution 425 — allowing Hezbollah to remain the dominant force in the area.

"Hezbollah operates from Lebanese territory along the border with Israel with impunity, staging terrorist strikes and cross-border kidnapping of Israelis with increased frequency," Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), the bill's sponsor, said in a press release. "Lebanon has the power to stop these terrorist strikes from its territory, and a solemn obligation under international law to do so."

The international community by and large excuses Lebanon from its obligations under Resolution 425 because the country is still dominated by Syria, which backs Hezbollah. Lantos said his bill is in Lebanon's interest because it requires the country to exert its sovereignty throughout its entire territory.

"This amendment is meant to promote U.S.-Lebanon relations, not punish Lebanon," Lantos said. "It provides a further incentive for Lebanon to defuse one of the most dangerous flashpoints in the Middle East."

The Bush administration opposes the Lebanon bill because it believes aid to Lebanon is necessary to jump-start the country's economy and wrestle Israel's northern neighbor out of Syrian and Hezbollah's control. □

## Hungarian Jews vow to pursue law criminalizing Holocaust denial

By Agnes Bohm

BUDAPEST (JTA) — Hungary's justice minister has rejected a request from the Jewish community to make Holocaust denial illegal.

"Such a law would be unconstitutional" in Hungary, Ibolya David told a legislative committee last week. She said she based her decision on "numerous professional opinions," mainly from officials within the Justice Ministry.

The Federation of Hungarian Jewish Communities submitted a request in November 1999 asking the government to begin drafting such a law. The request came after numerous books appeared dismissing the Holocaust as a Jewish fabrication.

Jewish leaders say the number of stores selling anti-Semitic literature and videotapes has increased significantly since they first requested the law. They cite the example of Aron Monus, who is living in southern Hungary without ever facing questioning for his widely publicized book, "The World Jewish Conspiracy."

Peter Tordai, the president of the federation, told JTA that despite the justice minister's statement last week, the Jewish community still plans to press ahead with its request for a law similar to the ones already on the books in Germany, France and Austria.

The community plans to make its request before the Hungarian Parliament takes up amendments to the penal code in October. □