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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Tel Aviv terror toll reaches 19

A 14-year-old girl injured in last Friday's suicide bombing outside a Tel Aviv disco died early Sunday, bringing the number of people killed by the bomber to 19.

Funerals were held Sunday for victims of the bombing. Of the 48 Israelis still hospitalized following the attack, three were in critical condition, six in serious condition. [Page 1]

Israel again targets terrorists

Israel called on its security forces to resume operations against members of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, Israel Radio reported Sunday.

There have been no reported Israeli operations against the terror groups since Prime Minister Ariel Sharon announced a unilateral cease-fire on May 22.

Both groups have claimed responsibility for last Friday's deadly suicide bombing in Tel Aviv.

Reform movement calls off trips

North America's Reform movement canceled its youth trips to Israel this summer after a spate of recent Palestinian terror attacks, including last Friday's deadly suicide bombing in Tel Aviv that killed 19 Israeli youths.

"The bombing certainly had an impact," Emily Grotta, communications director for the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, told JTA, but "we had been wrestling with this for some time."

UAHC President Rabbi Eric Yoffie will proceed with a planned trip to Israel in two weeks, Grotta said, but "there's a difference between an individual adult standing up and saying, 'I'm going and showing my solidarity,' and taking responsibility for someone else's children." The UAHC generally sends some 1,500 teenagers to Israel on a variety of programs each summer.

In another development, Yoffie blamed the past eight months of violence on Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat and other Palestinian officials for nourishing a culture of hatred.

At the same time, he also criticized Israel's behavior, including its settlement policy. Speaking last Friday in Cleveland, where he addressed the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Yoffie called on Israel to temporarily freeze all settlement construction "because it is politically wise and morally right."

After bomb, Israel tells Arafat: we demand deeds, not more words

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli officials have decided to wait and see whether Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat follows through on his call for a cease-fire — but they are not optimistic.

After two Cabinet meetings Saturday and Sunday to decide on a reaction to a devastating suicide bombing in Tel Aviv last Friday night, Israeli ministers agreed to withhold a military response and give Arafat a few days to live up to his vow to crack down on terrorists and rein in violence.

Eighteen Israelis were killed and more than 100 wounded when a Palestinian terrorist blew himself up outside a nightclub along Tel Aviv's beachfront promenade last Friday.

Nearly all the victims were young immigrants from the former Soviet Union for whom the disco was a popular hangout.

A 14-year-old girl injured in the blast died early Sunday, bringing the Israeli death toll to 19.

In the wake of the bombing, Israel tightened a closure on the territories and ordered even those Palestinians with entry permits back to the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon declared an end to the unilateral cease-fire he announced May 21, but did not immediately order any military reprisals, deciding to see whether international pressure would spur Arafat to rein in Palestinian violence.

Israeli officials were vague on how long it would take Israel to determine if Arafat is more serious about observing this cease-fire than the numerous ones he has disregarded in recent months, but some officials spoke of a testing period of one or two days.

The Palestinian Authority "has established in its territory a coalition of terror, and is attempting to disguise it with words of peace as lip service to the international community, while continuing to incite its people to hatred and violence," Israel said in a statement issued after the attack. "Israel calls upon the international community to take action that will clarify that terrorism has a political price."

Sharon was quoted as telling his Security Cabinet on Sunday that the Israel Defense Force made the assessment that Arafat's call for a cease-fire was merely tactical and did not represent a strategic decision to stop the violence.

On Saturday, after Israel called off its unilateral cease-fire, Arafat called for an immediate and unconditional halt to violence.

"We are prepared to act in order to invest the maximum efforts possible to stop the bloodshed of our people and of the Israeli people," Arafat said at a news conference in Ramallah.

Some Israeli commentators were skeptical, however, noting that Arafat also said the Palestinian Authority already has been exerting maximum effort until now.

A day later, in any case, 14 Palestinian groups — including Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the 12 factions that make up Arafat's PLO — pledged that they have a right to continue their uprising against Israel.

The Tel Aviv bombing drew widespread international condemnation. Officials from the United States, Russia, United Nations and European Union were among those condemning the attack.

Following Arafat's vow to pursue peace, Sharon told U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell that Israel would judge Arafat by his deeds, not his words.

A statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office said Sharon told Powell in a

MIDEAST FOCUS

Groups may go on U.S. terror list

President Bush seemed "very receptive" to adding the Palestinians' Force 17 security force and Tanzim militia to the U.S. State Department's list of foreign terrorist organizations, according to a participant at meetings Bush held last week with his Israeli counterpart, Moshe Katsav, and American Jewish leaders. Bush also said he was looking for ways to address the \$800 million supplemental aid request made by Israel and backed last year by President Bill Clinton, but he made no commitments to the Jewish leaders.

In another development, the Bush administration criticized the Palestinian Authority for failing to send high-level officials to U.S.-organized security talks with Israel last week.

State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said the United States continues to be disappointed that key Palestinian officials are not taking part in the meetings, which are designed to help stop the violence and resume peace negotiations. The U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv is arranging a new round of security talks, but they will be held at a lower level.

Wedding hall rescuers suffering

Some of those who helped evacuate the wounded and dead following the May 24 wedding hall collapse in Jerusalem are suffering from symptoms including distress, bouts of crying and insomnia, and are complaining that they have not received the necessary psychological care, according to the Jerusalem Post.

Palestinian official buried

Palestinian leader Faisal Hussein was buried last Friday on the Temple Mount after the Israeli Supreme Court rejected a motion to prevent the funeral procession, which brought thousands of Palestinians to the Old City.

Many of the people following the coffin from Ramallah did not have Israeli entry permits, but were not met with resistance from Israeli security forces.

weekend phone conversation that Arafat had made similar pronouncements in the past when he feared he would be harmed in response to "terrible deeds he committed."

Sharon told Powell that Israel expects Arafat to fulfill three conditions: end incitement, stop terror attacks and arrest all terrorists previously released by the Palestinian Authority.

Powell canceled a trip to Costa Rica in order to remain involved in attempts to calm the situation. He spoke by phone with Sharon and Arafat several times over the weekend.

On Sunday, Powell said this is the time for Arafat to stop Palestinian attacks on Israelis.

Speaking on NBC-TV's "Meet the Press," Powell also said he fears that a retaliatory strike by Israel in response to last Friday's suicide bombing could plunge the region into "an abyss that we might not be able to get out of."

As funerals were held Sunday for victims of the bombing, their families, friends and survivors of the attack struggled to cope with the tragedy.

The attack occurred around 11:40 last Friday night as groups of teen-agers waited in line for the doors to open at the Dolphin Disco, a nightclub located at the former site of an aquarium.

The disco was known for throwing parties every weekend attended by youths from the former Soviet Union.

The terrorist stood among a group of young people and detonated the bomb strapped to his body.

The bomb had been packed with screws, bolts and ball bearings, increasing its deadly impact.

"Suddenly, they flew up in the air, everyone together, before my eyes," recalled Avi Mizrahi, owner of the Dolphin club.

"I looked around and saw my security guards bleeding, and all these children on the ground.

"I looked at myself and saw I wasn't hurt, but my shirt was full of blood. I pulled it off and cut it up into strips and started making tourniquets."

Shai Har-Meshi, owner of a kiosk near the site of the bombing, described the scene before and after the blast.

"Dozens of young boys were sitting around, laughing, talking on [cell] phones, checking out girls.

"Within a second, the place turned into hell. Body parts flew in all directions. There were screams," he told the Israeli daily Ma'ariv.

"There's a jumble of dead children!" a passerby was quoted as screaming.

On Saturday, street crews worked to wash off the remnants of blood from the site of the bombing, while police pushed back angry Jewish demonstrators who threw rocks and bricks at the nearby Hassan Bek mosque.

As the day wore on, there was a tense standoff as Muslim worshipers inside the mosque threw rocks back.

The backgrounds of the bombing victims gave added poignancy to the deadly attack.

Most of the victims were teen-age immigrants from the former Soviet Union, and their personal stories resonated with the experiences of young people adjusting to a new home and culture.

"They always accused us that the 'Russian discotheques' are a differentiating factor in Israeli society. On Friday, the Russian discotheque turned into a unifying factor in society. Suddenly, we're all Israelis," the daily Ha'aretz quoted one student, Igor Lautman, as saying.

The dead included two sisters, who are survived by a younger brother and their mother; a young girl who immigrated with her father to Israel when she was three years old; and an immigrant soldier whose family is abroad.

A Tel Aviv high school that draws many immigrants from the former Soviet Union lost five of its students and one graduate in the bombing.

Russian-speaking social workers tried to comfort the survivors, their families and friends.

Volunteers from the Israel Crisis Management Center — which is also known by its Hebrew acronym Sela — worked to help victims who don't have a support network in Israel. □



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JEWISH WORLD

Two Birthright trips postponed

The largest provider of Birthright Israel trips has postponed its early June trips after a terrorist bombing in Tel Aviv last Friday killed 19 Israeli youths.

In a statement issued to participants, Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life said that trips meant to depart June 4 and 5 would be postponed and possibly subsumed in a larger delegation "that will, please G-d," leave on June 10. "Please be assured that it is always the first concern of Hillel and of Birthright Israel that we be able to offer a safe and wonderful Israel experience," the statement said.

U.N.: Help protect religious sites

The U.N. General Assembly passed a resolution calling for the protection of religious sites around the world.

The resolution, passed May 31, calls on countries to adopt measures aimed at preventing acts or threats of violence against religious sites and to promote a culture of tolerance and respect for them.

ADL blasts Romanian leaders

The Anti-Defamation League criticized Romania for continuing to sanction monuments honoring the nation's wartime dictator and Hitler ally, Marshall Ion Antonescu.

The criticism followed reports that Romanian military officials and right-wing politician Corneliu Vadim Tudor attended the unveiling of a bust of Antonescu in the courtyard of a Bucharest church. It is "disturbing" that such commemorations continue "throughout Romania without any response from the government and with some measure of official sanction," said Abraham Foxman, ADL's national director.

Online potential for shuls eyed

Twenty North American rabbis have been selected to form an advisory team exploring how emerging technologies can help pulpit rabbis in their work.

The project is under the auspices of Synagogue Transformation and Renewal, a year-old nondenominational organization. STAR also plans to create a synagogue "supersite" on the Internet and help individual congregations experiment with ways to serve their members online.

Airlines cancel Israel flights

Israel criticized two airlines' cancellation of flights to Israel following last Friday's Tel Aviv suicide bombing. Air France and Delta Airlines cited security concerns for halting service on Saturday and Sunday.

"There are absolutely no security related reasons to cancel flights to Israel," Israeli Transportation Minister Ephraim Sneh said Sunday. "We are demanding an explanation from the airlines."

Liberal Jewish groups may join central federation of Czech Jewry

By Magnus Bennett

PRAGUE (JTA) — The umbrella group representing the Czech Republic's Jewish community is poised to allow non-Orthodox branches of Judaism to participate in the community's official functions.

Bowing to growing calls from its membership to open its doors to alternatives to Orthodoxy, the Czech Federation of Jewish Communities said last week it is considering including the Reform movement's World Union for Progressive Judaism as a potential partner.

The federation also has not ruled out including other Jewish streams by the end of the year.

The federation said it was reacting to the results of an opinion poll conducted among the country's 10 official Jewish communities.

The poll showed that 80 percent of several thousand respondents want to see the federation open its doors to the non-Orthodox Jewish streams.

Orthodox Jews account for only a small proportion of Czech Jewry, which is largely secular or non-Orthodox.

The federation's executive director, Tomas Kraus, said the poll followed discussions within the various communities about the future direction the federation should take.

He said the federation would have to alter its regulations to allow non-Orthodox branches to operate officially. "There is quite a lot of good will on this issue, so I don't think there will be a problem with the rules," he said.

"There will be a problem, however, if there is no follow-up because we would be in a situation with people coming in to the community who are non-Orthodox but have no access to non-Orthodox services," Kraus added.

Local Jewish communities reacted positively to the federation's announcement.

"I think most people here are extremely happy that at last they may see alternatives to the Orthodox system," said one senior member of Prague's Jewish Community who wished to remain anonymous.

Kraus said the federation may invite representatives of specific Jewish umbrella groups — including the World Union for Progressive Judaism — to Prague to explain to the federation's governing council what they stand for before any final decision is made.

The country's Orthodox chief rabbi, Karol Sidon, has not opposed the possibility of changing the federation's makeup.

"There has been a lot of talking, but at present the regulations do not allow alternatives," he said of the federation's current rules.

"There are negotiations going on about changing the regulations, and I believe it is possible to reach a consensus. Everything is possible in this world.

"If the community had an absolutely different point of view from me, then we would have to leave each other, but I believe we can reach a consensus," he added.

Kraus stressed that Orthodox members of the community should not be alarmed at the prospect of other branches officially coexisting within the community.

"We are not harming the Orthodox community here. Quite the opposite, in fact," he said. "All we want to do is introduce pluralism into the life of the community."

Assuming a consensus is reached, the Czech Republic's first non-Orthodox, full-time rabbi could be in place within a matter of months. □

Oregon Jews get hate mail

NEW YORK (JTA) — Anti-Semitic hate mail was sent late last month to at least seven Jewish households in Eugene, Ore.

The mail, postmarked in New York, blames Jews for moral decay in the United States and denies the Holocaust occurred, police said. Rabbi Yitzhak Husbands-Hankin, of Temple Beth Israel, said he alerted city officials after hearing from families who received the hate literature. □

U.S. Supreme Court refuses to rule on display of Ten Commandments

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The U.S. Supreme Court has declined to hear a case testing whether a public display of the Ten Commandments violates the separation of church and state.

The high court last week could not get the four votes necessary to agree to hear the case, and as a result it let stand a federal appeals court's ruling against the display.

By refusing to hear the case, the high court turned aside an appeal filed by officials from Elkhart, Ind., who claimed a six-foot monument inscribed with the Ten Commandments that stands outside the city municipal building does not violate the Constitution's principle of church-state separation.

The high court is now letting a U.S. court in Indiana decide what the city must do with the monument.

A panel of judges from the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals had previously ruled against the Indiana officials, saying the purpose behind the 40-year-old display "was to promote religious ideals."

Judges in lower courts "will get the message that this is not an issue the Supreme Court is re-examining," said Marc Stern, the co-director of the American Jewish Congress' legal department.

Jeffrey Sinensky, legal counsel and director of domestic policy for the American Jewish Committee, said he would be surprised if the court would decide at a later date to take up a Ten Commandments case.

By coincidence, the court's announcement came on the second day of the holiday of Shavuot, when Jews commemorate the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai.

Another bit of irony: Above the Supreme Court bench there is a marble frieze that depicts Moses carrying the Ten Commandments.

The display does not break any church-state rules, Justice John Paul Stevens has written, because Moses appears along with other historical lawgivers, including Mohammad and Confucius.

In a dissent from the court's refusal to take the Indiana case, Chief Justice William Rehnquist said, "The monument does not express the city's preference for a particular religion or for religious belief in general," but rather reflects the role of the Ten Commandments in the development of the Western legal system.

In response, Stevens noted that the First Commandment reads "I Am The Lord Thy God," adding that this is "rather hard to square with the proposition that the monument expresses no particular religious preference."

There could be more challenges to the constitutionality of other similar monuments around the country as a result of the court's stance.

Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, said the court's announcement "should help bring the Religious Right's Ten Commandments crusade" to display the Commandments in public places "to a screeching halt."

In 1980, the high court ruled 5-to-4 that a Kentucky state law that required the posting of a copy of the Ten Commandments in each public school classroom violated the separation of church and state.

The justices ruled at the time that the posting "had no secular legislative purpose" and was "plainly religious in nature."

The U.S. House of Representatives passed a measure in 1999 that would have permitted states to allow the display of the Ten Commandments in schools and other public places, but the measure never became law. □

Foundation created to support Jewish cultural projects in Europe

By Richard Allen Greene

LONDON (JTA) — A \$1 million foundation, the European Association for Jewish Culture, has been established to inject creativity into Jewish life across the continent.

A joint project of the Institute for Jewish Policy Research in London and the Alliance Israelite Universelle in Paris, the foundation aims to provide a total of \$200,000 a year in grants to artists from more than 25 countries across Europe.

While the association may run some workshops and conferences, its main purpose is to disburse grants of roughly \$5,000 apiece to creative individuals in the visual or performing arts, Lena Stanley-Clamp, director of the association's London office, told JTA.

The foundation is supported by a grant from the European Union's Culture 2000 program and a charitable foundation based in Europe that has chosen to remain anonymous.

In its first year, the foundation will focus on supporting new plays, visual arts and Jewish periodicals.

The association's leaders are particularly eager to support cross-border projects, as well as those that involve collaboration among artists from different disciplines and backgrounds.

The association is sending out brochures to academics, museums, curators and theaters to solicit grant applications, Stanley-Clamp said.

"This initiative aims to help a new generation of Jewish artists, whether they are in Manchester, Prague, Budapest, Copenhagen or Rome," she said.

Jewish organizations across Europe are associated with the initiative, including the Jewish Community of Berlin, the Jewish Museum in Prague and the Jewish studies program of Budapest's Central European University.

Marcus Freed, a British actor who developed a one-man play based on the life of King Solomon, hailed the establishment of the foundation.

"We're going through a strong period in Jewish culture in Britain right now, partly because the wider Jewish community recognizes that it takes money" to produce art, he said.

Freed said British Jewish groups are becoming more willing to fund arts projects, and "the more players there are in the game, the better."

He pointed out, though, that the grants are relatively small.

"It's important for a grant-making body to be aware of what they can achieve with this amount of money," he said.

Stanley-Clamp acknowledged that grants of \$5,000 might not go far in some European countries.

"It's intended, to an extent, as seed money," she said.

Tom Freudenheim, a past chairman and president of the National Foundation for Jewish Culture in the United States, was also enthusiastic about the foundation.

Grants to support Jewish arts have been "extremely fruitful," he said.

"Artists need validation. They can't just work in the dark." □