



Daily News Bulletin

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84th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Disco death toll reaches 20

Another Israeli died from injuries sustained in last Friday's suicide bomb attack in Tel Aviv, bringing the number of people killed by the bomber to 20. Jan Blum, 25, of Ramat Gan, worked as a security guard at the Dolphin Club, where the attack took place.

Hamas dangles no-terror vow

A Hamas official raised the possibility of halting terror attacks within Israel, but said the group would continue fighting Israel in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. "But this will depend on the actions of the Israelis," the official told Reuters on Monday.

In a related development, the Simon Wiesenthal Center called upon leading Muslim clerics to issue a fatwa, or religious edict, against suicide bombings.

Rabbi Marvin Hier, the center's dean and founder, told JTA that most Muslim clerics are too fearful to issue such rulings, though some have said the bombings do not reflect the tenets of Islam.

King hosts European Jews

King Juan Carlos of Spain told European Jewish representatives that he has never understood how earlier Spanish monarchs could have expelled the Jews from Spain in 1492.

The king received leaders of the European Council of Jewish Communities at the Zarzuela Palace during the group's General Assembly, held in Madrid May 31-June 3.

Juan Carlos said he welcomed the Jewish presence in Spain and also hoped for peace in the Middle East.

During their conference, the Jewish leaders issued a resolution that expressed "unbreakable solidarity" with Israel, deplored the "demonization" of Jews and Israel in the media and urged a peaceful solution for the current conflict with the Palestinians. The resolution also called on European governments to denounce Palestinian terrorism and to "state clearly that such actions violate European moral values."

Springtime for Mel Brooks

A musical about a musical about Hitler broke the record for the number of Tony Awards won in a single season. "The Producers" won 12 Tonys Sunday night, breaking the previous record of 10 held by "Hello, Dolly!" since 1964. [Page 4]

NEWS ANALYSIS

Commission seeks truth about riots, but Arabs feel racial divide widening

By Ori Nir

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Behind a thick glass wall that protects witnesses from audience attacks, the state commission investigating the deaths of Israeli Arabs in clashes with police last October resumed its discussions this week.

The testimonies were suspended for three months after a bereaved Arab father beat a police officer who testified that he shot demonstrators at the entrance to the Arab town of Sakhnin early last October.

The glass wall is intended to let Israel's Arab minority see how justice is carried out, while preventing the audience at the commission hall in Jerusalem from further attacking witnesses.

Relatives of Arab youngsters killed in the riots twice attacked policemen whose testimony enraged them during hearings of the state commission that they themselves had demanded.

Many Arab Israelis view the wall as much more than a safety measure, however, describing it as a metaphor for their relations with the state and its Jewish majority.

In the eyes of many Israeli Arabs, the glass wall emphasizes that Israeli Jews see their Arab fellow citizens primarily as a security risk.

It demonstrates the distance between the Arab minority and the Jewish state's establishment.

And it is a reminder of the glass ceiling that prevents Arabs from thoroughly integrating into Israel's society.

To many Israeli Jews, however, the glass wall is also highly symbolic, erected as a necessary defense.

Like last fall's riots — when Arab Israelis demonstrating solidarity with the nascent Palestinian uprising attacked police forces and passing Jewish drivers — the security concerns embodied by the glass wall have been borne out by events, some Israeli Jews argue.

More than anything, the wall is a reflection of the deepening division between Israeli Jews and Arabs following last October's riots. Thirteen Arabs and one Jew were killed in mass demonstrations that continued through the first week of the Palestinian uprising in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, deepening Arab citizens' sense of estrangement and alienation from the state.

A public opinion poll published last week — the first scientific poll of Israeli Arabs since the riots — shows the depth of the alienation.

Like other polls taken in recent years, this survey shows a reversal of the "Israelization" of the country's Arab sector that was apparent through the mid-1990s.

Only 33 percent of the 1,202 Arab citizens surveyed said the term "Israeli" best defines their identity, compared to 63 percent in 1995.

Only 35 percent said they feel a stronger affinity to Israeli Jews than they do to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as compared with 50 percent six years ago.

Almost half — 46 percent — said they reject Israel's existence as a Zionist state, compared with 35 percent in 1995. A majority of 58 percent said the intifada had distanced them from the state.

Opinion polls among Israeli Jews show a parallel resentment toward the country's Arab citizens.

Resentment can flare into hatred that sometimes is expressed in verbal or physical

MIDEAST FOCUS

Fighting persists in Gaza

Israeli troops and Palestinian gunmen exchanged fire for hours in the southern Gaza Strip, despite attempts to arrange a cease-fire after eight months of violence. Two Israeli soldiers were slightly hurt and eight Palestinians wounded during Monday's firefight at Rafah on the Egyptian-Gaza border.

Each side accused the other of firing first.

Poll: Palestinians back bombers

More than 76 percent of Palestinians support suicide attacks against Israelis, according to a poll released Sunday by the Palestinian Center for Public Opinion.

Commenting on the results, a Palestinian security official said Hamas and Islamic Jihad know that their attacks have the backing of Palestinians and the groups will continue to perpetrate such attacks despite the Palestinian Authority's cease-fire order.

IOC: No peace, no Olympics

Tel Aviv will not be considered a candidate to host the Olympics as long as there is no peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians, the president of the International Olympic Committee said.

Juan Antonio Samaranch made the comment Monday during a visit to Israel. Tel Aviv had sought to present itself as a host for the 2012 Games.

Terrorists may have used funeral

Israeli security sources suspect that terrorists operating within the Palestinian Authority may have exploited the funeral procession of Palestinian official Faisal Hussein last Friday to smuggle terrorists, explosives and arms into Israel, the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot reported.

But army officials said that while the number of participants in the procession prevented a thorough check of every individual, no cars with Palestinian license plates were allowed into Israel.

attacks against Israeli Arabs. Many of those attacks are not even reported to the police because Arabs prefer not to rock the boat.

Human rights organizations, lawyers and Arabic newspaper editors report that Arab citizens hesitate to file complaints when harmed.

"Such things happen almost every day. People would call me to consult or commiserate, but they are very often afraid to go ahead and complain," says Awmy Banna, who runs the Haifa office of the Association for Civil Rights in Israel.

The state commission headed by Supreme Court Judge Theodor Orr was supposed to help bridge the rift between Israeli Arabs and Jews.

Eight months after the riots and four months after public hearings began, however, the commission has emphasized the rift and, possibly, even deepened it.

Much of the Arab public's frustration stems from enormous expectations. Israeli Arabs expected the commission to focus not only on the circumstances and results of the October riots but on what they claim were the causes of the violent protest — years of alleged police brutality and government discrimination.

However, the commission is not attempting to dig into such deep wounds, and therefore now is being perceived as alienated from the Arab public, says Arab Knesset member Azmi Beshara.

Israeli Arabs hoped the commission would renew their sense of affinity with the Israeli left, and they hoped to use the hearings as a podium to recount their claims of injustice to the international community.

They also viewed it as the closest thing possible to a tribunal that would hear their indictment against the Jewish establishment.

Indeed, late last January, the Arabs' umbrella leadership body, the Higher Monitoring Committee for the Affairs of Israel's Arab Public, presented the Orr panel with a collection of testimonies regarding the October events.

As he handed them the files, Monitoring Committee Chairman Muhammad Zeidan told commission representatives that he was submitting an indictment against the state of Israel, in the name of a million Arab citizens.

Some Israeli Jews, on the other hand, have been disappointed that the panel appears to be dealing only with Arab grievances and has not yet thoroughly investigated alleged incitement by Israeli Arab leaders, who they believe spurred the crowd to violence.

In addition, they note that Arab groups were empowered by the commission to collate testimonies from Arabs, rather than have the commission's fact finders directly interview the witnesses.

The three members of the Orr panel did hear some disturbing testimonies about the use of police force, including live ammunition fired against unarmed civilian demonstrators.

They heard testimonies from senior police officers about sharpshooters' orders to fire live bullets at Arab youngsters carrying slingshots.

One border policeman said he received orders to shoot rubber bullets at inciters demonstrating in Umm al-Fahm — the center of the riots — when he clearly was not in a life-threatening situation.

That same policeman testified that a few days later, on Yom Kippur — when he was off-duty — he participated with hundreds of Jewish rioters in a violent anti-Arab demonstration in Nazareth.

Two Arabs were shot dead when clashes erupted after that demonstration.

Despite such shocking testimony, Israeli media have highlighted the dynamics of the hearings, such as Arab relatives assaulting witnesses, or tension between Arabs and police officers in the audience.

Rather than shifting the focus from Arab violence to police brutality, as the community expected, Arab leaders feel the Orr Commission perpetuates the Jewish perception of Israeli Arabs as a violent threat.

"Unruly behavior of Arabs at the commission was very damaging to us, but the glass wall will further deepen the damage, as a perpetual statement that the presence of Arabs in the audience is somehow dangerous," says Hassan Jabareen of Adalah: The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, which informally represents the bereaved families before the commission.

As it reconvened this week, the commission continued hearing testimonies on the clashes in the Arab towns of Sakhnin and Arabe, where four Arab youths were killed by live bullets.



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JEWISH WORLD

U.S. Jews told to hang tough

Unity, resilience and tenacity are the most important weapons the Jewish people have in the face of Palestinian violence, according to a spokesman for Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Addressing U.S. Jewish leaders in a conference call Monday, Ra'anana Gissin also urged Jews to visit Israel, saying it will help Israel defeat terrorist activity.

Poll: Austrians knock reparations

A large percentage of Austrians oppose their government's decision earlier this year to provide compensation to Jewish Holocaust victims.

The finding was included in a poll of Austrian attitudes toward Jews that was commissioned by the American Jewish Committee. The poll also found that many respondents are beginning to come to terms with their nation's role in the Holocaust.

Ex-Nazi dies before deportation

A 78-year-old man stripped of his Canadian citizenship for collaborating with the Nazis has died before Canada could carry out its intention to deport him. But Ukrainian-born Serge Kisluk maintained his innocence until the end. "I go to my death with a clean conscience," he wrote in a final testament, "knowing that when I face God in Heaven I will not be judged by the likes of those who crucified me here on this Earth."

Jedwabne exhumation resumes

Investigators resumed on Monday the exhumation of a mass grave of 1,600 Jews massacred in 1941 by their Polish neighbors.

The work in the town of Jedwabne began last week as part of a government probe into the massacre, but was halted May 31 after a rabbi from Israel, who is an expert on exhumations, had to leave. A second rabbi, Morris Herschaft of London, came to Jedwabne to supervise the work.

Numerous Jewish groups have protested, saying the exhumation violates Jewish religious law.

Syrian Jews face filing deadline

Syrian Jews and their families who were previously granted asylum in the United States may now apply for permanent resident status. Under a law that took effect last month, those eligible have until Oct. 26 to file an application.

Newly found Chagalls on display

Seven newly discovered paintings by Marc Chagall will go on display for the first time in Hungary next month. The paintings, which have been with Chagall's heirs until recently, will be part of an exhibit of the Jewish artist's works that opens July 6 at the Budapest Jewish Museum and runs through Oct. 14.

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

Women say Jewish family life is key to rebuilding European communities

By Toby Axelrod

BERLIN (JTA) — European Jews made a statement this weekend to the rest of the Jewish world: They are alive, gaining confidence and have just as many opinions as do their counterparts elsewhere.

While the European Council of Jewish Communities met in Madrid, issuing statements on the Mideast and other political issues, the liveliness of European Jewry was very much in evidence on a smaller scale here, at the second Bet Debora conference of female rabbis, cantors, Jewish activists and scholars.

Dedicated to the theme of "Jewish Family — Myth and Reality," the conference, which ended Monday, attracted to Berlin some 200 participants, mostly women, from across Europe, Israel and the United States.

The conference provided an opportunity to discuss both traditional and alternative definitions of family, a topic that challenges Jewish communities worldwide.

The overriding consensus was that European Jewish communities should try to bend — in order not to break — under the pressure of a changing society.

As British Rabbi Elizabeth Tikvah Sarah put it, the Jewish family can no longer be defined solely as "a father, a mother and 2.4 children."

Instead, it can be a childless family, a single-parent family, or a family with parents of the same sex.

"The Jewish family is dead," she said, then added, playing on a Britishism, "long live the Jewish family."

Most conference participants were Reform Jews, though there were also many Conservative Jews and some from Orthodox backgrounds.

As with a conference held two years ago, Bet Debora is sponsored in part by the Jewish Community of Berlin — a fact that organizers say demonstrates the readiness of the community to attend to the concerns of its non-Orthodox members.

One participant noted that, as a grandmother, she is the most stable figure for her grandchildren as their parents undergo divorces and remarriages. Another asked how she could create a nurturing role for herself as a woman with no children.

When one young woman said she did not want to have children until she was sure of a supportive Jewish community, Israeli feminist and peace activist Alice Shalvi told her not to wait. "You and the child will create the community," Shalvi said.

The Madrid conference involved the leadership of European Jewry, while Berlin had a more grass-roots feel. Yet both conferences "express the degree of variety there now is in Europe," said Antony Lerman, who managed to attend both events.

"There is a strong degree of self-confidence," said Lerman, director of the Britain-based Hanadiv Charitable Foundation, which supports Jewish cultural projects in Europe, including Bet Debora. "It's an expression of pluralism."

The conference included discussions about rebuilding Jewish life in post-Holocaust Europe and the image of Jewish motherhood.

It also included workshops on traditional and alternative Jewish families; the use of oral history in connecting generations; Jewish identity and conversion; and single parenthood.

Religious services were held daily.

Rabbi Eveline Goodman-Thau of Vienna, who received Orthodox ordination and became the first female rabbi to serve in Austria, led a traditional Sabbath service on Saturday, while in a neighboring room a Reform service was held. In both services, many women wore tallitot and yarmulkes. Torah and Haftorah readings were conducted by women.

Conference organizers Lara Daemmig and Elisa Klapheck said they hoped Bet Debora would enable participants to network and strengthen their communities at home.

The first conference, held in 1999, was "a breakthrough," Klapheck said. "This time, we would like to go a step further and solidify" those contacts made two years ago.

"We are from the second generation" after the Holocaust, Klapheck said. "My grandfather was murdered in Auschwitz. But we are trying to become the first generation now, in doing something positive for the Jewish community." □

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Jewish activists ponder next step after a large pro-Israel rally in N.Y.

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — In the wake of the most rousing pro-Israel solidarity rally since the early weeks of the Palestinian uprising, some U.S. Jewish activists are pondering: "What next?"

Thousands of Jews — 10,000, according to police — crammed into mid-Manhattan streets near the Israeli Consulate on Sunday to vent their anguish at the ongoing bloodshed and rail against the man they hold directly responsible: Yasser Arafat.

The Palestinian Authority president, rally organizer Rabbi Avi Weiss proclaimed, has hands "dripping in Jewish blood."

"To Arafat we declare: As we defeated Nazism and Communism, so will we defeat your terrorism," said Weiss, president of AMCHA: The Coalition for Jewish Concerns.

Thousands of demonstrators thronged four city blocks, many carrying pro-Israel or anti-Arafat placards.

They cheered the impassioned speeches of rabbis from across the religious spectrum, recited prayers, sang songs and listened quietly as the name was read of each of the 100-plus Jewish victims of Palestinian violence.

Quantifying the success of such events is tricky, but the rally did appear to achieve at least two of its aims.

Visiting Israeli officials continually beseech American Jewry to show support and solidarity with the Jewish state. Observers said the weekend rally sent a clear message to Israel, via the Israeli and international media in attendance, that "We are with you."

The rally also used the media to underscore that many Americans agree with Weiss' view that "there can be no moral equivalence between cold-blooded murder and self-defense," observers said.

While the rally was a big story locally, it was not the stuff of nationwide coverage. Only a smattering of network affiliates around the country mentioned it.

That has some Jewish activists thinking bigger, looking for more effective means to drive their point home to America, the Bush administration, Arafat, the United Nations and others.

Several expressed hope that the New York rally might spark similar demonstrations nationwide. Chicago already has been planning a demonstration for Wednesday, and another rally is slated for June 17 in Palm Beach, Fla.

The United Jewish Communities, the umbrella group for Jewish federations across North America, had planned to sponsor a bicoastal rally last Sunday, but backed out because it couldn't guarantee the presence — and security — of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

The UJC is nearing a decision about holding a large rally in New York around the High Holidays, and will be encouraging federations across North America to do the same simultaneously, UJC President Stephen Solender said.

A September date also would coincide with the reconvening of the U.N. General Assembly, hopefully grabbing the attention of the dozens of heads of state, Solender said.

Weiss broached the possibility of a "march on Washington" — a reprise of the Dec. 6, 1987, rally in the nation's capital to demand freedom of emigration for Soviet Jews.

While some debate whether rallies are the best use of funds —

Sunday's event cost \$60,000, while a D.C. mega-rally might cost as much as \$3 million — one activist said the issue is moot.

"It's not that we want to have it; we have to have it," said Rabbi Simcha Freedman, co-chairman of the South Florida Solidarity for Israel Committee, which is organizing the June 17 event.

"We feel the pain and have to express ourselves. The level of frustration and despair is so intense that we simply have to vent it, and coming together in this venue offers us exactly that.

Freedman added, "Not responding is also a response that we're disinterested, that we're inured to the terror. And you don't get used to this kind of brutality and terror."

As for the notion of a Washington rally, it may get a lukewarm reception at the UJC, whose support would be key.

"I happen to be a person who ascribes to the need to have these kinds of rallies," said Solender, referring to Sunday's event.

But pressuring President Bush may be unnecessary, Solender said, as "our impressions from what Israeli officials are telling us is that they're quite satisfied" with the administration's current stance during the crisis.

Weiss and others, however, say Washington must be pressured to pursue Palestinians who kill American citizens in Israel, as they pursue killers of Americans around the world; to brand the Palestinian Authority a terrorist organization; and to withhold economic assistance from Arab authorities that do not assist in efforts to free Israeli MIAs.

If the D.C. rally "is not going to be done by the establishment," Weiss said, "then it will be done from the grassroots."

"One has to have vision and be prepared to take some risks. I'm absolutely convinced that our community is yearning to be involved, to stand up and be counted, and we just have to give them the opportunity." □

Mel Brooks' 'The Producers' wins record 12 Tony awards

By Daniel Fleishman

NEW YORK (JTA) — Say goodbye to Hollywood.

Mel Brooks has discovered that the hot place for him is Broadway, where his outrageous musical comedy "The Producers" swept the 55th annual Tony Awards on Sunday night, winning a record 12 awards.

Brooks accepted awards for best musical, best book of a musical (with Thomas Meehan) and best original score. "The Producers" also won for, among other things, for best director, best leading actor, best costume design and best choreography.

"The Producers" pokes fun at Jews, gays, old women and Hitler, among others, and includes a kickline of Nazi storm troopers. Nathan Lane and Matthew Broderick — both of whom were nominated for best actor, which Lane won — star as Bialystock and Bloom, two Jewish losers who look for success by, paradoxically, putting on the worst musical of all time.

Brooks, 74, was born in Brooklyn as Melvin Kaminsky.

Brooks previously won an Academy Award for his screenplay for the 1968 movie version of "The Producers."

Each time Brooks took the stage to accept a Tony, he entertained the audience with one-liners.

"I want to thank Hitler — for being such a funny guy on stage," he said. □