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84th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Aid package to Israel 'dead'

While State Department officials are insisting they are still considering an \$800 million supplemental aid package to Israel, the chance of that happening this year appears unlikely, according to a U.S. official familiar with the situation.

Calling the aid package "dead" for this year, the official said the government's comments to the contrary are a "stall tactic."

The package, originally requested by President Clinton and Israel during the last Congress, was initiated to assist Israel with its withdrawal last year from southern Lebanon. [Page 4]

Reform movement: Donate rebate

The U.S. Reform movement plans to ask its members to donate to charity as much as they can of the upcoming federal tax rebate.

The movement believes the Bush administration's tax plan hurts social service programs and disproportionately benefits the wealthy.

Israel accepts reduced U.S. force

Israel accepted an American proposal to reduce the U.S. peacekeeping force on the Sinai Peninsula, according to the Israeli ambassador to the United States.

David Ivry said Thursday it is important for the U.S. to maintain a presence in the Sinai, but added that Israeli officials understand the U.S. desire to minimize its force.

P.A. says it won't arrest terrorists

The Palestinian Authority will not arrest members of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, Palestinian Authority official Nabil Sha'ath said.

Sha'ath also said Thursday the Palestinians will not serve as Israel's police force. In addition, Israel Radio quoted Sha'ath as saying that the Palestinian Authority would only arrest those people who break laws in areas under Palestinian control.

In another development, Israel's defense minister criticized what he termed Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's inadequate steps to implement a cease-fire.

Benjamin Ben-Eliezer also said Thursday that Arafat gave up on peace after he rejected the concessions Israel offered at last July's Camp David summit.

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

European Jewish activists push for fewer discussions and more action

By Ruth E. Gruber

MADRID (JTA) — European Jewish activists agree on what they need to do: Enough schmoozing, more funding and initiatives.

"We must do this, because if we don't succeed, our goals and efforts may be doomed," said Latvia's Gregory Krupnikov, vice president of the European Council of Jewish Communities.

Krupnikov made his comments last weekend in Spain, where some 700 activists from 39 countries converged at the ECJC's General Assembly.

The four-day forum in Madrid and Toledo was conceived as the latest step toward creation of a unified, pan-European Jewish entity that can take active part in the formation of a new, democratic Europe.

"It really is exciting," said ECJC President Jacob Cobi Benatoff. "There are Jews here from all corners of the continent."

More than 2 million Jews live in Europe, including 1 million in the former Soviet Union.

Organizers and participants alike now face the challenge of harnessing the feel-good energy of Europe's biggest international Jewish gathering and preventing it from frittering away into rhetoric.

In short, activists say, the fact that European Jews are getting together and discussing common issues is no longer in itself enough to sustain momentum. Nuts and bolts pragmatism — and internally generated commitment — are required.

"It's a pity if we all just get on our planes and forget what went on here," said one participant.

"We need to make sure that our objectives are taken forward in a practical way. Things have to be followed through; we have to make sure that what we decide to do actually happens. Communities have to contribute energy or financial resources."

The ECJC, operating in close cooperation with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, is a service organization that aims to facilitate cooperation and communication among Jewish communities and organizations.

Along with fostering leadership training, it aims to mediate contacts between European Jewish bodies and the European Union.

It also increasingly aims to join the European Jewish Congress in providing a political voice for European Jewry in international forums and has entered into agreements with several American and international Jewish organizations.

The G.A. in fact, passed a resolution recognizing the "rich diversity" of Jewish life in Europe and calling for the creation of a "unified umbrella organization of and for European Jewry."

The assembly was the latest in a series of conferences and other initiatives aimed at promoting a pan-European Jewish identity that have taken place since the fall of communism and opening up of Europe more than a decade ago.

It was a direct follow-up to the ECJC's first G.A., held in 1999 in Nice, France. That meeting drew 600 participants and was unprecedented in size, scope and objective. Its greatest importance, however, was the very fact that it took place.

"At Nice, I really felt the energy," said Peter Gyori, of the Bejt Praha Open Jewish Community in Prague. "I mean, wow, it was the first time. Everyone felt together."

"It's great that there was the second G.A. here in Madrid, and that these meetings will probably continue," he added, "but at these meetings, everything should go forward

MIDEAST FOCUS

CIA director arranges meeting

CIA Director George Tenet arranged for Israeli and Palestinian security officials to meet Friday. The security chiefs will convene for the U.S.-hosted session in the West Bank city of Ramallah, officials from each side said after Tenet held separate meetings Thursday with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

Bombers carried hepatitis

The Palestinian suicide bombers who carried out attacks in Tel Aviv and Netanya were both infected with Hepatitis B, according to forensic testing of the bombers' remains. Several people wounded in the Netanya attack are now being treated for hepatitis because they came in contact with fragments of the bomber's body. No victims from the Tel Aviv attack were affected.

Settlers retaliate for shooting

Israeli settlers burned fields belonging to Palestinians in the Ramallah area. Thursday's incident occurred after three Israelis were wounded the night before in a Palestinian ambush in the West Bank.

Tel Aviv bomber gets 20 years

A Tel Aviv court sentenced a Jordanian citizen to 20 years' imprisonment for placing a bomb in a Tel Aviv bus last December. Fourteen people were injured in the attack, two of them seriously. Abdallah Abu-Jaber had confessed to the charges against him.

Palestinian workers replaced

The number of foreign workers in Israel jumped by 45 percent since the Palestinian uprising began last September, an Israeli official told Reuters.

The official said Thursday that the number of foreign workers increased by 76,000, for a total of 248,000. The workers replace Palestinian laborers barred from Israel since the violence began.



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with an increasing level — something more should always be offered.”

The two major transborder projects that grew out of the Nice G.A. were a conference last year on Jewish education that drew more than 200 European Jewish educators and the institution of a European Day of Jewish Culture.

Jewish heritage sites in 16 countries were simultaneously opened to the public on one day last September, drawing as many as 200,000 visitors from across the continent.

“It was the first event that really politically unified European Jewry,” said Amos Luzzatto, president of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities. “It also was a politically important event for Europe as a whole.”

Two dozen countries will take part in a second such day this year.

But ECJC leaders admit that, on a pragmatic level, much of the momentum from Nice was squandered.

A participant from Cannes, France, for example, noted that even though the 1999 G.A. took place in France, relatively few French Jews followed up and attended the Madrid conference.

With 600,000 Jews, France has Europe's largest Jewish community outside the former Soviet Union — more than the rest of Europe combined.

“The ECJC worked hard to involve the French community,” said Benatoff. “But for the moment it seems that the French Jews are self-sufficient and not interested in such events.”

So dramatic were the changes in the Jewish world since the fall of communism that Paris-based historian Diana Pinto dubs the 1990s “the Jewish decade.”

“But the Jewish decade is over,” Pinto, one of the most eloquent champions of pan-European Jewish identity, told a G.A. session. “What are the challenges beyond?”

She outlined a number of broad fundamental points, ranging from defining a Jewish collective identity to confronting relations with Muslims, Gypsies, also known as Roma, and other minority groups in Europe.

An informal survey of 200 participants attending the Madrid G.A. showed the challenges to be even more basic.

It showed widespread dissatisfaction with communal lay leadership and Jewish community programs as well as pessimism regarding the Jewish future in Europe: most respondents predicted a widening polarization in the Jewish world, a decrease in religious observance and an upsurge in intermarriage.

“There are very fundamental issues at stake,” said Barry Kosmin, director of the London-based Institute for Jewish Policy Research. “There are issues of viability, of coming together and feeling strength through numbers. We have to reject the rhetoric of paranoia.”

“Here we met in Spain, home to Don Quixote,” he said. “It's a good analogy — we risk tilting at windmills, that is, getting sidetracked by issues and problems whose solution is beyond the scope of what tiny European Jewish communities can do.”

The priorities “are not emergency relief, but another model — the creation of long-term structural development models that can ensure viability.” □

Missing journalist shows up

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An Israeli Arab journalist who disappeared in the Bethlehem area two months ago turned up at an Israeli checkpoint near the town on Wednesday night, saying he had escaped his captors.

Youssef Samir said that he had been held by Palestinian security forces who accused him of being an agent for Israeli security services.

Samir also showed reporters bruises covering his legs and said he was beaten every day. □

Maccabiah Games may be canceled

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Several delegations to the Maccabiah Games are asking Israel to consider postponing this summer's competitions, scheduled to begin next month, because of the security situation.

The Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported that Maccabiah officials are convening an urgent session on Sunday to discuss the situation. □

JEWISH WORLD

Group IDs Russian hate sites

Dozens of Russian Web sites propagate anti-Semitism and racial hatred, according to a report issued by the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews.

The sites violate a Russian law against publishing material that incites hatred, the group said.

Jerusalem may get liberal school

An Israeli center affiliated with the Reform movement is negotiating with Jerusalem officials regarding the possibility of opening a school there. The school proposed by the Leo Baeck Educational Center, which currently operates a school in Haifa, would focus on Judaic studies from a pluralistic perspective.

Canada nixes reduced aid to P.A.

The Canadian government on Tuesday rejected a suggestion by the country's main opposition party to link the nation's aid to the Palestinians to their willingness to hold peace talks with Israel.

Canada provides about \$6.5 million in annual aid to the Palestinian Authority.

Disco victims' kin receive help

The Jewish Agency for Israel is offering to bring from the former Soviet Union to Israel the families of those killed or injured in last Friday's disco bombing in Tel Aviv. In addition, the Jewish Agency has opened centers in Moscow, Kiev and Minsk to provide updated information on the condition on those injured in the attack, many of whom were immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

Hebrew U. president re-elected

The president of Jerusalem's Hebrew University was unanimously elected Wednesday to a second four-year term in office. The election of Menachem Magidor came at the concluding session of the university's Board of Governors meeting.

Czech cemetery defaced

Swastikas and other Nazi symbols were painted on 15 tombstones at an abandoned Jewish cemetery near the Czech town of Nyrsko, according to Czech Television. The defaced tombstones were found by an Israeli tourist searching for the graves of her ancestors.

Storm won't be named 'Israel'

The World Meteorological Organization altered its list of names for this summer's typhoons and hurricanes, changing the name of Hurricane Israel to Hurricane Ivo.

The move came after the Jerusalem Post reported last month that the Geneva-based U.N. agency was planning to use the name "Israel."

New Reform seminary president is known as scholar of Orthodoxy

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — The new president of the Reform movement's seminary is a scholar known for his work in Jewish religious thought, ethics and modern Jewish history — and for his popularity as a teacher.

Rabbi David Ellenson, a professor at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion's Los Angeles campus since 1979, will be the college's eighth president.

Ellenson, 53, replaces Rabbi Norman Cohen, who had served as acting president of HUC since December, when Rabbi Sheldon Zimmerman resigned amid allegations of sexual misconduct.

The new president assumes the reins of HUC at a time when many are looking to the college — which has grown dramatically in recent years and also has campuses in Cincinnati, New York and Jerusalem — to address the significant shortage of rabbis, cantors and other professionals in Reform Judaism.

With 906 member congregations, Reform is the largest stream of Judaism in North America.

Ordained at HUC but raised Orthodox, Ellenson is widely praised as an academic whose knowledge and stature extends beyond the Reform sphere, yet who is also in touch with Reform congregants and nonprofessional leaders.

In addition to his scholarly work — he is considered a leading expert on 19th-century Orthodoxy — Ellenson is a teacher in the Wexner Heritage Program, an intensive national program for lay leaders, and speaks frequently at synagogues and other venues throughout the United States.

He also directed the University of Southern California's Judaic studies program — under HUC's auspices — for 16 years.

Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and Rabbi Martin Weiner, incoming president of the movement's rabbinic organization, welcomed Ellenson's appointment.

"Throughout our search, I was amazed at how many people I met who said they'd studied with him," Weiner said. "He's not just a scholar with three books and 200 articles, but has devoted an incredible amount of his energy to adult Jewish education around the country."

Yoffie called the appointment an "inspired choice," and said Ellenson would "move the college forward."

Ellenson expects to face his greatest challenge in fund raising, an area in which he lacks experience. However, both he and his backers say his other skills will enable him to bring in dollars.

Paula Hyman, director of the Judaic studies program at Yale University and a longtime personal friend of Ellenson, said, "One of the essentials in fund raising is to convey your enthusiasm for a project so you can make it clear to potential donors just why they should donate to this institution, when there are so many others with hands outstretched. I think David will do that well."

Hyman, who has known Ellenson since the two were members of a chavurah, or informal worship group, in the 1970s, described him as a "non-Orthodox scholar whom Orthodox scholars take seriously."

Reached at home Wednesday, the day after his appointment was announced, Ellenson was still adjusting to the new role. He had spent the morning teaching a class on prayer at the Bureau of Jewish Education of Greater Los Angeles, and had returned to find 100 phone messages — and twice that number of e-mails.

Asked why he wanted to take on a college presidency — a job that many say has become more difficult and frustrating in recent years, given heightened fund-raising demands — he said, "I'm aware of what many of the pitfalls and problems are, but I think it's an opportunity to do good for the Jewish people and humankind."

He said he hopes to continue his predecessors' efforts in stepping up the college's recruitment and revamping the curriculum, so that the four campuses are more unified.

"Also, if you know anyone willing to give \$100 million, I'd like to speak to him or her," he joked. □

Despite rosy predictions from D.C., U.S. aid package to Israel is 'dead'

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — While State Department officials insist they are still considering an \$800 million supplemental aid package to Israel, the chance of Israel's seeing the money this year seems unlikely, according to a U.S. official familiar with the situation.

Calling the aid package "dead" for this year, the official said the government's comments to the contrary are a "stall tactic."

Speaking on condition of anonymity, the government official said the Bush administration is uncomfortable with providing an additional aid package to Israel while trying to broker an end to violence in the region.

The administration is also wary of the potential fallout among U.S. Jewish leaders if it announces that it is withholding the aid, the official said. As a result, administration officials are still sending optimistic signals about the package.

Israel and its U.S. allies have been lobbying heavily for the aid since it was first proposed last year.

The aid package, originally requested by President Clinton and Israel during the last Congress, was initiated to assist Israel with its withdrawal last year from southern Lebanon.

The aid — which was to be divided between \$450 million the first year and \$350 million at a later date — was also intended to aid Israel's military in combating long-range missiles threats from Iran and Iraq.

Congress did not act on the measure last year, choosing to wait until after the presidential elections.

Last Friday, Bush sent his supplemental aid request to Congress. The request, which mainly sought additional funds for the U.S. Defense Department, did not seek any funds for Israel.

The White House and its Office of Management and Budget refused to comment on the aid to Israel, directing inquiries to the State Department. A State Department spokesman said Thursday that the supplemental aid package is "still breathing" but acknowledged that there are no funds for it remaining in this year's budget.

Nonetheless, the spokesman told JTA, "We are still looking at ways" to give Israel the aid this year.

During a White House meeting with Jewish leaders last week, a senior administration official reportedly told visiting Israeli President Moshe Katsav that "a deal is a deal, and we are going to honor it."

U.S. Jewish leaders said they do not want to let the Bush administration renege.

"We expect that this is a promise that will be honored," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, who met with Bush and Katsav on May 31.

"Not because they want to, but because they know they have to."

Lawmakers are expected to make a push to move funds around to give Israel aid, and it is unclear whether that will have support from the Bush administration.

An Israeli official in Washington said he did not believe the door is completely shut.

"We are working with the administration to see if we can make this happen," the official said. □

Failed auction of anti-Semitic book creates fracas among British Jews

By Richard Allen Greene

LONDON (JTA) — A controversial Victorian manuscript widely described as anti-Semitic failed to sell this week when it was put up for auction at Christie's in London.

The result of Wednesday's auction was both disappointing and humiliating for the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the umbrella organization that sought to sell the document after suppressing it for nearly 100 years.

The board's decision to auction the manuscript, "Human Sacrifice Among the Sephardine [sic] or Eastern Jews," by the 19th-century explorer Sir Richard Burton, provoked a furious reaction from leading members of Britain's Jewish community.

Lord Janner, a former president of the Board, said it was "immoral to propagate pornography — and this is worse than pornography."

He called the decision to "seek to sell a viciously anti-Semitic document was a grotesque error."

The Board decided to sell the manuscript in part to raise much-needed funds, administrative director Sandra Clark said.

The estimated sale price of the manuscript was \$210,000 to \$280,000, but the top bid was \$196,000, less than the prearranged minimum price for the book.

Janner described the result as "the worst of both worlds — the contents of this disgraceful document have been publicized, and the Board has not raised the resources it needs."

He was not the only one upset by the attempted sale.

One London rabbi suggested that his congregation raise money to buy the book to keep it out of the hands of anti-Semites.

Sephardic deputies on the Board were "shocked and surprised" at not having been consulted about the sale, and some compared it to online auctions of Nazi memorabilia.

The Board rejected the comparison, describing the manuscript as a historical document of little interest except to those interested in Burton.

Clark told JTA there was nothing in the manuscript "that isn't readily available from other sources. The Board as a whole does not consider it controversial."

She said only two or three of the Board's 320 deputies objected to the sale.

At least one far-right Web site announced the planned auction.

The manuscript is an account of the Damascus Blood Libel. In 1840, a friar, Padre Tomaso, and his servant disappeared in Damascus.

Thirteen members of the city's Jewish community were arrested and accused of ritual murder. Some confessed under torture, but all 13 were acquitted in the end.

Burton, a colorful adventurer best remembered today for translating the Kama Sutra into English, was British consul in Damascus in 1870-71, but was recalled after disputes with his superiors, the Ottoman governor of Syria, local Christian missionaries — and a clique of Jewish moneylenders in Damascus.

He wrote "Human Sacrifice" when he was "angry and devastated at being recalled from his dream posting," Christie's manuscript expert Priscilla Thomas said.

The book, based on hearsay 30 years after the event, is critical of those who defended the Jews and refers to Padre Tomaso as a martyr. □