



Daily News Bulletin

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84th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israeli infant dies after stoning

An Israeli infant boy who was seriously wounded in a Palestinian stoning attack died from his wounds Monday.

Five-month-old Yehuda Shoham suffered severe brain damage after the June 5 attack in the West Bank.

A day after the stoning, Israeli settlers went on a rampage near an Arab village in the West Bank, setting on fire at least three Palestinian-owned buildings.

Court backs Christian group

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a public school violated a religious group's free speech rights when it refused to allow the group to meet in a public school building after school hours.

Orthodox Jewish groups hailed Monday's 6-3 decision in favor of the Good News Club, a Christian youth group that is supported by a missionary organization.

But most Jewish groups were disappointed by the ruling, saying that school officials should be able to constitutionally prohibit religious instruction on public school grounds. [Page 3]

Israelis slam group cancellations

A growing number of Israeli officials are criticizing Diaspora Jews for canceling trips to Israel because of fears of terror attacks.

For example, Transportation Minister Ephraim Sneh spoke of the "disgraceful" behavior of those "who for all these years have talked to us about the unity of the Jewish people over mounds of bagels and lox." [Page 1]

Sharon apologizes for 3 deaths

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon voiced regret Monday for the killing of three Bedouin women by tank fire in the Gaza Strip on Saturday night. Sharon called the deaths a "mistake."

Security meeting postponed

CIA Director George Tenet postponed a meeting between Israeli and Palestinian security officials slated for Sunday night, citing wide differences between the two sides. Tenet instead held separate meetings with the officials.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Solidarity gives way to caution as Diaspora Jews cancel Israel trips

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Maccabiah Games, the quadrennial tournament of Jewish athletes from around the world, is poised to become the latest casualty of the eight-month-old Palestinian uprising.

Barring any last-minute change, organizers of the 16th Maccabiah were expected to announce Friday that the Games — slated for July — will be postponed until next summer.

If so, it would mark the first time the Maccabiah Games have been canceled since World War II.

It also would follow the recent announcement by the U.S. Reform movement that it is canceling its summer youth trips this year to Israel.

Both developments have drawn the ire of Israeli officials, who feel that especially now — when Israelis feel they are under siege from Palestinian terror attacks and international criticism — world Jewry should make good on its frequent protestations of unity.

Yet by canceling trips, Diaspora Jews are refusing to show solidarity with Israel at this difficult time, Israeli officials charge.

Transportation Minister Ephraim Sneh spoke Sunday of the "disgraceful" behavior of those "who for all these years have talked to us about the unity of the Jewish people over mounds of bagels and lox."

In recent days, increasing numbers of athletes said they do not want to participate in the upcoming Maccabiah, nicknamed the "Jewish Olympics."

Some 2,500 are still registered to participate, but cancellations are continuing.

Last week, the U.S. delegation — the second-largest, after the Israeli hosts — suggested postponing the games for a year because of the threat of Palestinian terrorism.

On Sunday, an Israeli deputy minister sympathized with the calls to postpone the Games.

Rabbi Michael Melchior, Israel's deputy foreign minister for Diaspora affairs, said he had just returned from a tour of Jewish communities in Europe and found that most delegations there would not attend the July 16-26 event.

That same day, Maccabiah leaders from around the world met to decide whether to hold the games as scheduled, but agreed to an Israeli request to postpone the decision until Friday.

With a postponement increasingly likely, many Israeli politicians say it would represent a slap in Israel's face from world Jewry.

"Canceling the Maccabiah or postponing it is like granting Yasser Arafat the gold medal," Knesset member Eliezer Sandberg said.

Sallai Meridor, chairman of the executive of the Jewish Agency for Israel, said the Maccabiah Games should go on "to symbolize the solidarity of the Jewish people these very days."

"It is a choice between two evils," said former basketball superstar Tal Brody, who first came to Israel from the United States as a Maccabiah athlete — a choice between postponing the Games altogether or holding them with very few participants.

As cancellations mounted, Maccabi World Union President Jeanne Futeran announced at a new conference this week that there seemed to be no choice but to postpone.

"If we hold the Maccabiah under the present conditions, we could only have a

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israeli Arab legislator draws fire

Israel's attorney general lashed out at an Israeli Arab legislator for remarks he made against Israel at a memorial service for the late Syrian President Hafez Assad in Syria on Sunday.

At the service, Azmi Beshara called on Arab countries and Islamic militants to increase their resistance against the Jewish state.

Just the same, Elyakim Rubinstein said there was no legal basis for bringing charges against Beshara, because Israeli laws do not allow authorities to prosecute a Knesset member.

Violence hurts peace camp

Because of the ongoing violence in the Middle East, no Palestinian children will be attending a camp in Maine this summer designed to promote cooperation among Israeli and Arab teen-agers.

Despite the decision by the Palestinian Authority's Education Ministry, children from Israel, Egypt, Jordan and Morocco are still slated to attend the Seeds of Peace camp. But an Israeli official said the violence could force Israel to pull its campers from the program.

Case against lawmaker closed

Israel's attorney general closed an investigation into an Israeli Arab legislator for allegedly assaulting a police officer during a demonstration a year ago. The case against Mohammed Barakah was closed for lack of evidence.

Israeli study: Hash helps arthritis

A substance derived from hashish can be especially effective as an anti-inflammatory drug for treating rheumatoid arthritis, a doctoral student at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem maintains.

For her work with hashish as a therapeutic agent, Susanna Tchilibon, a 32-year-old immigrant from Italy, was named a winner of this year's Kaye Prizes for Innovations and Inventions at the university.



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couple of hundred of athletes," she said, which would be "an embarrassment."

"We need thousands," she added.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Reform movement's decision to cancel youth trips to Israel has come under fire.

Rabbi Eric Yoffie, the president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Reform movement's synagogue organization, announced the decision earlier this month.

Speaking to his board of trustees, Yoffie said he personally believed in making solidarity trips to Israel during difficult times.

"But what I do as an individual or what we do as adult leaders of this movement needs to be separated out from what we do with children who travel under our auspices," he said.

Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert announced this week that he was suspending ties with the movement to protest the decision.

The outspoken leader of Israel's secularist Shinui Party, Yosef "Tommy" Lapid, dashed off an angry letter to Yoffie.

"This is a painful surrender to terror and the enemies of Israel," Lapid wrote. "We cannot expect more from American Jewry than a solidarity demonstration at Madison Square Garden, and I am sure beautiful summer camps will take place at the Catskill Mountains."

The Reform movement in Israel also criticized the move, saying parents should have been given a choice whether to send their children.

"It's important to note that we are not suspending all visits to Israel by all Reform Jews," responded Emily Grotta, a spokeswoman for Reform congregations in the United States. "Many Reform Jews will be in Israel."

Melchior was one of the few Israeli leaders to adopt a moderate tone.

"You have to know that condemnations won't bring a single young person to Israel," he said. "It will only distance them."

"Relations with the Diaspora must be based on a constructive dialogue," he added. In any case, many Israelis appeared indifferent to the cancellations.

"When so many Israelis are expressing a desire to leave the country at this time we can't really complain to our fellow Jews," said Tamar Golan, a telemarketing executive from Haifa.

"If they want to stay at home, let them do so."

Since the outbreak of violence last September, tourism to Israel has fallen to new lows, with hotels throughout the country reporting marginal occupancy.

Had it not been for Jewish tourists, however, the blow would have been much more severe.

According to Israel's Tourism Ministry, the number of Jewish visitors between October 2000 and April 2001 fell by 5 percent compared with the same period a year before.

The number of non-Jewish tourists dropped by 56 percent, however.

Since the violence began, some major airlines — including KLM, Lufthansa, Air France and Swissair — have changed their flight schedules so that crew members would not have to spend the night in Israel.

Jewish youth groups, who in the past showed solidarity with Israel at difficult times like the 1967 Six-Day War and the 1973 Yom Kippur War, are now preferring to stay home:

- About half the scheduled participants — about 350 teens — canceled their participation in an Israel-based summer camp affiliated with the Conservative youth movement.

- An Israel program run under the auspices of West Coast Jewish federations, which was to be attended by some 600 youths, was canceled.

- The Orthodox Union, Young Judaea and several North American Jewish community centers — along with Jewish organizations in Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela and the United Kingdom — also reported cancellations.

In one of the rare exceptions, the Lubavitch-affiliated Ma'ayanot movement announced that most of its scheduled 1,100 youths would come to Israel this summer.

And Birthright Israel, which brings young adults from around the world on free trips to the Jewish state, postponed trips scheduled for early June but announced this week that some 5,000 students would come to Israel this summer. □

JEWISH WORLD

Group blasts circumcision law

The World Jewish Congress said it is "totally unacceptable" for Sweden to impose legal restrictions on circumcisions.

The new legislation, passed June 1, declared that circumcisions can only be performed after the administration of an analgesic by a doctor, nurse or person with special permit.

The law was passed after a circumcision led to the death of a Muslim boy.

Shoah studies to start in Germany

A Swiss historian and author on Nazism will serve as a visiting professor for Holocaust studies at a university in Frankfurt.

Johann Wolfgang Goethe University said Philippe Burrin will hold the first professorship in Germany "dedicated exclusively to the history and effects of the Holocaust."

Burrin, who teaches at Geneva University's Graduate Institute of International Studies, is slated to take up the visiting professor's post this summer.

Bosnian leaders appeal to G-8

Religious leaders from Bosnia appealed to the world's leading economic nations to help reconstruct religious buildings damaged or destroyed in the Bosnian civil war.

The leaders — including Jews, Catholics, Muslims and representatives of the Orthodox Church — addressed their appeal to the so-called G-8 group of world economic powers, which plans to hold a summit in Italy later this month.

Janet Reno attends Bat Mitzvah

Former U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno attended the Bat Mitzvah of a girl who had written a letter of support to Reno for her actions during the Elian Gonzalez case.

During Saturday's ceremony in New Mexico, Shoshana Breitburg-Moya thanked Reno for attending the event.

Bronx rabbi dies at 74

Rabbi Avram Twersky, a Holocaust survivor and seventh-generation descendant of the founder of Chasidism, the Ba'al Shem Tov. He died May 30 in New York at the age of 74 after a long illness.

During World War II, Twersky's father and brother were killed in their hometown of Chotin, while Twersky himself was interned in several detention camps.

After the war, Twersky moved to the Bronx, N.Y., where he founded a congregation named after his father, Rabbi Mordechai Israel Twersky.

Orthodox groups hail Good News in Supreme Court's religion ruling

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Orthodox Jewish groups are hailing a U.S. Supreme Court decision defending the right of a Christian youth club to meet in a public school building after school hours.

Most Jewish groups, however, are disappointed by the ruling, saying schools should be able to prohibit religious instruction on school grounds.

In a 6-3 decision Monday, the high court ruled that a public school violated a religious group's free speech rights when it refused to allow the group to meet in the school after school hours.

While the ruling in *Good News Club v. Milford Central School* boosts those groups that favor increased religious access to public facilities, it is unclear whether this narrowly drawn opinion has broader implications for the issue of religious freedom.

School officials in Milford, N.Y., had denied school facilities to the Good News Club, a community-based youth group with national support from a Christian missionary organization, because they believed the group's activities constituted religious worship. The club maintained that it taught moral values through the use of Bible stories, games, scripture and songs, and said it should have the same rights to meet in schools as the Boy Scouts and the 4-H Club.

The high court agreed.

"The Good News Club seeks nothing more than to be treated neutrally and given access to speak about the same topics as are other groups," Justice Clarence Thomas wrote in the majority opinion.

The Orthodox Union, which had joined a brief supporting the club, applauded Monday's ruling.

A policy barring the use of the school for religious purposes mandates "unequal, and therefore, unconstitutional discriminatory treatment of religion," said Nathan Diamant, director of the O.U.'s Institute for Public Affairs.

The court clearly stated that the U.S. Constitution demands neutrality toward religion, Diamant said.

However, Steven Freeman, director of the Anti-Defamation League's legal affairs department, said the decision "gives a green light to groups seeking to proselytize American schoolchildren."

The American Jewish Committee also expressed its "profound disappointment" over a ruling that it said "defies common sense."

Sammie Moshenberg, director of the Washington office of the National Council of Jewish Women, called the decision "appalling."

In the opinion, the Supreme Court disagreed with a lower court's view that something that is "quintessentially religious or decidedly religious in nature cannot also be characterized properly as the teaching of morals and character development from a particular viewpoint."

The club takes its name both from the "good news" of Jesus' gospel and the "good news" that salvation is available through belief in Jesus.

Allowing it to speak on school grounds would "ensure, not threaten, neutrality toward religion," Thomas wrote.

In his dissent, Justice David Souter said Good News intended to use the school premises not only to discuss subjects from a Christian point of view, but for evangelical worship calling on children to commit themselves to an act of Christian conversion.

"If the majority's statement ignores reality, as it surely does, then today's holding may be understood only in equally generic terms," Souter wrote.

"Otherwise, indeed, this case would stand for the remarkable proposition that any public school opened for civic meetings must be opened for use as a church, synagogue or mosque."

Thomas emphasized the noncoercive nature of the club, noting that meetings were to be held afterschool hours, were not sponsored by the school, and were open not just to club members but to any student whose parents consented.

The court rejected the school's argument that elementary schoolchildren will think the school is endorsing the club and will feel coerced to participate. □

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

In the land of the expulsion, Jews have both past and present

By Ruth E. Gruber

TOLEDO, Spain (JTA) — When Spanish King Juan Carlos received leaders of the European Council of Jewish Communities at his palace in Madrid earlier this month, he greeted them with a powerful message.

He welcomed the Jewish presence in Spain and said he could not understand why his predecessors had signed the 1492 order expelling Jews from the country.

Spain — Sefarad — holds a special meaning for Jews even today.

It was in Spain that medieval Jews enjoyed a golden age of commerce, medicine, scholarship and court life.

And next to the Holocaust, the expulsion from Spain is remembered as the most traumatic historic event to shake European Jewry.

This symbolism is one reason the ECJC held its second General Assembly here recently, drawing from all corners of the continent some 700 Jews committed to building a new European Jewish identity following the destruction of the Holocaust and the persecution of communism.

"There is a moving significance of convening in Spain," said G.A. chair Diana Lazarus, of Britain. "Five hundred years after the expulsion, here we are again."

Underscoring this symbolic character, the central session of the G.A. was held in Toledo, the ancient political, intellectual and spiritual capital of Spain that by the 12th century was home to 12,000 Jews.

At the time, Toledo's was the largest Jewish community in Spain.

Hundreds of Jews from Russia, Romania, Italy, Belgium, Bulgaria and beyond crowded beneath the horseshoe arches of the Santa Maria la Blanca synagogue.

Built in 1203, the synagogue was used after the expulsion as a church, dance hall, military warehouse and a home for reformed prostitutes.

"It is really an amazing feeling to be here," said Argentine-born Alberto Senderey, Community Development director of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

Senderey's relatives emigrated from Salonika, Greece, to Ukraine and eventually to Latin America, but their roots are in Toledo.

"There are tombstones here with the Hebrew version of my family name," he said.

After the expulsion, Jews weren't allowed to openly return to Spain until the late 19th century.

Only in the past three decades — particularly since the 1975 death of longtime fascist dictator Francisco Franco — has Jewish life been able to rebuild and expand.

In 1978, Jews were again recognized as full citizens.

Some 30,000 Jews live in Spain today, residing in Madrid, Barcelona and 10 other cities.

Community members include Holocaust survivors from Eastern Europe and Jews from the former Spanish colonies in Morocco, many of whose ancestors were Sephardim expelled 500 years ago.

There are also a number of recent emigres in Spain from Latin

America. Juan Carlos has taken a personal interest in backing a Jewish revival.

In 1992, he visited the synagogue in Spain's capital, Madrid, as a sign of reconciliation during a series of nationwide events sponsored by the government to mark the 500th anniversary of the expulsion.

And on his travels around the world, the king told the ECJC, he encountered many Sephardic Jews who told him they still kept the heavy iron keys to the houses in Toledo their ancestors had been forced to flee when the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492.

Even non-Jewish Spaniards have begun taking an interest in the Jewish history of their country.

"If we don't show and teach the past, we can hardly create the future," said Assumpcio Hosta, a non-Jew who helped create a Jewish museum in the town of Girona, where no Jews live today, as well as a series of Jewish historical itineraries around Spain.

Hosta said her museum draws some 100,000 visitors a year — only 5 percent to 7 percent of whom are Jewish.

Likewise, there is no Jewish community in Toledo today, but, as Jewish travel writer Alan Tigay put it, "Toledo probably has the world's largest stock of Jewish memories and, on any given day, the largest concentration of Jews. Jewish sights are an important part of Toledo's legacy; Jewish souvenirs are as common as in New York."

Jews settled in Toledo as early as the fourth century, and by the middle ages the walled, golden-toned city was a flourishing center of Jewish intellectual and scholarly life.

It was a city, Judah Ben Schlomo al Harizi wrote in the 12th century, "filled with the enchantment of domination and adorned with the sciences, showing its beauty to the people and the princes. There are so many synagogues of incomparable beauty!"

Among famous Toledo Jews of the time were the biblical scholar Abraham Ibn Ezra, and the physician and philosopher Judah Halevi.

Only two synagogues survive — the Santa Maria la Blanca synagogue and the magnificent 14th-century synagogue known as El Transito.

Both have long been revered as national monuments and today are major tourist attractions.

El Transito synagogue was built as the private synagogue of Samuel Levi Abulafia, who served as treasurer to King Pedro the Cruel.

Its magnificently ornamented interior, featuring rich geometric and floral carvings and exquisite Hebrew calligraphy, serves as a witness to the glory of Sephardic Jewry's Golden Age.

A Sephardic museum, incorporated into the synagogue complex, illustrates the history of Sephardic Jews and draws as many as 200,000 visitors a year, most of them non-Jews.

Souvenir shops throughout town feature plates, painted tiles and other keepsakes decorated with Stars of David and menorah motifs.

This month, as the ECJC delegates were meeting inside the Santa Maria la Blanca synagogue, a local tour guide was taking a group of English tourists through the medieval Jewish quarter.

The guide was clearly unaware of the ECJC conference — but her spiel to the tourists echoed a similar message.

"There aren't any Jews in Toledo," she told them, as she led them under arches and through small alley ways. "But they are coming back. There are apartments for rent and houses for sale. There will be a Jewish community here again." □