



# Daily News Bulletin

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## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### **Bush, Sharon meeting criticized**

A former Israeli minister blasted Tuesday's meeting between President Bush and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, criticizing Bush's insistence on pursuing the peace process despite continued Palestinian violence.

"This unnecessary visit really reduced the chances of ending the violence, because it is a victory for Arafat," dovish Israeli lawmaker Shlomo Ben-Ami said Wednesday.

"This is a slap in the face that will echo in the international arena."

### **P.A. says it can't meet conditions**

Israel is trying to prevent a return to the negotiating table by insisting on the "unattainable" condition of a complete halt to Palestinian violence, according to a Palestinian memorandum obtained by The New York Times.

"We cannot agree to become the first country in the world with no violence or criminals," said the memo, which is being circulated among Palestinian officials to provide talking points for a meeting this week with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell.

### **New compound opens in Ethiopia**

A third compound opened this week in Gondar, Ethiopia, for the roughly 10,000 Ethiopians gathered there awaiting the chance to immigrate to Israel.

The latest compound, sponsored by the New York-based Struggle to Save Ethiopian Jewry, will provide food to pregnant women, nursing mothers and all children under the age of 5.

Of the other two compounds, one is a school for children, while the second provides religious facilities and adult education. Some 80 to 100 Ethiopians are making aliyah each week.

### **British Jews issue alert**

British Jewish officials issued an urgent security warning following the release of a video in which Saudi-born terrorist mastermind Osama Bin Laden threatened an attack.

According to the Community Security Trust, which monitors anti-Semitic incidents in Britain, "There is the likelihood of an imminent incident involving American or Israeli institutions and/or Jewish European Diaspora community locations."

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### **Agency meeting has familiar theme: Time for Jewish solidarity with Israel**

By Jessica Steinberg

JERUSALEM (JTA) — At the annual assembly of the Jewish Agency for Israel this week, one word emerged as a mantra: solidarity.

"We are not equal with the citizens of Israel when it comes to the State of Israel," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. "But American Jews are part of the strategy, and we have a responsibility to make a difference."

Another word that cropped up with nearly as much frequency was "hasbarah," that quirky Hebrew term that denotes information, public relations or propaganda.

Hasbarah has become the all-purpose term to discuss Israel's dealings with world media during the nine-month-old Palestinian uprising — and it has to be the tool to unify Diaspora Jewry behind Israel at this trying time, Jewish leaders told the assembly.

In a poll of 1,600 Americans released in May — commissioned by the Conference of Presidents, United Jewish Communities, the Anti-Defamation League and the World Jewish Congress — 37 percent of respondents said they believe Israel is the most important foreign policy issue for the United States, and two-thirds held favorable views of Israel.

Despite that, Israel needs a more "rapid response network," Hoenlein said. "Everybody knows how to do hasbarah better; now we have to see some" practical "results. We've become lazy, complacent. Unity is our goal; our words count."

His message was warmly received by the 1,200 assembly participants, an animated, mostly middle-aged and older crowd from the United States, Europe and South America.

They broke into enthusiastic applause when former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took the podium.

In a typically smooth speech, Netanyahu talked about how to resolve the current conflict and reassert Jewish rights to the Land of Israel.

"You cannot achieve a military victory unless you have a political victory to accompany it," he said, "and you cannot achieve political victory unless you win a victory in the arena of public opinion."

At the same time, no hasbarah effort can "offer better pictures than reality already offers," countered Shlomo Avineri, a political science professor at Hebrew University and former director general of the Foreign Ministry. "Every government act doesn't necessarily take into account how it will appear on CNN."

During the three-day assembly, Jewish leaders repeatedly said the main challenge for the Israel-Diaspora relationship is creating concrete examples of solidarity.

In public and private, many participants denounced the poor attendance expected at next month's Maccabiah Games, as well as the U.S. Reform movement's recent decision to cancel summer youth tours to Israel.

"That's the real threat, when people read that the Maccabiah might be canceled or that the movements aren't holding summer tours," Avineri said in an impassioned speech.

He called the assembly delegates "ambassadors of existential solidarity with the State of Israel," urging them to go home to their families, friends, children and grandchildren, and "make sure they come this year to Israel."

"It isn't easy," Avineri said. "We are in harm's way in this country. Please join us." Avineri's plea was echoed several times during the conference.

"The kids are losing a lot by not going on these tours, and that's part of the hasbarah

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Powell arrives in Middle East

U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell said he is encouraged by the decline in Israeli-Palestinian violence, but predicted a long road to new peace talks. "This is going to be a long, difficult process," he said Wednesday, when he arrived in Egypt on the first leg of a Middle East visit.

He was slated to fly on to Israel after meeting in Alexandria with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

### Assad blasts Sharon, Bush

Syrian President Bashar Assad accused Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of pushing the Middle East toward war.

Assad also said Wednesday that the Bush administration has not yet done anything to advance the Middle East peace process.

Assad's comments came as he ended a visit to France that was marked by protests over anti-Semitic remarks Assad made last month when the pope visited Syria.

During his visit to France, Assad defended those remarks, saying that when he said Jews had betrayed Jesus and tried to kill the Prophet Mohammed, he was talking about Israelis, not Jews in general.

### Settlers call for retaliation

Israeli settlers launched a sit-down strike opposite the Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem on Wednesday to protest the government's ongoing policy of restraint.

Protesters called on the prime minister to let the army respond more vigorously to Palestinian violence.

In another development, Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer defended his decision to evacuate illegal Jewish enclaves in the West Bank, saying it came after discussions with military officials.

Settler leaders and conservative politicians have accused Ben-Eliezer of using the issue to try to improve his chances of becoming the next Labor Party leader.

process," Hoenlein told JTA. "But we need a period of quiet, otherwise we're going to keep experiencing this backlash."

Not all the news was disquieting, however.

At the opening session Saturday night, the chairman of the Jewish Agency's executive, Sallai Meridor, said 5,000 adults have visited Israel on solidarity tours since Palestinian violence began in September. During that period, he added, 20,000 youths have come to Israel for long- and short-term study programs, including 14,000 on Birthright Israel.

In the lobby, however, delegates discussed the difficulty of sending a teen-ager to Israel during a violent period.

"I didn't give a second thought to coming to Israel," one American delegate said. "But I'm just thankful it wasn't my daughter's turn to come to Israel this year, so that I didn't have to make that decision."

It was a disquieting topic for the participants, considering the Assembly's theme of solidarity.

At the opening session, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon called for a campaign to encourage Jews to visit Israel — and to make aliyah.

"It is time for the Jews to stand behind Israel," Sharon said. "It is time for tens of thousands of Jews to visit Israel. The solidarity of the Jewish people must be seen."

Around 60,000 Jews made aliyah last year, and 50,000 are expected this year, Meridor said, adding that 36,000 have immigrated since the violence began.

The Jewish Agency currently is focusing on aliyah from France, Argentina and South Africa, as well as on improving absorption efforts for Ethiopian immigrants.

Continuing the unity theme, the UJC announced a solidarity mission — called Israel NOW — to educate and advocate for Israel.

There are also plans to offer financial subsidies "to get as many people to Israel as quickly as possible," said Joel Tauber, chairman of the UJC executive.

During the UJC's upcoming "Solidarity September" program, a national media campaign will seek to educate American Jews about the current conflict, culminating with a Sept. 23 rally in New York.

The UJC also is encouraging American rabbis to focus their High Holidays sermons on solidarity with Israel.

Other assembly issues included immigrant absorption, Zionist education and ensuring that Israel remains a central part of the agenda of the Jewish people.

In another development, Meridor succeeded in pushing through a resolution to restructure the Jewish Agency.

In a vote by the Zionist General Council, which was approved by a majority of 65 percent, one-third of the seats on the executive and two-thirds of the agency's Board of Governors will be reserved for well-known Jewish figures not closely affiliated with political parties.

The resolution will ensure that people of vision and influence will lead the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency, devising long-range strategies for the benefit of Israel and the Jewish people, Meridor said after the vote. □

## Indonesian says he's learned from Jews

SYDNEY (JTA) — Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid told a meeting of leaders of Australia's major religious communities that he has "learned very much from Judaism."

Wahid, a Muslim, made his comments Tuesday with the leaders, who included representatives of the Jewish, Christian, Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim faiths. He said that one of his closest friends had "taught him the history of the Holocaust and of the Diaspora experience."

"I cried together with him," he said, before criticizing "Saddam's madness" — a reference to Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein — and the mistreatment of Jews in Arab countries.

Wahid, who was a leader in international interfaith dialogue prior to his election in 1999, told the group that the essence of Islam is to respect other faiths and that the Koran teaches that human beings are made into tribes in order to learn from one another, not to kill one another. □



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## JEWISH WORLD

### Lawmakers alter faith-based bill

Members of the U.S. House of Representatives and Bush administration officials agreed Tuesday to insert new protections separating church and state into legislation that would give religious groups an increased role in providing social services.

In a move that will allow the stalled legislation to move forward in the House, the negotiators agreed that faith-based charities wanting to run social service programs with government money will have to let participants opt out of any religious aspects of their programs.

### Polish Jews to mark massacre

Polish Jews plan to hold their own ceremony in Warsaw's synagogue next month to commemorate the 1,600 Jews massacred in 1941 by their Catholic neighbors in the village of Jedwabne.

Stanislaw Krajewski, a member of the board of the Union of Polish Jewish Congregations, said the July 6 ceremony was meant as a "complement, not a competition" to the official July 10 commemoration at Jedwabne, when the state will unveil a controversial new monument at the site where Jedwabne's Jews were tortured and burned to death in a barn.

### Jewish heirs share auction funds

A Claude Monet painting that the Nazis forced a Jewish family to sell in 1935 was auctioned Tuesday at Sotheby's in London, with the seller sharing the proceeds with heirs of the prewar owners.

The anonymous seller's family acquired "Au Parc Monceau" in good faith after the war and negotiated a settlement with the heirs of Margret Levy-Kainer.

The work fetched \$5,240,900.

### Austrian calls for end to lawsuits

An Austrian envoy called for an end to U.S. lawsuits dealing with the plunder of Jewish assets in Holocaust-era Austria, saying the lawsuits are delaying compensation for survivors.

Earlier this year, Austria agreed to establish a \$310 million compensation fund for Austrian victims of the Holocaust.

As part of the agreement with American officials, Austria called for all lawsuits filed by survivors in the United States to be dismissed before its payments begin.

### Chelmno monument defaced

Vandals defaced a monument at Chelmno, the site of the first mass murders carried out by the Nazis in Poland.

Police said the vandalism appeared to have been the work of drunken teen-agers and did not appear to have been prompted by anti-Semitism.

## Holocaust denier seeks appeal of ruling that rejected his libel suit

By Richard Allen Greene

LONDON (JTA) — A British court is considering Holocaust denier David Irving's request to appeal his defeat last year in a libel suit he brought against an American scholar.

In a highly publicized case in London last year, Irving lost his lawsuit against Deborah Lipstadt and her publisher, Penguin Books, who had accused him of being a Holocaust denier.

In what was a crushing defeat for Irving, Britain's High Court ruled in April 2000 that he was a racist who had deliberately misrepresented and distorted historical evidence about the Holocaust. The court found that Irving had portrayed Hitler in a favorable light for ideological reasons.

Irving was ordered at the time to pay Lipstadt's legal costs, estimated at nearly \$3 million. The ruling ruined him financially.

Irving, 63, is now requesting permission to appeal the verdict.

Under the British legal system, the right to appeal is not automatic in all cases.

Irving's written request for an appeal had already been rejected, but he was granted the right to an oral request.

The Court of Appeal is expected to decide by the end of July whether to grant the appeal.

Irving claims evidence that should have been permitted at the original trial was disallowed.

James Libson of the law firm Mischon de Reya, which is advising Lipstadt, told *The Lawyer* magazine that Irving's case has no merit.

"Irving is looking for anything to attack the judgment on," he said. "Our client would like this to be over now. It has taken up nearly six years of her life."

After representing himself last time, Irving now has a legal team presenting his case. In four days of arguments earlier this month, Irving's lawyer, Adrian Davies, maintained that his client did not approve of the murder of Jews in the Holocaust.

"Nowhere in the entire core of Mr. Irving's work has he said anything which remotely began to suggest that he thought the Nazis did a jolly good thing — or even an excusable thing — in rounding up all the Jews in Eastern Europe and putting them into camps," Davies said.

He said Irving did not deny that Jews had died in concentration camps, but that the systematic murder of Europe's Jews was not Nazi policy until 1943.

Davies said that while Irving might have "poor judgment" as a researcher, that did not make him a falsifier of history.

Justice Charles Gray's ruling last year found that Irving "misrepresented and distorted" historical evidence and that he was "anti-Semitic and racist and that he associates with right-wing extremists who promote neo-Nazism."

Richard Rampton, defending Lipstadt, told the Court of Appeal that the weight of evidence against Irving in the original case was "absolutely crushing."

It is unusual for an oral request for appeal to go on for days; they usually last a few hours. One source close to the case said Irving was trying to turn the appeal request into an appeal itself.

If the court finds that Irving's request has no merit, it can deny him permission to appeal.

In theory, he could fight that decision in the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France, on the basis that Britain refused him a fair trial.

A decision to grant Irving the right to appeal would not imply that the Court of Appeal thinks the original ruling was incorrect, only that there are grounds for re-examining it.

Irving's own online diary of the case suggests that his lawyers think the case is going badly for him.

Last Friday, Davies is quoted as telling Irving "at least we can go down with all guns firing."

"Go down?" Irving asks him.

"We're going down," Davies replies firmly. □

## NEWS ANALYSIS

**Uproar over Schulz murals raises question of who owns Holocaust**

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — The shadowy “rescue” by Yad Vashem of Holocaust-era wall paintings from Ukraine — viewed as outright theft by officials in Eastern Europe — has renewed debate over who “owns” the Holocaust.

The Jerusalem-based Holocaust museum has come under fire for removing a set of wall paintings by a renowned Polish-Jewish artist killed in the Holocaust. In its defense, Yad Vashem said it had the “moral right” to the paintings by Bruno Schulz, a writer and artist shot down by an SS officer in the Ukrainian village of Drohobych in 1942 because he was a Jew.

The action — which some have compared to Israel’s rescue of Israeli hostages in Entebbe in 1976 or its bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1981 — has raised the question of who owns the Holocaust, who owns Holocaust commemoration and who has rights to the Jewish heritage in post-Communist Eastern Europe.

It is unclear whether the artwork was actually endangered and in need of rescuing.

“Israel has a long tradition of ‘evacuating’ Jewish cultural treasures that were deemed in danger after the Holocaust,” said Bernhard Purin, director of the Franconian Jewish Museum in Fuerth, Germany.

But, critics say, such decisions cannot be made unilaterally in today’s Europe, where Jews are trying to strengthen a local identity and promote the recognition that Jewish heritage is part of Europe’s cultural patrimony.

“There may be arguments for transmitting cultural monuments from the Diaspora to Israel,” Purin said. “But I would wish that Israeli institutions would start to discuss this issue with institutions and organizations in the affected countries, and also that institutions like Yad Vashem would observe international standards of museum ethics and monument preservation.”

London-based Anne Webber, commenting on behalf of the European Council of Jewish Communities, the Commission for Looted Art in Europe and the Conference of European Rabbis, also took issue with Yad Vashem’s action.

“The murals by Bruno Schulz are an important part of the heritage of the Jews of the Ukraine,” she said. “While appreciating the value that Israel puts upon this legacy, the living European Jewish communities must be able to commemorate their history and cherish the memories of their Holocaust victims through the artifacts that have survived.

“Artifacts such as the Schulz murals are a unique memorial of what happened in a particular time and place, and they are a monument to the history and culture of the Jews of this part of Europe,” she said.

The paintings in question, illustrations of Grimm fairy tales, were the last known works painted by Schulz, whose works are highly regarded in Europe. He had been ordered to paint them in the bedroom of the child of the local Nazi commandant.

They were discovered in February by a German filmmaker who had gone to Drohobych to make a film about Schulz.

The discovery caused a stir in Poland and Ukraine, and discussions began about making a Schulz museum on the site, with funding from a German foundation.

“The planned museum would have provided an ideal opportu-

nity to strengthen awareness in the Ukraine and beyond of what befell the Jewish people, and would have helped build relations between Jews and the local communities,” Webber said.

In May, however, Yad Vashem officials went to Drohobych and physically removed five large fragments of the murals, spiriting them out of the country to Jerusalem.

The circumstances surrounding the removal and export of the paintings are murky. What seems clear, however, is that local officials in Drohobych — wittingly or unwittingly — helped Yad Vashem circumvent state laws protecting cultural heritage.

Yad Vashem said it took the paintings with the “full cooperation” of local authorities, including the mayor, “to the extent that the municipality even assisted in the provision of materials required for packing the sketches.”

In a statement, Yad Vashem said local authorities gave assurances that the municipality was responsible for such issues in town. Like other countries, however, Ukraine bars the removal of pre-1945 cultural objects, art works or antiquities without a special permit. National culture authorities in Ukraine said they learned of the paintings’ removal only from the media. No one has explained how Yad Vashem got the paintings across the border.

The affair touched off a bitter controversy. Whether or not local officials were involved, the impression given was that Yad Vashem had taken unilateral action that violated Ukrainian law and trampled local sensibilities.

“It looked like theft and was certainly deception,” said one New York-based expert on Jewish heritage.

Meylach Sheykhet, an Orthodox Jew involved in the preservation of Jewish monuments in Ukraine, said that while “Yad Vashem and Israel always try to represent themselves as the exclusive side to inherit the heritage left after the Holocaust in European countries,” times have changed.

“To my understanding, culture is a fundamentally important base to bridge the world, and if at some point the Jewish cultural heritage will be displayed in a Ukrainian museum it will definitely show the positive developments and it will definitely bridge the world,” he said.

“In other words, Ukraine also has to have rights to have some of the Jewish heritage to display the Jewish presence in Ukraine,” Sheykhet said. □

**Clinton blasted at Shoah event**

TORONTO (JTA) — He came to raise funds for a local memorial wall to the Holocaust, but former President Clinton ended up running afoul of some 200 protesters incensed by his failure to prevent ethnic cleansing in Rwanda in 1994.

Gerald Caplan, who participated in an international panel that investigated the Rwandan genocide, wrote a blistering Op-Ed in Toronto’s Globe and Mail newspaper several days before Clinton participated in Monday’s event, sponsored by the Canadian Society for Yad Vashem. The commentary also accused Canadian Jewish groups of not doing enough to stop the massacres.

While most of the international community failed to take action in Rwanda, the protestors blamed Clinton for failing to prevent the genocide. Hutu militias in Rwanda killed at least 500,000 Tutsis and moderate members of their own tribe in 1994.

“We understand” the protesters’ “feelings, and we are very upset that we’ve upset another community,” said Marilyn Somers, the executive director of the Yad Vashem group. □