



# Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 79, No. 147

Thursday, August 9, 2001

84th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Israeli killed in drive-by shooting

Palestinian gunmen killed an Israeli man in a drive-by shooting Tuesday night on a West Bank highway.

In retaliation for the slaying of 40-year-old Zohar Shurgi, from Moshav Yafit in the Jordan Valley, Israeli army helicopters pounded Palestinian security targets in the town of Salfit on Wednesday, damaging buildings but causing no casualties. Shurgi is survived by his wife and three children.

The Al-Aksa Brigades, a group associated with Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's Fatah Party, claimed responsibility for the killing.

### Suicide bomber wounds one

A Palestinian suicide bomber blew himself up at an Israeli military checkpoint in the Jordan Valley of the West Bank. The Palestinian detonated a bomb Wednesday when a soldier approached to inspect his car, Israeli security sources said.

The soldier was slightly hurt after being hit in the leg by shrapnel. It was not clear whether the Palestinian meant to detonate the bomb at the checkpoint or had intended to explode it among more Israelis.

### Israeli helicopters hit Nablus

Israeli helicopters fired three missiles at a Palestinian security post in the West Bank city of Nablus, but caused no casualties. Wednesday's airstrike came after two Israeli soldiers were lightly wounded by a roadside bomb that exploded earlier in the day as their convoy was traveling on a hill overlooking Nablus.

Also on Wednesday, Israel fired missiles at a Palestinian security target in the West Bank city of Jericho after Palestinian gunmen fired at motorists.

### Hadassah urges organ donations

Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, organized a demonstration Wednesday in Jerusalem to urge Israelis to donate organs for transplants. According to the Israel Association for Transplants, Israel has among the lowest rates of organ donation in the Western world.

In a show of solidarity with Israel, Hadassah is holding its annual convention this week in Jerusalem. At the opening Monday night, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and the U.S. ambassador to Israel, Daniel Kurtzer, addressed the 550 Hadassah delegates.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Israel cleaning up its PR act, but activists still find some faults

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — With image almost as important in the Israeli-Palestinian struggle as the actual fighting on the ground, American Jewish activists note with approval the strides Israel's public relations machine has made.

Criticism of Israel's PR response to the violent Palestinian uprising rose earlier this year until Israel hired two New York public relations firms. Jewish philanthropists even proposed creating a permanent, Israel-specific PR agency.

Today, though, the Israeli Foreign Ministry and its embassies are using e-mail and the Internet to disseminate facts and opinion more quickly and efficiently.

Smooth-talking spokesmen like Alon Pinkas, Israel's consul general in New York, take to the airwaves with greater frequency to make Israel's case.

Spokeswomen like Deputy Defense Minister Dalia Rabin-Pelosoff, the daughter of assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, gradually are elbowing aside the gruff, English-challenged generals who often have been charged with taking Israel's message to the world.

Still, shortcomings persist and errors are committed.

Take the Aug. 1 assault on Hamas headquarters in Nablus.

It took several hours after the world media began beaming images of the Israeli helicopter attack — which killed six Hamas members, plus two Palestinian children — before the Israel Defense Force issued a statement.

When it did, it was a doozy:

"The Palestinian establishment media is devoting her main broadcasting from the morning to intensive dealing to the assassination in Nabulas (sic) and increasing in significant way the dosage and the sort of the incitement broadcasting, the media also started to broadcast national songs in very high frequency."

So read the first "sentence" of the release, according to a story in the Jerusalem Post.

In the process, the release misspelled the name of the targeted city; used the "assassination" terminology that Israeli leaders have gone to great pains to avoid; and neglected to offer condolences for the innocent blood spilled.

"The road to hell is paved with good intentions," Ra'anan Gissin, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's foreign press spokesman, told the Post. "I will make sure it doesn't happen again."

The pro-Palestinian sympathy the incident stirred highlights Israel's failure to convince the world that its assault on terrorist groups like Hamas is justified, Jewish observers say. Palestinian propaganda efforts aside, it also underscores the need for quick-thinking, English-speaking Israeli experts in "hasbarah" — a Hebrew term that means explanation or propaganda — who are able to spin a given situation before the Palestinians and the world media define it for them.

An Aug. 3 editorial in The Jerusalem Post called for an investment in PR planning and professionalism to match the effort given to military actions.

"The missiles that can pinpoint a single window on the third floor of a building may be 'smart,' but the information campaign that should accompany such an operation has been clumsy by comparison," the Post wrote.

Changes must be made soon, observers say.

Recently, the hasbarah campaign waged by Israeli officials and their U.S. advocates has been thrown another curveball — efforts challenging the conventional wisdom of

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Turkey blasts Sharon policy

Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit attacked visiting Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's policy of not negotiating with the Palestinians while violence continues. During a joint news conference Wednesday with Sharon in Ankara, Ecevit called the policy a recipe for endless bloodshed.

During the news conference, Sharon called on Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat to halt the violence. "It's important for him to decide if he wants to stand at the head of an independent state and act accordingly or if he wants to stand at the head of a gang of murderers," Sharon said.

Sharon also told reporters, "I am ready to make painful concessions for peace, but I will not make any concessions on the security of the people of Israel."

### P.A., Hamas may form unity gov't

The Palestinian information minister said in an interview that the Palestinian Authority soon will hold a meeting with Hamas and Islamic Jihad to discuss forming a national unity government.

Yasser Abed Rabbo also said the meeting would focus on coming up with a joint strategy to deal with "the continuing Israeli aggression."

### Israeli Arabs strike for funds

Israeli Arabs began a strike Wednesday to protest what they called Israel's failure to improve their living conditions. Israeli Arab lawmakers said strikers are protesting the government's failure to implement a \$9.5 billion, four-year plan to develop the Arab sector.

A spokesman for the Finance Ministry said the government is committed to the plan, but that it is being delayed until at least next year while officials arrange funding.

The Abraham Fund, a group working to promote cooperation between Israelis and Arabs, recently wrote Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, urging him to release funds for the Israeli Arab community.



## Daily News Bulletin

Shoshana S. Cardin, *President*

Mark J. Joffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*

Lisa Hostein, *Editor (on leave)*

Michael S. Arnold, *Managing Editor*

Lenore A. Silverstein, *Business Manager*

JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at [www.jta.org](http://www.jta.org).  
© JTA    Reproduction only by previous arrangement.

what happened at and after the Camp David summit in July 2000.

The basic narrative, propagated by former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and President Clinton, was this: Barak offered far-reaching concessions to Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat, Arafat rejected them and offered no alternatives of his own, and the Palestinians then resorted to violence to try to squeeze from Israel concessions they failed to win at the bargaining table.

Now, however, analyses in such publications as *The New York Times* and *The New York Review of Books* cite missteps by all three sides, seeming to imply that all parties to the summit share the blame for its failure.

The danger of that conclusion, Jewish leaders say, is that if it becomes the new conventional wisdom it may erode whatever support exists for Israel's claim that it is acting in self-defense against Palestinian aggression.

Moreover, there is concern that the American public, not to mention much of the world, may begin to consider the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as intractable as the war in Bosnia, where all sides are equally bad — and where no one deserves international sympathy.

In response, Israel's American defenders have swung into action.

Pundits and analysts are churning out articles and e-mails.

In the Aug. 13 edition of *U.S. News & World Report*, publisher Mortimer Zuckerman — the new chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations — opens his piece "A Surfeit of Cynicism" with the following question and answer: "How much longer will the violence persist in the Middle East? As long as lies are believed and responsibility is evaded."

Barak himself recently has appeared on television, and in opinion pages, a think-tank speech and a *New York Times* interview to reiterate his version of events.

Other U.S. Jewish leaders say they are redoubling efforts to arm grass-roots activists with fresh "talking points" to lobby opinion-shapers such as journalists and politicians.

Studies indicate that Americans — both Jews and non-Jews — have less and less knowledge and understanding of historical context, both in general and about the Middle East conflict specifically.

"No one is suggesting that Barak and Clinton were flawless, but to say they've all made mistakes doesn't mean they're equally culpable," said Martin Raffel, associate director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs.

"The Palestinians are fundamentally responsible for the violence, they made the decision to respond with violence rather than negotiations, and everything over the past 10 months starts from there."

Nevertheless, activists appear resigned to the fact that Israel always will face an uphill PR battle in what appears to much of the world to be a David vs. Goliath struggle.

Despite the Palestinians' widespread use of guns, mortars and other weapons, television images continue to portray Palestinian civilians confronting heavily armed Israeli soldiers.

Also, American journalistic style and the news cycle dictate that the freshest information leads a story.

In the case of the Mideast, that usually means that the Israeli action comes first, followed by mention of the Palestinian attack that — reportedly, the stories point out — provoked it.

Still, some Israelis, like consul general Pinkas, express confidence that "the truth" will win out.

The revisionist history "is not credible, it's not believable," Pinkas told JTA. "There's the truth, and everything else is interpretation. The truth is about the forest; revisionism is about dissecting the trees." □

## Report: India to buy Israeli simulators

NEW YORK (JTA) — India's navy is planning to buy submarine simulators from Israel.

The two nations have also begun talks regarding the manufacture of such simulators at Indian facilities, *The Times of India* reported. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Diplomats see U.N. kidnap videos

Israeli military officers and diplomats on Wednesday viewed videotapes made by U.N. peacekeepers in Lebanon that may provide clues to the kidnapping of three Israeli soldiers by Hezbollah gunmen last October. The Israeli team also inspected seven bloodstained items retrieved by U.N. peacekeepers from vehicles apparently used by Hezbollah in the kidnapping.

The Israelis walked out of a meeting Tuesday after U.N. officials said they would only be able to view the videos once. But that obstacle was overcome when the two sides agreed that the Israelis would be able to have at least two viewings.

### Court rules for Jewish reservist

Canada's Federal Court of Appeal found that a naval reservist was the victim of illegal discrimination when the Canadian Armed Forces denied him a posting to the Middle East during the 1991 Gulf War because he is Jewish.

Reversing a lower court's ruling in 1998, Justice Edgar Sexton said last Friday that the decision in the case of Lt. Andrew Liebmann was made "in a factual and evidentiary vacuum" and that the number of Jewish soldiers from the United States serving in the Persian Gulf at that time exceeded the size of the whole Canadian contingent.

### Senate proclaims 'HIAS Day'

The U.S. Senate named Sept. 9 "HIAS Day" to mark the 120th anniversary of a group that has resettled more than 4 million immigrants, mostly Jews, in the United States.

On that date, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society's anniversary celebration will be centered in Brooklyn, home to some of the Jews who emigrated from the former Soviet Union during the past decade.

### Jews, Latinos call for cooperation

Jewish and Latino community leaders called on their respective communities to cooperate in joint projects to boost intercommunal ties. The call was made at a conference Tuesday in New York sponsored by the local Jewish Community Relations Council, the Israeli Consulate and Latino groups.

### Writer on Sephardic life dies at 89

Rebecca Amato Levy, an author who spent decades writing about Sephardic Jewish life, died Saturday at the age of 89. She was the subject of a 1995 documentary "Island of Roses — The Jews of Rhodes in Los Angeles" that was partly based on her 1986 book, "I Remember Rhodes."

Levy fled the island of Rhodes in 1939 under the threat of Italian fascism, moving to France and then Morocco before settling in Los Angeles.

## ARTS & CULTURE

### Student film focuses on friendship between young German and survivor

By Daniel Fleishman

NEW YORK (JTA) — At the beginning of the new documentary, "From Third Reich to Third Generation," 21-year-old Christoph Erbsloeh, the grandson of a doctor in Hitler's army, asks 101-year-old Holocaust survivor Arthur Lederman, "Do you think every German has a little Hitler in them?"

Lederman's response: "Yes, and I told you that, deep in your being, you're a Hitler."

This frank dialogue is typical of the film, which was written and produced last winter by three recent graduates of Columbia University's School of Journalism and received an award from BNNtv.com, a company that produces documentaries and supports up-and-coming filmmakers.

The examination of Lederman and Erbsloeh's relationship serves as a case study of efforts at small-scale German-Jewish reconciliation.

Erbsloeh is in the U.S. on an 18-month program sponsored by the Berlin-based Action Reconciliation/Service for Peace, an organization that sends about 160 young Germans around the world to help those who were harmed by the Nazis.

He meets each week with Polish survivor Lederman, whose entire family was murdered by the Nazis.

Lederman, who left Poland in 1948, has been too weak to leave his tiny apartment for the past two years. Erbsloeh comes each week to help Lederman with necessary chores, and more importantly, provide him with some human contact.

Their discussions in the film focus almost exclusively on the Holocaust. Lederman, who has had plenty of time to think about what he went through, offers tidbits of personal philosophies.

He tells Erbsloeh, "I wouldn't want to be in your skin. You know why? Because your children and your children's children will always have a stamp: Hitler."

Despite these comments, Lederman appears to harbor little ill-will toward the young German.

Lederman was an accomplished concert violinist before the war, and loves German music and poetry. He and Erbsloeh — who plays the cello — use such shared interests to forge a bond.

The documentary is sprinkled with the melancholic sounds of Erbsloeh's cello, as well as other moving sounds that match the unhurried flow of images.

The film also relies on experts in the field.

William Helmreich, a professor at City College in New York, emphasizes that Erbsloeh and his generation are more likely than their parents to examine Germany's past. He explains it by quoting Marcus Hansen, a prominent historian: "What the second generation tried to forget, the third generation tries to remember."

Christian Staffa, the executive director of Action Reconciliation, tells the camera, "There is still an incredibly strong feeling of guilt among the third and fourth generation. You can sense it right away when they meet a survivor or grandchild of a survivor."

The three filmmakers — Amy Rubin, Michael Rey and Stefan Knerrich, all in their early 30s — developed, photographed and edited the film during a six-month period beginning last October, condensing 50-plus hours of footage into a 25-minute movie. The film was the brainchild of Rubin, who spent the past five years working in the oral history department at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial in Washington, where she learned about Action Reconciliation.

Like Erbsloeh, Knerrich's grandfather served in the Nazi army.

Their goal, the filmmakers said, was not to create yet another Holocaust story that would get lost among the dozens made each year, but to provide a fresh perspective.

The film has had limited showings, having been screened at Columbia and to the German consul general, who lauded it.

BNNtv.com and the three filmmakers are considering expanding the film to an hour or more and to show it in other venues. □

## Refuting revisionists, U.S. envoy says Arafat torpedoed Camp David

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — As new versions are presented of what went wrong at last summer's Camp David summit, the Clinton administration's lead Mideast negotiator is reiterating that Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat is primarily to blame for scuttling the talks.

That version generally had been accepted in Washington, Israel and elsewhere since the talks ended in late July 2000. But recent analyses by the New York Times and by one of Dennis Ross' colleagues on the U.S. negotiating team have sought to shift much of the onus from the Palestinian leader to the United States and Israel.

These reports say Arafat was pushed into attending the Camp David summit by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and President Clinton, and went only after receiving assurances that he would not be blamed if the talks failed.

The conflicting observations have led to confusion over what actually happened at Camp David and in talks held in January in Taba, Egypt.

Ross served as Clinton's special Middle East coordinator and was the administration official most involved in the peace process.

While there were reasons for Arafat to be wary of Barak, Ross said, the Palestinian leader was the one unwilling to take the steps toward peace.

"Arafat wasn't thinking in terms of a permanent deal," Ross said Wednesday at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a think tank. "Barak was thinking in historic terms, and Arafat was thinking in interim terms."

For the process to work, both sides needed to give up things they long had deemed essential — but Arafat was unwilling to do so, Ross said.

Arafat expressed interest in a permanent peace plan because he believed an interim solution would not be acceptable to his people, Ross said, but made no serious effort to create one.

Instead, Arafat "created new mythologies," including a version of history that denied the existence of the Jewish temples in Jerusalem during biblical times.

"When you question the core of the other side's faith, it's not exactly an indication that you are ready to find an end to the conflict," Ross said.

The former envoy is currently writing his memoirs and serving as an adviser to the Washington Institute.

The frustration over Arafat's attitude led Clinton to go back on his word not to blame the Palestinian leader for the summit's failure, Ross said.

But, he emphasized, Clinton did not so much criticize Arafat as lavish praise on Barak — leaving listeners to draw their own conclusions.

Ross said the summit was postponed repeatedly at Arafat's request, but the Palestinian Authority seemed to make no effort to gear up for the meeting in the meantime.

Other Palestinian negotiators, Ross said, were more flexible than Arafat and made key concessions, including setting practical limits on the Palestinian "right of return," accepting the Jewish neighborhoods of eastern Jerusalem as part of Israel, accepting slight modifications to the pre-1967 borders and accepting three warning posts in the West Bank that would contribute to Israeli

security. But a whole week went by at Camp David before Palestinian peace negotiators came to him and indicated they were ready for serious discussion of the parameters of a peace plan, Ross said.

While Barak's team made historic steps toward resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Ross said, Barak himself, fearing for his political future, was reluctant to specify details that he might have difficulty selling to the Israeli public.

In order to sell a final agreement to the public, Barak believed he could not squander political capital in advance, Ross said.

"His mind-set was riveted on an end-game summit, where he could finally talk about issues like Jerusalem," Ross said.

He also said Barak was unwilling to make a third redeployment of Israeli troops from the West Bank — as specified in interim peace agreements — because the Palestinian leadership likely would dismiss any offer as insufficient.

In addition, Barak was known to believe that the interim redeployments robbed Israel of bargaining chips it could use in final negotiations.

Instead, he preferred to go directly to a final agreement, in which he presumably could be more generous with land transfers in exchange for a declaration that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was over.

By the time Clinton offered his own proposal for a permanent peace plan in the fall, the violent Palestinian uprising had begun and the atmosphere in the Middle East had changed immensely.

Arafat told Clinton he accepted the peace plan — but with so many reservations that they negated the terms, Ross said.

"He never formally said 'no', but his 'yes' was a 'no,'" Ross said.

While the eruption of violence made the situation harder to resolve in the fall, Ross said, the key component remained Arafat's unwillingness to close a deal. While Arafat was capable of beginning the peace process, he did not have the ability to conclude it, Ross said.

"I do personally feel that it is too hard for him to redefine himself," Ross said. "It is too hard, as a revolutionary, to give up struggle."

Ross showed respect for his old boss' efforts.

He said Clinton was an avid reader of Israeli polls and believed that if a final agreement were reached he could sell it to the Israeli public.

In fact, polls showed a very high popularity rating for Clinton in Israel.

Faced with recent criticism that the American team doomed the peace process by pushing too hard for what proved to be a fateful summit, Ross said it was impossible to ignore the possibility of ending the conflict.

"There really was a sense it would not have been responsible," he said. □

## Danish group ends kibbutz program

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A program to recruit approximately 1,500 Danish volunteers a year to work on kibbutzim is ceasing operations, according to the Copenhagen Post.

A spokesman for Danish Kibbutz Friends told the Post that "young people now are much more negative toward Israel, a result of the less than flattering media coverage. Youngsters today feel that by working on a kibbutz they are supporting a system that suppresses and tortures Palestinians." □