



Daily News Bulletin

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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Security council takes no action

Two days of fiery speeches before the U.N. Security Council, most of them critical of Israel, ended Tuesday with no action taken against the Jewish state.

The Palestinians are now expected to try to drum up support among their allies in the Third World, an Israeli diplomatic source said, in hopes of returning to the Security Council with a resolution calling for an international peacekeeping force for the territories.

Barak asked about Rich pardon

A U.S. congressional committee sent former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak a list of questions about his role in President Clinton's controversial pardon of philanthropist Marc Rich. According to White House notes of conversations between Clinton and Barak, obtained by the House of Representatives' Government Reform Committee, the two leaders discussed the pardon on three occasions. [Page 4]

Reform mov't reinstates trips

The U.S. Reform movement, which drew headlines and criticism for canceling its youth trips to Israel this summer, is resuming high school programs in Israel this fall. Rabbi Allan Smith, director of youth programming for the movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations, said it would send 25 students because the Jewish Agency for Israel and the Israeli government have increased security in recent months.

Israel arrests three in bombing

Israel arrested three residents of eastern Jerusalem in connection with Tuesday's car bombing in downtown Jerusalem, which failed to cause serious injuries. Jerusalem's police chief, Mickey Levy, told Army Radio that Palestinian terrorists are directly targeting police in Jerusalem. Tuesday's blast, in the Russian Compound, was the third near police headquarters in the past four months.

Crown Heights relatives meet

The man whose son's death in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn 10 years ago sparked days of rioting met with the brother of a yeshiva student killed during the riots. "Violence can never be justified, nor ought it be condoned," said Norman Rosenbaum, the brother of the student, after meeting with Carmel Cato on Monday in a kosher delicatessen in Brooklyn.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Peres-Arafat meeting in Berlin is seen as another last chance

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Next week in Berlin.

That is the new mantra for the shrinking number of Israelis who still hold out a slender hope that Israel and the Palestinians can negotiate a peaceful end to the last 11 months of violence.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, Israel's indefatigable peacemaker, and Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian Authority president, are to meet in Berlin under the aegis of the German government.

Peres has proposed a "graduated" or phased cease-fire, to be implemented region by region across the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, with Israeli troop withdrawals in response to each phase.

Arafat has proposed nothing, but has told the visiting German foreign minister, Joschka Fischer, that he is ready to listen.

The German statesman is one of the few international figures respected by both sides. His desperate diplomatic efforts in the wake of the disco bombing in Tel Aviv on June 1 are credited with heading off a major Israeli military reprisal then.

Fischer was back in the region this week trying to fill what some observers feel is a yawning diplomatic gap left by the Bush administration's reluctance to commit too much of its prestige and credibility to the often thankless task of Middle East peacemaking.

European leaders hope to take advantage of the lowered American profile to increase their own role in Middle East diplomacy.

Fischer utilized a recent agreement between Peres and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon that allows Peres to launch a new effort to engage the Palestinian Authority in negotiations — despite Sharon's oft-stated insistence that Israel will not talk "under fire."

Peres agreed to Sharon's condition that any talks will be solely about a cease-fire and not deal with more "political" issues, such as the diplomatic concessions the Palestinians can expect if they agree to a cease-fire. Many here note, however, that once Peres and Arafat meet face to face, such a restriction will be virtually impossible to enforce.

The Sharon-Peres understanding was not much of an opening, but Fischer resolved to try to widen it.

Officials on both sides cautioned against heightened expectations, though they need hardly have bothered.

Previous attempts at diplomacy, including a purported cease-fire Peres personally worked out with Arafat last fall, have led nowhere.

Increasingly, a ghastly wisdom seems to be taking hold both here and abroad that the Palestinians' "Al-Aksa Intifada" needs to shed more blood, cause more pain and poverty and further run its course before a diplomatic resolution is possible.

Peres has to contend not only with despairingly low expectations of success but with hostile criticism from within his own party.

The latest broadside came Monday, when former Prime Minister Ehud Barak publicly upbraided Peres for seeking to engage Arafat.

Intensive peace talks at Camp David last summer and thereafter proved that Arafat is no partner for peace, Barak contended, and anyone who fails to see this must be blind.

Barak recently broke a self-imposed silence since his defeat at the polls last winter

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel arrests five settlers

Israeli police arrested five residents of a settlement near Jerusalem on suspicion of stoning Palestinian cars on a local road. The five were detained after two Palestinians filed complaints about being stoned from a car driven by young Jews. Israel Radio said the five admitted to the allegations.

Iraqi cleric: Expel 'pigs and apes'

The deputy chairman of Iraq's Revolutionary Command Council urged support for a holy war against Israel at the opening session of an international meeting of Islamic clerics. Izzat Ibrahim said Arab and Muslim states should "expel the sons of apes and pigs from the holy places of Palestine," according to the Associated Press. Hosted by Iraq, the meeting brought together clerics from 15 countries, including Canada, France, Germany and Russia.

Hillary Clinton presses Arafat

Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.) called on Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat to stop Palestinian violence.

Clinton, whose embrace of Arafat's wife at a conference caused controversy during her Senate campaign last year, made the comments Monday. She also opposed international monitors for the West Bank and Gaza Strip, slammed the U.N. cover-up of a videotape that may shed light on Israelis kidnapped by Hezbollah and expressed concern about anti-Israeli rhetoric at an upcoming U.N. conference on racism.

Israelis to see U.N. video again

An Israeli delegation left for Geneva for another viewing of U.N. videotapes and other items linked to the October kidnapping of three Israeli soldiers by Hezbollah. The soldiers' families were invited but refused, in a show of protest against the conditions set by the United Nations for reviewing the materials.

and has been urging world leaders to shun Arafat as a "thug." Merely talking to Arafat now weakens Israel in its efforts against him, Barak argued.

Peres hit back, recalling the magnitude of Barak's electoral defeat to Sharon.

Yossi Beilin, a leading Labor dove who recently mounted his own unsuccessful effort to convene an international peace conference in Madrid, said Barak's criticism was "incomprehensible" given that Barak continued to negotiate with the Palestinians on a package of far-reaching Israeli concessions until the eve of elections, months after the intifada began.

Beyond the verbal sparring, the arguments highlight a basic fault line within the peace camp. It runs between those like Peres and Beilin who still believe in negotiating with Arafat, and those like Knesset member Haim Ramon and Center Party leader Dan Meridor, who believe Israel must act unilaterally to end the violence or at least to better contain it.

In his speech to the kibbutz movement leadership Monday, Barak pointedly noted that he was the father of the "unilateral separation" concept.

Indeed, it was Barak who, as premier, coined the saying, "We are here and they are there," trying to persuade the Israeli public that it must forfeit the dream of "Greater Israel" in favor of the pre-state principle of partitioning the Land of Israel into viable Jewish and Arab states.

Barak claims that his intention was to test Arafat by making him a most generous offer, one that met virtually all Palestinian demands short of allowing millions of Palestinian refugees and their descendants to return to homes they had abandoned within Israel during the 1948 War of Independence.

If Arafat accepted, well and good. But if he rejected Israel's condition to declare an end to the conflict, then Arafat would be "exposed in his true colors," Barak said.

This is precisely what happened, Barak contends, resulting in Arafat's resort to violence beginning in late September.

Increasingly, politicians across a wide spectrum are adopting the logic of the Barak thesis, arguing that no deal can be negotiated in the foreseeable future and that Israel now must unilaterally redeploy its troops and consolidate settlements.

Public opinion is not entirely in favor of unilateralism, however.

A sizable segment of the population and the political echelon fears that if Israel withdraws from settlements without an agreement, it will in effect be offering a "prize" for Palestinian violence, encouraging their belief that continued attacks will lead to further Israeli concessions.

In addition, since all but the most extreme advocates of withdrawal recommend that Israel retain some important West Bank settlements and key security areas such as the Jordan Valley, some argue that a unilateral move will fail to remove a source of conflict or swing world opinion to Israel's side.

On the Likud side, a key voice advocating the unilateral option is Knesset member Michael Eitan.

Meridor, who this week led his party into the Sharon government and joined the Inner Security Cabinet, also favors the unilateral approach. He was at Barak's side at Camp David and came away profoundly disenchanted with Arafat.

Sharon is fully aware of Meridor's views and disagrees with the unilateral separation approach, but still was pleased by the Center Party's decision to join the coalition.

"I want him at my side," the premier said of Meridor.

Even in Peres' circle, the word is that unilateralism, in one form or another, will have to be seriously contemplated if the foreign minister's best-laid diplomatic plans again run up against Palestinian recalcitrance.

A unilateral withdrawal is not the preferred option, a key aide explained this week — but it could yet be adopted as the only viable alternative to unending bloodshed. □

Livni put in charge of Israel's PR effort

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has named Tzipi Livni as minister in charge of Israel's public relations.

Observers said the appointment of Livni, who was replaced by the Center Party's Roni Milo as minister for regional cooperation, was a positive step in the ongoing public relations war with the Palestinians. □



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JEWISH WORLD

Jews to Powell: Go, but...

Two Jewish leaders urged U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell to attend an upcoming U.N. conference against racism where Israel may be scapegoated, but to walk out if necessary.

Richard Heideman, president of B'nai B'rith International, and Amy Goldstein, an official with Hadassah: The Women's Zionist Organization of America, made the comments at a news conference Tuesday.

S. African Muslims protest Israel

Approximately 10,000 Muslim South Africans rallied Tuesday against Israel's policies, with some demonstrators carrying Palestinian flags and others holding signs comparing Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to Hitler.

One protester, Mohamed Chung, told The Associated Press he would like to put his "faith in God and become a suicide bomber."

Jewish kidnapping trial begins

A 22-year-old Chechen, Bulat Umalatov, went on trial last week for the 1999 kidnapping of an Israeli teen-ager in Chechnya.

Laura Lichtman was abducted along the Russian-Georgian border and held for five months before she was released. Now 19, Lichtman took leave from the Israeli army to attend the trial.

Austrian bank's fund is final

Bank Austria/Creditanstalt said it soon will begin distributing the bulk of money from its \$40 million Holocaust fund.

The bank made its announcement after a deadline passed for further appeals against the fund. The bank also will make a \$5 million payment to the Claims Conference, to be given to Austrian Holocaust survivors.

Groups press Russia on arsons

The Russian Jewish Congress and the Moscow office of the Anti-Defamation League are urging Russian authorities to take action against the increasing number of arsons and other anti-Jewish incidents.

Warsaw Ghetto survivor dies

Sigmund Nissenbaum, a survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto and Treblinka who later restored Jewish sites throughout Poland, died Aug. 11 in Germany at 75.

Nissenbaum, who was born in Warsaw and lived in southern Germany after the end of World War II, set up a foundation in 1983 to renovate Jewish cemeteries and synagogues across Poland.

He also was active in German-Jewish reconciliation efforts.

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

Jewish teachers meet in rural Ukraine, but predictions for the future are bleak

By Lev Gorodetsky

MUNKACS, Ukraine (JTA) — Rabbi Chaim Hoffman doesn't see a Jewish future here in rural Ukraine.

"The elderly will pass on, and the place of the young is in Israel. I feel it as a mitzvah to bring all of them to Israel," Hoffman recently told JTA.

Despite the gloomy prediction, Hoffman and his wife, Esther, left their 11 children in Israel seven years ago to come work for the 2,500 Jews in the Trans-Carpathian Mountains.

Esther Hoffman runs a Sunday school for girls. Her husband, the chief rabbi of the Carpathians, officiates at Jewish rituals, runs charity programs for the elderly and distributes two freshly baked Sabbath challahs to every family in his dwindling community.

Yosef Zissels, a Ukrainian Jewish leader, is also pessimistic about the future of the Jewish community in rural Ukraine.

Recent statistics showing high rates of mixed marriages fuel his pessimistic outlook for this region, where many predict that Jewish life will disappear in a generation.

If so, it will mark the end of a rich history. In the 19th century, when it was part of Hungary, the area was a center of Orthodoxy and Chasidism. It became part of Czechoslovakia after World War I and later became part of Ukraine.

Chaim Hoffman — who is a Vishnitz Chasid, another group that hails from this region — was born in Hungary and survived Bergen-Belsen as a child. Other local Jews were less fortunate.

In the spring of 1944, Hungary's pro-Nazi regime began deporting Jews from the countryside. By June 1944, tens of thousands of Carpathian Jews had been deported by train to Auschwitz.

Only several thousand came back, mostly young Jews who were able to work, local resident Eva Sarayeva said. The parents of Sarayeva, who now works with Rabbi Hoffman, were among this group.

Before World War II, Munkacs had 37,000 Jews, 30 synagogues and a Jewish high school with subjects taught in Hebrew. Now there are about 500 Jews, one synagogue and two Sunday schools.

But not everyone agrees that Jewish life is ending in Western Ukraine. Indeed, Munkacs last week hosted a seminar for Jewish teachers in Ukraine sponsored by the Israeli branch of the Conservative movement. The seminar featured lectures by Israeli professors on religion, Jewish culture and Hebrew.

Gila Katz, a former Ukrainian school teacher who currently heads the Russian desk of the Masorti movement, as Conservative Jewry is called in Israel, praised the movement's Jewish high school with 250 students in Chernovtsy in Western Ukraine.

The Conservative movement has become active in Western Ukraine recently, having opened several Sunday schools. Despite this growth, young Jews continue to leave this land, known for its beautiful landscape, for what they consider greener pastures in Kiev, Moscow, Germany, Israel or North America.

Pyotr Khorodny, 27, a teacher of Jewish history at the Chernovtsy day school, was trained as a computer programmer but lost his job because of Ukraine's economic situation. He plans to move to Toronto in a few months with his wife and daughter.

If the Jewish future is questionable in Western Ukraine, there appears to be more hope in Kiev, the nation's capital, where the Conservative movement recently established a Sunday school.

Sasha Feldman, 16, who came to the weeklong seminar from a Jewish Sunday school in Khust, a resort town in the Carpathian mountains, said she wants to stay in Ukraine.

"I feel good in Ukraine," said Feldman, whose family moved to Khust from Central Asia after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Feldman said that she had wanted to emigrate to Israel, but changed her mind recently because of the tense security situation there. Instead, she said, she has decided to move to Kiev. □

Rich pardon won't fade away: Committee asks Barak for details

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A congressional committee is seeking more information from former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak about his participation in the controversial pardon of financier Marc Rich.

The House of Representatives' Government Reform Committee also released White House transcripts of conversations between the former Israeli leader and President Clinton.

The transcripts show that Barak twice sought Rich's pardon in the waning months of Clinton's presidency, and that Clinton remained undecided on the day before the pardon was announced.

A commodities trader, Rich was pardoned by Clinton on Jan. 20, during his last hours in office.

He had been indicted on 51 counts of tax evasion, racketeering and violating trade sanctions with Iran, but fled to Switzerland in 1983 before standing trial.

In a letter sent to Barak last week, committee Chairman Dan Burton (R-Ind.) sought answers about the former prime minister's involvement in the Rich pardon, whom he thought it would benefit and why he and Clinton agreed that they should "not say much" about the pardon request.

Burton also sought information about Denise Rich, a prominent Democratic fund raiser and Rich's ex-wife.

Burton asked whether Barak believed the pardon could be financially important to Clinton or the presidential library he is building in Arkansas.

Burton is investigating whether the pardons were exchanged for donations to the library or other Democratic causes.

This is the second letter Burton has sent to Barak seeking information. In March, Barak sent a letter to the committee, addressing his participation in the Rich pardon in two paragraphs.

Barak wrote that he was approached by the chairman of Rich's foundation, Avner Azoulay, a former Mossad agent who has "contributed a lot to the security of the State of Israel."

"I raised the subject with President Clinton several times (probably three) in the course of routine telephone conversations during the last two or three months of his presidency and made a personal recommendation to him to consider the case," Barak wrote.

Transcripts of Clinton's conversations with Barak, obtained by the committee, show that Barak first raised Rich's name to Clinton on Dec. 11, the same day Rich's pardon petition was submitted, Burton claims.

Barak described Rich as a man who was "making a lot of philanthropic contributions to Israeli institutions and activities like education."

"He violated certain rules of the game in the United States and is living abroad," Barak reportedly told Clinton. "I just wanted to let you know that here he is highly appreciated for his support of so many philanthropic institutions and funds, and that if I can, I would like to make my recommendation to consider his case."

Clinton responded that he was aware of the case because he knew Denise Rich.

"If your ex-wife wants to help you, that's good," Clinton said.

During the second conversation, Barak said he wanted to mention two names, Rich and another person, whose name was edited out of the transcript copy for security reasons.

In addition to Rich, Barak was believed to support the pardon of Jonathan Pollard, a former U.S. Navy intelligence officer who is serving a life sentence for spying on the United States for Israel.

Clinton did not pardon Pollard despite numerous public requests by American Jewish leaders.

Clinton told Barak he had received a "long memo" about Rich, but added, "it's best that we not say much about that."

"Ok, I understand," Barak responded. "I'm not mentioning it in any place."

Barak said the pardon could be important financially — it was not clear to whom — and Clinton described Rich's case as "bizarre."

In their final conversation, on the day before Rich's pardon was announced, Clinton apparently raised the issue with Barak, and said he was having difficulty moving the pardon forward.

"Here's the only problem with Rich: There's almost no precedent in American history," Clinton said. "There's nothing illegal about it, but there's no precedent."

Clinton apparently was referring to the fact that Rich never stood trial because he fled to Switzerland.

"The question is not whether he should get it or not but whether he should get it without coming back here," Clinton told Barak. "That's the dilemma I'm working through. I'm working on it."

The next morning, as Washington began to inaugurate George W. Bush, Rich's name was on a long list of pardons, which also included a Jewish business associate of Rich, Pincus Green.

Rich's pardon is believed to have been aided by a well-choreographed campaign to persuade Israeli and American Jewish leaders to advocate on his behalf, citing his charitable largesse. Rich donated to numerous hospitals and educational programs in Israel and to the Birthright Israel program, which sends young Diaspora Jews to Israel.

Several prominent American Jews wrote letters on Rich's behalf, including Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League; Rabbi Irving "Yitz" Greenberg, chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council; and Marlene Post, North American chairwoman of Birthright Israel.

In Israel, then-Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami, Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert and Itamar Rabinovich, president of Tel Aviv University and a former ambassador to the United States, all contributed letters on Rich's behalf.

A New York federal prosecutor is investigating the Clinton pardons, and whether any laws were broken.

The transcripts are based on verbatim notes taken by White House aides. While the investigation is ongoing, a government reform committee spokeswoman said no Israeli or American Jewish official has sought additional information.

Barak did not respond to a request for comment from JTA. A committee spokeswoman said Barak has yet to respond to its second request for information. □

Israelis deny drug-running charges

NEW YORK (JTA) — Eight Israelis pleaded innocent in a U.S. court to charges they were involved in an international Ecstasy drug-smuggling ring.

Monday's pleas came after the group's alleged ringleader, Oded Tuito, was indicted last week in Spain. He is currently being sought by both the United States and Israel. □