



Daily News Bulletin

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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Cease-fire holding in Beit Jalla

A cease-fire appeared to be holding in Beit Jalla after Israeli troops pulled out of the West Bank town in accordance with an agreement reached between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

Israel's pullout early Thursday came after U.S. and European diplomatic efforts. But two Palestinians were killed elsewhere in the West Bank in battles between Palestinian gunmen and Israeli soldiers.

Israeli killed in West Bank cafe

A masked gunman killed an Israeli as he was eating in a cafe in a Palestinian village near Ramallah. Amos Tajouri, 60, was killed in an area under Israeli security control. Tajouri loaned the money to help the restaurant open, according to Reuters.

Jews disrupted at racism forum

Pro-Palestinian activists disrupted a news conference by more than 20 Jewish groups a day before a U.N.-backed forum on racism in South Africa.

The activists yelled "Zionism is racism" and "You have Palestinian blood on your hands" at the news conference, which was being held to highlight anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist intimidation ahead of the racism forum. The United States and Israel both are sending lower-level delegations to the conference because of proposals slated to be considered that denigrate Zionism as racism.

U.N. official condemns booklet

The United Nations' high commissioner for human rights publicly condemned a virulently anti-Semitic booklet being distributed by an Arab group at a U.N.-backed conference on racism opening this week in South Africa.

Mary Robinson called the Cairo-based Arab Lawyers Union booklet "racist" and said she would not allow "this fractiousness to torpedo the conference." The booklet contains anti-Semitic cartoons with Nazi swastikas and pictures of Jews with hooked noses and fangs dripping blood.

REMINDER: The JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Monday, Sept. 3.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Students learn to defend Israel on campus, but some unconvinced

By Julie Wiener

HONESDALE, Pa. (JTA) — Dusk was blanketing the Pocono Mountains as Katie Wells stood on the grass a few yards from hundreds of students dancing to Israeli folk tunes.

A sophomore at Ohio State University, Wells had spent the day attending sessions on Zionism and Israel's history, a sort of crash course in how to promote Israel on campus.

She wasn't sure what to make of it all.

"I'm so unknowledgeable" about Israel, she said.

Wells' feelings were not atypical at the Schusterman Hillel International Student Leaders Assembly, a five-day retreat that, for the first time in years, had devoted a full day to Israel advocacy. The other days were devoted to leadership training and Jewish learning.

"Some people here can pull out all the Oslo details and pull all this knowledge out, while others of us are trying to figure out just the basics," she said.

But as the sun set over the rustic camp, Wells, like many of the assembly's 388 student participants — all of whom either were Hillel activists or were chosen for their leadership potential — still had not become a hard-core advocate for the Jewish state.

The Israel advocacy day, she said, was "definitely rejuvenating and very positive, but also kind of hard to swallow because it's so pro-Israel."

As the organized Jewish community tries to mobilize campus support for Israel, it faces a Jewish student body that not only lacks the confidence to defend Israel but is not entirely certain what to believe.

Last fall, pro-Palestinian students mobilized rapidly after the "Al-Aksa Intifada" began, bringing in speakers, posting anti-Israel fliers, raising placards denigrating Zionism as racism and Nazism, and building mock Israeli checkpoints and Palestinian refugee camps.

On the campus of one New York university, Palestinians copied recruitment fliers for Birthright Israel — a program offering young Jews free trips to Israel — with the message that while Jews are visiting Israel, Palestinians are being killed.

Many Arab and Muslim student groups seem willing to champion the Palestinian cause unquestioningly, but Jewish students appear far more ambivalent.

Brian Jaffee, director of Hamagshimim, the university movement sponsored by Hadassah: The Women's Zionist Organization of America, said most American Jewish students lack the education and emotional connections to Israel "to be that passionate about it." Adding to the challenge, Jaffee said, is that "students by their very nature want to not offend anyone."

"They want to be good universal humanists and first and foremost care about human rights. It's tough for them to appear that they're taking sides on any issue," Jaffee said.

The students at the retreat who did feel passionately about Israel — many wore T-shirts with their college names transliterated into Hebrew — expressed frustration at what they see as apathy from their Jewish classmates.

Several said that while their Muslim and Arab counterparts are organizing rallies, they still struggle to get most Jewish students to participate in occasional Hillel events.

Last year the pro-Palestinian students "were right on top of it and we were, like, 'whoa,'" said Robyn Weisman, a sophomore at George Mason University in Fairfax,

MIDEAST FOCUS

Finn compares Israel to Nazis

Finland's foreign minister compared Israeli policies toward the Palestinians to Nazi Germany's anti-Jewish policies in the 1930s.

Erkki Tuomioja said his remarks were in line with what he called the European Union's tougher stance against Israel.

The leader of Helsinki's Jewish community said Tuomioja should resign after his remarks, which were made to a Finnish newspaper.

Israel presses U.N. on village

Israel urged the United Nations to restore a checkpoint along the Israeli-Lebanese border.

The decision by the U.N. force in Lebanon to remove peacekeepers from Ghajar, a village lying on both sides of a line marking Israel's withdrawal last year from southern Lebanon, endangers both Israeli soldiers and civilians, said Yehuda Lancry, Israel's ambassador to the United Nations.

Israel goes on alert in north

Israeli troops were on high alert along the country's northern border against a possible attack by the Lebanon-based Hezbollah.

A spokesman for the prime minister said the government has information Hezbollah is waiting for an opportune moment to carry out an attack.

13 percent of Israelis from FSU

Immigrants from the former Soviet Union make up 13 percent of Israel's population, according to recently released statistics.

With 58,000 of the total number of 850,000, Haifa has the largest number of these immigrants, followed by Ashdod and Beersheba.

Almost 60 percent of the immigrants have post-high school education, compared with 40 percent of all Israelis.

Va. "We have a hard time finding the Jewish kids and getting them to come to events."

Weisman, who participated in Birthright Israel this year, seemed eager to mobilize Jewish students on Israel's behalf, but other participants barely felt equipped to talk about the Jewish state.

Many students said they felt overwhelmed sorting through the facts of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and still did not know how to respond to anti-Israel rhetoric.

Rabbi Daniel Allen, president of the Masorti Foundation for Conservative Judaism in Israel and former executive vice president of the United Israel Appeal, said, "I did a session on what do you say to Mohammed, and a kid said, 'I don't know enough to talk to him, so I would avoid it.'"

"They need to be encouraged, and this is clearly an encouragement," Allen said of Hillel's Israel Advocacy Day.

Sessions ranged from "Why Are They Saying Those Terrible Things About Israel?" to "The ABCs of Zionist Legitimacy: How to Feel More Secure about Discussing Israel on Campus," and "Programming for Peace, Tolerance and Coexistence."

Students also received packets of information from Hillel, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee and Hamagshimim. Materials included basic talking points, responses to common charges against Israel and tips for organizing rallies, vigils and other events.

Organizers pitched Israel in other ways as well, broadcasting Israeli pop music from the camp loudspeakers at one point, serving a dinner of Middle Eastern food and hosting an Israeli cultural fair.

A common theme was the need to be proactive, seek help from the organized Jewish community and not let pro-Palestinian students set the agenda.

In a keynote speech, Lenny Ben-David, former deputy chief of mission at the Israeli Embassy in Washington, told students they were on the "front lines" of defending Israel. "As students, you are energetic, inquisitive, have research skills and are computer literate if not computer geniuses," he said. "That makes you potent."

Ben-David urged students to write term papers on topics such as the history of Israel's right to exist and human rights violations in the Arab world, then use the information to write Op-Ed pieces in their campus newspapers or to speak on campus.

He also suggested holding commemorative vigils marking the 100th day since the suicide bombing of a pizza restaurant in downtown Jerusalem and calling on Arab and Muslim student groups to sign declarations condemning all violence against civilians.

"Put them on the spot — it's a position they haven't been in," Ben-David said.

But not all the students seemed comfortable being cheerleaders for Israel.

Some said they weren't certain whether to trust the materials they received during the advocacy day, and others emphasized that they do not support all Israeli policies.

Zachary Gerson of Stanford University said he has "really mixed views." While he supports Israel, Gerson said, "that doesn't mean I support everything about it."

"I've been disappointed with the uncompromising attitudes both sides are taking," he said.

Despite the battering Israel has taken on many campuses this year, few students had much appetite for anti-Palestinian publicity campaigns.

When one student asked Ben-David how to spread propaganda about the Palestinians, another student won applause for responding, "conditions should never be so bad that we have to lower ourselves to that level."

Malkie Karkowsky, a student at the University of Maryland who participated in a new pro-Israel leadership training program this summer, the Emet Fellows, said, "It's very hard because you want to be, 'Boo Palestinians, Yea Israelis,' but you know that's not going to lead to the ultimate goal."

While the advocacy day might not completely reverse the apathy and timidity vis-à-vis Israel, several students said it gave them food for thought.

Jonathan Delshad, a senior at the University of California at Los Angeles, said he received "good advice" about sticking to a positive message when defending Israel, and got some good programming ideas. Hamagshimim's Jaffee expressed optimism that Jewish students will be more active this year than last.

"Students are getting their legs under them and figuring out ways to care about the issue," he said. □



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JEWISH WORLD

Reports: Israel to pay Pollard

Israel will pay \$1 million to convicted spy Jonathan Pollard as compensation for his suffering, according to Israeli media reports.

Pollard, a former U.S. Navy intelligence officer, is serving a life sentence in a U.S. prison for spying for Israel.

Reports confirm Swiss complicity

A report from a commission investigating Switzerland's role in the Nazi war effort "confirms the worst fears about Switzerland's collaboration with the Nazis during World War II," said Elan Steinberg, executive director of the World Jewish Congress.

Switzerland was a trade center for looted cultural assets and provided financial assistance to the Nazis, according to the Bergier Commission, which includes historians from Switzerland, the United States, Israel, Britain and Poland.

The report, which is part of the commission's ongoing inquiry into Swiss wartime dealings, determined that the Swiss used forced labor and removed Jews from senior business positions.

Poll: Americans blame both sides

Seventy-eight percent of Americans blame both Israelis and Palestinians for the breakdown of the peace process, according to a new poll.

Some 12 percent blame only the Palestinians; and 4 percent blame only the Israelis, according to the poll of 1,000 likely American voters commissioned by the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee and conducted by Zogby International.

In other results, 18 percent of Americans have a favorable impression of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, while 29 percent have a favorable impression of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Holocaust tax instruction revised

The Internal Revenue Service is revising its 2001 instructions to ensure that Holocaust victims or their heirs will not report restitution payments as income on their U.S. tax returns.

The revisions come as a result of a law passed this spring. The IRS will inform tax specialists of the changes through updated training manuals.

Lithuania soccer sorry for foul

Lithuania's soccer federation apologized this week to the country's Jewish community for fans who chanted anti-Semitic slogans during a recent match between a Vilnius team and Maccabi Tel Aviv, according to the Union of Councils for Jews in the FSU.

Chants in German of "Jews get out!" marred the Aug. 23 match. Local Jews say stadium security did not try to stop the chanting.

Argentine bomb trial will examine connections to Iran and Hezbollah

By Florencia Arbiser

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — Prosecutors here are set to accuse Iranian intelligence and the Lebanon-based Hezbollah of masterminding the 1994 bombing of Buenos Aires' major Jewish community center when the bomb trial begins next month.

The district attorney at the upcoming trial, Natalio Alberto Nisman, told JTA that "according to the investigation, there are enough elements to support the idea of an international connection with Iran and the Hezbollah group."

On July 18, 1994, a bombing in the AMIA community center building killed 85 people and wounded hundreds. This attack followed a March 1992 attack against the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires that killed 29 people.

After an investigation that has been criticized for moving too slowly, the trial of Argentines suspected of links to the AMIA bombing is expected to begin on Sept. 24.

So far, five locals have been arrested on suspicion of aiding the bombers: car mechanic Carlos Alberto Telleldin, former Captain Juan Jose Ribelli and former policemen Anastasio Leal, Raul Ibarra and Mario Barreiro.

Another 15 people imprisoned for offenses connected to the bombing also will be judged at the trial, and more arrest warrants could be issued, Nisman said.

Investigative judge Juan Jose Galeano will be the prosecutor. Jewish groups in Argentina and around the world have frequently criticized Galeano's investigation for failing to follow important leads.

The local Iranian community also has criticized Galeano. The most important Islamic authority in Argentina, Sheik Abdul Karim Paz, told JTA that "the testimonies of former terrorists are considered false." Galeano is considering evidence given by a former Iranian intelligence officer who identified Iranians and Hezbollah officials involved in the attack.

Karim Paz, who runs a Buenos Aires mosque, defended one of the prime suspects in the case, Moshen Rabbani, an Iranian cleric named cultural attache of the Iranian Embassy in Buenos Aires three months before the AMIA bombing. The investigation traced a call from Rabbani's cellular phone to the Iranian Embassy — three days before the attack — from the area where the van used for the explosion was parked.

Rabbani's present location is unknown, but he is presumed to be in Iran.

The investigation is following the track of Iranian diplomats traveling to Argentina from neighboring regions around the bombing date. Karim Paz told JTA that "those were official delegates with official invitations."

Karim Paz, a former Catholic who converted to Islam, often said after the AMIA attack that the local Muslim community supports Lebanon and Iran.

"We will have to wait until the end of the trial to see the results," he said. □

Controversial Rio rabbi beaten

RIO DE JANEIRO (JTA) — A controversial rabbi who wants to be chief rabbi of Rio de Janeiro has been beaten by gang members inside a synagogue, where the rabbi's family also resides.

Rabbi Jacob Israel Blumenfeld said the three men who invaded his home in the Copacabana section of Rio de Janeiro on Sunday morning likely followed him after he withdrew \$100 from an automated bank-teller machine.

After tying Blumenfeld up and beating him, gang members forced his mother to open a safe on the second floor of the residence. The trio got away with \$1,000 and antique jewelry. The 45-year-old rabbi was treated at a local hospital and released. His mother was not injured.

Before leaving, the robbers damaged the Torah scroll and scrawled the initials of their gangs on the synagogue walls. The unguarded synagogue keeps its doors open and has been vandalized before.

Blumenfeld's troubles reach beyond the beating and robbery.

The controversial rabbi, who inherited his post upon the death of his father, considers himself chief rabbi but is not regarded as such by community members. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**As New York prepares to choose, Jews likely to sprinkle their votes***By Michael J. Jordan*

NEW YORK (JTA) — In this year's New York City mayoral race, Jews are not the biggest news, but they are making some headlines.

A decade after the Crown Heights "pogrom," no overarching issue has galvanized the city's 1 million-strong Jewish community in advance of the Sept. 11 primary: Anti-Semitism is a nonissue; none of the four Democratic candidates is pandering to the Jewish vote; and while two of the Democratic candidates are Jewish, all are pro-Israel and supportive of Jewish concerns.

Leading the Democratic pack to replace Mayor Rudy Giuliani are Mark Green, New York's public advocate; Alan Hevesi, the city comptroller; Peter Vallone, the city council speaker; and Fernando Ferrer, the Bronx borough president.

Each attracts his share of Jewish voters, as well as sizeable support from the city's myriad ethnic, religious and racial groups.

If none of the four garners 40 percent of the vote, a runoff between the top two will be held Sept. 25.

Jewish-tipped comments or issues indeed have surfaced during the campaign, but the general calm is enabling New York Jews to think in terms of voting as New Yorkers who happen to be Jewish.

"It's a good position to be in — where you don't have to worry about somebody getting in," said William Rapfogel, executive director of the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty. "It's a welcome relief not to be pandered to, and to deal with the same substantive issues that the ordinary New Yorker is interested in — crime, transportation, education and housing."

On the Republican side, the clear front-runner in the Sept. 11 primary is a third Jew: billionaire Michael Bloomberg, founder of the Bloomberg financial services empire. Bloomberg will face Herman Badillo, the chairman of the Board of Trustees of the City University of New York.

Yet New Yorkers overwhelmingly vote Democratic, so the winner of the Democratic primary generally sweeps into office.

An exception was 1993, when the moons aligned for Republican Giuliani. Under then-Mayor David Dinkins, crime was perceived as rampant, and residents felt an iron fist was needed.

When Giuliani offered himself as a tough-on-crime candidate, the Jewish community flocked to him. Giuliani unleashed his police force, driving down the crime rate. But the police trampled civil rights to do it, say minorities, the segment that often bore the brunt of police action.

Nevertheless, Giuliani's policies — coupled with the booming economy — boosted the overall quality of life, won him a second term in 1997 and turned the city into one of the world's premier tourist destinations. The mayoral contenders criticize Giuliani's policies, but in deference to his popularity among "Giuliani Democrats," are careful not to be too strident. Rather, they portray themselves as "Giuliani with compassion," and vow to improve the school system.

Needless to say, the Jewish community does have its concerns.

For example, there's the shifting demographics of New York.

The Jewish community in recent years has absorbed some 250,000 Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

Meanwhile, Hispanics, African-Americans, Haitians and

Asians now comprise a majority of the city's population.

With memories of the 1991 Crown Heights riots still fresh, some fear a deterioration of race relations under a Democratic administration. These concerns were fueled by comments made in April by Bruce Teitelbaum, a Jew who is a top adviser to Giuliani.

In an interview with New York Jewish Week, Teitelbaum suggested that if elected mayor, Ferrer would surround himself with "Dinkins administration retreads," which "should be of great concern to the Jewish community."

Some Jewish leaders accused Teitelbaum of race-baiting and fear-mongering, using the term "retreads" as a code word for the same folks perceived to have stood idly by as Jews were attacked in Crown Heights. The implication, analysts said, was that a minority candidate like Ferrer, who is Puerto Rican, would again allow crime and violence to flourish.

All four of the Democratic candidates criticized Teitelbaum's remarks, including Hevesi, for whom Teitelbaum's wife reportedly is a campaign adviser. But some Jews also sided with Teitelbaum, agreeing that under Dinkins, who is black, some Jewish social-service organizations were shut out of city contracts that were awarded to Dinkins' black cronies.

These fears were reinforced a few days later by an editorial in the Amsterdam News, a black community newspaper.

Jews, the editorial said, have "done an amazing job of being able to promote themselves above all others in order to first achieve power and then, most importantly, to keep it."

Ironically, though, Ferrer has an endorsement from the pro-Giuliani Chasidic group that sprang up in the wake of the Crown Heights riot, the Crown Heights Political Action Committee.

Likewise, each of the other Democratic candidates seems to have covered a potentially weak flank. Green, the most liberal of the challengers, has the endorsement of former Giuliani police commissioner William Bratton; Hevesi, who stirred concern among more conservative Jews when it was revealed he is married to a Catholic, has earned the gratitude of Holocaust survivors with his high-profile work in Holocaust restitution. Vallone, a staunch Catholic, has been to Israel several times in recent years and has the endorsement of the New York Post and New York Daily News.

Green got some egg on his face when he was pictured receiving an endorsement from leaders of the Satmar Chasidic community — but it was later learned that those leaders represented only an upstate New York group of Satmars, not those living in New York City.

Bloomberg has also had his share of embarrassing headlines.

He recently quit several exclusive New York-area clubs, including two founded by Jews, whose memberships reportedly exclude minorities. To be fair, Bloomberg's campaign released documents claiming he gave more than \$100 million to charity in 2000 to groups such as the Anti-Defamation League and the American Jewish World Service.

Meanwhile, despite the fact that the next mayor may well be a Jew, there indeed is concern of diminished Jewish influence.

Term limits on the New York City Council may mean the loss of as many as a dozen Jews from the 51-member council — in addition to non-Jewish politicians familiar with the Jewish community.

"The real anxiety we have is not that Jews will have less clout, but more damaging is losing black, Latino and Italian friends who are not necessarily Jewish but understand our needs," Rapfogel said. □