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84th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Suicide bomber kills 3 Israelis

A Palestinian suicide bomber struck Sunday in the train station in the Israeli coastal town of Nahariya, killing at least three Israelis. [Page 3]

Israel praises racism document

Israel welcomed an agreement reached Saturday at the conclusion of a U.N. conference on racism in Durban, South Africa.

Along with an acknowledgment of the "massive suffering" caused by slavery, the final agreement noted the "plight of the Palestinians under foreign occupation," but did not contain a harsher attack on Israel as Arab delegates had sought.

A day earlier, the Anti-Defamation League called the compromise language on Israel and the Palestinians "unacceptable," saying "some nations were railroaded by the Arabs whose only aim was to delegitimize the State of Israel and manipulate the Middle East peace process for their own end."

Arab states were angry that the conference refused to condemn Israel as racist, and accused the United Nations of giving in to pressure from the European Union and Washington.

UJC mission flies to Israel

Some 450 Jews from North America are flying to Israel as part of a solidarity mission sponsored by the United Jewish Communities. The mission comes in the run-up to an Israel solidarity rally slated to be held in New York on Sept. 23.

During the mission, participants are slated to meet with residents of the Jerusalem neighborhood of Gilo, which has come under repeated Palestinian fire.

The group will also be addressed by the U.S. ambassador to Israel, Daniel Kurtzer, and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.

Berlin gets new Jewish museum

Berlin's Jewish Museum was dedicated Sunday with addresses by German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and President Johannes Rau, a performance of Mahler's Seventh Symphony conducted by Daniel Barenboim and a gala dinner.

With 3,900 objects, the museum will paint a picture of 2,000 years of Jewish life in Germany — religious and secular life, business and arts, politics and social relations. [Page 4]

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

College students call on schools to divest holdings in 'racist' Israel

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — Equating Israel to apartheid-era South Africa, pro-Palestinian student activists hope to launch a campaign across the United States this fall urging universities to divest from companies that do business in the Jewish state.

Most Jewish leaders, who bristle at the comparison, are skeptical that such a movement would spur universities to change their financial holdings or even attract anywhere near the kind of support that was seen in the 1980s for the anti-apartheid movement.

However, the campaign comes just after nongovernmental organizations at a U.N. conference in South Africa denounced Israel as a "racist" and "apartheid" state — and when American Jewish students are not particularly well-educated about Israel or prepared to defend it.

Pro-Palestinian groups plan to kick off the campaign with a national conference Oct. 12-14 at the University of California at Berkeley, tentatively called "Holding the University Accountable: Divesting From Israeli Apartheid."

Sponsored by Students for Justice in Palestine, a Berkeley organization, the conference's other supporters include the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee and SUSTAIN: Stop U.S. Taxpayer Assistance to Israel Now.

Organizers hope to attract up to 500 students from universities throughout the United States.

Michel Shehadeh, West Coast regional director of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, who will be a speaker at the Berkeley conference, said the divestment campaign's "ultimate goal" is to "end Israeli racism against the Palestinian people and democratize Israel so it would become a real democracy. It's a democracy for Jews only right now."

Israel, Shehadeh claimed, is "worse than apartheid."

The conference follows efforts last spring to convince the University of California to divest.

At a Berkeley protest in April that coincided with the celebration of Israel's Independence Day, pro-Palestinian students demanded that the university's Board of Regents divest \$5.5 billion, which, it claimed, goes toward companies involved in Israel.

Regents at the university, which in 1985 divested from companies doing business in South Africa, haven't discussed divesting from Israel and have no plans to do so in the near future, according to a school spokesman.

Adam Weisberg, executive director of Berkeley's Hillel, was quoted this spring in the Jewish Bulletin of Northern California as saying that while any comparison between the Arab campaign and the one directed against apartheid South Africa is "completely fallacious," it is "a powerful analogy because the students aren't shown a lot of information."

"They hear 'apartheid,' which they know is a terrible thing, and think, 'Well, Israel practices it, therefore I should support divestment,'" he said.

According to the Anti-Defamation League, the idea of divestment was also raised last year at the University of Michigan, but didn't gain momentum.

Richard Joel, international president of Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, predicts that the divestment effort "will fall on its face."

"There are all kinds of complex issues in the Israel-Palestinian situation that people

MIDEAST FOCUS

Iranian minister visiting Brussels

Iran's foreign minister is slated to visit Brussels on Monday as part of efforts to negotiate trade deals involving the European Union and the Islamic Republic.

E.U. officials hope to use talks with Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi to prepare for a trade and cooperation agreement with Iran. The agreement would fly in the face of U.S. sanctions against Iran.

Burg calls himself Labor leader

Israeli Knesset Speaker Avraham Burg called his supporters together at Labor Party headquarters in Tel Aviv last Friday and declared himself the new party leader following this week's primary, despite allegations of ballot box-stuffing.

Party officials announced that Burg received 50.2 percent of the votes to Ben-Eliezer's 48.5 percent, but an inquiry is under way.

Clinton: I should have done more

President Clinton said he wished he had been able to do more to secure a lasting peace in the Middle East.

"Now all hell breaks loose there every day, and both communities are full of grieving and funerals," Clinton said Saturday at a charity dinner for a children's hospital in Sydney, Australia.

Israel pins hopes on Arrows

Israeli officials said they hope to be able to defend most of the country with three Arrow anti-missile batteries by the end of the decade, according to the Associated Press.

The officials, who were in Washington to brief the Bush administration on a successful Arrow test carried out Aug. 27, said Israel expects to spend up to \$2.5 billion on development of the Arrow project by the end of the decade.

can disagree on," he said. "Divestiture is not one of them. To me, this whole divestment idea is as obscene as saying Zionism equals racism."

Combating such a campaign, Joel said, "is one that it's pretty easy to equip Jewish students to feel passionate about, because it's not about protecting the rights of Palestinians or moving to create a Palestinian state," but a "direct assault on the legitimacy of a Jewish state."

Jeffrey Ross, the Anti-Defamation League's director of campus/higher education affairs, said the divestment campaign "deserves to be watched" but that there is no reason to assume it will imitate the success of the South Africa campaign of the 1980s.

"The divestment movement about South Africa was a uniting thing on campus, whereas anti-Israel activity on campus is divisive," he said.

Protesting apartheid South Africa, he said, "was a thing everyone could be for, and there was no perceived downside. It was a very politically correct cause, and appropriately so."

Rhetorical links between Israel and apartheid South Africa are not new, but had been largely absent during the 1990s peace process between Israel and the Palestinians.

In the mid-1980s, amid national efforts pressing for universities to divest from businesses involved in South Africa, several Arab groups and activists exaggerated the levels of trade and cooperation between Israel and South Africa, according to Yossi Abramowitz, author of "Jews, Zionism and South Africa," a 1986 monograph published by Hillel.

At a Berkeley divestment rally in 1985, a Palestinian speaker denounced Zionism, and many people held posters featuring an Israeli flag and South African flag, with the words "Stop Zionism and Racism."

In 1985, the University of California at Davis' anti-apartheid coalition required Jewish students who wanted to join to denounce Israel and Zionism and to support U.N. Resolution 3379 declaring Zionism to be a form of racism, according to Abramowitz's book. Now CEO of Jewish Family and Life, a nonprofit Jewish media company, Abramowitz said he is deeply concerned about the potential of a divestment campaign, as well as other anti-Israel campus activism.

Jewish students are not being given enough information or training, Abramowitz said, adding "I don't think the Israeli government or the American Jewish community has figured out what's their message."

"We have the ability to pre-anticipate what the issues are going to be through the year, and you want to be able to hit hard and early and publicly to take a position of peace in the Middle East, an end to violence in the Middle East and be prepared for these kinds of divestment and related tactics," he said. "I'm just not overly confident that the students or the organizations that serve students are ready and able to do this."

Indeed, at the Israel Advocacy Day during an August conference for Jewish student leaders, many participants said they don't feel they have the knowledge or conviction to defend Israel on campus, and some even criticized the program for being too pro-Israel.

Even in California's Bay Area, where anti-Israel protests were loudest last year and where the divestment conference is to be held, Jewish organizations appear unprepared for the coming year's attacks against Israel. The Jewish Bulletin of Northern California recently reported that local Jewish student organizations have not yet planned pro-Israel campus activities for this semester.

"If the Palestinian groups are going to be demonstrating, I think we'd rather wait and see what the nature of it is before we plan anything," a University of California at Davis student told the paper. □

Report: Belgium freezes Sharon probe

NEW YORK (JTA) — Belgium has frozen a probe of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon for alleged crimes against humanity while an appeals court rules on the legality of the investigation, Reuters reported.

Palestinians, who say then-Defense Minister Sharon was responsible for the slaughter of Palestinian civilians by Israel's Lebanese Christian allies during the 1982 Lebanon War, have pressed charges against Sharon under a Belgian law allowing war crimes committed elsewhere to be prosecuted in Belgium. □



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JEWISH WORLD

HIAS marks 120th birthday

Thousands of people attended a daylong celebration in Brooklyn marking the 120th anniversary of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society.

Featured guests included Hadassah Lieberman, the wife of former vice presidential candidate Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), and Olympic Gold medal swimmer Lenny Krayzelburg. Both immigrated to the United States with the help of HIAS. Activities at the event included a chess tournament, ethnic music, dancing and personal testimonials on immigration.

Brothers plead guilty to arsons

Two brothers pleaded guilty to arson attacks at three California synagogues and an abortion clinic two years ago. As part of the plea agreement reached last Friday, Benjamin Matthew Williams and James Tyler Williams face jail sentences of 30 years and 18 to 21 years, respectively. Sentences are slated to be given in November.

In a related development, California Gov. Gray Davis signed into law a bill prohibiting insurance companies from canceling, failing to renew or raising premiums on policies of organizations filing claims based on hate crimes.

Central Synagogue reopens

New York's Central Synagogue is reopening after a fire forced its closing three years ago. Among those speaking at Sunday's rededication were Mayor Rudolf Giuliani and the state's governor, George Pataki.

Hundreds of workers were involved in the restoration, which cost some \$40 million. The fire occurred in August 1998, when workers were repairing an air conditioning unit on the roof of the synagogue.

Senate bill presses PLO

A bill introduced in the U.S. Senate would require the Bush administration to report to Congress on whether the PLO has complied with its commitments to combat violence and, if not, to cut off nonhumanitarian U.S. aid to the Palestinians.

The legislation resembles language that passed the House earlier this year as an amendment to the Foreign Operations Appropriations bill.

French youths study in Israel

Thirty-five Jewish youths from France arrived in Israel last week for high school studies as part of the expansion of a program aimed at encouraging teens to move to Israel.

The Na'aleh program, run by the Jewish Agency for Israel and Israel's Education Ministry, has focused on attracting teens from the former Soviet Union. Some 8,000 Jewish teens have participated in the program in its 10 years.

Palestinian terrorists kill 5 Israelis; Israel launches helicopter reprisals

By JTA Staff Report

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Calls for Israeli-Palestinian cease-fire talks were all but drowned out this week by a series of Palestinian terror attacks.

On Sunday, a Palestinian suicide bomber struck in the train station in the Israeli coastal town of Nahariya, killing at least three Israelis and wounding more than 60. The station was packed with soldiers returning to base. Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack.

That same day, Palestinian gunmen opened fire on a van ferrying teachers to a school in the West Bank. A teacher and the driver were killed, and four other teachers injured.

In another incident Sunday, a car bomb exploded at a busy intersection in central Israel near the city of Netanya. The Palestinian driver of the car, which was waiting at a red light, was killed in the explosion.

Police speculated that the driver was heading to Netanya, the scene of several previous attacks.

Israel retaliated for the Palestinian attacks with helicopter missile strikes Sunday in four West Bank cities. The helicopters hit two empty offices of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction near Ramallah and a government building in Jericho. Helicopters also struck the Palestinian police headquarters near Jenin, while Israeli tank shells hit a security post in Nablus.

A day earlier, Israeli helicopters also used missiles to attack a Fatah office in Ramallah. Israel said it was retaliating for several Palestinian terror attacks, including a Sept. 6 shooting in which an Israeli soldier was killed.

Israel's Security Cabinet reacted to the continuing terror by approving a limited plan on Sunday to set up buffer zones between Israel and the West Bank to prevent infiltrations by Palestinian militants.

The Security Cabinet could decide, on a case-by-case basis, to make areas off-limits to Palestinians — except those who live there — and would permit troops to arrest nonresidents.

Palestinian minister Yasser Abed Rabbo said the plan would make life intolerable for Palestinians living and working in the closed zones.

Despite the continued violence, E.U. foreign ministers meeting in Brussels on Sunday issued a statement calling on Israel and the Palestinians to hold cease-fire talks.

The ministers said it was imperative for the European Union and the United States to pressure the two sides to meet as soon as possible.

Before the latest eruption of violence, Arafat had been expected to call the E.U. foreign policy chief, Javier Solana, to announce the date and place of a meeting with Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.

E.U. officials had hoped for several weeks to arrange a Peres-Arafat meeting, but after the weekend violence it was not clear whether the two would meet any time soon.

On Sunday, The New York Times reported that President Bush and Arafat would meet later this month in New York on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly if Israel and the Palestinians hold truce talks that yield practical results.

But National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice denied the report, saying there currently are no plans for a Bush-Arafat meeting.

Speaking Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press" television program, Rice also said U.S. officials had received new assurances from the Palestinian Authority that it was trying to stop what she called the "senseless" violence, but still needed to do more.

"We are waiting to see" results from the Palestinian promises, Rice said. "We believe they can do more — and they really do need to do more."

Asked whether Bush would become more personally involved in Middle East peacemaking efforts, Rice said the president already was very involved.

But, she added, it would be hard for Bush to play a more active role until the United States had the cooperation of both sides and there was an end to Palestinian terrorism.

The European Union has taken a larger peacemaking role since Bush came into office in January. During their weekend meeting in Brussels, the E.U. foreign ministers called on the United States to increase its involvement in the Middle East. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

New Berlin Jewish museum recreates generations of stories

By Toby Axelrod

BERLIN (JTA) — A wooden Torah pointer that survived a fire is a mystery to Michal Friedlander.

She may never know the entire story of how this delicate object escaped the destruction of the synagogue where it was used. But she will listen carefully to what it has to say.

"Objects tell stories," said Friedlander, the Judaica curator at the new Jewish Museum in Berlin. "And particularly interesting are the stories that are missing."

The Jewish Museum, which had its official opening Sunday, is all about such "missing stories."

The museum's goal is to present the history of German Jewish life from Roman times through today, for a public that by most accounts is largely ignorant, fascinated — and afraid to ask.

Material for the museum was gathered through painstaking searches. Many objects come from Jews who fled Nazi Germany and today live around the world. There are nearly 90,000 Jews in Germany today, more than half of them recent emigres from the former Soviet Union. Before the Nazis came to power in 1933, there were about half a million Jews in the country.

"For me, this whole museum" is a tribute from children of Holocaust survivors, said Leontine Meijer, who joined the museum's research team in May 2000 and has been in touch with donors from around the world.

Their stories have special meaning for Meijer, whose own parents survived the Holocaust hiding in Holland, but "never talked about it."

"About 200 people responded" to the international call for material, said Leonore Maier, who has coordinated outreach to survivors since coming to the museum in mid-1999.

"It is true to a great degree that German Jewish history is over, past," Maier said. "But I find it important to pass on the story so that it can live on."

Friedlander spoke about the special importance of those who made donations to the museum. "You can't reconstruct the past without a lot of cooperation," said Friedlander, who came to Berlin in May after working for five years as Judaica curator in the Judah L. Magnes Museum in Berkeley, Calif.

Her parents — Albert Friedlander, rabbi emeritus of the Westminster Synagogue in London, and Evelyn Friedlander, head of the London-based Hidden Legacy Foundation — both left Nazi Germany for England. The personal donations — from World War I medals to family photos to letters from concentration camps — make clear the new museum's link to the Holocaust, despite every effort to focus on preceding centuries.

It is a Jewish tradition to remember sorrows in the midst of celebration, and this museum is no exception.

But this is not the museum about an "extinct race" that Hitler had planned to establish in Prague. Rather, it is spiritually linked to one that Berlin's Jewish community started in 1933, a project aborted by the Nazis.

Jews in pre-Hitler Germany were proud to be both German and Jewish. The ravages of the Middle Ages, when thousands of Jews were raped, murdered or expelled from Germany, were not forgotten but were considered acts impossible in the modern age.

Today, many Jews of German background still speak proudly

of their deep roots here, but the Holocaust destroyed their belief that anti-Semitic barbarities can't occur in an "enlightened" period.

Susanne Fischel's father and uncle fought for Germany in World War I, earning medals of honor.

"The sad thing is," she said, "both were deported to Auschwitz and murdered. That was the thanks of the 'Fatherland.'"

"I think it is very good for the German people to see how Jews contributed to the German culture," said Fischel, who was born in Berlin in 1919, fled to England in 1938 and today lives in New York City. She donated items related to her family's World War I service.

Henry Oertelt, who was born in 1921 in Berlin and survived several concentration camps, lives today in St. Paul, Minn.

"We were able to trace our roots nearly 200 years in Germany," said Oertelt, whose donation includes letters from his cousin Stephanie, a young musician murdered in Auschwitz.

"When I was living in Germany, I was a German of Jewish religion," he said. "Today, people sometimes ask me, with my accent, 'Are you German?' I answer, 'No. I am an American.'"

"My family and many others wanted to be considered Germans first and Jews second," said Ralf Unger, whose family left Berlin in 1937 for New Zealand, where he lives today with his wife, Patricia.

They visited the museum two years ago, when it was not yet completed, and after learning "that they were looking for old things, we looked through the stuff we had from my parents and grandparents." Unger donated letters and photos of relatives killed in Auschwitz, photos of his father during his World War I service and a Sabbath bread cover. These and other donors will see their material on display in the museum on Monday.

In preparation, Maier, the museum outreach coordinator, engaged psychologists from Esra, a counseling organization for Holocaust survivors and their children.

"When someone sees his photographs or letters for the first time in the 'Holocaust Axis' of the museum, it can naturally lead to strong emotions," said Maier, who for years worked as a guide for former German Jews revisiting Berlin.

"Sometimes they felt great resistance, fears," said Maier, who is not Jewish. "I learned that I can serve a purpose, sitting across from someone who tells me the story of their life, their loves and terrible experiences, and just to listen."

Friedlander pointed out that "one aim of this museum is to be a place where people feel comfortable asking."

She said that many non-Jewish Germans "are incredibly curious, but feel very awkward" about their curiosity.

They won't learn much through the usual packaged tours of Berlin, which barely touch on the city's Jewish history or its destruction, she said.

As Judaica curator, Friedlander will fill in the details of the missing stories surrounding objects in the new museum — objects like the wooden Torah pointer.

It was found in 1938 in the rubble of a synagogue in Chemnitz, one of hundreds of synagogues destroyed by Nazi arsonists on Kristallnacht, the night of Nov. 9-10, 1938, when Nazi thugs ransacked Jewish-owned shops and set synagogues ablaze across Germany and Austria. More than 60 years later, a private donor gave the piece to the museum.

"You can't work in this field in Germany without looking at the dark part of history," she said.

"But the survival of this piece gave me hope that something is coming through from the past." □