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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel denies firing at churches

Israel's military operations in Bethlehem are drawing protests from church leaders, who accuse the army of firing indiscriminately at church sites.

Israel denied that it fired at any churches in Bethlehem and accused Palestinian gunmen of launching attacks from churches in order to draw Israeli fire.

Michigan called a terror base

Areas of Michigan, home to hundreds of thousands of Arab Americans, are a major financial support center for radical Middle East groups, according to a report submitted to the U.S. Justice Department.

The state's police, which wrote the report, also said Osama bin Laden's Al Qaida network, along with Hezbollah and Hamas, were among the groups thought to have a presence in the state.

Palestinian opens fire, wounds 4

A Palestinian shot and wounded four people in Jerusalem's Talpiot neighborhood before a soldier shot him dead. Monday's incident appeared to begin as a money dispute with the man's Israeli employer, but after shooting his boss, the man ran into the street, firing wildly.

Jewish Agency: We back U.S.

The Jewish Agency for Israel's Board of Governors opened its meeting in Jerusalem on Sunday proclaiming solidarity with the American people.

About 240 Jewish representatives from around the world gathered at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, where Israeli Tourism Minister Rehavam Ze'evi was assassinated last week.

The board is expected to make decisions about a proposed \$660 million plan to facilitate increased immigration from Argentina, France and South Africa over the next nine years.

Peres calls on Arafat to do more

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres called on Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat to do more to fight terror.

"Arafat wants to belong to the 'club' that fights terror," Peres said Sunday, addressing the convention of the American Jewish Congress at the start of a three-day visit to Washington. "But you cannot enter the nonsmoking room with a cigar in your mouth."

Faith-based bill may face delays, easing Jewish activists' concerns

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — President Bush's faith-based initiative may be split into two bills, postponing the contentious issue of direct government funding for religious groups.

Such a move would be welcomed by Jewish groups because it would postpone the more controversial aspects, which have divided the Jewish community.

Along with virtually everything else on the domestic agenda, the faith-based initiative, which has raised so many concerns in the Jewish community, has been eclipsed since the Sept. 11 terror attacks in New York and Washington.

And as the Senate and White House continue to confer on the initiative, a new approach may separate the legislation into two parts.

That would allow consensus issues to be dealt with now, while leaving more controversial issues such as charitable choice for another day. Charitable choice allows religious institutions to bid for government contracts for providing social services.

The consensus bill likely would include incentives for charitable giving and other ways to assist charities, a welcome move for relief organizations that have suffered in the past month because donors have focused on groups that help terror victims.

Before Sept. 11, there was an assumption that work would progress slowly on the Senate's alternative to the U.S. House of Representatives bill passed in August.

Sens. Rick Santorum (R-Pa.) and Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), the co-sponsors of the legislation, were taking a methodical approach and were sensitive to the church-state issues surrounding the legislation, say observers.

The administration wanted to push hard for the bill after Sept. 11 but encountered opposition, said Dan Gerstein, Lieberman's press secretary.

"It was not the right time or environment to paper over differences," he said. "The differences are real and significant."

A White House spokesperson would only say that the administration is pleased with the bill's progress and will continue to work with the Senate to determine points of consensus. Stanley Carlson-Thies, the associate director for law and policy at the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, said that if the bill is separated into two parts, people could "look at it with fresh eyes."

Lieberman has said that he supports work on a larger bill at some point in the future.

Ever since Bush started to make good on his campaign promise to increase the role of faith-based organizations in social service programming, Jewish groups have been wary of the anticipated changes.

Some Jewish organizations still fear the Bush administration's effort to increase partnerships between the federal government and religious institutions runs the risk of eroding the separation of church and state.

The drive to enact a consensus bill sits well with Jewish groups.

"We should pass legislation that reflects the common ground," said Richard Foltin, legislative director for the American Jewish Committee.

A bill that attempts to tackle all the issues together will never pass, he added.

Other Jewish groups — primarily Orthodox — want faith-based institutions to play a greater role in providing social services and want to lower the wall that separates church and state, as long as minority religions are protected. Faith-based programs are successful, they argue, and it is wrong to continue denying government funding to religious institutions.

However, it is important to pass legislation as soon as possible so that charities can

MIDEAST FOCUS

Hezbollah fires at Israeli posts

Hezbollah gunmen fired Monday at two Israeli military posts overlooking a disputed area on the Israeli-Lebanese border known as Shabaa Farms. There were no reports of injuries from the attack, which prompted Israeli jets to fire at Hezbollah targets inside Lebanon.

Settlers sponsor Jerusalem rally

Thousands of Israelis attended a rally in Jerusalem on Monday to oppose the creation of a Palestinian state. The rally, organized by settler leaders, was held under the slogan, "Topple the Palestinian Authority and fight terrorism."

Speakers addressed the crowd from a stage posted with a picture of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat and Osama bin Laden, who were dubbed "the twins."

Arafat outlaws PFLP wing

U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell welcomed Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's decision to outlaw the armed wing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Israel had demanded the move after the PFLP claimed responsibility for last week's slaying of Tourism Minister Rehavam Ze'evi. Calling the assassination a "challenge" to Arafat's authority, Powell said Monday, "I'm glad to see that he is responding to that challenge."

Labor discusses military action

Concerned about Israel's continued military presence in six Palestinian cities in the West Bank, Labor Party officials called a meeting of party legislators to discuss the military action.

A party spokeswoman said the meeting was intended to explore "under what conditions they would stay in the government" and to set "red lines" for military operations undertaken by the government.



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get help, said Nathan Diament, director of the Orthodox Union's Institute for Public Affairs.

Diament, whose organization and other groups that support charitable choice met with White House officials Monday, said a consensus bill does not remove the need for another phase of the faith-based initiative.

Diament conceded that splitting the legislation into two bills could make it harder to pass the charitable choice provisions next year.

Many Jewish groups are not supporting the House faith-based bill, which allowed religious groups to get direct federal funds for a range of social service programs, is no longer the model.

The Anti-Defamation League called the bill "the most seriously flawed and constitutionally objectionable 'charitable choice' legislation that has ever reached the House floor."

Other groups, including Hadassah: The Women's Zionist Organization of America and the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, maintained that the bill would expose religious institutions to government scrutiny and does not provide safeguards against proselytizing. Even when signs of compromise did emerge from the House bill, there was no way to tell how the compromises would work. For example, to avoid proselytizing, the bill ordered that religious organizations must make secular social service alternatives available to those who request them — yet it was unclear how such requests would be implemented and monitored.

A scaled-back version of the bill would highlight the ways that religious groups can form partnerships with the government in non-contentious ways.

"We should direct our energies to try to make the recent spirit of giving permanent," said Julie Segal, former legislative counsel for Americans United for the Separation of Church and State. "By changing laws regarding private funding and charitable donations, we could serve those in need with the Constitution's blessing."

It is not a new thing for religious-based organizations to receive funding for charitable services. But Jewish federations, for example, take great care to follow guidelines and safeguards so there is no blurring of church-state separation and no religious coercion.

Many Jewish organizations worry that those checks and balances will not be in place as religious institutions assume a larger social service role. □

Controversial Italian politician may finally be welcomed in Israel

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — The door is opening for the leader of an Italian party with fascist roots to visit Israel.

In an interview published Monday, Israel's new ambassador to Italy, Ehud Gol, said Israeli officials believe Gianfranco Fini, deputy prime minister in Italy's center-right government, has shaken off his neo-fascist roots and become a mainstream politician.

"We can see, from various signs, that he has retreated from the positions of his political past," Gol told the *Corriere della Sera* newspaper.

Fini, the leader of the National Alliance Party, has sought to visit Israel since the mid-1990s, when he began converting the neo-fascist Italian Social Movement, into a mainstream right-wing force.

As part of this transformation, he has openly courted Jewish interests.

He condemned anti-Semitism and even visited Auschwitz to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust.

In 1997, he condemned the anti-Semitic laws introduced in 1938 by the fascist government of Benito Mussolini.

At that time, he also condemned the so-called Salò Republic, a diehard fascist-run enclave set up by Mussolini in Nazi-occupied northern Italy after the Allied invasion of Italy in 1943.

Earlier this year, he laid a wreath during his first visit to San Saba in Trieste, the only Nazi death camp located in Italy.

A visit by Fini to the Jewish state and meetings with Israeli officials would be an important step in legitimizing this transition. □

JEWISH WORLD

Blast at Nuremberg rally site

There was an explosion Sunday night at a site in Nuremberg where the Nazi Party once held rallies, killing one person and severely damaging a building used as a warehouse.

Police said there was no indication of a terrorist attack at the Congress Hall, a massive stone building Hitler built in 1935 for Nazi rallies. The blast did not affect a new documentation center on World War II and the Holocaust that is slated to open at the site next month.

ADL, 'Sesame Street' team up

The Anti-Defamation League and the creators of "Sesame Street" joined forces to create an anti-bias education project aimed at preschool-age children.

"While there is no vaccine against hate, we know the only antidote is education, and this project is a great way to begin the fight," said Abraham Foxman, the ADL's national director. "We cannot think of a better way to relate to children than through the characters of 'Sesame Street.'"

Webcast to focus on terror

People from throughout the world will be able to discuss what Judaism teaches about the Sept. 11 attacks and about terrorism in general in an interactive national Webcast Oct. 29.

Sponsored by STAR, an organization that promotes Jewish renewal by helping synagogues of all denominations, the Webcast will feature rabbis Irving "Yitz" Greenberg and David Wolpe and writer Nessa Rapoport leading a live discussion entitled "A Discussion of Fear and Courage: A Jewish View." Those interested can participate at 9 p.m. EST by logging onto www.starsynagogue.org.

Bunny bares Jewish roots

Playboy Magazine's latest bunny is not only Jewish, but proud of it. Miss November Lindsey Vuolo, who hails from Princeton, N.J., told the men's magazine about her father's conversion to Judaism and a recent trip to Israel.

"Being in Jerusalem was so emotional for me — I broke down and cried," she said.

Emilie Schindler hailed as rescuer

Diplomats and politicians attending the funeral of the widow of industrialist Oskar Schindler lauded her efforts to save Jews from the Holocaust.

"Without Emilie Schindler, more than 1,200 Jews could not have been saved from a certain demise in the Nazi death camps," Christa Stewens, social affairs minister for the state of Bavaria, said last Friday during a brief ceremony at the cemetery in the village of Waldkraiburg.

Orthodox furious as Reform leader compares them to Islamic terrorists

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — U.S. Orthodox Jewish leaders are outraged by an Israeli Reform leader's comments drawing comparisons between fervently Orthodox Jews and the Islamic fundamentalists who attacked the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

But Rabbi Uri Regev, the outspoken director of the Israel Religious Action Center — an organization that promotes religious pluralism in Israel — is standing by a speech he gave recently at a suburban Cleveland temple.

In the speech, which was reported in the local Jewish newspaper, Regev spoke about the dangers of Islamic terrorism.

He added, "In Israel we have our own religious extremists who feel they have the right to rule other people's lives, spreading the venom of religious fundamentalism."

Regev asserted that some fervently Orthodox Jewish leaders in Israel have used hate-filled and violent language to describe liberal and secular Jews and their institutions.

He also said fervently Orthodox Jewish individuals are believed to be behind recent acts of vandalism and arson against liberal Jewish institutions.

"We need to band together to fight religious zealots on both the Palestinian and Israeli sides," Regev was reported as saying. "If we don't learn from the Sept. 11 loss of human lives, we haven't learned anything."

Orthodox leaders, who quickly circulated the article by e-mail, bristled at the comparison with Muslim terrorists.

"How can you even think about comparing a Jew of any sort to the Arabs who flew into the World Trade Center and killed 5,000 innocent people?" asked Rabbi Pesach Lerner, executive vice president of the National Council of Young Israel.

Lerner, who is calling for Regev's resignation, said no fervently Orthodox Jews have been proven guilty of vandalism against liberal Jewish institutions.

Rabbi Avi Shafran, spokesman for the New York-based Agudath Israel of America, described accusations that fervently Orthodox Jews had vandalized institutions as "apocryphal."

Regev is "comparing murderers, hateful murderers, with people who simply want to maintain the standards of the Jewish religion with regard to things like conversion and Shabbat," Shafran said.

Regev is "co-opting the horror the whole world is feeling against Islamic terrorists in his fight against religious Jews," Shafran said.

Comparing fervently Orthodox Jews to "these evil people who murdered thousands is beyond the realm of comprehension," said Rabbi Dovid Eliezrie, a Chabad rabbi in Yorba Linda, Calif.

"Regev has crossed all boundaries in modern Jewish life," Eliezrie said. "He is sowing the seeds of hatred and division when we need unity and understanding. Instead of participating in a meaningful theological debate about real issues, he lowers himself to the playground, using name calling."

Reached by telephone in Jerusalem, Regev clarified that he was not criticizing all of Orthodoxy or even all the fervently Orthodox, as the Cleveland article implied. Still, he said he stands by his speech.

"The point that I made is that we are waking up too late when we express our concern and outrage when the actual assault takes place," he said.

"What we need to understand is that it's the religious fundamentalist hate speech that precedes those outbursts that we should be more conscious of, concerned about addressing."

Regev said he was particularly concerned about a Sept. 7 article in the fervently Orthodox newspaper, *Yated Ne'eman*, which described Reform and Conservative Jews as "destroyers of religion," "criminals" and "enemies of God."

He also pointed to a sermon one of Israel's chief rabbis, Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron, gave in 1996, in which he defended the violence of the biblical zealot, Pinchas, and suggested that bloodshed in defense of Judaism is "like a doctor who spreads blood with his scalpel, but saves the patient." □

NEWS ANALYSIS

Ze'evi killing reopens debate about Israel's policy of 'targeted killings'

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel finds itself in a bind after the assassination of Tourism Minister Rehavam Ze'evi.

Not only do Israeli officials have to come up with a credible response to the slaying, they have to contend with claims that the murder of Ze'evi by Arab militants was little different than Israel's policy of killing Arab terror ringleaders before they can carry out attacks against Israeli targets.

Israel launched the policy in November 2000, two months after the start of the Palestinian intifada.

Israel has staunchly defended the policy — which it refers to as "targeted preventive measures" — as one of the few plausible responses to the campaign of suicide bombings and drive-by shootings that have marked the Palestinian intifada.

But the policy has elicited repeated criticism from the United States — which calls it "unproductive" — and a host of other Western powers.

Last week, Israeli officials were aghast after Denmark's foreign minister, Mogens Lykketoft, equated the assassination of Ze'evi and Israel's targeted killings of suspected Palestinian terrorists.

"Political murder in that area is not anything new," Lykketoft said on Danish television, adding that he does not hold Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat responsible in any way for Ze'evi's killing.

A senior Israeli official later called Lykketoft, who has a history of incendiary statements about Israel, an anti-Semite and "the most anti-Israel foreign minister in Europe."

Others also weighed in against him.

"We fail to understand how he can compare terrorists planning or on their way to commit terrorist acts against Israelis with a prominent political figure who has acted always in a democratic way," said Victor Harel, deputy director general for European affairs at Israel's Foreign Ministry.

Despite the international criticism, few Israelis have come out against the country's targeted killings of terrorists.

One exception is Gush Shalom — Hebrew for the Peace Bloc — a group led by former legislator and journalist Uri Avnery.

"The system of assassinations and 'annihilations' must stop immediately and totally," the group said in a statement after Ze'evi's murder on Oct. 17. "Whether the victim is Israeli or Palestinian, the outcome is the same — more tension, hatred and feelings of vengeance, and widening the circle of bloodshed."

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a radical group that is part of the PLO, claimed responsibility for assassinating Ze'evi.

The group said it was avenging the death of its leader, Mustafa Zibri, who was killed in a pinpoint Israeli rocket attack in late August. Israel had accused Zibri of masterminding a string of bombings and other terror attacks inside Israel.

The killing of Zibri was "viewed by the Palestinians as the slaying of a political leader," said Riad Ali, an Israeli Arab journalist who covers the Palestinian Authority for Israel Television.

While Israeli officials described the slaying of Ze'evi as "a whole new ball game," Ali said, the Palestinians regarded the

murder as part of the same bloody "game" that claimed Zibri's life.

When Zibri was killed in August, Israeli intelligence officials predicted that the PFLP might retaliate by trying to kill Israeli political figures.

The head of army intelligence, Maj. Gen. Amos Malka, told the Cabinet at the time that Israel could expect an escalation in Palestinian violence. All of which prompts the question of whether Israel's targeted killing of suspected terrorists is an effective tool in its fight against terrorism.

One cannot tell how many lives — if any — were saved by killing Zibri. There does, however, appear to be a direct link between his killing and the murder of Ze'evi — and to the deaths that ensued after Israeli forces moved into positions in six Palestinian West Bank cities at the end of last week, following the assassination.

Israel moved into the cities — Bethlehem, Ramallah, Jenin, Nablus, Tulkarm and Kalkilya — saying it intended to nab Palestinian terrorists planning attacks on Israelis.

It was Israel's biggest operation in areas under Palestinian control since the two sides signed their first interim peace accords in 1993. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said the ground offensive would end after he was satisfied that Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat had begun cracking down on terrorists.

Meanwhile, the Israeli public appears to support the targeted killings policy.

A Dahaf opinion poll released over the weekend — after Ze'evi's assassination — indicated that 62 percent of Israeli respondents want to continue the policy.

At the same time, 50 percent support continued negotiations with the Palestinians.

Similarly, another poll — this one conducted by Gallup-Israel — showed that 38 percent of Israeli respondents want total war against the Palestinians.

In the same poll, however, another 38 percent said they want "to speed up" negotiations with the Palestinians.

Israelis appear as divided as their leaders about what to do next. □

Book documents Hungarian racism

BUDAPEST (JTA) — The B'nai B'rith chapter here has published a book documenting recent anti-Semitic discourse in the Hungarian media and other public forums.

The book details work carried out throughout 2000 by its Jewish Documentation Center, an office founded in 1999 to monitor and document Hungarian Jewish life.

The center's responsibilities also include monitoring and creating a database of racist and anti-Semitic acts and statements in the Hungarian media and activities of far-right organizations.

The book, published in English and Hungarian, includes anti-Semitic writings that appeared in two far-right weeklies — Magyar Forum and Magyar Demokrata — as well as similar comments voiced over Hungarian Public Radio.

B'nai B'rith intends to publish similar reports, possibly annually if its financial resources permit, Laszlo Koranyi, a past president of the group, told JTA.

"This book makes it clear that anti-Semitic discourse is alive in many segments of contemporary Hungarian society," historian Andras Gero said at a Budapest news conference at which the book was introduced. □