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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Sharon demands week of peace

Ariel Sharon is sticking to agreed-upon conditions for relaunching the peace process.

At a news conference Sunday after he met with a high-level E.U. delegation, Israel's prime minister reiterated that there would have to be a seven-day cessation of Palestinian terrorism and incitement before the two sides could begin confidence-building measures.

Sharon set forth Israel's position amid reports that U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, in a major Middle East policy speech on Monday, will declare such terms unrealistic.

During his meeting with the E.U. delegation, Sharon asked Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt, whose country holds the rotating E.U. presidency, to stop giving aid to the Palestinian Authority.

Sharon accused the P.A. of using the aid to buy weapons.

Powell: U.S. has no new plan

U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell said he will not introduce a new U.S. plan for Israeli-Palestinian peace.

A day before he was to make what has been billed as a major Middle East policy speech, Powell said Sunday that Israel and the Palestinians should stick to the terms of an existing cease-fire plan put forward earlier this year by the U.S.-led Mitchell Committee.

"We have a plan. It's a solid plan. It's called the Mitchell Committee report," Powell told "Fox News Sunday."

U.S. senators stand with Israel

At least 89 U.S. senators signed a letter to President Bush supporting his decision not to meet Yasser Arafat. The letter, being circulated by Sens. Kit Bond (R-Mo.) and Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.), praises the pressure Bush has placed on the Palestinian leader to control violence.

The letter also asks that the White House continue to support Israel's right to defend itself.

Among those who have not signed the bill is Sen. Joseph Biden (D-Del.), chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who prefers to handle issues involving Israel and the Palestinian Authority "more discreetly," a spokesman said.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Faced with intifada and recession, some Israelis leave, some stay put

By Jessica Steinberg

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Yossi Cohen, a Tel Aviv taxi driver, is taking it easy these days. He has been slicing time from his usual ten-hour shifts because there just aren't many clients out there.

At the same time, he wouldn't consider leaving Israel for greener pastures.

"What, I need to be a cabbie in Queens?" asked Cohen, 47, shrugging his shoulders. "I'm right where I need to be, here, in my homeland, offering my bit of support."

That's one of the typical reactions offered by Israelis after more than a year of violence. They're tired of the drive-by shootings, the suicide bombings, the endless cycle of death and destruction. But they're hunkering down in Israel, because this is their homeland and they're not leaving.

But there also is an opposite reaction — the Israelis who decide to leave because they can't take it any longer. They want to feel safe and secure. They want good jobs and nice homes and safe futures for their children. But they don't leave without a certain amount of guilt over "abandoning" their homeland.

The Israelis who are emigrating are called yordim in Hebrew, which means "those who go down." The term has a negative connotation in Hebrew, the opposite of the word for those who move to Israel — olim, or "those who go up" to Zion.

There were waves of yordim in the early 1960s, when large numbers of Israelis moved to the United States seeking better opportunities, and after the 1973 Yom Kippur War, when Israel's self-confidence was gravely shaken. There hasn't been a need during the last decade as the country underwent an economic boom, creating a generation of Israeli yuppies who drive SUVs and live in spacious suburban homes.

But the continuing Palestinian intifada, coupled with the global economic downturn — Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics announced last week that the country officially is in a recession — has forced more than a few Israelis to consider a temporary or permanent move.

Former New Yorker Susie Teschner and her husband Nathan Katz, an Australian, are moving to Australia for a few years. Teschner said she thinks of it as "rehabilitation for the soul."

For Teschner, living in Israel was something of a disillusionment and a disappointment. "When I came here, I was very optimistic," she said. "My Zionism has dwindled by being here."

Nevertheless, the decision to leave wasn't easy. What makes it possible is "not thinking too far in the future," she said.

"The decision to leave is very complex and usually comes about because of a number of factors," said Danny Gordis, a well-known educator who made aliyah with his family from the United States shortly before the intifada began in September 2000. "People are out of work and they're hurting financially. You can sense a general societal unhappiness."

Yet being in Israel during the intifada forces Israelis to re-examine why they are here in the first place, Gordis pointed out.

"I think this has clarified for a lot of Israelis the degree to which they're committed to the Jewish state," he said. "It is about not being the first generation of Jews to run when the going gets rough."

No statistics have been gathered by Israeli organizations or government ministries on the number of Israelis who have left since the intifada began. According to the Jewish

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel withdraws from Tulkarm

Israeli troops withdrew from the West Bank city of Tulkarm. Israeli forces moved into six Palestinian cities on Oct. 18, a day after Palestinian terrorists killed Israeli Tourism Minister Rehavam Ze'evi. Israeli forces now remain only in Jenin.

Israel rejects E.U. offer

During separate meetings with Israeli and Palestinian leaders, a delegation of E.U. officials offered Sunday to mediate an end to Israeli-Palestinian violence.

Israel rejected the mediation effort, however, charging that E.U. nations favor the Palestinians.

Peres speech rocks government

Right-wing Israeli politicians asked the prime minister to dismiss Shimon Peres after he told the United Nations last week he favors a Palestinian state.

Benny Alon said last Friday his National Unity Party would likely leave the government if Ariel Sharon does not fire his foreign minister.

Anti-Sharon show airs in Belgium

A BBC show harshly critical of Ariel Sharon aired in Belgium. The show, which aired last Friday on the eve of the Belgian prime minister's visit to Israel, accuses the Israeli prime minister of being responsible for the 1982 Sabra and Shatila massacres in Lebanon. A lawsuit by Palestinian victims against Sharon was launched in Belgium several months ago.

In another development, some Belgian Jews are planning to call for Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat to be tried for war crimes under the same 1993 law being used against Sharon.

According to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz, Israel's attorney general, Elyakim Rubinstein, asked defense officials to transfer relevant information to the Belgian Jews in order to help their case.



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Agency for Israel, aliyah from Western Europe and North America has been affected slightly since last fall. There were 1,159 immigrants from North America between January and October 2001, an 11 percent drop from the previous year. Another 1,382 Western Europeans made aliyah during the same time period, a 19 percent drop from the same period in 2000.

"The reasons for the drop could include the intifada and the current economic situation," said Yehuda Weinraub, a spokesman for the Jewish Agency. "But we can't be certain."

According to the World Council of Churches, Palestinian Christians also are leaving the Holy Land, at a rate of about three families per week. They make up about 3 percent of the population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but that number is steadily dropping as Christians seek to escape violence, economic depression and pressures from the Palestinian Muslim majority.

Yet despite depression over the continuing violence and the worsening economic situation, only a small minority of Israelis — both Arabs and Jews — are considering emigrating, according to the monthly Peace Index.

The survey, conducted by the Center for Peace Research at Tel Aviv University, asked 580 Israeli Jews and Arabs in August whether they have considered emigrating as a result of the situation.

Fully 80 percent of Jewish respondents said they had no plans to emigrate even if they could, and only 14 percent said they would leave due to the situation. Of the Arabs surveyed, 94 percent said they had no intention of emigrating.

"It would seem that neither pessimism about chances of attaining peace, nor uncertainty about the present state of affairs, have caused the public to change its daily way of life," wrote Ephraim Ya'ar and Tamar Hermann, who run the center. "The ability to cope with the situation, as reflected in maintaining daily routine, is also reflected in the low numbers who announced that they were considering leaving the country, which is surprising."

Yet everyone seems to know someone who is leaving. People often say they're going away for a few years, just to take a break. Some call it a sabbatical, others a breath of fresh air from the tension of life in Israel.

For Sissy Block, an American who made aliyah nine years ago and is now heading to New York, it's a matter of weighing opportunities.

"I came here in 1992, when all we heard about was making peace," said Block, a writer who worked in high-tech for the last four years.

"I came here because I liked it here. There were opportunities during those years, it was an exciting time to be here."

The intifada, however, has shattered that reality.

"The decision to leave was agonizing, because I had an image of being a successful Zionist," Block said. "I definitely leave Israel as an option, but I'm going. This was a thought-out decision." □

Faith may reduce substance abuse

NEW YORK (JTA) — Religion may have the potential to reduce the risk of substance abuse. According to a report from Columbia University's National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, adults and teens who consider religion to be very important and who attend religious services are far less likely to smoke, drink or use illicit drugs.

The two-year study shows that nearly all clergy consider substance abuse and addiction important issues in their congregations, but only 13 percent of spiritual leaders have any training in the field.

The center recommends training clergy to recognize signs of abuse and also training medical professionals to recognize the importance of spirituality. □

Ethiopian Jews celebrate holiday

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Thousands of Ethiopian Jews in Israel last week marked the Sij'd holiday, celebrating their love for Jerusalem by praying, fasting and celebration. The holiday is celebrated in both Israel and Ethiopia. □

JEWISH WORLD

Judge joins anti-terror task force

A Jewish judge from South Africa was named to a new international task force on terrorism. Richard Goldstone had served as the first United Nations war crimes prosecutor in the former Yugoslavia.

Established by the London-based International Bar Association, the task force will prepare recommendations on legal issues relating to terrorism. It will deal with a range of issues, including extradition, laws pertaining to the financing of terrorist groups and the restriction of civil liberties in the fight against terror.

Pardon investigator resigns

The prosecutor overseeing investigations into pardons of Marc Rich and Hasidic Jews is resigning her post. Mary Jo White, who served for eight years as U.S. attorney in Manhattan, has been investigating the controversial pardons President Clinton gave to philanthropist Marc Rich, his partner and leaders of a Hasidic community that supported Hillary Rodham Clinton's Senate bid.

White said she had planned to resign after the trial of alleged U.S. embassy bombers was completed in May, but after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks she chose to stay on until year's end.

Philanthropist helps cathedral

A Jewish philanthropist donated \$2.5 million to install a fountain in front of the new Catholic cathedral rising in downtown Los Angeles. The identity of the donor will not be made public until the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels is dedicated in September 2002, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles announced.

The grant, given through a foundation established by the anonymous donor, recognizes "the longtime cordial and constructive relationship between the Jewish community and the Roman Catholic community here in Southern California," the statement from the archdiocese said.

Club owner faces prosecution

German prosecutors filed charges against a nightclub owner for inciting racial hatred. Prosecutors said last Friday the charges were filed against Rudolf Fischer for allegedly making anti-Semitic remarks when he cancelled an event last March for Noa Ben Artzi, the granddaughter of slain Israeli leader Yitzhak Rabin.

"The nightclub owner cancelled an event with the words 'I'm not going to open the place for you Jews,'" a Munich prosecutor said. "This was supported by credible testimony from several witnesses, even if the owner has denied it."

The charges were filed by officials with Keren Hayesod, also known as the United Israel Appeal, which was planning to host a dinner at Fischer's club.

ARTS & CULTURE

Jewish film fest brings controversial topics to screen for U.K. audiences

By Tamar Shiloh

LONDON (JTA) — Homosexuality among fervently Orthodox Jews. McCarthyism. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

These are some of the issues tackled by the fifth Brighton Jewish Film Festival.

The festival, which runs Nov. 10-25, was launched at Brighton's Duke of York Cinema last weekend with the star-studded Hollywood film "One of the Hollywood Ten," directed by Karl Francis.

Starring Jeff Goldblum, Greta Scacchi and Angela Molina, the film deals with one of America's darkest periods — the era of Cold War, anti-Communist McCarthyism — and with the true story of Jewish director Herbert Biberman and his wife, Gale Sondergaard, who were among those blacklisted.

The floor and balcony of the high-ceilinged, old-fashioned cinema were packed, and people were turned away at the ticket booth at the opening night of the largest Jewish film festival in Britain.

The festival's founder and artistic director, Judy Ironside, welcomed the audience and apologized that Scacchi was unable to attend, despite rumors that she had planned to come to the seaside resort in southern England.

The audience was given a treat before the opening film began — the screening of a 23-minute film, "Mandela, A Righteous Man." The moving film pays tribute to South Africa's former president, Nelson Mandela, from the point of view of the Jews who knew him, helped him and his cause and remained Mandela's friends over the decades.

"One of the Hollywood Ten" was not quite as captivating, mainly because it was too long and slow-paced. But it was clearly a timely film — with the war in Afghanistan and Hollywood executives meeting with White House officials to discuss ways the industry might spread the message of patriotism, and amid pressure on the media to support the Western cause.

For a festival's opening night, it must have helped to have a movie with so many internationally acclaimed stars. But the Brighton festival is not all Hollywood glitz. Ironside has selected about 20 films, including documentaries, short films and features. There is a balance of mainstream and fringe, comic and serious issues, and this year the festival will include also other events.

There will be interviews with directors, and a Jewish music event was held on Sunday, the festival's second day.

This is the first year that the festival is touring the rest of Britain too, with selected highlights to be shown in London, Aberdeen, Cambridge, Oxford and York.

The films selected for the festival include some controversial topics.

Ironside makes it clear: The festival is aimed to educate, enlighten and entertain.

"We don't shy away from difficult and painful issues. I very much believe we shouldn't just be celebrating Jewish cultures," she says. "We show films about difficult, sometime painful issues, too."

Gill Mendel, the media and film education officer of the Jerusalem Cinematheque, is going to present an Israeli-Palestinian project titled "I Am, You Are."

The project brings together 30 Arab and Jewish teen-agers from various Jerusalem neighborhoods who create short films that reflect the way they define their identities, experiences, hopes and fears.

Ironside finds three of the festival's films especially worthy. One is "Yellow Asphalt — A Trilogy of Desert Stories," a film about Bedouin in the Judean Desert and encounters between West and East.

Also warmly recommended is "Time of Favor," a psychological thriller about the commander of a religious soldiers' unit in the Israeli army, directed by Joseph Cedar.

And another must is "Trembling Before G-d," a feature documentary about the personal stories of homosexual Orthodox Jews, which had its U.K. premiere at the Curzon Soho theater in London. □

For more details about the Brighton Jewish Film Festival, visit its Web site at <http://www.bjewish-filmfest.org.uk>.

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD**With bombing trial focusing on van, results of testing should be crucial***By Florencia Arbiser*

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — Testimony in the trial of 20 people accused of helping to bomb Buenos Aires' main Jewish community center is focusing on the van that carried the explosives.

Police have done chemical testing on 20 parts of the vehicle, including the engine, that were found in the rubble of the AMIA community center. Expert analysis of the results will be given by the end of November.

The 20 on trial are accused of playing a local role in the attack.

Sources close to prosecutors and plaintiffs say the tests show the van exploded and — even seven years later — still bears residue of explosive chemicals.

So far, the vehicle used in the bombing has been the main focus of the trial.

Carlos Alberto Telleldin, a used-car dealer, is accused of supplying the van. Juan Jose Ribelli and three other former police officers are accused of loading the van with some 600 pounds of explosives.

The other 15 on trial are accused of various offenses.

"The nexus for these five main defendants to the attack is the presence of the van. If there was no bombing car, they could be charged for extortion and smaller crimes, but they could walk out of court," prosecutor Natalio Alberto Nisman told JTA.

So far, 70 witnesses close to the AMIA building at the time of the explosion have testified. Very few recalled seeing a van in the vicinity.

Lawyers for the accused hope to stress the testimony of people on the block at the time who say they did not see a van turn the corner of Tucuman Street and head toward AMIA.

Prosecutors and lawyers for victims' families, AMIA and DAIA — a Jewish umbrella organization located in the same building — remarked on the differences in the recollections of people who were near AMIA on the morning of July 18, 1994, but did not know they were about to witness a terrorist attack. The bombing killed 85 people and wounded 300.

The area where AMIA was located is known as Once, an area of town crowded with small shops. A van loading and unloading merchandise on a Monday morning in Once hardly would attract attention. Every witness has been asked how he or she remembers the traffic on the block that morning.

Answers range from "crowded as usual" to "unusually empty," from "full of vehicles" to "without any car driving or parked."

The results of the tests on the vehicle parts will be "crucial to the trial," Nisman said.

After this group of witnesses, subsequent witnesses will include members of the Argentine intelligence services, employees of a nearby lot where the van was parked and expert witnesses.

The investigating judge, Juan Jose Galeano, also is searching for information on international connections to the attack: How the decision to carry out the bombing was made, for what reasons and who was involved.

The Mossad, CIA and FBI have contributed information and technical expertise that incriminates Iran and Hezbollah in the bombing. A recent tip has led some to believe that Osama bin Laden's Al Qaida terror organization was involved.

Juan Antonio Pardo, who served as ceremonial deputy director

for the Argentine chancery, testified to Galeano on Nov. 14. Pardo said Iranian diplomatic trips increased in the days before the attack, and that Argentine intelligence was aware of the trips. □

Anti-Jewish slur in Zimbabwe angers African Jewish Congress*By Michael Belling*

CAPE TOWN (JTA) — Accusations of an alleged Jewish plot to destroy Zimbabwe's economy have been featured prominently in a newspaper there.

The Bulawayo Chronicle, which supports the government of Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe, earlier this month published a 3,000-word article alleging Jewish responsibility for the ongoing economic problems facing Zimbabwe.

This is the second time in three months that Jews have been singled out for attack there.

At the beginning of September, Mugabe was quoted as saying: "Jews in South Africa, working in cahoots with their colleagues here, want our textile and clothing factories to close down."

At that time, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and the African Jewish Congress condemned Mugabe's remarks as being both racist and anti-Semitic.

Over the past few years, Zimbabwe has been plunged into increasingly autocratic rule, which many observers believe is designed to keep the aging 77-year-old Mugabe in power. He has ruled Zimbabwe for more than 20 years.

Zimbabwe's Jewish chief justice, Anthony Gubbay, resigned earlier this year under government pressure.

White-owned farms have been invaded by self-styled war veterans who demand redistribution of land. Both freedom of the press and the main opposition party are under government threat.

Moreover, Zimbabwe's economy has been in a tailspin. Agricultural production has fallen dramatically, and industrial production is suffering as well.

The newspaper article, "Company Closure Racket Unearthed," by Innocent Madonko, focused on the Broomberg family of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second largest city.

Madonko stated that the collapse of the family company — once the country's leading textile manufacturer — was "engineered by a closely knit community of Jews with interests in India, Germany, South Africa, Namibia and the United Kingdom." He accused the "racketeers" of being part of a Jewish conspiracy.

Mervyn Smith, chairman of the African Jewish Congress, criticized the "pointed and gratuitous references to the fact that those accused of misdoings are members of the Jewish community."

"The effect of continually pointing this out is to create the erroneous and highly offensive impression that there is a Jewish-led conspiracy to undermine the Zimbabwean economy. It is reminiscent of many other conspiracy theories that have been invented over the centuries in order to stir up hatred against the Jewish people," he said.

There are about 800 Jews remaining in Zimbabwe — 500 in the capital, Harare, and 300 in Bulawayo.

Two decades ago, the country had a population of 6,000 Jews.

It has been suggested that the real target of the article was not the entire Jewish community, but a prominent Zimbabwe economist and business consultant, Eric Bloch, who has written for the opposition press and is a known critic of Mugabe. □