



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 79, No. 217

Wednesday, November 28, 2001

84th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

3 killed in Israel attacks

Two Israelis were killed and dozens wounded when two Palestinian gunmen opened fire in the northern Israeli city of Afula.

Islamic Jihad and the Al-Aksa Brigade, a group affiliated with Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, claimed responsibility for the attack. In other violence Tuesday, an Israeli woman was killed in a Palestinian shooting attack on a Gaza road. [Page 4]

Lawmaker decries U.N. meeting

A California lawmaker asked Secretary of State Colin Powell to speak out against a U.N. meeting.

Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) said Monday he believes the Dec. 5 meeting in Geneva, where the United Nations will discuss alleged Israeli violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention for its treatment of Palestinians, "will inevitably become a new platform for Arab nations to resurrect the viciously anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist declarations" made at previous U.N. forums.

Waxman said he hopes Powell will express to Arab leaders that the meeting could pose a serious threat to the Middle East peace process.

Jenin withdrawal criticized

Israel's defense minister was criticized for approving the army's withdrawal Monday night from Jenin. Hawkish Cabinet ministers criticized Benjamin Ben-Eliezer after two terrorists set out from Jenin and carried out an attack in Afula on Tuesday.

German exhibit reopens

Right-wing protests are expected to greet the reopening of an exhibit in Germany.

The exhibit, which details how ordinary German soldiers committed Nazi war crimes, caused an uproar when it was first launched in 1994 because it countered a widely held belief that the army, unlike Hitler's SS, was not involved in Nazi atrocities.

The display closed in 1999 after historians said some photographs showed Soviet security police, not the German army, involved in mass killings. The new exhibit, slated to open Wednesday in Berlin, has less of an emphasis on photography and more on textual sources to make the same point about the Wehrmacht, the wartime German army.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

As Israelis languish in U.S. jails, Jewish activists wondering why

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — The revelation that dozens of Israelis have been thrown in jail since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks has some American Jewish leaders wondering if this is a new government attempt at "even-handedness."

Most of the 50 or so Israelis reportedly jailed in Cleveland, St. Louis, Kansas City, Houston and San Diego are men in their 20s.

No one refutes the likelihood that they violated visa regulations.

But some have been in jail for over a month for what normally would be considered petty infractions.

That leaves Jewish activists wondering if the U.S. Department of Justice is straining to show "even-handedness" in its investigation of the Sept. 11 attacks to appease Arabs concerned that Washington is targeting only Arab and Muslim suspects.

Several Arab states are vital partners in the U.S.-led coalition to hunt down the Sept. 11 perpetrators.

Nevertheless, Israeli officials say they do not believe the Israelis have been singled out.

They say they are treating the incarcerations as a consular issue rather than a political one.

"Israelis who break the law must understand there will be consequences for their actions," said Mark Regev, spokesman for the Israeli Embassy in Washington.

"America is justifiably looking much more closely at foreign visitors, and Israelis who are here illegally or doing something in contrast to their visa specifications should not consider themselves immune just because of the friendly relations between the two countries."

Israeli officials say they sent advisories to their citizens in the United States after Sept. 11, warning them to have their papers in order.

Still, that wasn't enough to reassure some American Jewish leaders, who note that visa violations typically do not result in jail time.

U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft refuses to disclose the names of detainees, but Israelis are believed to be the largest single national group arrested in a nationwide crackdown that has netted at least 554 on visa violations — and 55 charged with a direct link to the attacks — since Sept. 11.

Reports of the arrests seems to have seeped out beginning two weeks ago, and some believed that as many as 150 Israelis had been arrested.

When he read about the Israelis in news reports last week, "I couldn't see the connection. Why would Israelis even be suspected of terrorist activities here?" asked Leon Levy, president of the American Sephardi Federation and former chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. "It's very confusing. I know I'm only speculating, but it may be about giving a sense of balance between Arabs and Jews."

The Zionist Organization of America this week said it was crafting a letter to the Justice Department complaining that the large-scale arrests of Israelis "play into the hands of anti-Semites" because of the canard that Israel orchestrated the suicide attacks and that 4,000 Jews were warned not to come to their jobs at the World Trade Center on Sept. 11.

"Why aren't we also arresting people from Finland, Denmark or Sweden? There is no evidence, historically or presently, that anyone from Israel has ever been involved

MIDEAST FOCUS

Iraq could attack Israel

If attacked by the United States, Iraq may attack Israel, Israeli military sources said.

Following President Bush's statements Monday hinting that Iraq could be the next target in the U.S. war on terrorism, Israel Defense Force sources said they believed the United States would attack Iraq in two to three months, Israel Radio reported. Legislator Moshe Arens, defense minister during the 1991 Gulf War, said he believed that if the Americans decided to hit Iraq, they would "finish it this time."

Man denies nuclear charges

A 72-year-old man pleaded innocent Monday to charges that he exported potential nuclear triggers to Israel.

Richard Henry Smyth faces a 30-count indictment involving the alleged export of about \$60,000 worth of triggering devices that can be used in nuclear weapons. Smyth is being held without bail. His trial in a federal court in California is set for Jan. 15. Smyth had been awaiting trial on the charges in 1985 when he fled the United States for Spain. He was extradited from Spain earlier this month.

Palestinian faces deportation

A Palestinian who faces deportation from the United States allegedly has ties to groups linked to Hamas and Islamic Jihad. The Justice Department rearrested Mazen al-Najjar over the weekend after a U.S. appeals court ruled that it could deport him for overstaying a student visa in the early 1980s.

Najjar, who was previously held for three-and-a-half years on secret evidence, was involved in the World and Islam Studies Enterprise and the Islamic Concern Project. The U.S. government says these groups raise money for Islamic Jihad and Hamas, but Najjar's lawyers say the groups send money to orphans in Palestinian-ruled areas.



Daily News Bulletin

Ivan Michael Schaeffer, *President*

Mark J. Joffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*

Lisa Hostein, *Editor*

Michael S. Arnold, *Managing Editor*

Lenore A. Silverstein, *Business Manager*

Paula Simmonds, *Marketing and Development Director*

JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.
© JTA Reproduction only by previous arrangement.

with terrorism against America," ZOA President Morton Klein said.

"Clearly, America is bending over backward to make it seem as if we are not targeting Middle Easterners, although the evidence shows clearly that it was Islamic militants who perpetrated this heinous crime."

Malcolm Hoenlein, the executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents, urged caution in reacting to the arrests.

"There could be a real problem here but we don't know yet," Hoenlein said. "In situations like that, you have to be careful about the allegations you make. We and others are still looking into it, trying to ascertain the facts."

Ashcroft, in a news conference Tuesday, defended his actions.

"While I am aware of various charges being made by organizations and individuals about the actions of the Justice Department, I have yet to be informed of a single lawsuit filed against the government charging a violation of someone's civil rights as a result of this investigation," Ashcroft said.

"I would hope that those who make allegations about something as serious as a violation of an individual's civil rights would not do so lightly or without specificity or without facts.

"This does a disservice to our entire justice system."

There actually have been two separate situations involving Israelis.

The first involved five Israeli men spotted clowning around Sept. 11 along the New Jersey riverfront, taking photographs against a backdrop of the burning World Trade Centers.

The men worked for a moving company and happened to have box cutters — one of the weapons used on the hijacked flights — in their truck.

The men were imprisoned in Brooklyn, where one reportedly failed a polygraph test when discussing his Israeli army service.

The men were never charged with a crime, but complained that they were treated like criminals and even intentionally placed with Arab inmates, who beat them up. After two months in jail, the five were quietly deported to Israel last week.

The Anti-Defamation League took the incident seriously, but not the suggestion that Israelis are being unfairly singled out.

"There's a war, a change of scenery, and the fact that Semitic-looking people are caught in the web of ethnic profiling is an unfortunate consequence of the new reality," the national director of the ADL, Abraham Foxman, said. "My only concern is that once Israelis are arrested and detained, there needs to be sensitivity not to put them together with Arabs or Muslims, because their safety may be in danger."

Then there are the dozens of Israelis arrested nationwide, some of whom apparently aroused suspicion because they worked for a company selling trinkets that may have hired other young men from the Middle East.

Regev, however, sought to put the events in perspective.

"Israelis, better than most, can understand the problems involved with dealing with terrorism, and I think Israelis can appreciate the enormous pressure American authorities were under in the weeks following Sept. 11," he said.

While not commenting specifically on the Israelis, a spokesman for the Justice Department told The New York Times, "We are taking every step we can to prevent future terrorist attacks. We are conducting the largest investigation in U.S. history, and we are leaving no stone unturned."

Yet the secrecy surrounding the detainees' identities and the refusal to disclose the charges, if any, are fanning suspicion about the arrests. Some wonder if the Justice Department is arresting almost anyone just to create the semblance of progress in the Sept. 11 investigation.

Some Jewish activists say they are concerned not only about the Israeli detainees, but with all those held.

"In Judaism, we don't believe in collective guilt," said Rabbi Avi Weiss, national president of AMCHA — Coalition for Jewish Concerns. "If they've overstayed a visa or some other infraction, deport them. But it's un-American to hold people without charging them. Maybe a day or two, but weeks or a month or two? It's really unpardonable. It's contrary to what America stands for."

Levy, too, was critical.

"If there is no evidence after a month of incarceration, there has to be some explaining to do," he said. "We're still a nation of laws." □

JEWISH WORLD

Anthrax hoaxes possible

The anthrax threat may lead to a wave of hoaxes. Right-wing extremist groups fascinated by biological and chemical weapons may stage hoaxes in order to foment panic, according to a new report issued by the Anti-Defamation League.

The report is available at www.adl.org/learn.

Detroit Arabs to be interviewed

Law enforcement officials in Detroit want to interview hundreds of Arab men.

According to The New York Times, the anti-terrorist task force in the Detroit area plans to send letters to about 700 men between the ages of 18 and 33 who had come to the United States on temporary visas during the past two years.

The Detroit area is home to the nation's largest concentration of Arab-Americans.

About 5,000 people are being sought for questioning nationwide.

Slovak survivors may get property

A panel is meeting soon to consider compensation for property that was confiscated by the Nazis from Slovak Jews.

The commission, which includes 10 government officials and 10 Jewish representatives, plans to hold its first meeting Dec. 4 in Bratislava.

The panel plans to identify and establish the value of property seized from Jews, most of whom died in Nazi concentration camps.

Jewish quarter eyed as U.N. site

A Jewish quarter in the Czech Republic could be placed on UNESCO's World Heritage list.

The Czech Foreign Ministry included the quarter in the town of Trebic in a proposal it submitted to UNESCO headquarters in Paris last week.

The 125 houses in Trebic were built over a period of six centuries.

Their recent reconstruction was funded by a \$1 million loan from the United States.

Exhibit opens on S. Carolina Jews

An upcoming exhibit will trace the history of Jewish life in South Carolina.

The exhibit will use more than 200 portraits, photographs and household ritual objects to depict Jewish life in the state.

Two hundred years ago, Charleston, S.C., was considered the cultural capital of Jewish America. The city also was the birthplace of Reform Judaism in the United States.

The exhibit will open in Charleston next September and travel to New York and Charlotte, N.C., in 2003.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

With campus activism in disarray, students seek guidance on message

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The hotbeds of student activism are in disarray.

On campuses around North America, Jewish students are attempting to find their place and stake out positions on Israel in an atmosphere that is unusually politically charged.

But it hasn't been easy.

Israel's image has been under attack since the Palestinian intifada began in September 2000, and the future of Jewish-Arab relations on North American college campuses — particularly since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington — is still uncertain.

While there is no unified picture of what's going on at campuses, the message for Jewish students at the recent United Jewish Communities' General Assembly was to be proactive and not let pro-Palestinian students set the agenda.

The focus should be less on defending Israel and more on providing a pro-Israel message, according to Eric Bukstein, a student at the University of Michigan.

Jewish students should learn and strengthen their own views, agreed Richard Joel, international president of Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life.

"There is a tremendous student ignorance of Israel," Joel said.

Joel dismissed the notion that there is widespread apathy on campuses. Students are looking for meaning, he said, and Hillels and student groups should help them find their way.

More than 700 students attended the UJC conference, joining sessions on Jewish leadership, current events and student journalism.

As students continue to grapple with understanding the political situation in Israel, it is difficult to gauge the level of support for Israel or Jewish groups on different campuses, and where public sympathy lies.

Initially, the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon brought increased support and sympathy for Israel, and some Jewish and Muslim groups on campus came together for interfaith dialogues.

But articles in college newspapers blaming Israel indirectly for the terrorist attacks became more frequent, and Jewish and Muslim groups struggled to keep the peace.

At Cornell University in upstate New York, there were tensions between pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian and Muslim groups, according to Michelle Mason, a senior. But the student groups ultimately came together and even held a vigil, she said.

Now there is quiet and there appears to be agreement on campus about the need for tolerance, Mason said.

For Jack Zagha, a junior at the University of Texas at Austin, the post-Sept. 11 atmosphere created a climate of confusion on campus.

There were Zionist Jews arguing with pro-Palestinian Jews, and Muslim groups trying to get people to understand that they don't condone terrorism, Zagha said.

Students from New Jersey, California and Maryland told of unease on campus and the need to revamp Israel advocacy.

The mixed picture makes it harder to find the right plan of action for students.

Bukstein, who sits on the board of directors of Michigan's Hillel, said that before Sept. 11 the Jewish community on campus was striving to define itself by building community. After the attacks, students needed to address anti-Israel rhetoric and fight anti-Semitism, he said.

There needs to be a national coordinated effort to help students, Bukstein said.

Gil Troy, a history professor at McGill University in Montreal, encouraged students to build Jewish identity on campus and not to get caught up in the "hysteria" of political arguments.

"A campus used to be an oasis of civility," Troy said. "But I've seen demonizing. It's hard to have a free exchange of ideas."

Joel played down reports of extremism at schools.

"Campuses are not filled with hate," Joel said. "Some have tension, some have quiet." □

NEWS ANALYSIS

U.S. envoys hope to halt violence, succeed where others have failed

By Mitchell Danow

NEW YORK (JTA) — The terror attacks that greeted the new U.S. peace team in the Middle East pose the question: Can these envoys succeed where their predecessors failed?

A burst of Palestinian terror accompanied the first full day of work for former Marine Corps Gen. Anthony Zinni and the assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, William Burns.

In the most serious attack, two Palestinian gunmen from Jenin entered Israel just hours after Israeli troops withdrew from the West Bank city in response to American pressure.

The gunmen opened fire on civilians in the northern Israeli city of Afula, killing two Israelis and wounding dozens more.

Later in the day, an Israeli woman was killed in a Palestinian shooting attack on a Gaza road. Israeli soldiers at a nearby post shot and killed the Palestinian gunman, who had opened fire on passing vehicles, wounding two other Israelis.

In other violence that day, Palestinian gunmen wounded a foreign worker in an Israeli car in the West Bank and fired at workers on the Trans-Israel Highway, which is located inside Israel but near Palestinian-controlled areas.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon received news of the Afula attack while he was meeting with Zinni. One of the gunmen was from Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement.

Sharon told Zinni that Arafat had established "a coalition of terror" with Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, the PLO, the Palestinian militias and the Force 17 presidential guard.

Even before the Palestinian uprising began in September 2000, there had been no shortage of envoys — most notably from the United States, but also from the European Union, Russia and elsewhere — who sought to prod Israel and the Palestinian Authority into some semblance of peaceful relations.

Earlier this year, a U.S.-led international panel known as the Mitchell Commission set out a series of confidence-building measures to help end Israeli-Palestinian violence. Israeli and Palestinian officials welcomed the initiative — then returned to the bloodletting.

Several weeks later, the director of the CIA, George Tenet, arrived with a blueprint for a cease-fire. Officials from both sides agreed to the truce Tenet drew up — but the welcoming words were not followed with meaningful implementation.

Now come Zinni and Burns, accompanied by U.S. diplomat Aaron Miller, a veteran member of U.S. Mideast peace efforts.

Zinni, who took a helicopter tour of the West Bank with Sharon, told the Israeli premier that he will stay as long as necessary to achieve his task. He said he hopes to get Israel and the Palestinians to implement the cease-fire steps spelled out by Tenet and the recommendations of the Mitchell Commission.

Sharon's office said on Monday that "Israel attaches supreme importance to achieving a cease-fire."

Yet even Sharon's dovish foreign minister, Shimon Peres, did not get carried away by the envoys' arrival.

"We will do our utmost for the mission to succeed, but we see very clearly the difficulties ahead," Peres told reporters.

The U.S. envoys were to meet with Arafat on Wednesday. But the Bush administration is trying not to raise expectations unreasonably high. "It's very difficult for the process to get started,"

State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said Monday. "We would not expect instant results."

Yet there are reasons to believe this U.S. mission might yield tangible results where others have failed.

The Bush administration wants solid Arab backing for its war on terror. Ending Israeli-Palestinian violence with a peace accord that the Arab world considers fair would help advance American interests. Moreover, many have come to see the continuing Israeli-Palestinian conflict as fertile ground for the extremism that breeds terror.

With many in the Arab world criticizing U.S. support for Israel — perceived to come at the Palestinians' expense — American officials have an added incentive to get the two sides to end violence.

In addition, Sharon will head to Washington over the weekend to see President Bush and U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, and may wish to avoid the kind of public dressing-down that soured his last visit.

Another reason is the losses Israel and the Palestinians already have suffered. More than 700 Palestinians and nearly 200 Israelis have died since the uprising began more than a year ago.

Then there are the financial losses: Israeli officials earlier this month declared that the nation is officially in a state of recession.

The Palestinian economy has been absolutely decimated.

The cost of the violence provides a strong motivation to reach a cease-fire. There was some evidence of this last week, when Palestinian researchers released a poll indicating growing Palestinian dissatisfaction with the uprising against Israel.

On the other side of the balance sheet, there is one compelling reason to believe that Zinni & Co. will fail like their predecessors — the violence has shown no sign of letting up.

Indeed, hours before the envoys arrived Monday, a Palestinian suicide bomber detonated his explosives at the Erez Crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip, lightly wounding two Israeli soldiers.

The following day brought the deadly Afula attack.

Israeli forces moved into six Palestinian cities on Oct. 18, a day after Palestinian terrorists killed Israeli Tourism Minister Rehavam Ze'evi.

After withdrawing from the other cities, Israel had remained in Jenin because of persistent reports that terror attacks would be launched from there.

Before Tuesday's attack, Israeli defense sources said the withdrawal from Jenin had been carried out as a gesture to the U.S. administration. □

Anti-Arafat complaint filed

NEW YORK (JTA) — A group of Israelis filed a complaint against Yasser Arafat in Belgium.

The group, called the Terror Victims Association, said the complaint against Arafat and several Palestinian groups, including the Palestinian Authority and the PLO, cited attacks against Israelis dating back to 1974.

The action came a day before a Brussels court was due to consider whether to go ahead with a lawsuit brought by Palestinian and Lebanese plaintiffs against Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Belgium has a 1993 law on "universal jurisdiction," which enables Belgian courts to judge atrocities committed elsewhere, regardless of whether or not they involved Belgians. □