



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 79, No. 225

Monday, December 10, 2001

84th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Suicide attack in Haifa

A suicide bomber blew himself up near Haifa on Sunday morning. The attack took place at a major intersection just outside Haifa.

The blast injured at least 23 Israelis. The suicide bomber was spotted by police officers before the attack. They fired at him before he detonated the nail- and screw-studded bomb attached to his body. Police believe he intended to carry out the attack on a bus.

Another terror victim dies

The 11th victim of last week's suicide bombings in Jerusalem died Saturday night. Ido Cohen, 17, was critically wounded in the Dec. 1 attacks on the Ben-Yehuda pedestrian mall. He died a week later at a Jerusalem hospital.

Cohen, who was in a coma with severe head wounds, had never regained consciousness. Two other victims of the attack remain in serious condition. Some 40 others are still in local hospitals.

N.Y. officials visit Israel

Several N.Y. officials visited scenes of Palestinian suicide bombings in Jerusalem to show solidarity with Israel. [Page 4]

U.S. renews travel warning

The United States renewed its travel warning for Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The State Department renewed the warning because of last week's suicide attacks in Jerusalem and Haifa.

The warning also said Americans in the region should stay away from buses, malls and restaurants. American should only go to Jerusalem's Old City during the daytime, the State Department added.

Arafat blasts American officials

Yasser Arafat lashed out at U.S. officials, accusing them of having a pro-Israel bias.

Arafat became visibly angry last Friday night when an interviewer for Israel's Channel One television asked him about the continued U.S. pressure on him to clamp down on terrorists.

"Dear God, who cares about the Americans," Arafat said. "The Americans are on your side and they give you everything." He went on to accuse the United States of providing the airplanes and tanks that Israel uses against the Palestinians.

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

Russian federation boasts large network of activities

By Lev Gorodetsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — Only a few years ago, the idea of a Russian Jewish group passing a resolution approving a Kremlin-backed war would have seemed laughable.

Even in the post-Soviet era, most Jewish activists shied away from the halls of power.

But when the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia — and the representatives of the federation's 150 constituent groups who gathered here last month for the group's second annual conference — narrowly passed a resolution backing Russia's war on Chechnya as a war on terrorism, the action seemed natural.

The federation's alliance with Russian President Vladimir Putin, combined with the energy of the group, has made it the driving force in Russian Jewry.

The federation's growing network is active in at least 135 cities and towns across the country, running 32 synagogues, 120 Jewish centers, 17 day schools and 41 Sunday schools — and distributing 320 tons of matzah each Passover.

The group, which has a strong Lubavitch representation, prints books on Jewish traditions, edits newspapers and magazines and creates Jewish Web sites.

Next up — plans to open a Jewish university to enhance the professional level of Sunday school teachers.

Tens of thousands of Russians benefit from the federation's activities.

Vera Eizenshtat, 72, a Moscow pensioner, says she gets food parcels through the Lubavitch-run distribution system. She also gets free tickets to Jewish concerts and performances, which she says helps her to socialize with other elderly Jews.

Vladimir Reznikov, a middle-aged community leader from the town of Novozybkov in western Russia, home to 300 Jews, receives two monthly allocations for his salary.

The first sum permits him to run a Sunday school for 10 kids, and the second to fund weekly Sabbath celebrations for the community.

The federation also provides \$170 to Reznikov's community for activities and holiday celebrations.

The amount may seem laughable to Western ears, but he says this is the only real help the community gets from the Jewish world, besides the Chessed canteen for elderly Jews run by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

The emissaries' tirelessness is evident across Russia's vast land mass. Among their activities:

- distributing food parcels to elderly Jews in the distant Far East island of Sakhalin on the Russian-Japanese border;
- repairing a synagogue in the city of Kostroma in central Russia;
- organizing a seminar for hundreds of Jewish youngsters in Kaliningrad in western Russia.

Federations throughout the former Soviet Union are united under one umbrella group, the Federation of Jewish Communities of the Former Soviet Union.

Now, this group's leaders want to consolidate further and gather all the Russian-speaking Jews in the world into one group. The federation adopted a resolution of that nature at the federation's conference, which brought 350 delegates from around the country.

Valery Engel, the federation's executive director, and Rabbi Avraham Berkowitz, executive director of the broader umbrella group, are planning to hold this month the first convention of Jewish activists from Russia, the United States and Israel to create

MIDEAST FOCUS

4 Palestinians die in shootout

Israeli forces killed four Palestinians in a West Bank raid. Palestinian officials later said the four killed Sunday in a town near Tulkarm were Palestinian policemen. Israel said the four had opened fire on soldiers, who were searching the area for terrorists.

Chemical weapons in use?

Israeli officials believe a device used by a suicide bomber last week may have included a crude attempt at a chemical weapon.

A Health Ministry official said Sunday that hazardous materials were found in the remains of a bomb used in the Dec. 1 attacks in Jerusalem. Another official said one of the bombs used in the Jerusalem attacks had been "immersed in some kind of chemical such as pesticide."

Powell: Arafat losing credibility

Sunday's suicide bombing in Israel is "destroying" Yasser Arafat's credibility, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell said.

The violence by Arab terrorists "is destroying his authority," Powell said Sunday. "They will not push Israel into the sea. So they will not be successful if that is their goal."

Meanwhile, Vice President Dick Cheney said on NBC-TV's "Meet the Press" that "until Arafat demonstrates that he is serious about suicide attackers, there won't be progress. They are led by someone who can't control terrorists."

U.S. envoy warns he may leave

Israeli and Palestinian security officials met for a round of U.S.-brokered truce talks. The U.S. envoy in the region, former Marine Corps Gen. Anthony Zinni, said at the start of Sunday's two-hour meeting that he might leave for home unless real progress on ending the violence was made within 48 hours.

an Executive Committee of the World Congress of Russian Jews.

The goals of this group, according to federation leaders, are to initiate cross-cultural programs, to promote investments in Russia and Israel, to support Israel and Russia in their fight against international terrorism, and to support Russia in its integration into the world community. But even with the dedication of its emissaries, it is unlikely that the federation would have succeeded without the support of the Kremlin.

The romance with the Kremlin administration has long been evident.

Putin spoke at the opening ceremony of the center in September 2000, praising the group's activities.

He then visited the center last Chanukah and spent three hours there, drinking Israeli wine and talking to former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The group's main funder, Lev Levayev, an Uzbek Jew who made aliyah at the beginning of the 1970s and became a diamond tycoon in Israel, is on friendly terms with the chief Kremlin executive, Alexander Voloshin, and with Putin himself.

Last January, Levayev dined in a Kremlin palace with Putin, Israeli President Moshe Katsav, who visited Moscow, and with one of Russia's two chief rabbis, Berel Lazar — who for this dinner managed to have the Kremlin kitchen made kosher with a blowtorch.

For his part, Lazar does not lose any opportunity to praise Putin for making every effort to ensure a vastly improved quality of life for Jews in Russia.

Despite the almost unanimous support for Lazar at the convention, some dissidents were not happy with the alliance with the Kremlin.

"I don't think this romance will last long. Putin will use it and do an about-face, which will be dangerous to Jews. He stays a KGB guy," said Mark Aron, a delegate to the convention, referring to Putin's former work for the Soviet spy agency.

Federation officials disagree that the close relationship with the Russian president could backfire.

"What they call 'the federation's close relationship with Putin' is actually normal cooperation with a president who sympathizes with the Jews. And I feel personally and from other sources that he is sincere in this sympathy," said Michael Gluz, the federation's president.

The federation's rise has come at the expense of its rival, the Russian Jewish Congress, which has suffered from a Kremlin campaign that chased its former president, Vladimir Goussinsky, out of the country. Goussinsky now lives in the United States.

But in recent weeks, tensions surfaced between the federation and another Jewish group, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

Officials of both groups say that money lies at the heart of the dispute between federation and the JDC, which operates hundreds of Chessed welfare centers and JCCs across the FSU and is building a system of more secular-oriented Jewish communities.

The tensions surfaced in recent weeks, when the JDC opened a new community center in Moscow — and federation leaders complained that the JDC does not adequately support the federation's efforts.

The tensions escalated further when Engel demanded at his group's conference that any JDC project costing more than \$50,000 be coordinated with all major Russian Jewish organizations. For their part, JDC officials say there is enough room for two centers to operate in Moscow.

But further clashes appear likely between the two groups, each of which operates a budget of between \$30 million and \$40 million for activities in the region.

"There are currently two strong players in the same field, and they inevitably have to clash," said Mark Grubarg, a federation leader in St. Petersburg. □

Israelis admit to computer virus

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Four Israeli youths admitted to creating and spreading the "Goner" computer virus. Israeli police arrested the four high-school students from the northern city of Nahariya last Friday.

The virus first spread early this month to computers in Europe.

American anti-virus companies have reported more than 400 cases of Goner attacks worldwide. The Goner virus appears as an apparently harmless e-mail, with a subject line of "Hi" and a note asking the recipient to open an attached screen saver. □



Daily News Bulletin

Ivan Michael Schaeffer, *President*

Mark J. Jaffe, *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.

JEWISH WORLD

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Jewish groups stake out positions as Congress looks at energy policy

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — National energy policy might seem like a peripheral issue for American Jewish groups, but they are joining the national debate, pointing out that reducing U.S. dependence on foreign oil is best for America — and maybe for Israel as well.

The issue has assumed added importance as the U.S.-led war on terrorism casts a light on the U.S. need for Arab oil.

As Jewish groups try to clarify their positions on energy policy, however, some confusion has ensued.

There is a general consensus among Jewish groups that it's wise to reduce America's dependence on foreign oil. Most agree that the efforts should be made to develop alternative energy sources and technologies, as well as reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and improve fuel economy standards. But the question of support for drilling for oil in environmentally sensitive areas remains divisive.

Mortimer Zuckerman, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, joined Senate Republicans in a Dec. 4 news conference. The senators have proposed an energy bill that calls for drilling in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Zuckerman later told JTA that the Conference of Presidents has no position on drilling in Alaska, and is not taking a stand on the specifics of various policy suggestions. Still, he believes that the less dependence the United States has on foreign oil, the better it is for both America and Israel.

Dependence on Arab oil, especially, is seen as making the United States susceptible to Arab pressure concerning Mideast policy.

Malcolm Hoenlein, the executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents, said the group believes generally that the United States should devise a sound energy policy. "We do not support any particular legislation," he said.

Conference of Presidents representatives also would appear together with Democrats, should they present an alternative bill, Hoenlein said.

Republicans are trying to push through the Senate energy legislation that allows for oil and gas drilling in the Alaskan wilderness, but Democrats have threatened a filibuster.

The White House is pressing to have some energy bill presented before Congress recesses later this month. Earlier, Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.) had said that other pressing matters such as economic recovery, national security and remaining government spending bills leave no time to deal with energy this year.

The Orthodox Union supports drilling for oil in Alaska. Other groups, such as the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, also support drilling in the Alaskan refuge, but most Jewish organizations oppose drilling there.

Drilling in the refuge could endanger indigenous peoples as well as the caribou population, and could destroy the ecosystem, environmentalists say. There also is concern that oil from that area will not be nearly enough to meet national energy demand.

Some groups questioned the logic of Zuckerman's appearance with Republican senators — including Frank Murkowski (R-Alaska), the sponsor of the energy bill — if the Conference of Presidents is not endorsing the legislation.

"You risk being misinterpreted," said Hannah Rosenthal, executive director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs.

Rosenthal believes the JCPA's positions are more representative of the organized Jewish community. In its resolution passed early this year, the umbrella organization said the United States "should not seek to increase energy independence by drilling for oil or gas in environmentally sensitive areas."

By standing with senators who support particular legislation, you signal your support for that legislation, said Mark Jacobs, director of the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life.

Murkowski's bill is environmentally harmful, Jacobs said. □

'Safe' Israel trips planned

The North American Reform movement is creating new "safe" programs for teen-agers visiting Israel next summer. The kibbutz-based programs will replace the teen tours the Union of American Hebrew Congregations usually sponsors.

Last summer, the Reform movement canceled its teen programs in Israel, saying it could not guarantee the participants' security. The cancellation spurred some critics to say the movement failed to show solidarity with the Jewish state. Until last summer, the Reform movement had been the largest sponsor of Israel teen tours, sending 1,500 teens in 2000.

Mayor-elect lauds N.Y. federation

New York's mayor-elect applauded the importance of work being done by UJA-Federation of Greater New York. Calling the philanthropy "one of the most wonderful organizations in the world," Michael Bloomberg said the federation's work in New York has taken on added significance following the terror attack on the World Trade Center.

"This year, because of the terrible tragedy of Sept. 11," he said, "UJA-Federation has more to do than ever before."

Bloomberg spoke at the federations's annual Wall Street dinner on Dec. 5, a fund-raising event that organizers said raised a record-breaking \$19 million.

U.S. boycott praised

Jewish groups are praising the United States for boycotting last week's meeting of a human rights forum at which Israel's treatment of the Palestinians was criticized.

The United States took a "principled stand" in refusing to participate in the meeting of the Fourth Geneva Convention, according to the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

"It is obscene that a document adopted 52 years ago to address Nazi atrocities against Jews and others would be used to condemn Israel," said Malcolm Hoenlein, the group's executive vice chairman.

Terror expert addresses ADL

An Israeli expert on terrorism addressed the Anti-Defamation League last Friday.

Col. Yoni Fighel is director of the Israel-based International Policy Institute for Counter Terrorism, which educates the public, media and local decision makers on how to deal with the psychological aspects of terror.

Fighel also serves on the Israel Defense Ministry's anti-terrorism think tank. Following the Sept. 11 attacks, the ADL created a partnership with the institute and is making the institute's database on terrorist organizations available on its Web site.

As N.Y. officials visit Israel, Giuliani gets the loudest cheers

By Jessica Steinberg

JERUSALEM (JTA) — New York officials showed their support and admiration for Israel during a visit here this week — and many Israelis offered similar sentiments for New York.

“The people of Jerusalem and the people of New York City are shoulder-to-shoulder, and the people of America and the people of Israel are shoulder-to-shoulder in the fight against terrorism,” New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani said Sunday during the one-day visit.

New York’s mayor-elect, Michael Bloomberg, and New York state Gov. George Pataki accompanied Giuliani on the visit.

The officials came to Jerusalem after Prime Minister Ariel Sharon visited the wreckage of New York’s World Trade Center on Nov. 30.

“We love New York,” shouted Jerusalem residents, as the three politicians and other New York dignitaries walked the streets of Jerusalem to show their support for the beleaguered city.

The officials began their visit at the Western Wall, where they were greeted with the blowing of a shofar.

They then made their way through the Western Wall tunnels, a labyrinth of arches and passageways discovered after the 1967 Six-Day War.

The group — which met with Israeli officials and participated in a candle-lighting ceremony for Chanukah — also included Mortimer Zuckerman, the chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations; Giuliani’s girlfriend, Judith Nathan; Bloomberg’s daughter, Emma; and several other New York rabbis and officials.

Also making the visit was John Ruskay, executive vice president of UJA-Federation of Greater New York.

“This group of elected officials wanted to offer support to the people of the state of Israel as they resist horrendous violence and pursue peace,” Ruskay said.

The three elected officials wore yarmulkes while at the Western Wall. Giuliani had his own black crocheted skullcap, which he donned while stepping out onto the Western Wall Plaza.

On the men’s side of the Wall, a small crowd surrounded the visiting officials, while a small scattering of men continued their prayers on the bright, sunny Sunday morning.

The entourage made its way toward downtown Jerusalem, stopping first at Sbarro’s, the branch of the American pizza chain that was the scene of an August suicide bombing that killed 15 and wounded more than 130. The pizzeria reopened Sept. 12.

Pataki flashed a thumbs-up sign toward Israelis lining the street as the triumvirate of officials made their way down Jaffa Road.

One of the main thoroughfares in Jerusalem, Jaffa Road was renamed New York Street by the municipality following the Sept. 11 attack on the World Trade Center.

“It’s great to be here,” Pataki told a crowd of reporters. “We have a great feeling of solidarity with Jerusalem. New York has the largest population of Jews outside Israel, and we want to support that connection.”

Thomas Von Essen, the commissioner of New York’s fire department, wearing his navy blue FDNY windbreaker, added: “I can’t think of a better way to support the people of Israel. They understand the kind of thing we’ve been through.”

The morning in downtown Jerusalem ended with the officials

planting two trees — one oak, one maple — in memory of the 11 Israeli teen-agers who died in a double suicide bombing Dec. 1 at Jerusalem’s Ben Yehuda pedestrian mall.

The trip was initiated by all three officials, but the cheers were all for Giuliani, who was recognized by the locals.

“Giul-Giul-Giuliani,” yelled several teen-aged boys following the entourage. “Go New York!”

“He is pro-humanity,” said Roby Shmerling, an Australian native who happened to be downtown Sunday morning. “That’s rare for a politician, but Giuliani means it. He didn’t have to come here. It’s not like he doesn’t have enough to do in New York.”

Giuliani lit the first Chanukah candle in Jerusalem’s Zion Square on Sunday evening. Thousands of people crowded into the square to watch the ceremony.

The candlelighting took place near the site where two Palestinian suicide bombers blew themselves up Dec. 1, killing 11 people and wounding at least 188 people.

“For 2,000 years, our enemies have tried to prevent us from performing this ritual, but they have failed,” Sharon said at the ceremony. □

Anti-Semitism in Australia recorded at highest levels ever

By JTA Staff

SYDNEY, Australia (JTA) — Anti-Semitic incidents against Australian Jews have reached record highs, according to a new report.

For the year ended Sept. 30, the Australian Jewish community recorded more than 30 reports per month of such incidents directed at Jewish community members and communal institutions.

The report, prepared by the incoming president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, Jeremy Jones, noted that incidents of assault, arson and vandalism took place at a rate of more than 60 percent above the average in past years, and more than 10 percent above the previous record year.

The incidents included:

- a series of firebomb attacks at a synagogue and community center, including one firebombing while people were on the premises;
- assaults on young Jewish men, one of which resulted in the victim’s requiring serious surgery;
- gasoline bombs thrown into the homes of Jewish religious leaders;
- the smashing of windows at synagogues and other communal institutions;
- vandalism at Jewish homes and communal offices; and
- repeated occasions on which people on their way to or from synagogue services were assailed by eggs, rocks, bottles or firecrackers, or were subjected to verbal harassment.

The report also found:

- threats made over the telephone, or through mail, leaflets, posters and e-mail, were recorded at a rate of more than 65 percent above average;
- telephone threats were recorded at the highest rate ever, and were almost five times those of the previous year; and
- abusive e-mails were recorded at a rate close to three times the previous average, exceeding the previous tally by 25 percent. E-mail was also a common vehicle for the dissemination of anti-Jewish propaganda. □