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85th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israeli troops enter Gaza Strip

Israeli troops entered the northern and central Gaza Strip. Palestinian sources said five Palestinian policemen were killed in exchanges of fire during the Israeli incursion.

In what was described as Israel's biggest operation in Gaza since the intifada began more than 16 months ago, large numbers of infantry, tanks and bulldozers entered three Gaza towns late Tuesday.

Israel said the operation was aimed at arresting suspects and capturing arms, including rockets and mortars.

According to reports, Israeli soldiers arrested at least 18 Palestinians during the operation.

Study: Diaspora Jewry shrinking

Most Jews will live in Israel in about 30 years, according to the Jewish Agency for Israel. This will be the result of aliyah and the shrinking size of Jewish communities abroad due to assimilation and low birth-rates.

The world Jewish population, currently about 13.2 million, is expected to reach 15.6 million in 2080. Currently 37 percent of the world Jewish population lives in Israel. The figures were released as part of a new, world-wide Jewish demography research project launched this week by the Jewish Agency.

U.N.: Release Arafat

U.N. officials are calling on Israel to free Yasser Arafat from his virtual house arrest in Ramallah.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan made the appeal on Tuesday, and it was echoed Wednesday by the U.N. high commissioner for human rights, Mary Robinson.

Israel to pay China for Falcon

Israel agreed to compensate China for the canceled sale of an airborne radar system.

The agreement was reached during a trip to Beijing this week by the director and deputy director of Israel's Defense Ministry, Israel Radio reported.

Israel canceled the \$250 million sale of the Falcon system in July 2000 following pressure from the United States.

Israel agreed to pay China \$350 million for the canceled deal, according to the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot.

Civil liberties vs. national security: Hot debate expected at policy plenum

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON, Feb 12 (JTA) — If you think the Jewish community has been quiet on the civil liberties debate lately, just wait.

A resolution charging that the United States has not struck a balance between civil rights and national security in certain areas is expected to be the most hotly discussed issue at the annual conference of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs here next week.

The civil liberties resolution slated for debate at the JCPA plenum has been proposed by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the congregational arm of the Reform movement.

In putting forth the resolution, the Reform movement — and its co-sponsors, the community relations councils of Detroit and St. Louis — are challenging the organized Jewish community to take a stand.

"It's time for the organized Jewish community to express a cautious concern of the rolling back of civil liberties in the face of terrorism," said David Bohm, the president of the St. Louis Jewish Community Relations Council and the co-chair of a JCPA task force on Jewish security and the Bill of Rights.

Others who believe the issue deserves more study will offer an alternative resolution to postpone any action.

Opponents of the resolution worry that voicing opposition to some anti-terrorism measures would send the wrong message to the White House as it pushes forward with its fight against terrorism, which benefits Israel and is supported by most Americans.

It's not clear which path will prevail when the debate gets going among delegates to the Feb. 17-19 meeting of the JCPA, an umbrella group of 13 national organizations and 123 local federations and community relations councils.

Since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, the country has been embroiled in debate about how to increase security but not violate personal rights.

Jewish groups have, for the most part, kept relatively silent on the topic, parting company with civil rights groups they are often aligned with.

When the antiterrorism bill moved quickly through Congress in the wake of the Sept. 11 attacks, Jewish groups found it hard to quickly assess the nuances of the bill.

Then the Department of Justice issued a number of directives that raised some concern.

The UAHC resolution "applauds the Bush Administration for its overall efforts to make our nation and our world safe for us and for our children."

But it details three areas where the group says the Bush administration is not appropriately balancing combating terrorism and protecting civil liberties:

- Attorney-client privilege: the resolution says the Department of Justice directive allowing federal officials to listen in on conversations between certain detained individuals and their counsel undermines due process. The directive has the effect of weakening not only the protection of attorney-client privilege, but the basic right to competent legal counsel altogether.

- The detention of immigrants: the resolution says many feel that detaining suspects without charge for an unspecified "reasonable time" during a "national emergency" violates not only the due process protections of the Sixth Amendment, but also the will of Congress.

- Military tribunals: The resolution objects to the proposed use of closed-door military tribunals. "Open military tribunals, bound by the traditional protections that govern both our civilian and military courts, might be an important tool in prosecuting

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel, U.S. talk economics

Israeli and U.S. officials discussed economic policies in Washington. Wednesday's meeting, held at the State Department, included both government and private industry officials who discussed budgetary and monetary policy as well as developments in labor markets. They sought to create policies that would foster global economic growth and enhance Israel's high-tech sector.

Rajoub denies feud with Arafat

The head of Palestinian security in the West Bank denied any conflict with Yasser Arafat. An eastern Jerusalem newspaper quoted Jibril Rajoub as saying that Arafat is the symbol of the Palestinian national struggle, and a dispute with him when Israeli tanks are stationed hundreds of yards from Arafat's office borders on treason.

Rajoub's comments followed media reports that Arafat waved his pistol at Rajoub and slapped him during a meeting in Ramallah.

Knesset panel blasts P.A. texts

A Knesset committee is asking Western nations to withhold funding for Palestinian education until the Palestinian Authority removes anti-Israel incitement from its textbooks.

Condemning the textbooks, the chairman of the Education Committee, Zevulun Orlev, said this week that they are a "hotbed for the growth of martyrs and suicide bombers."

Britain's Straw visits Mideast

British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw began two days of talks with Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who has the flu, canceled a meeting with Straw. The British foreign secretary's visit comes ahead of next week's meeting of E.U. foreign ministers in Brussels.



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the exponents of terror," the resolution says, but courts should not operate behind closed doors without many of the constitutional and procedural safeguards.

Despite the delicate nature of the debate there is a lot of restlessness in the field to get some clarity on the issue of civil liberties, according to Hannah Rosenthal, JCPA's executive director. The quandary, she and others say, is how to fight the war against terrorism but still maintain the protections under which the Jewish community in particular has benefitted. "We can't subvert the values we have here at home," she said.

Now is the time to stake out a position, according to Mark Pelavin, associate director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

The resolution is not extreme, Pelavin said. There are fundamental concerns about where civil liberties are heading now and the resolution is intended to be a voice of caution.

Others, however, think more reflection is needed. They say it is difficult to determine where to draw the line between national security and individual freedoms.

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Bergen County, N.J., will offer an alternative to the resolution, calling for more study of the three points and several additional issues, including the idea of issuing national identity cards and profiling.

The alternative resolution suggests that JCPA develop a more detailed policy statement on the issue when the study is completed after several months.

Jerome Milch, former chair of the JCRC of Bergen County, said his community feels "you shouldn't rush into this."

These issues are the same kinds of issues Israel faces, Milch said, and the Jewish state's experience has influenced his thought process.

Others say the Jewish community ought to support the administration as much as possible because of the effect of the war on terrorism on Israel.

Jack Rosen, president of the American Jewish Congress, said Jews should rally at Bush's side and not say, "We like what you say on Israel and terrorism, but can't support your antiterrorism agenda."

"While we do have some concerns with military tribunals and unmitigated detention of suspects, we could deal with those and make the necessary adjustments without forgetting that our country is in crisis mode and that we need the support for Israel right now," he said. □

Israeli pop star may be jailed after he's convicted of bigamy

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Matti Caspi, one of the dominant forces in Israeli popular music over the past 30 years, has been convicted of bigamy in an Israeli court.

The convoluted case, which has been dragging through the Israeli courts and media for 12 years, also involved a Los Angeles rabbi, Gabriel Cohen, in a controversial role.

In 1990, Caspi filed in Tel Aviv rabbinical court for divorce from his wife of 15 years, Doreen Caspi, who is the mother of his two children.

As the divorce proceedings grew increasingly bitter and public, Caspi moved to Los Angeles with his girlfriend, Rachel Wenger.

While Caspi was living in Los Angeles, Rabbi Cohen granted him a divorce. Caspi subsequently married Wenger in a civil ceremony. The couple has two daughters.

However, in Tel Aviv magistrate's court, Judge Daniel Be'eri castigated Cohen and said he believes administrative steps should be taken by the rabbinical court against Cohen for granting Caspi a divorce. In a phone interview, Cohen defended himself by saying that before granting the divorce he had spent almost a year trying to get a ruling from the Tel Aviv rabbinical court.

Cohen then granted the divorce, after which Caspi's attorney asked for a ruling from the chief rabbinical court in Jerusalem. According to Cohen, the Jerusalem court confirmed the validity of the divorce. In any case, Cohen maintained, no secular court, either in Israel or the United States, could overturn a divorce decree granted by rabbinical authority.

Cohen is the rabbi of Congregation Bais Naftali in mid-town Los Angeles. He said he did not even know that Caspi was a celebrity when the singer contacted him.

Caspi's sentencing hearing is to take place in about a month. □

JEWISH WORLD

JTS offers more fellowships

The Jewish Theological Seminary is offering more fellowships for rabbinical students. With a new \$3 million endowment, the New York-based Conservative seminary will offer four years of free tuition to 7-10 rabbinical students in each entering class.

JTS Chancellor Rabbi Ismar Schorsch said he hopes the new financial aid will attract more applicants and enable rabbinical students to focus on their studies without the distractions of part-time jobs. JTS also recently announced a \$1.5 million endowment offering free tuition to several students pursuing degrees in Jewish education.

Belarus rights record blasted

A Jewish leader in Belarus is calling on the U.S. Congress to maintain a trade sanctions law against the former Soviet republic.

Yakov Gutman said the 1974 Jackson-Vanik Amendment, which helped open the door for tens of thousands of Jews to emigrate from the former Soviet Union, should be maintained in Belarus because of "the trampling of human rights" there, according to The Associated Press.

President Bush has indicated he is likely to adjust the amendment, which links trade privileges to free emigration practices, with regard to Russia and several other former Soviet republics later this year. Most observers believe the restrictions will continue to apply to Belarus.

Vandals attack Calif. shul

Anti-Semitic vandals painted a red swastika and the word "Nazi" on a synagogue in Redwood City, Calif.

Rabbi Nathaniel Ezray of Temple Beth Jacob said after the weekend attack that he would leave the graffiti in place until all of the Hebrew school classes have a chance to see it.

Resolution commends Turkey

A resolution proposed in the U.S. Congress commends the Israel-Turkey relationship.

The bill, introduced in the House of Representatives Wednesday by Rep. Robert Wexler (D-Fla.), recognizes the cooperative relationship between the two countries, noting that Turkey was the first Muslim state to have diplomatic relations with Israel.

Performers boycott racist station

Sixty well-known performers don't want their songs played on a Hungarian radio station they describe as "racist and anti-Semitic."

Pannon Radio is often described as a mouthpiece for Hungary's far-right Hungarian Justice and Life Party.

Looking for a mate to take to Israel? Palestinian ads flood the Village Voice

By Rachel Pomerance

NEW YORK (JTA) — A new weapon may have emerged in the Palestinians' battle against Israel — the "siren call."

In several ads this week in New York's Village Voice newspaper, Palestinians — or people posing as Palestinians — solicit romantically available Jews or Israelis to take them "home" to Israel.

"YOU STOLE THE LAND. MAY AS WELL TAKE THE WOMEN!" reads one ad. "Redhead Palestinian ready to be colonized by your army."

Another corporal call makes a similar point: "Shalom baby! Hot Palestinian Semite gal Hoping to find my perfect Israeli man. Let's stroll the beaches of Akka & live and love in Jerusalem. No Fatties."

Some Jewish leaders say the unusual barrage of ads — at least 18 in the Feb. 12 issue — is some kind of publicity stunt. Others fear a more serious ploy to infiltrate Israel and realize the "right of return" for Palestinian refugees to homes they fled in Israel.

Still others remember the incident last year when a Palestinian woman struck up a cyber romance with a teen-aged Israeli boy to lure him to Ramallah, where he was murdered.

Kenneth Jacobson, associate national director of the Anti-Defamation League, said that before Sept. 11 he might have dismissed the ads as a gimmick. Now he's a little more skeptical.

Referring to former U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Tip O'Neil's axiom that "all politics is local," Jacobson said Sept. 11 had given previously distant matters a greater personal relevance.

After Sept. 11, a convoluted plan to infiltrate Israel via personal ads in a counterculture New York paper may not seem as ridiculous as it once might have.

"It's as if some in the Palestinian world" may be looking for "ways to begin to inject more and more Palestinians into Israel proper," Jacobson said.

For its part, the Village Voice said it had received only one call about the ads — from JTA.

That call, however, prompted the advertising department to "review the ads in question," said the paper's public relations director, Jessica Bellucci.

"We feel they don't raise any red flags," she said, but "we're going to continue to monitor" them "and then take appropriate actions necessary."

That could mean pulling ads if they are fraudulent.

The Voice might have been selected for the ads not only because it takes personal ads and has a wide Jewish readership, Jacobson said, but because it might have been seen as less likely than Jewish or mainstream publications to reject such offbeat ads.

"In any case," the ads "clearly seem to be an orchestrated effort," he said.

Similar ads — though fewer — appeared in the Village Voice over the summer, Jacobson said, but the ADL's "antennae are up higher now."

The ADL hasn't received many calls on the ads, but after Sept. 11, "When we see something we might dismiss as ludicrous, today we have to give it some due attention, because we know crazy and dangerous things have happened and can happen again," he said.

Ido Aharoni, spokesman for the Israeli Consulate in New York, said the ads are a "kind of guerilla P.R. warfare that" reflects negatively on those who placed them.

Yet he doesn't think the ads warrant further concern.

"I don't think it's serious. I don't think it's for real," Aharoni said. "Here's a relatively inexpensive way to reach hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers."

In addition, he noted, such ads are protected under the First Amendment's free speech provisions.

Bellucci of the Village Voice said the paper sees "trends from time to time" in the personal ads that may highlight religion, for example, or sexual orientation.

The Palestinian ads are "in keeping" with the background and interests of the Voice's diverse readership, she said. □

As emotional ties to Israel fray, federations worry about future

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — As young Jewish leaders waved Israeli flags and speakers exhorted them to go to Israel, it might have seemed strange that federations are concerned about the next generation of leadership and its relationship to Israel.

But anxiety is growing in the Jewish community as the numbers of American Jews visiting Israel — especially young ones — continue to drop.

With 2,000 leaders from around the country gathered in Washington this week for the biennial United Jewish Communities' Young Leadership Conference, there was a chance to assess where the American Jewish community stands vis-a-vis Israel.

Financial support from communities to Israel remains strong, but emotional attachment seems to be at a crossroads. Fewer people visiting Israel makes it difficult to articulate the necessity of helping Israel, and distances the United States from its ally and friend in the Middle East, the 30- and 40-something-year-old participants in the conference said.

It also makes for uncertainty about future leaders of the American Jewish community.

When teens and college-age young adults go on Israel trips, many forge a lifelong connection to the Jewish state, that later translates into leading positions in the federation system. If fewer youths get that "Israel experience," however, the result could have unwelcome consequences for the Jewish community.

"There could be a long-term drag on leadership development if it goes on too long," UJC's president and CEO, Stephen Hoffman, told JTA.

Since the Palestinian intifada began 16 months ago, and especially since the Sept. 11 terror attacks, youth movements have canceled summer trips and the American Jewish connection to Israel has been tested, some warn.

Karen Alpiner of Detroit is worried about the dwindling numbers of American Jews visiting Israel and what will happen as fewer people are able to recount firsthand the situation in Israel.

Alpiner wants UJC to sponsor more family missions. The idea is one Hoffman agrees with — but for the future.

"When things get better, we'll have to make more investments in missions," he said.

Hoffman believes Birthright Israel — the free trip for young people who have never visited Israel before — could alleviate the damage from the decrease in youth trips.

In addition, UJC is considering running an Israel-focused summer camp, with a prototype possible for this coming summer.

On the local level, federations could face a long-term ripple effect on their future leadership. Short-term, however, the effects of Israel's crisis situation are confusing.

Financial support for Israel seems firm, despite the absence of specific initiatives and the fact that no end appears to be in sight to the intifada, participants said.

Similarities between the domestic situations in Israel and the United States should be emphasized, some said.

Money is being diverted from social services to defense in both countries, said Cara Levinson of Philadelphia, and just as American Jewish communal needs are high, Israelis are hurting and need help.

"That's the message we have to get out," she said.

The U.S.-Israel relationship is still strong, participants agreed, it just needs some adjustment.

The charged title of one session — "Do We Still Need Israel and Does Israel Need Us?" — got the reaction organizers were likely looking for, as panelists called the question "ridiculous."

But the session was a chance to highlight the effects of "disengagement" and how the divide is growing between American Jews' financial and emotional support for Israel.

Carol Smokler, president of UJC's National Women's Constituency, said American Jews feel the intifada is making Israel dependent on the United States once again.

"We must find a way to raise funds but not be patronizing," she said. "We need to meet each other to know each other."

American Jews cannot just "have a relationship with the mythic land of Israel," she added.

Darrel Friedman, president of the Baltimore Jewish federation, warned against "the turning inward of the American Jewish community," and urged people to keep Israel at the center of their agendas. □

Sept. 11 heroes honored during weeklong visit to Israel

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel is paying tribute to a group of members of the police and military who took part in rescue efforts following the Sept. 11 attacks.

A 12-member delegation from the New York Police Department and the U.S. Army arrived here for a weeklong visit sponsored by Israel's Tourism Ministry and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

The group, including 11 men and one woman, received special citations Monday at a Jerusalem news conference and reception.

"You are a real source of inspiration to everybody," Tourism Minister Binyamin Elon said. "I want to thank you for coming here,"

Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents and one of the trip organizers, said the visit expressed the Israeli public's support for the United States in the wake of the Sept. 11 attacks.

"Israel was the first country to hold a blood drive" for victims of the attacks "and a national day of memorial," Hoenlein said. "The things that unite us are positive — commitment to democracy, to liberty, to values we hold in common. Now we have the negative that unites us — the war against what President Bush calls 'the forces of evil.'"

During the visit, the participants were scheduled to meet with Israeli government officials, police and other rescue workers, visit religious sites and tour northern Israel.

Prior to the trip, Lt. Lee Mackalowe of the NYPD said he had wanted to visit Israel long before the Sept. 11 attacks.

"You can't imagine how glad I am to be here," he said.

A group of Jerusalem school children who met with delegation members at the news conference asked Mackalowe what it feels like to be a hero.

"The people who are heroes are the people buried under the rubble, the firemen, all the police officers, all the emergency medical technicians, all the people who just went to work" and had "no clue they would be victims of a mass homicide by madmen," he said. "Those are the true heroes." □