



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 80, No. 43

Tuesday, March 5, 2002

85th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Jerusalem bomb toll rises to 10

The death toll from Saturday night's suicide bombing in Jerusalem rose to 10.

Avi Hazan, 36, died Sunday night of injuries sustained in the terror attack.

Hazan was attending his nephew's Bar Mitzvah when a suicide bomber belonging to a military wing of Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction blew himself up in the fervently Orthodox neighborhood of Beit Israel.

Israel targets car, kills 6

Israel killed six Palestinians on Monday when it blew up the car of a Hamas member.

An Israeli tank shell hit the car Monday in the West Bank city of Ramallah, killing at least six people, including the Hamas member's wife and three children.

The Hamas member, Hussein Abu Kwaik, was not in the car.

Israeli Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer issued a statement expressing regret and saying that the shell had been fired at a vehicle carrying armed Palestinians and that "an adjacent vehicle carrying civilians was hit by mistake."

Hamas called it a "Zionist crime" and said Israel would "pay a heavy price."

10 Palestinians killed in fighting

At least 10 Palestinians were killed Monday in Israeli army raids in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Three of the 10 were killed in clashes with Israeli troops in the Rafah refugee camp in southern Gaza.

Seven Palestinians were reported killed in clashes in Jenin.

Israel's actions in Gaza and the West Bank came after Israel's Security Cabinet met Sunday night and approved "continuous military pressure" on the Palestinian Authority and terrorist groups. That decision came in response to the slaying of 22 Israelis in weekend terrorist attacks.

Israel, P.A. cited in U.S. report

A new U.S. State Department report on human rights cited incidents of torture and arbitrary arrest in Israel.

The report also charged Israel and the Palestinian Authority with not doing enough to stop the violence.

A change in leadership unlikely to alter course of Claims Conference

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A change in leadership at the Claims Conference is unlikely to change the way Holocaust restitution funds are used and distributed.

Such is the view of the four individuals nominated to take over the leadership of the organization that, for the past 50 years, has been primarily responsible for \$50 billion in reparations to more than 500,000 Holocaust survivors.

Rabbi Israel Singer, the former secretary-general of the World Jewish Congress, has been nominated as the new president of the Claims Conference.

Singer would replace Rabbi Israel Miller, who recently announced his intention to step down for health reasons.

But in an apparent effort to resolve a power struggle over who would succeed Miller, a deal was worked out to create four leadership positions instead of one.

The other nominees are Julius Berman as chairman, Moshe Sanbar as chairman of the executive and Roman Kent as treasurer.

But the Jewish Agency for Israel, which had hoped for a greater role in deciding how to distribute what could amount to hundreds of millions of dollars in outstanding reparations, complained that it was shut out of the nominating process and that the new leadership would not properly represent Israeli interests.

It has vowed to fight the nominations and involve Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

The conference board is scheduled to vote on the nominees April 11.

The recent creation of several compensation and restitution funds around the world means the conference will be administering compensation programs and distributing payments for the next few years.

The conference disburses funds to individuals and organizations and works to regain Jewish property lost during the Holocaust.

Using money from the sale of unclaimed Jewish property in the former East Germany, it gives grants to organizations to help needy survivors and Holocaust education projects.

Many people are looking for clues as to how funds will be distributed to survivors and education projects, though so far it seems there won't be big changes.

The direction of the conference will not be "altered in any substantial fashion under the new administration," said Berman, a former chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and currently chairman of the board of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University.

The amount of funds remaining to be allocated ultimately could reach hundreds of millions of dollars, depending on how much is earned from the sale of property in the former East Germany.

A debate has raged in recent years over the use of restitution funds, and whether there should be a balance among the needs of survivors, Holocaust education and the potential help the money could bring for Jewish education and identity-building in the Diaspora.

Sanbar, currently chairman of the Center of Organizations for Holocaust Survivors in Israel, said the money has to go to Holocaust-related purposes and should not be used for anything else — even for a "good Jewish purpose."

Berman said that the conference's primary goal remains "to aid survivors, especially in the last years of their lives."

Singer, who was the conference's vice president and its lead negotiator in many

MIDEAST FOCUS

Palestinian killed near roadblock

Israeli troops shot and killed a knife-wielding Palestinian on Monday at a West Bank roadblock.

The army said the troops suspected the Palestinian of planning to attack them. The army said he ran toward the checkpoint shouting "God is Great" in Arabic, wielding a knife and carrying a bag.

Israel strikes in Bethlehem

Israeli missiles destroyed the main Palestinian Authority building in Bethlehem. The missiles caused explosions Monday that could be heard some six miles away in central Jerusalem. Witnesses said Israeli F-16 jets fired the missiles. Hours later, Israeli helicopters fired missiles at Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's compound in Ramallah.

The missiles hit a building some 10 to 15 yards from Arafat's office; he was unhurt.

Mubarak calls for summit

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak is calling for a meeting between Ariel Sharon and Yasser Arafat. Mubarak, who is visiting Washington this week, proposed the meeting Monday in a bid to promote what he called a "window of hope" in the Middle East.

Vatican approves Israeli decision

The Vatican welcomed a decision by Israel to stop construction of a mosque near the main Christian shrine in Nazareth. Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro Valls said in a statement Monday that Israel's decision the previous day had "re-established legality and respect for holy places and regard for the respective communities of believers."

In Nazareth, however, a leader of the Islamic Movement described Israel's decision as a declaration of war. "We defeated the crusaders 800 years ago, and we will defeat the enemies of Islam today," said Nazareth's deputy mayor, Salman Abu Ahmed.



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, *Finance and Administration Director*

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.

restitution settlements, recently told JTA: "I negotiated the settlements, I recovered it, and let me tell you, as long as there's a Holocaust survivor in need, they are the primary beneficiaries."

Although Singer did not return phone calls for this story, he did in a recent interview tell JTA that if money is left over, "it should be used to revitalize and create a renaissance for the Jewish people."

Berman said it is critical that geographic areas or organizational affiliation not divide the conference.

Representatives of the Jewish Agency — which helped found the Claims Conference in 1951 — were upset that they weren't included in the nominating process.

"They left Israel out of the picture," said Chaim Chesler, the Jewish Agency's treasurer. "It's unheard of."

Chesler said the nominees would not properly represent Israeli interests. Although Sanbar is Israeli, he said he will leave his position with the Israeli survivors' group when he joins the conference leadership.

Chesler and Sallai Meridor, the agency's chairman, met with Miller and tried to persuade him to postpone the nominations and change the nominating committee's structure.

But Miller declined.

Both Chesler and Meridor were offered the positions of vice president, but Chesler said that it was just a title with no role.

The Jewish Agency wants to see Israel more involved in the distribution of funds, Chesler said.

In a letter to the conference, Chesler and Meridor said Israel was "the true heir of all unclaimed assets from the Holocaust."

Kent, also the chairman of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, wrote back that all unclaimed assets from the Holocaust belong "first and foremost" to survivors.

Kent also chided the Jewish Agency for not properly assisting Holocaust survivors in the past.

A source close to the issue said the agency is in severe financial straits and is trying to get control of the conference in order to use the restitution funds to pay for its programs.

Chesler denied the charge, saying the agency simply wants to be a part of the decision-making process for distributing funds.

Conference officials say projects in Israel have received priority, given the large number of Holocaust survivors who live there.

But the agency appears willing to fight the new leadership.

Chesler said it has "many moves" left and is in close cooperation with the Israeli Prime Minister's Office.

The Claims Conference will be in charge of hundreds of millions of dollars from the sale of heirless or communal property in the former East Germany.

So far, the conference has sold off some 50 to 60 percent of the assets, and has allocated over \$400 million — primarily from such sales — since 1995.

The conference decided that 80 percent of the revenue should go to institutions and agencies that care for needy Holocaust survivors, such as home nursing care, nursing homes and psychiatric hospital wards.

The remaining 20 percent would go toward Holocaust research, education and documentation.

Among the recipients of Claims Conference funding have been the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Israel and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington.

The conference plans to keep the same 80/20 ratio when it sells the remainder of heirless East German properties, according to Hillary Kessler-Godin, the conference's spokeswoman.

There also could be hundreds of millions of dollars in unpaid insurance policies from various European companies, and perhaps tens of millions of dollars from a Swiss government humanitarian fund.

Just what role the conference will play in the disbursal of those funds remains unclear. □

JEWISH WORLD

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Century-old anti-Semitic forgery just won't die a quiet death in Russia

By Lev Gorodetsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — Nearly 100 years after it was first published, a notorious anti-Semitic forgery continues to make waves in Russia.

The latest news came recently, when an Israeli judge presented to a major Russian library a book that exposes the "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" as a fraud.

"The Lie That Doesn't Want to Die" was written by Israeli judge Hadassah Ben-Itto, and later translated into Russian.

The translation couldn't have come at a more propitious moment.

The "Protocols," which purports to reveal a Jewish plot to control the world, has become increasingly popular in Russia in recent years.

During the past year, Jewish activists in Russia have repeatedly accused the Russian Orthodox Church, one of the most influential bodies in the country, of permitting distribution and propaganda of the Protocols in its parishes.

Our Orthodox priest recently recommended the "Protocols" to his congregation as an authentic and instructive document, Pyotr Grigoryev, a Moscow university student, told JTA.

Metropolitan Kirill, the Moscow Patriarchate's chief of foreign relations, refused comment when asked about the issue recently.

In the fall of 1903, the "Protocols," ostensibly revealing a global Jewish plot to destroy Christian civilization and establish a world government, were published in a St. Petersburg newspaper by Sergey Nilus, a xenophobic Russian Orthodox author.

"It is a very roughly done" forgery, Alexander Lokshin, a Moscow-based researcher specializing in the history of Russian Jewry, told JTA. "But it came at the right moment: Russia was entering a period of upheavals and hard times and a regular scapegoat was needed. Therefore it became so popular."

The "Protocols" were banned in the Soviet Union, and surfaced again only during the Gorbachev era.

Even today, not all Russians are ready to admit that the publication, which over the last century has come to be seen as archetypal anti-Semitic writing, was just a fraud.

The document still provokes emotional reactions in contemporary Russia. Not only marginal xenophobic groups, but even some mainstream bodies publish or use the "Protocols" in their propaganda.

A Russian Orthodox publishing house in Yekaterinburg recently printed a book that contained the "Protocols" as an appendix.

Ironically, Yekaterinburg is a place strongly connected with the book's history.

The July 1918 killing of the family of Nicholas II by Yekaterinburg-based Bolsheviks brought a wave of anti-Semitism and made the "Protocols" popular in prozarist circles in the following years.

Eighty years later, the growing popularity of the "Protocols" is being resisted.

Mikhail Oshtrakh, a Jewish community leader, has protested to local and Moscow prosecutors and other officials over what he calls anti-Semitic propaganda in Russian churches.

Last December, regional prosecutors unexpectedly opened a criminal investigation into the local diocese's publication and distribution of hate literature, including the "Protocols."

But Oshtrakh, the representative of the Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union, told JTA that he doesn't expect anybody to be charged or punished in the case.

"I think they will soon close the case. All local media are defending the diocese," he said, adding that he would be happy to receive an official apology from the diocese or the Moscow Patriarchate.

Yet church leaders refuse to oppose anti-Semitism publicly, and local Jews are unwilling to enter a conflict with the powerful Orthodox Church, he said.

Oshtrakh and his small organization appear to be almost alone in the struggle — unsupported by other Jewish groups in Yekaterinburg, and even annoying some Jewish activists by their militant stance. □

Shoah denier declared bankrupt

Holocaust denier David Irving was declared bankrupt. A British court took the step Monday after Irving failed to pay legal costs to an American professor and her publisher.

In 2000, Irving lost a libel suit he brought against Deborah Lipstadt and her publisher, Penguin Books, after she called Irving a Holocaust denier in her book, "Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory."

At the time, the court ordered Irving to pay Lipstadt and Penguin's legal costs, which were estimated to be as high as \$3.3 million. The court took action this week after Irving failed to make an interim payment. A bankruptcy order clears the way to seize assets to settle unpaid debts.

Crown Heights prosecutor named

New York's mayor appointed the prosecutor in the 1997 Crown Heights murder trial to a high-level post. Michael Bloomberg last Friday named Zachary Carter the chair of the Mayor's Committee on the Judiciary, a 19-member committee that submits recommendations to the mayor for appointments to city courts. Carter prosecuted the civil rights case for the murder of Yankel Rosenbaum, a yeshiva student killed in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Crown Heights during the worst recorded riots of blacks and Jews in New York.

Lawmaker blasts extremist party

A U.S. legislator blasted the anti-Semitism voiced by a Hungarian political party in the run-up to the nation's April elections.

The hate speech of the far-right Hungarian Justice and Life Party "will lead sooner or later to aggression, to violence, for this kind of propaganda always has an effect on societies," Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.) said during a recent visit to Budapest.

Lantos, a Hungarian-born Holocaust survivor, said he agreed with the recent remarks of the U.S. ambassador to Hungary, Nancy Goodman Brinker, who voiced concern about the recent increase in anti-Semitic rhetoric.

Exhibit honors diplomat-rescuers

An exhibit opened in Venezuela highlighting the efforts of diplomats from various countries who saved tens of thousands of Jews during the Holocaust.

The exhibit, which opened in Venezuela's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, included documents, photos, remembrances and biographies of the diplomats, whose efforts have been honored by Jerusalem's Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial. Among those featured are Switzerland's Carl Lutz, Portugal's Aristides de Souza Mendes and Japan's Chiune Sugihara.

Recovering from terror weekend, Israelis bury and honor their dead

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — As Israel mourns its dead from a particularly bloody weekend of Palestinian terror, one family stands out in its misery.

Hundreds of mourners crowded into a Rishon le-Zion cemetery Sunday to bury seven victims of the previous night's suicide attack in Jerusalem — all members of the same extended family.

"I want them home. I want them with me," cried the family matriarch, Chana Nehmad.

A mother of eight, Nehmad lost a son, a daughter-in-law and five grandchildren in the attack.

Three others were also killed in the bombing in the fervently Orthodox Beit Israel neighborhood.

The extended family had gathered in Jerusalem over the weekend to celebrate the Bar Mitzvah of one of Nehmad's grandsons. The attack occurred as the Sabbath ended and family members were preparing to go home.

Among those mourned Sunday was Shlomi Nehmad, 40; his wife, Gafnit, 32; and their two daughters, Shiraz, 6, and Liran, 3.

"It is incomprehensible that an entire family disappears in a single second," a bereaved friend said. "They were a match made in heaven. They loved each other and did everything for the children."

Shlomi and Gafnit had met at the offices of the Rishon le-Zion municipality, where they worked in different departments.

Last week, the family had celebrated Liran's third birthday at her nursery school before traveling to Jerusalem. Gafnit was anxious about going to Jerusalem because of the security situation.

"She was afraid to go. She had a bad feeling about it. She even cleared her desk of work before she left," said David Rahamim, Gafnit's boss.

Friends and colleagues described Gafnit as warm and friendly. They said her desk was covered with family pictures and notes friends had written her. Also killed in Saturday's attack was Shaul Nehmad, 15, the son of one of Shlomi's brothers.

Family members recalled how Shaul had run back to the guest house to get wine for the Havdalah service that marks the end of Shabbat. On the return trip, he was killed instantly when a Palestinian suicide bomber detonated his explosives. Shaul's brother, Eli, was seriously wounded.

Ronit Ilan, Shlomi's sister, had gone with her middle daughter, Linoi, to change clothes when the attack occurred.

Ronit's husband, Shimon, was outside with their two other children, Lidor, 12, and Oriah, 18 months, when the blast occurred.

The two children were killed. Shimon was wounded in the leg. "My wife grabbed our daughter, and was crying, 'She's dead, she's dead,'" Shimon said.

He ran to his son, who was lying on the ground. "I hugged him, and cried, 'Don't die, don't die. Daddy loves you.'"

"I just hope that this will be the end of the bloodletting," one mourner told a reporter. "They should be the last ones to lose their lives in this conflict."

As a longtime volunteer medic for Magen David Adom, Yohai Porat helped save lives in numerous terror attacks and disasters, including the Feb. 16 suicide bombing in Karnei Shomron that killed three teen-agers and the June 1, 2001, attack outside a Tel Aviv disco that killed 21 Israelis. On Sunday, while on reserve duty

in the West Bank, Porat was killed along with nine other Israeli soldiers and civilians by a Palestinian sniper.

Porat, 26, was coordinator of the Jewish Agency for Israel-Magen David Adom foreign volunteer program. A week ago, he met Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.), who honored program participants during her visit to Israel.

"I saw him, a week before, young, vigorous, in the uniform of a Magen David Adom paramedic, surrounded by young volunteers from six different countries," a colleague from the Jewish Agency said of last week's event.

"These young men and women looked to him as their leader, which he was. As he emerged from his meeting with Sen. Clinton, his boyish face was filled with emotion.

"He did all in his power to draw the young men and women closer to Israel and to the Magen David Adom family."

Porat, a resident of Kfar Saba, is survived by his parents, a brother and a sister.

Even before immigrating to Israel, Steven Koenigsburg, 19, dreamed of serving in the Israeli army.

In his native South Africa, Koenigsburg was active in the Beitar youth movement. He moved to Israel with his father two-and-a-half years ago and settled in Hod Hasharon. His father, Kevin, said Steven loved Israel from the moment they arrived.

"Steven and I made aliyah because we are Zionists and Israel is our only country," he said.

On Sunday, Koenigsburg, a sergeant, was killed in a Palestinian shooting attack near the Kissufim Crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip. "His death was not a waste," Koenigsburg's father said. "Because of him and his comrades, we can live in this country, which is the only one we have."

As a member of the Givati brigade, Koenigsburg was cited as an outstanding soldier and slated to go to an officer's training course. His friends described him as an exceptional person, to whom many turned for advice.

Koenigsburg is survived by his father, stepmother and stepsister, and by his mother and two siblings. □

Hungarian Jews importing matzah

BUDAPEST (JTA) — Hungarian Jewish leaders are importing matzah in an attempt to avoid a shortage that plagued the community last year.

Reform, Conservative and Orthodox leaders are importing matzah from Israel to avoid last year's fiasco, when the country's 100,000 Jews were saved by a last-minute shipment from the Jewish state. Some 15 to 20 tons of matzah — double the normal amount — is coming from Israel, according to Peter Tordai, president of the Federation of Hungarian Jewish Communities.

"We ordered 7 tons of matzot, which is enough not only for the local Orthodox Jews, but we will donate" some of this "as a charity to neighboring Ukrainian Jews," said Hermann Fixler, the head of Hungary's Orthodox community.

The local factory in Budapest, which had been responsible for the matzah supply here for decades, closed down two years ago after its owners decided it was no longer financially viable.

Private dealers and distributors have begun to import matzah from neighboring Slovakia. Matzah is cheaper to produce in Slovakia, in part because labor is cheaper there, said Zoltan Kondorosi, manager of a local Hungarian company that imports the product from Slovakia. □