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85th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Bomb explodes in Jerusalem

A Palestinian bomber killed at least three people and wounded more than 100 in downtown Jerusalem on Thursday afternoon. After the explosion, Israel postponed Thursday's round of cease-fire talks with the Palestinians. [Page 1]

Saudis apologize for libel

A Saudi editor is apologizing for an article in a government-run daily that said Jews use human blood to make Purim hamantashen.

"What has been mentioned by this writer is wrong. It neither reflects the opinion of the al-Riyadh newspaper nor the Saudi government," the paper's editor in chief said Thursday.

In addition, the statement said, the writer did not understand that "Jews everywhere in the world are one thing, while Jews belonging to the Zionist movement that acts to annihilate the Palestinians are something else," adding, "Our dispute with phenomena such as" Israeli Prime Minister Ariel "Sharon must in no way cause us to generalize the emotions of hatred to all Jews."

The statement came after complaints from the U.S. government.

The paper's editor in chief also said the writer of the article, a freelancer, would not be hired to write for the paper again.

Dead Israeli identified

The last of seven Israelis killed in a terror attack Wednesday has been identified.

Ha'aretz reported that Bella Shneider, 51, from Hadera, was killed when a Palestinian suicide bomber blew up a bus near the Israeli Arab city of Umm el-Fahm in the Galilee.

Israel Miller dies at 83

Rabbi Israel Miller, the longtime head of the Claims Conference, died Thursday in his home in Jerusalem after a long illness. He was 83.

A passionate advocate for the interests of Holocaust survivors, Miller also was an administrator at Yeshiva University for 25 years.

"For me he was one of the great Jewish leaders of this era," said Gideon Taylor, executive vice president of the Claims Conference. "He had vision, courage and wisdom."

With hopes rising for cease-fire, a bomber targets central Jerusalem

By Jessica Steinberg

JERUSALEM (JTA) — King George Street was filled with its usual afternoon rush-hour crowd of pedestrians stopping for a schwarma sandwich, buying fresh baguettes, wolfing down a plate of hummus or shopping for hats against the hard Jerusalem sun.

And then Eli saw him — an Arab man who had just gotten off one of the many buses that ply the city center. The man seemed a bit bewildered, turning from one side to the next, seemingly searching for his orientation.

This is a terrorist, thought Eli, 22, who like other Israelis has been besieged in recent months with news of suicide bombings that have killed scores of Israelis, and of others that were averted just in time.

Eli turned to look for a policeman, but he never had time to convey his warning.

At that moment, Mohammed Hashaika, also 22, from a West Bank village near Nablus, detonated a bomb that had been filled with nails and metal bits to maximize the damage. "You just don't have time in these kinds of situations," Eli told Israel Radio shortly after the attack. "I just thank God that I'm relatively OK."

Others were not so lucky. The bomb killed at least three people and wounded more than 100.

The attack came as Israeli officials were expressing optimism that U.S.-brokered peace talks might be able to bring about a cease-fire in the 18-month-old Palestinian intifada. As with a bus bombing the previous day that killed seven Israelis, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's government did not order an immediate military retaliation.

It did, however, cancel a round of Israeli-Palestinian truce talks that had been scheduled for Thursday evening.

Hashaika was sent on his mission by the Al-Aksa Brigades, a militia of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement.

Israeli officials said they held Arafat responsible for the attack.

"Arafat is taking no action whatsoever, even the most minimal action" against terrorists, Sharon spokesman Ra'anana Gissin said.

Arafat condemned the bombing in unusually forceful terms, vowing to "put an end" to such attacks. However, a spokesman for the brigades said Arafat had given no order to stop attacking Israelis.

In Washington, after months of hesitation, the U.S. State Department announced it was adding the Al-Aksa Brigades to its list of foreign terrorist organizations.

The brigades become the fourth Palestinian group on the list, joining Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

State Department spokesman Philip Reeker said it was unclear to what extent the group acts with the approval of Fatah's senior leadership.

However, given Fatah's centrality to the PLO and the Palestinian Authority, the brigades are the closest organization to Arafat to make the State Department's list.

The designation, which will not become law until next week, makes it illegal to provide funds or material support to the group in the United States and requires banks to freeze funds held in its name. Members of the group can also be denied visas to the United States.

The State Department also said it was moving forward with other steps to add the Al-Aksa Brigades to a parallel terrorist list in the White House. If the group is designated a terrorist organization by White House executive order, foreign banks would be asked to freeze the organization's assets or risk having the bank's U.S. assets

MIDEAST FOCUS

Jerusalem car bomber jailed

The Jerusalem District Court sentenced a Palestinian terrorist to 25 years in prison Wednesday.

Ahad Natshe, 25, from Beit Hanina in northern Jerusalem was convicted in a plea bargain arrangement for planting a car bomb in a parking lot under a residential building in Jerusalem last July.

The blast caused damage but no casualties. Jerusalem Police Chief Mickey Levy announced Wednesday that police have apprehended three other Palestinians who drove two separate suicide bombers to the sites of their attacks.

Israel arrests Palestinians

Israeli troops arrested more than 20 Palestinian terror suspects in the northern West Bank. In southern Israel, police are examining a Kassam rocket found in the fields of a western Negev farming community.

Israeli army blasted

An Israeli human rights organization criticized the army's open-fire rules. B'Tselem charged that Israel Defense Force regulations allow the use of live ammunition in situations where there is no clear threat to life. The organization also stated that IDF regulations are too vaguely worded and not given to soldiers in a straightforward manner.

B'Tselem also charged that the army has opened only superficial investigations when lethal force is used against Palestinian civilians. The IDF denied the charges.

Matzah cop patrol established

Israel's Interior Ministry will fine any business offering leavened foods during Passover. The ministry is borrowing five Druse inspectors from the Labor and Social Affairs Ministry to be matzah inspectors during the eight-day holiday. The fine will be \$80, more than double last year's fine for selling leavened food.



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frozen. The brigades could be added to another list, the terrorist exclusion list, which strengthens the United States' ability to exclude supporters of terrorism from the country or to deport them if they are found within U.S. borders, according to the State Department's Reeker. Secretary of State Colin Powell spoke with Arafat by telephone, telling him, that "the time to act is now," Reeker said.

President Bush said he is "disappointed" with Arafat.

"We've set some strong conditions" for him to fulfill, Bush said. "We expect Mr. Arafat to meet those conditions."

Thursday's attack came a day after Jerusalem police released statistics showing 50 terror attacks or attempted attacks in the capital in 2001, a 500 percent increase from the year before. As during so many other times during the intifada, Jerusalem's city center Thursday afternoon was a tangle of ambulances, emergency medical workers, bleeding victims, journalists and horrified onlookers.

Visiting the blast scene, Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert said Israel was "at war, and we will be at war for the foreseeable future. I am not willing to turn Jerusalem into a closed military base."

Several hours after the bombing, life began returning to semi-normal.

Roads in the city center were reopened, a basketball game was broadcast on the radio and television stations resumed their regular programming.

Yet not everyone wanted to return to normality so quickly. Some 50 demonstrators gathered near the site of the attack, demanding harder military strikes against the Palestinians and protesting what they called the government's inaction.

At the Ra'anana Junction north of Tel Aviv, some 100 people carried placards calling on Sharon to bring down the Palestinian Authority. A large poster depicted Osama bin Laden and Arafat as terrorist twins.

"We must act," Interior Minister Eli Yishai said Thursday night. "We are in a war, and the Americans must understand that."

One witness to the bombing, identified on the radio only as Israel, said the terrorist looked suspicious, but he did not have time to tell the authorities.

"I was very close to him," Israel said. "I saw him walking, looking here and there, and I saw he looked suspicious. I wanted to call someone, but I didn't have time. Then he blew up. I saw arms and legs flying all over the place."

Rena Cohen, who works at a bank near the site of the attack, said: "We can't take this anymore. I don't know how we're supposed to leave our homes in the morning."

Wary of more attacks, police and soldiers are on high alert for the upcoming Passover holiday, with guards to be deployed in all major cities and in all bus stations considered vulnerable to attacks. Yet the concentrations of police and security forces already on high alert in Jerusalem failed to stop Hashaika.

It's not clear what effect the bombing — as well as several shooting and bombing attacks on Israeli civilians Thursday in the West Bank that caused no injuries — will have on the fate of the U.S. peace effort.

U.S. envoy Anthony Zinni met separately with Sharon and Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer on Thursday night.

"There cannot be a cease-fire that only Israel honors," Ben-Eliezer said afterward.

Zinni had expressed optimism that this, his third mission to the region, was making progress toward a genuine cease-fire.

The United States also had dangled the prospect of a meeting with Vice President Dick Cheney early next week to induce Arafat to combat Palestinian terror.

A State Department official said the Cheney-Arafat meeting was in doubt, given the two major terror attacks within 30 hours on Wednesday and Thursday.

"It's safe to say we're further away from such a meeting than when the vice president was in the region" earlier this week, the official said.

Late Thursday, Israeli television reported that Palestinian security services recently had arrested Hashaika at Israel's insistence. Israel had presented evidence that Hashaika, a Palestinian Authority policeman, was preparing to carry out a suicide bombing inside Israel.

Pressed for goodwill gestures to ease the American mission, Israel agreed to a P.A. request to transfer Hashaika from a jail in Tulkarm to one in Ramallah. Palestinian officials soon released Hashaika, saying they feared for his safety when Israeli troops briefly invaded the city earlier this month. □

JEWISH WORLD

Anti-Semitism up in Canada

Anti-Semitic incidents in Canada rose after the Sept. 11 attacks.

Some 35 percent of anti-Semitic incidents reported to B'nai Brith Canada's office took place in September and October, according to the group's new report.

"Our audit this year illustrates that anti-Semitic propaganda emanating from abroad has already reached these shores," said Frank Diamant, executive vice president of B'nai Brith Canada.

Tycoon wants to leave Russia

An embattled Russian Jewish tycoon is asking for permanent residence status in Britain. Boris Berezovsky has come under pressure from the Kremlin in recent weeks after saying Moscow staged apartment house bombings in Moscow and Volgograd in 1999, which it blamed on Chechen Muslim rebels.

Political flier uses Nazi imagery

A state Republican legislator distributed a flier portraying three Democratic gun control advocates as Nazis.

Maryland legislator Augustus Alzona, who distributed the flier last week, described it as "political parody" and said he would not resign. The flier showed the heads of the delegates on the bodies of uniformed Nazi soldiers in front of a Holocaust victim, and read "Montgomery County democrats have a final solution for all of Maryland's gun owners."

The Republican Jewish Coalition called the flier "offensive and hateful" and said it hoped that Republicans and Democrats would speak out against the material.

Ex-Israeli wins primary

A former Clinton aide won a Democratic primary in Chicago, despite a campaign marred by anti-Semitism.

Rahm Emanuel, a senior adviser to President Clinton, was accused of holding both American and Israeli citizenship, having served in the Israel Defense Forces and harming Palestinians.

Opponents in the heavily Polish 5th Congressional District charged that Israel is an anti-Polish state. Emanuel no longer holds Israeli citizenship.

Anti-Semitism hits Brazilian show

A cast member of a Brazilian reality television show was voted off after she made anti-Semitic remarks.

Eighty-five percent of viewers wanted Estela Padilha off the Brazilian version of "Big Brother" after she made the remarks and also praised the World Trade Center bombing.

BACKGROUNDER

If a cease-fire does take hold, Tenet, Mitchell plans then kick in

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The guideposts to ending the 18-month-old Palestinian intifada remain plans submitted by two senior American officials.

First came former Sen. George Mitchell, champion of the peace pact in northern Ireland. He was followed by CIA Director George Tenet.

Both have failed — but their drafts have become the cornerstones for subsequent attempts to end the escalating violence.

The Mitchell Committee was composed of a highly respected international cast: Suleyman Demirel, former president of Turkey; Thorbjørn Jagland, foreign minister of Norway; former U.S. Sen. Warren Rudman; and Javier Solana, a leading European Union official. The committee first arrived on the scene in December 2000, when Ehud Barak was still Israel's prime minister, and concluded its work four months later.

On April 30, 2001, the committee issued a report calling for the immediate cessation of violence — and, later, a freeze on Israeli settlement-building — but refrained from blaming either side for the outbreak of hostilities.

The plan was intended a ladder allowing both Israelis and Palestinians to climb down from the high intifada tree.

The main points of the 32-page report were:

- Israel and the Palestinian Authority should immediately implement an unconditional cease-fire.
- The two sides should immediately resume security cooperation.
- A "cooling-off period" would be followed by confidence-building measures.
- The sides would condemn and discourage all forms of incitement.
- The Palestinian Authority would make clear that terrorism is unacceptable and make a complete effort to prevent terrorist operations and punish perpetrators. The effort would include immediate steps to arrest and jail terrorists.
- Israel would freeze all settlement activity in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, including the "natural growth" of existing settlements.
- The Palestinian Authority would prevent gunmen from using civilian areas to stage attacks on Israelis.
- Israel should lift closures, transfer to the Palestinian Authority all tax revenues frozen since the intifada began, permit Palestinians who worked in Israel to return to their jobs, and make sure soldiers and settlers do not damage Palestinian homes, roads, trees and other agricultural property.

Israel reacted favorably to the report, albeit with reservations — particularly about the linkage between an end to violence and end to settlement building.

For their part, the Palestinians were disappointed that the committee did not recommend an international force for the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Enter CIA chief Tenet, who came to the region after the Mitchell process failed to take hold and issued a new report on June 13. Tenet's main goal was to put in place a cease-fire that would allow for implementation of the Mitchell report.

The main point in Tenet's report eventually turned out to be its main obstacle. At the insistence of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, the Tenet document in effect assumed a period of seven days without attacks as a condition for moving forward.

The main points in the Tenet plan were:

- Israel and the Palestinian Authority agree to reestablish security cooperation and, within one week, to return the situation on the ground to what existed before the intifada began on Sept. 28, 2000.
- A demonstrable on-the-ground redeployment of Israel forces would begin within the first 48 hours of the one-week period.
- Within a week of resuming security cooperation, a timeline would be developed for Israel to lift the closures it imposed on Palestinian areas in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and to reopen roads, the Allenby Bridge, Gaza Airport, the Gaza seaport and border crossings. Israeli checkpoints would be minimized.
- Even if violence flared, the two sides would continue security cooperation through a joint committee. □

Algerian compares Israel to Nazis as U.N. conference gets under way

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Arab world's assault on Israel in international forums reached new heights this week in Geneva, Jewish observers say.

It was there that the Algerian delegate to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights repeatedly invoked Holocaust imagery to describe Israeli treatment of Palestinians.

As the Geneva meeting kicked off its 58th session Monday, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was once again expected to garner a disproportionate amount of attention and harm Israel's image.

Pro-Israel advocates say that while the 53-member commission — which is touted as the world's leading body for the protection and promotion of human rights and claims Syria, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Cuba, China and Sudan as members — is ostensibly striving to bring peace to the Middle East, its one-sided resolutions continue to prove counterproductive.

"There are two parties to this contentious issue, and if one of these parties feels it's bludgeoned and ganged up against, every time and in every international forum, then why would it feel moved to act?" asked Dan Mariaschin, executive vice president of B'nai B'rith International, whose small delegation in Geneva was led by President Richard Heideman.

"For that reason, it should fall on deaf ears in Israel."

In his opening remarks on Thursday, Mohamed-Salah Dembri, the Algerian ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, reportedly said: "Kristallnacht repeats itself daily" against "the ghettoized Palestinian people."

In comments translated from French by U.N. Watch, he added: "We must end this 'night and fog'" — a reference to the German expression 'nacht und nebel' used by the Nazis — "inflicted on the Palestinian population by the inheritors of the Shoah."

The commission meeting, which lasts six weeks, comes amid a diplomatic spat between Israel and U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who recently condemned Israel's "illegal occupation" and whose letter to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon criticizing his policies was leaked to the media.

The commission gathering is also the first to discuss global human-rights issues since the U.N.-sponsored World Conference Against Racism late last summer in Durban, South Africa.

Israel and the United States walked out of that event, charging it had been hijacked by anti-Israel extremists.

Israel was accused of "apartheid," "genocide," "ethnic cleansing" and "war crimes"; a final document was toned down, lamenting the "plight of the Palestinians" under "foreign occupation," but the fact such wording appears in an anti-racism document implies they are victims of Israeli racism.

Israeli officials maintain the conflict is over politics, not race.

Jewish activists in Durban said they were stunned by the level of vitriol aimed at Israel in general — and Jews specifically — and talked of being better prepared next time around.

With Geneva approaching, they expected more of the same and lobbied various governments with their concerns.

The Geneva-based U.N. Watch began lobbying diplomats in November and disseminated "talking points" to 40 major Jewish communities throughout the Diaspora to use for pro-Israel advocacy with their governments, said Andrew Srulevitch, the U.N. Watch's executive director.

Hadassah: The Women's Zionist Organization of America planned its annual congress to coincide with the U.N. meeting in Geneva and invited 40 diplomats to its luncheon on the day of the opening session, said Amy Goldstein, Hadassah's national director of Israel, Zionist and international affairs. But the first week of debate went even worse than anticipated, Jewish observers reported.

This was for two reasons, they said: the dramatic spike in bloodshed over the past month, and the U.S. absence from the commission. The United States — which routinely raises its influential voice in defense of Israel — has been relegated to "observer" status. Last spring, the country lost its seat on the commission for the first time since its creation in 1947, when votes for the three seats designated for Western countries went to France, Austria and Sweden.

Many observers viewed the humiliating ouster as a rebuke of America's perceived unilateralism, disregard for international treaties and controversial plan to build a missile-defense system.

Washington reportedly lobbied for months behind the scenes to win back its seat.

That campaign seemed to culminate last week with the announcement by Spain and Italy that they were withdrawing their candidacies to fill several new vacancies, paving the way for a U.S. return to the commission next year.

Elections will be held at the end of the current session, in late April.

But with Washington marginalized at the Geneva meeting, Jewish observers suggest it may be emboldening the Arab world to issue harsher denunciations of the Jewish state.

During the first week, the Syrian representative accused Israel of "genocide" and "massacres of children."

The U.N. high commissioner for human rights, Mary Robinson, whom Israeli officials and Jewish activists long accuse of harboring pro-Palestinian sympathies, opened the session Monday, saying:

"Palestinians continue to be subjected to a wide range of human rights violations related to the ongoing occupation. Israel also continues to suffer from deliberate killings of civilians."

Robinson, who announced her intention to step down from the post, called for international observers to be present on the ground "as a deterrent to the violations of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories and also to promote human security against suicide and other attacks on Israeli civilians."

But Jewish activists were most taken aback by the remarks of Dembri, the Algerian ambassador.

"Must we wait in silence until new death camps are built, new massacres like at Babi Yar?" he asked, according to the U.N. Watch translation.

And "what about the Israeli soldiers, the true disciples of Goebbels and of Himmler, who strip the clothes from their Palestinian prisoners in front of the cameras of the world and inscribe numbers on their bodies, just as they were tattooed in the concentration camps."

With this ratcheting up of rhetoric, Goldstein said, the Arab world "tells us what they really intend to do. By taking the language of the Holocaust and turning it on its head, they are denying the history and the identity of the Jewish people.

"My question is: How are the Europeans going to respond to the hijacking of their history in this way?"

In fact, Jewish activists say they don't expect the European Union to speak out. □