



Daily News Bulletin

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85th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Eight killed in bus bombing

Eight Israelis were killed and 14 wounded in a suicide bus bombing near Haifa on Wednesday morning. The powerful blast demolished the bus, which was crowded with commuters traveling from Haifa to Jerusalem. Police believe the terrorist got on the bus one or two stops before he blew himself up near Yagur Junction, southeast of Haifa.

A senior police official said security forces were on alert for possible attempts by Palestinian terrorists to carry out attacks, but had had no specific warning of Wednesday's attack.

No cuts planned in aid to Israel

President Bush will "remain persistent" in efforts to get Israel to withdraw from the West Bank, according to spokesman Ari Fleischer.

Fleischer also told reporters Wednesday that Bush has no plans to withhold U.S. aid to Israel should Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon refuse to order the troop withdrawal.

When a reporter spoke of Sharon's refusal to heed Bush's repeated demands for a withdrawal, Fleischer said, "Welcome to the Middle East."

Fleischer also reiterated that the United States sees Palestinian suicide bombers as terrorists, not freedom fighters.

14th soldier killed in Jenin

Another Israeli soldier was killed during fighting Tuesday night in the Jenin refugee camp. Twelve others were wounded when they were fired on while searching a building. Earlier Tuesday, 13 other soldiers were killed in a Palestinian ambush.

Another member of the Israel Defense Force, Maj. Asaf Asulin, 30, of Tel Aviv, was also killed Tuesday, during clashes in Nablus. The army is investigating the possibility that he was killed by friendly fire.

On Wednesday, armed Palestinians began surrendering to Israeli forces in Jenin. Reports said some 200 Palestinians, including civilians, had given themselves up.

More than 100 Palestinians are believed to have been killed in the Jenin refugee camp. Among those reported killed was Mahmoud Tawalbeh, 23, a leader of Islamic Jihad who masterminded a number of suicide bombings in Israel.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Blurring the line between anti-Israel and anti-Jewish

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — It was on full display last year at the global anti-racism conference in Durban, South Africa, but the "demonization" of Israel has reached a frenetic pitch in the past month with the surging death toll in the Middle East, Jewish observers say.

Even as Holocaust Remembrance Day is marked this week, anti-Israel critics worldwide increasingly are employing Nazi and Holocaust imagery and analogies to describe the Jewish state's behavior toward the Palestinians.

At the same time, Western Europe — particularly France — has seen a rash of attacks on synagogues and other Jewish institutions, prompting one French Jewish leader to compare the current situation to Kristallnacht, the night in November 1938 when Nazi thugs destroyed Jewish homes and synagogues across Austria and Germany.

All of which seems to prove the adage coined by the French writer and philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre: "Words are loaded pistols."

Pro-Israel advocates say they accept the fallibility of Israel and the right to criticize it. However, the line between anti-Israel sentiment and anti-Semitism blurs when the world seems to hold Israel to a higher standard than all other countries.

"I wouldn't have a problem if the Fourth Geneva Convention were convened to discuss Rwanda and Northern Ireland and Kashmir and the Middle East, but why is it that it's been convened only twice in its 53-year history — both times to discuss Israel? That's anti-Semitism," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, referring to a set of human rights guidelines passed after World War II.

"How many times did the U.N. Security Council meet to discuss and pass resolutions about Rwanda or Northern Ireland? You have to ask the question: Why only Israel?" Foxman asked.

Beneath today's vitriol for Israel, Jewish observers detect a form of anti-Semitism of the "we-don't-hate-Jews, just-the-Jewish-state variety," which was first formally enshrined when the United Nations denigrated Zionism as racism in 1975.

Likening Israelis to Nazis is particularly nefarious, advocates say, and goes hand in hand with the Holocaust denial pervasive in the Arab world.

"To open the world for new crimes against Jews, you either have to say the Holocaust did not exist, or to minimize or trivialize it by saying that the victims are really the victimizers," Rabbi Michael Melchior, Israel's deputy foreign minister, told JTA. "This is total demonization of the State of Israel and, therefore, of the Jew. Whether they be an Israeli Jew or a French Jew."

In some cases, the rhetoric is purely political, aimed at damaging Israel's image. For many of those who blindly mimic the rhetoric, it's ignorance of history.

But for a sizeable portion — especially many in Western Europe — it is a way to ease the conscience, Holocaust historian Michael Berenbaum said.

"It's some measure of solace for Europeans that Israel seems to be in the morally compromised position, because it relieves them of the residual guilt they have for the Holocaust," said Berenbaum, a professor at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles and the former director of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum's Research Institute.

"It's a way of getting even with Jews, whom they think have lorded the moral depravity of the Europeans over their heads."

The current movement can be traced to the 1960s, Foxman said, when some in the Arab world embraced the Holocaust denial propagated by unreformed Nazis. "The idea

MIDEAST FOCUS

E.U. votes against Israel

E.U. lawmakers voted for new pressure on Israel to stop its military operation in the West Bank.

Meeting in Brussels on Wednesday, the European Parliament approved a nonbinding resolution calling on E.U. governments to impose an arms embargo on Israel and to suspend the E.U. association agreement with Israel, which governs trade and political ties between Israel and the European bloc.

P.A. interested in bio-weaponry

The Palestinian Authority showed "an interest" in developing biological and chemical weapons, according to Israeli intelligence officials.

The officials made the claim based on documents Israeli forces found recently in P.A. offices in Ramallah and other West Bank cities, according to Middle East News Line.

"We see at this stage an interest" in developing "weapons of mass destruction," said Col. Miri Eisen, an intelligence officer. "We're not talking about nuclear weapons. We see the interest in research and development in chemical and biological weapons."

However, Eisen said at a briefing Sunday that the Palestinians did not actually launch such a weapons development program.

Germany has Mideast peace plan

Germany's foreign minister has drafted a Middle East peace plan. Joschka Fischer plans to present the plan at a meeting next week of E.U. foreign ministers in Luxembourg.

The plan calls for an Israeli-Palestinian cease-fire, followed by an Israeli troop withdrawal, the early declaration of a Palestinian state and an end to Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell declined Wednesday to comment on the plan, saying it was inappropriate to do so until it was formally presented.



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was, if the only reason Jews were given Israel was because of the Holocaust, then if this is a hoax, they don't really deserve it," Foxman said.

Over time, he said, Arab and Muslim Holocaust deniers have generally become even more zealous than neo-Nazis. Then came the "Zionism is racism" equation, a U.N. resolution that remained on the books until it was rescinded in 1991.

U.N. officials, including Secretary-General Kofi Annan, have described that period as a stain on the world body's record.

Nevertheless, it was feared that the Arab world was angling to resurrect the equation at the U.N.-sponsored World Conference Against Racism late last summer in Durban. In fact, the denunciations of Israel there were broader and more visceral.

Israel and the Middle East overwhelmed all other issues, as Israel was branded an "apartheid state" guilty of "genocide," "ethnic cleansing" and "war crimes."

In street rallies outside the conference, some protesters likened Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to Hitler. Other handed out caricatures of bloodthirsty Israelis killing Palestinian children, copies of the anti-Semitic tract "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" and fliers with Hitler's photo above the question: "What if I had won? There would be no Israel, and no Palestinian bloodshed."

As Irwin Cotler, a Canadian politician and human rights lawyer, said in Durban, "In a world in which human rights has emerged as the secular religion of our time, Israel, portrayed as the worst of human-rights violators, is the new anti-Christ."

Most disturbing to Jewish observers was not that Arab and Muslim delegates were ganging up on Israel, but how easily so many otherwise compassionate activists from around the world jumped aboard the bandwagon.

In light of the now-renewed rhetorical offensive against Israel, Foxman said, "Durban was the dress rehearsal to see if this kind of anti-Semitism could sell. And with all these well-meaning people there who would have laid down their lives for others, no one was willing to stand up for the Jews."

With Israel's siege of Palestinian cities, refugee camps and the Ramallah headquarters of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, Israel has been barraged with Holocaust denials, Nazi comparisons and blood libels that circulate globally via the Internet. On March 7, according to the ADL, the director of the Palestinian News Agency, Ziad Abd-al-Fatah, said: "What they are doing now to our people is a 'Holocaust' in every sense of the word, while what happened to them was not a 'Holocaust' since researchers doubt its veracity and the testimonies are also doubtful."

On March 21, Algerian diplomat Mohamed-Salah Dembri told the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in Geneva that "Kristallnacht repeats itself daily" against "the ghettoized Palestinian people."

"Must we wait in silence until new death camps are built, new massacres like at Babi Yar?" said Dembri, referring to the two-day slaughter in 1941 of more than 30,000 Jews outside Kiev.

The fusillade also has come from beyond the Arab world.

On March 26, Portuguese writer Jose Saramago, who won the 1998 Nobel Prize in Literature, was quoted as describing the Israeli blockade of Ramallah as "in the spirit of Auschwitz," and said, "this place is being turned into a concentration camp."

On April 5, the Kuala Lumpur-based newspaper The Star quoted Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad saying Israelis needed to be stopped, like the Bosnian Serbs. "Of course, some of the European countries have begun to say something," Mohamad reportedly said.

"But you know, Europe is still feeling guilty about the Holocaust. It dares not say anything against Israel. And as a result, the Palestinians have to pay a price for the Jews being killed in Europe during the last [world] war."

Mohamad will be meeting with President Bush next month in Washington.

Not many are speaking out against the incendiary rhetoric.

One notable exception, though, was the president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Jakob Kellenberger.

On March 26, in his address to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, Kellenberger said: "It would be misleading to think that recent or present-day international crimes surpass the evils that humans have historically inflicted on humans. Does anyone really believe that the suffering caused by current conflicts around the globe surpasses the ravages of World War II and the atrocities that accompanied it?"

Still, rebuttals seem few and far between. □

JEWISH WORLD

Anti-Semitism drops in U.S.

The number of anti-Semitic incidents declined in the United States in 2001.

There were 1,432 incidents in 40 states and the District of Columbia, reflecting an 11 percent decline from 2000, according to a report by the Anti-Defamation League.

The group said the decline is partly due to tighter security at Jewish sites. New York and California both saw significant drops in the number of incidents, and nationwide there was a decrease in the number of acts of vandalism.

Paper faces lawsuit over ad

Lebanon is preparing to file charges against the International Herald Tribune over a pro-Israeli ad that appeared last week in the newspaper, which has a Beirut edition.

The ad in last Friday's edition was sponsored by the New York-based Anti-Defamation League and ran on page 7 under the headline, "Israel, we are with you. Now more than ever." Under Lebanese law, a foreign publication that is distributed in Lebanon cannot publish items considered propaganda for Israel.

Report: Bombers target Oslo sites

Muslims are being recruited to become suicide bombers against Jewish targets in Oslo, a Norwegian newspaper reported.

Security was increased at the Israeli Embassy and a synagogue in the Norwegian capital after police learned of the plot from a member of a mosque where the plan allegedly was discussed, according to the report.

Jews blamed for envoy's firing

The Swiss ambassador to Germany lost his post because of Jewish pressure, his supporters say. The charge surfaced after the Swiss Foreign Ministry recalled Thomas Borer to Bern.

Before his posting to Germany, Borer had been Switzerland's leading troubleshooter for dealing with accusations that Swiss banks had close financial ties to the Nazis and had hoarded the contents of long-dormant bank accounts opened by Holocaust victims. While serving as ambassador to Germany, Borer had been the subject of reports alleging that he was living in high style at taxpayers' expense.

He was dismissed after the Swiss daily *Blick* reported that Borer had had an extramarital affair at his residence in Berlin while his wife was in Switzerland. Borer supporters told Swiss Television that Borer had been the target of a Jewish plot. A spokesman for Swiss Foreign Minister Joseph Deiss told JTA that the Foreign Ministry rejected such allegations as "non-sense."

Netanyahu warns senators against double standard in the war on terror

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told U.S. senators that the United States may be wavering in its commitment to fight terrorism — and that Israel must expel Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat if it wants to end violence in the region.

"Until last week, I was absolutely certain that the United States would adhere to its principles and lead the free world to a decisive victory. Today I, too, have my concerns," Netanyahu said in an address Wednesday to about 20 senators on Capitol Hill.

"I am concerned that the State of Israel, that has for decades bravely manned the front lines against terror, is being pressed to back down just when it is on the verge of uprooting Palestinian terror," said Netanyahu, who recently became an official spokesman for the government of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

The United States has called on Israel to withdraw troops "without delay" from the West Bank — where it is in the midst of an operation aimed at dismantling the Palestinian terror infrastructure — and resume political negotiations with Arafat.

But Netanyahu told the senators that there is no political solution to terrorism — and that if Mideast terrorism is ignored the terrorists eventually could strike the United States.

"If we do not shut down the terror factories that Arafat is hosting, those terror factories that are producing human bombs, it is only a matter of time before suicide bombers will terrorize your cities here in America," Netanyahu said. "If not destroyed, this madness will strike in your buses, in your supermarkets, in your pizza parlors, in your cafes."

Netanyahu outlined three things he said Israel must do to control terrorism in the region — dismantle the Palestinian Authority terrorist regime and expel Arafat from the West Bank; clean out illegal weapons and explosives in Palestinian areas; and create a physical barrier between Palestinian and Israeli population centers.

Netanyahu made clear that Israel would do what was necessary to prevent terror attacks, even if it meant defying Bush administration demands. He estimated that the current campaign, Operation Protective Wall, would take several weeks.

"With or without international support, the government of Israel must fight, not only to defend its people," he said, "but also to ensure that the free world wins the war against terror in this pivotal arena in the heart of the Middle East."

He noted that Israel took military action alone before — in 1981, when it destroyed an Iraqi nuclear facility — and was condemned internationally. Only after the 1991 Persian Gulf War did the world realize how farsighted the Israeli strike had been, he said.

Netanyahu expressed support for toppling Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, and said Israeli action against Palestinian terror will not hurt U.S. efforts against Iraq. Many commentators believe the United States must check Israeli-Palestinian violence if it wants Arab support for an attack on Iraq.

Netanyahu drew many parallels between Israel's military campaign in the West Bank and the U.S. war on terrorism launched after the Sept. 11 attacks. He suggested that Israel was being held to a double standard for taking anti-terror actions similar to America's.

"At the very moment where support for Israel's war against terror should be stronger than ever, my nation is being asked to stop fighting," he said. "Though we are assured by friends that we have a right to defend ourselves, we are effectively asked to suspend, not to exercise, that right."

Advocates for Israel have been concerned that Israel is being pushed to withdraw from areas it invaded after a string of terror attacks culminated in a massive bombing on the eve of Passover, and predicted that Secretary of State Colin Powell's mission to the region would only increase the pressure on Israel.

Sharon asked Netanyahu to come to the United States to explain Israel's military actions to American audiences. Netanyahu likely chose Congress for his major address because it is a bastion of pro-Israel sentiment. He also is expected to highlight a major Israel solidarity rally on the Capitol grounds Monday. □

Despite Iraq's best efforts, OPEC oil action seems unlikely

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Despite Iraq's best efforts, it appears that at least for now, oil and politics will not mix.

Iraq announced this week that it would suspend its oil exports for a month to protest Israel's military offensive into Palestinian areas. But other OPEC members rejected a similar move, and observers here predicted that the oil weapon would not succeed in shifting American public or political support for Israel.

The Iraqi move comes as the U.S. Senate is set to renew its debate over an energy bill that could focus on decreasing America's dependence on foreign oil.

When Arab OPEC members used an oil embargo as a weapon in 1973 it backfired, and it is unlikely this time as well that Israel will be blamed for any potential fears of long lines at the U.S. gas pumps or the already-rising gas prices.

"In the 70s, public opinion did not turn against Israel, it actually went against the Arab side," said Martin Raffel, associate executive director for the Jewish Council for Public Affairs.

The U.S. Energy Department announced Monday that the summer average for gas pump prices is expected to be the third highest on record, after 2001 and 2000.

U.S. crude oil and gasoline inventories are still above last year's levels but they are expected to decline through the summer.

While the price of a barrel rose this week after the Iraqi announcement, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, both OPEC members, said they would not join any Iraqi boycott.

A cutoff in oil supplies is not the same threat it once was, said Phil Baum, former executive director of the American Jewish Congress and now a special adviser to the group on world affairs.

People are aware of U.S. moves toward other energy options and also are aware of Saddam Hussein's regime.

"The anger will be against him, not Israel," Baum said.

One of the more contentious parts of the congressional debate over energy policy is whether to allow drilling in an Alaskan wildlife refuge, a policy that may gain more support in light of the Iraqi boycott.

Pro-drilling advocates maintain that only a part of the Alaskan National Wildlife Refuge will be disturbed, but environmentalists claim pipelines will extend across the entire coastal plain and hurt wildlife and indigenous populations.

Some Jewish groups oppose drilling in the refuge, a few support it and others sidestep the issue and focus on the general message of reducing U.S. dependence on foreign oil.

The Jewish community has been concerned about foreign oil dependence for a long time but drilling in the reserve will not resolve the problem, said Mark Jacobs, executive director of the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life.

"There is no reason to change one's position on drilling in the Arctic as a consequence of Iraq's threat," he said. "This is a long-term issue and the primary way to solve it is through energy conservation."

Drilling in the refuge is not expected to produce oil for several years but the American public should still take domestic production seriously, said Chuck Kleeschulte, press secretary for Sen. Frank Murkowski (R-Alaska), a leading proponent of drilling.

The U.S. House of Representatives already passed a bill that includes drilling in the refuge.

The Iraqi move will not change the terms of the debate, according to Adam Kovacevich, press secretary for Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), an opponent of drilling. A reliable oil supply is needed to help protect American economic interests, but the situation in the Middle East should not be used as an argument for drilling in the Arctic refuge, he said. □

After assault in Berlin, students go home, will return to yeshivas

By Amy Sara Clark

NEW YORK (JTA) — A Passover trip to Germany for two young American rabbinical students began as a celebration of the Jewish exodus from Egypt.

It ended as a nightmare when they were attacked in a Berlin hate crime.

Both students have returned to the United States and are preparing to return to yeshiva, one in New Jersey, the other in Chicago. Shneur Zalman Teldon, who sustained injuries to the head and face in the attack, is recovering well, according to his father, Rabbi Tuvia Teldon, of Long Island.

Shneur Zalman Teldon could not be reached for comment.

The attack came as a series of anti-Semitic incidents swept across Europe, particularly France, in connection with Israeli-Palestinian violence.

Teldon and Zev Goldberg, both 21, had traveled to Frankfurt an der Oder, two hours east of Berlin, to help Russian immigrants hold a seder through the Lubavitch movement's "International Seder Program."

On the night of March 30, Teldon and Goldberg had been walking down a busy shopping street in a posh Berlin neighborhood when someone shouted "Juden" from an Internet cafe, Teldon's father said. The two continued walking.

One youth from the cafe caught up with the pair and asked Teldon if he had any money. Approximately seven more young men then approached Teldon and Goldberg.

One of the young men asked Teldon if he was a Jew. When he confirmed that he was, the men began punching him.

According to German police, the men had a "Southern" appearance — a term often used in Germany to describe Arabs.

The attackers did not harm Goldberg, who is slightly taller than Teldon. "I was standing in shock," Goldberg said. "He was screaming for help."

No one stopped to help, and, according to Goldberg, no one called police. The beating lasted approximately 45 seconds, Goldberg said, until the assailants let Teldon go.

Teldon sustained injuries to his head, stomach and face and had to have four stitches to his lip, Goldberg said. The attackers also smashed Teldon's glasses and stole his hat and yarmulke.

German police are investigating the incident.

There have been several cases of anti-Semitic vandalism in Berlin in recent years, according to Werner Schmidt, a spokesman for the German Consulate in New York, but anti-Semitic assaults in Berlin have not been reported.

The attack will not keep Teldon and Goldberg from returning to Germany to help the Russian emigre community there, Goldberg said. "Everyone was telling us that it is a safe place, but it left a bad taste in my mouth," Goldberg said. "If you asked me to do the seder again, I wouldn't say no. Of course not tomorrow, but eventually I would go back." □