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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Powell: No proof of massacre

Secretary of State Colin Powell said he has no evidence of an Israeli massacre of Palestinians at the Jenin refugee camp.

"Clearly, innocent lives may well have been lost," Powell testified Wednesday before a U.S. Senate subcommittee.

But, he added, "I have no evidence of mass graves. I see no evidence that would support a massacre took place."

Powell said he based his assessment on a three-hour-plus inspection of the refugee camp last Friday by Assistant Secretary of State William Burns.

Crisis brews over U.N. panel

Israel is sending a delegation to New York seeking to change the composition of a U.N. fact-finding team going to the Jenin refugee camp.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on Tuesday called for a delay in the arrival of the panel, expressing concern that its composition and mandate might have a pro-Palestinian bias.

Following talks with Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan indicated a willingness to consider widening the fact-finding commission.

The panel and its military and police advisers gathered Wednesday in Geneva for meetings, and they are expected to arrive in the Middle East on Saturday.

Israel's U.N. ambassador, Yehuda Lancry, said he told Annan that the panel should also look into the Palestinian terror infrastructure that existed in the refugee camp prior to the Israeli military operation there, Israel Radio reported.

Two Jewish leaders attacked

Two Jewish leaders were attacked when they came to Brussels to attend a meeting this week of the European Jewish Congress.

Avraham Berkowitz, executive director of the Federation of Jewish Communities in the former Soviet Union, was attacked as he stepped off the train that brought him to the Brussels meeting.

He said an Arab-looking man punched him in the stomach, stole his hat and called him a "terrorist." Moscow Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt said he was attacked by four Arabs who shouted, "Death to the Jews!"

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

American Jews open checkbooks in response to campaigns for Israel

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — At the office here of Friends of the Israel Defense Forces, phone calls from people seeking to make contributions or volunteer increased an estimated 500 percent in the past month.

Hadassah: The Women's Zionist Organization of America, which raises money for Jerusalem's largest hospital, has already raised \$8.4 million of a special \$28 million campaign for its emergency medical center.

The Jewish National Fund, which is running a special campaign in addition to its regular campaign, has already raised \$19 million this year, 26 percent ahead of where it was at this time last year.

And Israel Bonds, which pays for Israeli government infrastructure, reports investments 70 percent ahead of last year at this time.

As major Jewish and Israel-related philanthropies launch emergency campaigns for Israel, American Jews are apparently heeding the call and pulling out their checkbooks.

The Jewish federation system, which has raised more than \$100 million in emergency funds for Israel in the past few weeks, expects to raise considerably more.

The recent giving — stemming from widespread concern about Israel's survival — appears to be reversing, at least temporarily, the 1990s trend away from general giving to Israel.

The more traditional institutions, such as federations and Israel Bonds, had suffered setbacks in recent years as American Jews opted to fund what were described as "boutique" philanthropies — Israeli organizations that focused on specific institutions, political causes or cultural needs.

"In general, the way most Jewish fund-raising organizations work is that they always do better in times of crisis, and in fact many of them are structured for crisis," said Gary Tobin, president of the San Francisco-based Institute for Jewish and Community Research.

Tobin, who has studied American Jewish philanthropy, said, "There is no question that we are in a real crisis."

He said he expects all giving to Israel — whether to centralized or specialized groups — to increase.

"It's a plain and simple response. People are concerned. They're afraid. They are desperate to do something to show support for Israel."

But some of the more specialized groups, like the New Israel Fund — which supports a variety of progressive causes in Israel — and the American Society for Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, say their fund raising this year is holding steady so far, but not increasing.

For the most part, both groups report they are sticking to their main missions, but say their funding priorities will likely change somewhat to reflect the new situation.

At the New Israel Fund, officials said that means collecting money for grantees that help terrorist victims, as well as increasing support for human and civil rights groups, which the fund believes are particularly challenged in the current climate.

At the Technion, more spending is expected for ongoing security-related projects, such as a think tank for the IDF and projects to upgrade weapons systems and border fences, said Lawrence Jackier, chair of the American Society for Technion's board.

However, Jackier, who is also president of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit, said the Technion is not creating a special emergency campaign. "We don't

MIDEAST FOCUS

Five Palestinians killed in clashes

Israeli troops killed a senior Hamas member in a clash near Hebron on Wednesday. Another Palestinian was also killed in the fighting, which took place while Israeli troops were conducting searches for wanted Palestinians.

Two other Palestinians were detained for suspected terrorism.

In the Gaza Strip, Israeli troops killed three Palestinians armed with explosives who approached the Jewish settlement of Netzarim, in northern Gaza. Palestinian sources said the three were teen-agers.

In another development, three Palestinians died Wednesday in Gaza when a bomb they were making exploded prematurely.

Hezbollah resumes shelling

Hezbollah fired anti-aircraft shells Wednesday across Israel's northern border.

Shrapnel landed in the northern Israeli town of Shlomi, but no injuries or damage were reported, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

The attack was the first since U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell visited the Middle East two weeks ago.

Egypt: We'll fight Israel for \$

Egypt's prime minister said his country would go to war with Israel if other Arab countries came up with the money to fund it.

"If you want to take action, if you are ready to rise to the challenge, you must send \$100 billion," Atef Ebeid told a Persian Gulf newspaper when asked why Egypt had not launched a military offensive against Israel.

"The Arab world must allocate \$100 billion from Arab coffers deposited around the world. It must say to Egypt: 'This is the national budget. This budget is at your disposal. Start the confrontation.'"

want to start shifting gears and projecting some different image to the pool of donors," he said. "And we certainly don't want to get in the way" of other groups raising emergency funds.

Amid so much bloodshed, medical facilities like Hadassah and — to a lesser extent — the American Committee for Shaare Zedek Jerusalem Medical Center, a fund-raising arm for another major hospital, are seeing major increases not just for special campaigns but for regular efforts as well.

Hadassah's regular campaign is already \$3.3 million ahead of last year at this time.

Its special campaign focuses on upgrading its emergency facilities, which were last renovated 20 years ago and designed to handle 40,000 patients a year.

Currently, an estimated 70,000 patients a year go through the facility, officials say.

Officials say the hospital is facing other new demands as a result of the situation. For example, it has stepped up security at the hospitals and now provides its doctors and nurses traveling through eastern Jerusalem with bulletproof vests.

The increased needs seem to be matched by increased giving, said Joyce Rabin, coordinator of the national fund-raising division.

She said that on top of the emergency campaign, she would like to double the \$30-\$40 million that Hadassah raised last year.

"There has been a tremendous outpouring of people calling us that never gave before, even though they were members," Rabin said.

In addition, one individual who had never made large gifts before recently contributed \$500,000, she said.

The group has also benefitted from a high media profile recently, including features on several television programs drawing attention to the fact that the hospital serves both Jews and Palestinians.

Shaare Zedek, which also serves both Jews and Palestinians and is also upgrading its emergency medical department, saw increased giving in the past year.

But the organization is not yet certain how this year will shape up.

"What's happened to us is that we don't have a hard sell at all," said Paul Glasser, executive vice president of Shaare Zedek's American fund-raising arm.

However, he noted, with all Israel-related groups stepping up emergency campaigns, fund raising may become more challenging in the coming weeks and months.

The group is in the midst of a \$30 million campaign — a third of which has been raised so far — to build a new department of emergency medicine.

Plans for that project began last fall, and it is slated to begin construction this summer, expanding the department's capacity from 40 beds to 70 beds.

The committee, which raises \$12-\$15 million per year, enjoyed an 8 percent increase in 2001. For its part, the JNF is sticking with existing priorities, including addressing Israel's water needs and building roads.

But it is focusing its advertising on the ways its regular activities relate to the security situation.

For example, it has marketed an ongoing project to build a new road near the Lebanon border as a safe alternative to an existing road that has been vulnerable to attacks from Lebanon since Israel withdrew from southern Lebanon.

The JNF is also allocating some funds for new projects related to the situation, such as after-school programs for Israeli schoolchildren and Caravan for Democracy — a series of pro-Israel speaking tours to college campuses in North America.

For the first time, it is also helping raise funds for groups such as the Long Island-based Israel Emergency Solidarity Fund that help the victims of terrorism and their families.

In a new partnership, people can make contributions in increments of \$36, half of which goes to plant a tree in honor of a terrorist victim and half of which goes to the Israel Emergency Solidarity Fund. A spokesperson for Israel Bonds, which also focuses on general infrastructure needs, said the group has been asked to sell at least \$1.25 billion worth of bonds this year, a 25 percent increase over last year.

As the Israeli government has increased spending for military and security needs, it "needs more bonds money for road building, port expansion, telecommunications, water desalinization, power and the economic infrastructure," said the spokesperson, who asked not to be identified. □



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JEWISH WORLD

New York snubs PLO

New York's mayor excluded the PLO from a reception for U.N. diplomats.

Michael Bloomberg deliberately omitted the PLO from the guest list to Monday's event, where he spoke about the need for good relations between New York City and the United Nations, according to Bloomberg aides.

"Mayor Bloomberg understands that there are certain responsibilities that come with being the host city for the U.N., but that doesn't include inviting representatives of a terrorist organization into the people's house," said the mayor's spokesman, Ed Skyler. Taiwan, Iraq, Iran, Libya and Cuba also were left off the guest list.

Algerian admits to shul plot

An Algerian on trial in Germany for alleged involvement in a bomb plot said he had gathered explosives to blow up a synagogue in the French city of Strasbourg.

Aeurobui Beandali, 26, one of a group of Algerians accused of plotting to bomb a market in Strasbourg, said he had not intended to kill anyone, but wanted to harm relations between France and Israel. In testimony Tuesday in a Frankfurt court, he also denied having links to Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaida terror network.

Demjanjuk can stay in U.S.

A U.S. judge is allowing John Demjanjuk to remain in the United States until an appeals court rules on his deportation.

But District Court Judge Paul Matia recently refused to overturn his own decision earlier this year to deport Demjanjuk for lying about his work as a Nazi concentration camp guard when he entered the United States in 1952.

Demjanjuk, now 82, formerly lost his U.S. citizenship in 1981 on evidence that he was the sadistic Nazi guard "Ivan the Terrible" at Treblinka from 1942-43.

Berkeley won't divest from Israel

The Berkeley, Calif., city council voted down a measure to divest city funds from companies doing business in Israel. According to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz, the divestment plan — which had been touted as similar to the divestment campaign Berkeley participated in against apartheid South Africa in the 1980s — would also have called for a boycott of all Israeli products.

"I don't think this does anything to advance what probably every person in this room wants, and that's a peaceful resolution," the newspaper quoted Mayor Shirley Dean as saying about the divestment plan. "There's no sense in dividing up into warring camps."

Academics lining up for and against proposed boycott of Israeli scholars

By Toby Axelrod

BERLIN (JTA) — Thousands of scholars have joined in condemning an "unprecedented" attempt to suspend European-Israeli academic and cultural exchanges, calling it "an improper and immoral act of collective punishment" against a population with "diverse political views."

As of April 21, more than 2,500 European, American and Israeli scholars, including 100 from Germany, had signed a protest letter against an anti-Israel boycott proposed by the British-based Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

The Israeli-based protest can be found on the Internet at <http://www.geocities.com/euroisrael2002/>.

That was a response to the boycott initiative published April 6 in the London Guardian newspaper and signed by some 120 European scholars, most from England, and at least one in Israel.

Meanwhile, some 300 French scholars also joined the call for a boycott, publishing their petition in the daily newspaper Liberation on April 16. According to the Inter Press Agency, some of the signatories were "of Jewish origin."

The British-based boycott initiative said it would be "timely" to call a moratorium on European-Israeli academic cooperation "until Israel abide[s] by U.N. resolutions and open[s] serious peace negotiations with the Palestinians, along the lines proposed in many peace plans including most recently that sponsored by the Saudis and the Arab League."

The counter-reaction was swift. In their open protest letter, Israeli professors Hillel Shuval, Eva Illouz and Aaron Benavot of Hebrew University in Jerusalem criticized the boycott idea on several grounds:

- Much internal criticism of current Israeli policy comes from within Israeli academic circles.
- A boycott against Israel ignores ongoing attacks against Israeli citizens.
- A boycott might damage continuing academic cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians.

"A unilateral boycott of Israeli academics unfairly identifies Israel as the only party responsible for the violent shift in Israeli-Palestinian relations," the professors wrote. "Such a one-sided perspective is contrary to academic standards of truth-seeking."

In Germany, word of the protest spread quickly through the academic community, mostly via e-mail. Reflecting popular opinion here, all signatories reached by JTA said they did not like Israel's handling of the current crisis but did not believe an academic boycott was the right response.

"I mailed the letter to almost everyone in my directory," said Stefanie Schuler-Springorum, director of the Hamburg-based Institute for the History of German Jewry, who learned of the protest from friends in Israel.

"I have friends who have rejected military service but I also have friends who are serving in the territories," she said. "It is horrible, very depressing.

"We had been talking a lot because we feel so helpless," Schuler-Springorum said. "And then a friend wrote to me about this letter and said, 'Here is something we can do.'"

"It seems to me absolutely stupid to hold all Israel hostage for what the government does," said sociology professor Martin Kohli of the Free University in Berlin, who signed and e-mailed the letter to some colleagues. "This call for a boycott was very ill-conceived and not at all helpful."

One argument for a boycott was, he said, that if the West can collectively punish Iraq, they also can punish Israel. "But Israel is a democracy and people do speak out. Political life is differentiated and publicly aired," Kohli said. "It just does not make sense to create an embargo situation."

"I must admit that I was really shocked by this," agreed Annette Vowinckel, who also signed the protest letter. "Some of the sharpest critics of the Israeli government whom I know are Israeli academics," said Vowinckel, who has a post-doctoral position in cultural studies at Humboldt University in Berlin. "I don't know why one should hold them responsible collectively." □

NEWS ANALYSIS

As U.S., Israel stand at crossroads, activists promote a common bond

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The mantra for pro-Israel activists is coming straight from the mouth of President Bush.

"You are either with us, or you are with the terrorists."

That theme, enunciated in Bush's address to the nation shortly after the Sept. 11 attacks, is resonating more than ever with pro-Israel activists who see parallels between America's war on terrorism and Israel's struggle with the Palestinians.

Fueled by the crisis confronting the Jewish state, these activists see this common bond as the best way to promote the U.S.-Israel relationship.

"There's now an obvious No. 1 reason why America and Israel are partners, and that is terrorism," said Mark Lederman of Warwick, N.Y., who attended this week's annual conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the pro-Israel lobby.

"Before there were nebulous ideas like democracy and Judeo-Christian values," Lederman said. "Now, it is more concrete."

Through public rhetoric and working with Congress on legislation, the Israeli activists are trying to ride the coattails of an immensely popular military campaign and leadership in the United States by saying, in essence: If you support the war on terrorism, you must support Israel.

The strategy is important because it comes as both the United States and Israel stand at a crossroads as they contemplate their next steps in the Middle East.

After 19 months of a Palestinian uprising, a spate of deadly suicide bombings in Israel, an Israeli military operation that decimated the Palestinian Authority and a failed mission by the U.S. secretary of state to secure a cease-fire, both the U.S. and Israel must figure out how to proceed.

For pro-Israel activists, the challenge is to make sure the U.S. approach does not deviate significantly from Israel's.

The overall goal, as voiced by AIPAC leaders and delegates gathered here this week, is to shape American policy to allow Israel a free hand in its battles against the Palestinian Authority and to pressure the administration to desist from the mixed messages that have occasionally emerged from the White House and State Department over the past several months.

Some observers credit last week's rally in Washington as a galvanizing point for the American Jewish community, where more than 100,000 Jews came together with a similar message.

The participants cautiously avoided criticism of White House policy and other divisive issues within the Jewish community, and tried to send a message in support of Israel's right to defend itself and America's war on terrorism.

In the immediate aftermath of the Sept. 11 attacks on New York and Washington, pro-Israel activists said they believed the United States and its leaders would have increased empathy for the plight of Israelis. But it has been a bumpy ride.

The Bush administration began its war on terrorism with a full-fledged courting of the Arab states, heightening fears that Israel would have to pay for American military interests.

Most American Jews see the administration as immensely supportive of Israel. But sometimes U.S. and Israeli interests

diverge. The administration discovered, for instance, that it would not get Arab support for going after Iraq in its war on terrorism without interceding in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Thus Bush called for an immediate end to Israeli incursions in the West Bank, and before that became the first U.S. president to explicitly call for a Palestinian state.

But as the anti-terrorism campaign continued and images of suicide bombings in Israel brought back memories of Sept. 11 for the American people, Bush ratcheted up the pressure on the Palestinian leadership and Arab states.

He and other administration officials have also backed away somewhat from demands on Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. Still, the U.S. and Israeli approaches to Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat are different, with the United States still seeing him as a partner and Israel wanting to see him sidelined.

Throughout the three-day AIPAC convention this week, the goal was to create grass-roots support for the U.S.-Israel bond, especially as Israel continues to withdraw from the West Bank without the promise of a cease-fire.

Part of the strategy also appears to be to create the image of the United States and Israel united against the rest of the world.

Palestinian terrorism and Arab extremism have always been the target of pro-Israel lobbyists, but the circle of antagonists has widened, given the anti-Israel — and sometimes anti-Semitic — rumblings emerging from the European community, the Arab world and the United Nations.

Another theme is that Israel's military actions against Palestinian terrorism makes the Jewish state a leading player in America's anti-terrorism campaign.

"Israel is America's commando unit," Nicole Mayer of Boca Raton, Fla., said, echoing the perspective of many at the AIPAC conference. "Israel goes in, accepts a lot of criticism and does what it has to do, so America doesn't have to get its hands dirty."

Support by American pro-Israel activists for the Bush administration appears steadfast.

He is repeatedly characterized as the most pro-Israel president ever, both for his tackling of the terrorism issue and his refusal to meet with Arafat. Yet, there is still a belief that the U.S.-Israeli partnership cannot be taken for granted, even when there is a friend in the White House.

AIPAC has proposed several pieces of legislation in the past two weeks, in an effort to demonstrate the vast support for Israel in Congress and to thwart any administration attempts to placate the Palestinians. In an address to AIPAC on Monday, Andrew Card, the White House chief of staff, went out of his way to express the Bush administration's solidarity with Israel, even when the two sides are quibbling.

"This administration and this group may not always agree with each other," Card said. "But our differences are the difference of true friends. Friends who share the same values and same dreams."

The strategy of promoting the U.S.-Israel bond is eliciting strong support from Jewish activists across the political spectrum, as evidenced by an unusually cohesive meeting of AIPAC's executive committee on Sunday.

As the group crafted AIPAC's action agenda for the year, the normal bickering between left- and right-leaning advocates was replaced with near consensus for resolutions and amendments.

Debating the terms of a final negotiated settlement with the Palestinians would be fruitless in the wake of suicide attacks, members said. □