



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 80, No. 108

Tuesday, June 11, 2002

85th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Bush speaks out for Israel

President Bush spoke out in defense of Israel and reiterated his criticism of Yasser Arafat. "Israel has a right to defend herself," Bush told reporters Monday as he met in the White House with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Bush again spoke of his disappointment with Arafat's leadership. The preconditions for an Israeli-Palestinian peace accord are not in place, he said, because "no one has confidence in the emerging Palestinian government."

White House spokesman Ari Fleischer later said Bush believes diplomatic talks should proceed at the same time as Palestinian reforms. Sharon has demanded reform as a precondition to talks.

Israeli troops enter Ramallah

Israeli forces entered Ramallah on Monday and surrounded Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's headquarters. The army ordered a curfew over several neighborhoods and arrested about 20 suspected terrorists. Two Israeli soldiers were lightly wounded in exchanges of gunfire.

A Palestinian police official was killed during a clash, according to Palestinian sources.

The army denied reports that it had entered Arafat's headquarters, saying it had encircled the compound to prevent terrorists from taking shelter there.

Jewish group plans armed patrols

A militant Jewish group plans to start patrolling Jewish neighborhoods in Brooklyn armed with shotguns and other weapons.

The little-known Jewish Defense Group is taking the step after a suspected terrorist jailed in Iraq said in a TV interview aired last week that the terrorists who carried out the 1993 World Trade Center bombing originally wanted to target Jewish neighborhoods in Brooklyn.

The founder of the Jewish Defense Group, Rabbi Yakove Lloyd, told The Associated Press on Monday that there would be some 50 to 200 people involved in the street patrols, some carrying shotguns in bags, others with bats and lead pipes. The plan has met with criticism from some local Jews, who said the job of preventing terrorism should be left to the police and army.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Drawing lessons from the past, Bush ponders a Mideast initiative

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The White House is grappling with one of the oldest problems in modern Middle East peacemaking: how to construct parameters for peace that can withstand the tests of diplomacy and violence.

On Monday, President Bush completed an extensive consultation period with Middle East leaders, hosting Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon for the sixth time since taking office, just days after hosting Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

Appearing with Sharon after their meeting, Bush backed Israel's right to defend itself against Palestinian attacks, and continued his criticism of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

He also downplayed expectations of an international peace conference being planned for this summer, saying "the conditions aren't even there yet" and highlighting the need for a much-discussed restructuring of Palestinian institutions to commence.

Over the weekend, Bush indicated that he would not bow to Arab pressure on the United States to lay out a firm timeline for the establishment of a Palestinian state.

"We are not ready to lay down a specific calendar, except for the fact we need to get started quickly — soon — so that we can seize the moment," Bush said at a Saturday news conference with Mubarak at Camp David.

With consultations with regional leaders completed and two U.S. envoys back from the Middle East, the next few weeks are expected to be filled with internal White House debate over the contours of a Middle East peace initiative.

Bush announced last week that after his consultations he would "talk to our country about how I think we should move forward," but it remains unclear what form — a speech, dialogue or document — such guidelines will take.

At the heart of the debate, administration officials say, will be how to restore negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, and whether Arafat should be afforded a place at the table.

The details will be the crux of the internal debate.

The broad strokes of a final solution already have been laid out, analysts say, in Secretary of State Colin Powell's speech in Louisville, Ky., last November, and in Bush's Rose Garden address in April.

"There will be less of what we want to see at the end of the rainbow, and more of the how," a State Department official said.

Since the 1967 Six-Day War changed the borders of the Middle East, American leaders have been crafting peace plans in an attempt to show leadership in the Middle East.

Many of the plans shared goals and visions, but none has succeeded in ending the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

The Rogers Plan, created by Secretary of State William Rogers in 1969, proposed an Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders in exchange for security. The plan broached the issues of a unified Jerusalem and the handling of Palestinian refugees.

Under President Carter, the 1978 Camp David agreements between Egypt and Israel also called for "autonomy" for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip — but were ambiguous enough that both sides interpreted the call as they wished.

Sparked by the evacuation of the PLO from Beirut, President Reagan suggested a plan in 1982. Reagan called for Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza — but not a Palestinian state — and an Israeli settlement freeze on the way toward final

MIDEAST FOCUS

Jewish Agency downplays report

The Jewish Agency for Israel denied reports that the organization is trying to settle whole communities in the West Bank. The chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel, Sallai Meridor, said in a statement that "the Zionist movement has no plan for bringing communities to settle specifically beyond the Green Line," as immigrants themselves decide where to live.

Meridor was responding to a report in the Ma'ariv newspaper that the World Zionist Organization's settlement department was involved in efforts to help rabbis and dozens of families in their communities settle in the West Bank. The paper referred to one project involving a community from Monsey, N.Y., that has chosen to live in Kochav Ya'acov, near Ramallah.

Replace soldiers at settlements?

The Israeli army is considering replacing soldiers at Jewish settlements with private security guards, according to a military official. A pilot project will be tried in the Gush Etzion block of settlements south of Jerusalem, Maj. Gen. Yiftah Ron-Tal said.

Some military officials have complained that guarding the settlements takes soldiers away from other missions.

Phalcon plane returned to China

Israel sent back to China the plane it was to have outfitted with a Phalcon airborne early warning system. Along with the plane, Israel paid China some \$350 million to compensate for canceling the deal under U.S. pressure.

Palestinians protest housing site

Palestinians threw rocks Monday at police on the construction site of new Jewish housing in southeastern Jerusalem. Two border policemen were injured in what was the second straight day of Palestinian unrest in the predominantly Arab neighborhood of Jabel Mukaber.



Daily News Bulletin

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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.

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negotiations. In the 1990s, the Oslo peace process began in secret, direct talks between Israeli and Palestinian officials and then advanced through intensive mediation by the Clinton administration.

It also sought "land for peace," and resulted in intense negotiations toward a final settlement at Camp David during the summer of 2000.

None of these initiatives, however, produced lasting peace. Analysts say American plans don't work mostly because they do not have the support of the parties themselves, and are rejected either by the leadership of one or the other side or become moot in the wake of a violent backlash.

Analysts say that, aside from the Oslo process, plans also failed because they didn't have the full weight of U.S. pressure and diplomacy behind them.

"The United States has never committed itself, with the exception of Camp David, to a serious pursuit of a peace plan," said Henry Siegman, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.

President Clinton was the only American leader to show true commitment to Middle East peace, Siegman says, and his effort failed only because of a "terrible mistake" by the Palestinian leadership in rejecting a generous offer and turning instead to violence.

Pro-Israel activist Morris Amitay said American plans historically have been ineffective because they have been created largely to appease Arab states, while — until Oslo — the United States had been uninterested in exerting pressure on Israel to become more flexible in its positions.

Amitay says he believes any plan announced by the Bush administration would move in the same direction as previous U.S. initiatives.

"If and when they do come down with a plan, it will be general and have enough loopholes to drive a truck through," he said.

But Siegman, the former executive director of the American Jewish Congress, says Bush has more leverage than his predecessors, and can do more to implement a plan.

"The United States has emerged in the post-Sept. 11 period as the one superpower trying to rearrange the world to make some sense of a war against terrorism," he said.

The focus on reform in Palestinian institutions lays the groundwork for the future of Palestinian society, a feature that wasn't a focus of past peace plans. The support and participation of other Arab states in the peace effort also is seen as an encouraging sign, Bush administration officials said.

Siegman said adopting a firm timeline toward statehood is essential to give the Palestinians "a reason to believe there is a path to legitimate achievement of their goals." But some say a rigid timeline is unrealistic, because it ignores the effect violence and terrorism have on any peace process.

"Such a timeline, which is not predicated on the Palestinian Authority's renunciation, rejection and elimination of terrorism, would undermine America's war against terrorism by rewarding Palestinian violence," the president of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, Amy Friedkin, said in a statement.

Analysts say Bush sent clear signals over the weekend that he is not willing to push Sharon beyond where he is willing to go, and any plan adopted by this White House will not offer concrete details for a future Palestinian state.

"I think this president is very wary of having a 'land for nothing' or a 'land for terrorism' deal," said David Makovsky, senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "I think he's going to tread more cautiously than others." □

Russian woman regains some sight

MOSCOW (JTA) — A Russian woman flown to Israel for treatment after being injured by a booby-trapped anti-Semitic sign has regained sight in her right eye.

Doctors at the hospital where she is being treated said the damage to her left eye is more extensive, according to the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot.

Tatyana Sapunova, a 28-year-old biophysicist, was driving her 4-year-old daughter and her mother a few miles from Moscow on May 27 when she noticed a sign "Death to Kikes" hanging from a pole near the road.

She pulled over, walked to the sign and began to take it down. The sign, rigged with dynamite, blew up in her face. □

JEWISH WORLD

S.F. federation makes cuts

The Jewish federation in San Francisco is laying off 12 employees. The Jewish Community Federation announced the layoffs last week to help offset a \$750,000 budget deficit.

The layoffs are the first at the federation in a decade. "The federation has been here for 93 years and needs to be here another 93 years," the federation's CEO, Sam Salkin, told the Jewish Bulletin of Northern California.

Swiss claims to be sped up

A U.S.-led tribunal is relaxing the standards for paying claims to Jews whose Holocaust-era accounts were frozen by Swiss banks. The Claims Resolution Tribunal, supervised by former U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker, also plans to speed up distribution of \$800 million from Swiss banks to Holocaust victims and their heirs.

The tribunal was set up to help distribute money from a \$1.25 billion settlement by Swiss banks. The tribunal said that as of last month, it had received more than 32,000 claims and had paid out \$16.9 million in 135 claims.

Pro-Palestinian activist harassed

Several dozen Jews in Rome jeered and harassed a leading Italian pro-Palestinian activist. Sunday's incident occurred when Vittorio Agnoletto tried to have lunch in a restaurant in the old Jewish Ghetto of Rome.

Italian newspapers ran photos Monday showing riot police leading Agnoletto to safety after he was held by young militant Jews in the restaurant for more than two hours. Witnesses said the Jewish youths shouted abuse at Agnoletto and also threw stones, coins and rotten fruit at him.

Agnoletto is the spokesman for Italy's main anti-globalization movement. In April, he and other members of an Italian pacifist group wanting to organize pro-Palestinian activities were turned back by Israeli authorities when they landed at Ben-Gurion Airport.

Shoah art to travel into space

An Israeli astronaut plans to bring a Holocaust-era drawing with him into space. Col. Ilan Ramon contacted Jerusalem's Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial requesting an item from the Holocaust to take with him when he blasts off July 19 aboard a NASA space shuttle.

Yad Vashem chose "Moon Landscape," a drawing by Peter Ginz, a 14-year-old Jewish boy, created during his incarceration in the Terezin transit camp. Ginz was later killed in Auschwitz. Ramon's mother survived Auschwitz, but his grandfather and other family members died in Nazi camps.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Still a refuge, summer camps now gearing up for greater security

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) —With their quiet surroundings, unique traditions and opportunities for old friends to reunite, Jewish summer camps often are regarded as an escape from day-to-day life.

This year, however, in the wake of unprecedented terror attacks in both the United States and Israel, even summer camps are not immune from international concerns.

The new climate has led most American Jewish camps to step up security.

Many Jewish camps already increased security two and a half years ago, after a gunman burst into the lobby of a Los Angeles-area JCC and injured five people, including three young children.

However, security is getting considerably more attention at camps this summer. Recent revelations that the Al-Qaida terror network had plans to target American Jewish institutions likely will further increase security concerns.

"The question we're asked every day by parents is what you're doing about security and what will you do if something like Sept. 11 happens," said Harvey Finkelberg, executive director of Camp Tamarack, a community-wide Jewish camp in Michigan. "Those are things that were never asked before."

In response, Finkelberg said, the camp has installed new gates and security cameras. Since Sept. 11, several regional Jewish camp associations have convened special meetings on security measures, and there were workshops on the topic at the most recent convention of the North American Alliance for Jewish Youth.

Like Tamarack, many Jewish sleep-away camps have installed electronically controlled gates and have hired full- or part-time security guards to control who enters.

This winter, the Reform movement brought in Israeli security consultants to evaluate each of its camps, and as a result has invested in new gates, guards and emergency lighting.

All 12 Reform movement camps will have 24-hour security patrols.

Emergency training has been expanded, with staff going through role plays to prepare them for dealing with intruders, as well as training for dealing with "all kinds of emergencies," said Paul Reichenbach, director of youth programs for the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

The Conservative movement's Camp Ramah network also has been upgrading security, getting "closer and closer to 24-7" guards in every camp, said Rabbi Sheldon Dorph, Ramah's national director.

Visitors to Ramah camps now have to call ahead. The camps also have discouraged families from sending packages and mail, urging them to communicate by e-mail.

Despite the precautions, most in the camping world acknowledge that no method is foolproof in keeping away a determined intruder, especially since most summer camps are on sprawling, wooded lots that are impossible to fully enclose in gates.

"Any camp that has a lot of acres, if someone wants to walk into the camp, they can," Finkelberg said. "But we want to limit the amount of people that come in that aren't authorized."

While wanting to reassure skittish parents that security measures are in place, camp directors say they are nervous that talking too much about it will give the impression that camps are dangerous.

In fact, they say, the opposite is true. "In general, most camps feel they are relatively less at risk compared to a lot of other places," said Rabbi Ramie Arian, executive director of the National Foundation for Jewish Camping.

"If you're a terrorist, you're probably more likely to target an urban area than a small camp in the middle of nowhere, which is where the overnight camps mostly are."

The likelihood of terrorism, Arian noted, is considerably lower than that of more mundane security concerns, such as health and weather emergencies.

"In the sleep-away camp world, in general, the assessment is that you probably have a significantly greater risk of kidnapping of children by noncustodial parents than you do from terrorist activities," Arian said. □

Arab Americans struggling for rights — and for Palestinians

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The Friday afternoon schedule for the annual convention of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee presented participants with a tough choice.

In one room, they could discuss the effects of the Sept. 11 attacks on the civil rights of Muslims and Arabs, many of whom feel they must constantly convince other Americans that they are not terrorists.

Across the hall, families of both Arab and Jewish victims of Israeli-Palestinian violence discussed the human perspectives of the conflict.

Both sessions were filled.

The scheduling structure at the conference, held over the weekend, mirrors the dual focus of this Arab advocacy and lobbying group.

The organization faces two major battles this year in the wake of the terrorist attacks on the United States and the ongoing Palestinian intifada.

Arab Americans are attempting to fight what they view as gross infringements on their civil liberties, including ethnic profiling at airports and other public places — and proposed restrictions on immigration.

At the same time, they are trying to tell the Palestinian side of the story to a strongly pro-Israel Congress, a White House that repeatedly has welcomed Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon while shunning Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, and what they view as an anti-Palestinian media.

"We've been presented with a truly unprecedented set of challenges," said Hussein Ibish, the ADC's communications director. "We couldn't choose and we don't choose."

In many ways, Ibish notes, the Arab American lobby's focus mirrors that of American Jewish groups such as the Anti-Defamation League and the American Jewish Committee. Those groups grapple with how to delve into both domestic and foreign policy issues, fighting anti-Semitism while seeking international support for Israel.

"In founding ADC, we really took a page from the Jewish community," he said.

Domestically, the organization is attempting to counter the effects of the Sept. 11 attacks.

American Arabs complain that they are greeted with suspicion almost every place they go, and that the government is taking what they say are illegal steps to single Arabs and Muslims out.

"The image of Arab Americans has been severely damaged by the acts of maniacs," Ibish said.

Just last week, Attorney General John Ashcroft announced plans to increase monitoring of immigrants from suspect countries, including several in the Arab world.

"It's a real challenging signal that we are moving toward a trend where our country considers immigrants as a class as suspect," Jeanne Butterfield, executive director of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, told the audience in a civil rights session. A forum later in the day addressed the topic, "Flying While Brown."

The ADC has hired two full-time lobbyists to handle the domestic issues — which they compare repeatedly to anti-Semiti-

sm — and Ibish says the legal department has been working harder than ever. Jewish leaders say they have seen the ADC mainstreaming itself since the Sept. 11 attacks, gaining legitimacy by focusing more on the plight of American Arabs.

"They have jumped into a leadership role in the civil rights community since 9/11," said Stacey Burdett, assistant director of the ADL's government and national affairs office. "They have a better seat at the table."

Ibish himself has appeared often in the media to discuss the discrimination Arabs allegedly face. On CNN's "Crossfire" last week, Ibish debated a Florida representative on Ashcroft's new initiative.

When the focus of the show changed to the Arab-Israeli conflict, Ibish stayed in his seat and a new challenger was brought in to debate him. Ibish was able to shift gears quickly to the Middle East conflict, much as his group has been able to do this past year.

Many participants at the ADC convention said that despite the discrimination they say they face at home, the plight of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is the larger issue.

"As an Arab American here, I don't feel as much of a threat from other people," said Neezar Samara, 25, from San Francisco. The Palestinians, he said, "are the ones actually living in terror."

To that end, ADC's board of directors met last Friday with Secretary of State Colin Powell and heard from numerous experts on the Middle East conflict.

Ibish and others say the organization's two fronts do not need to be completely separated.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, they say, has led to a negative perception of Arabs, which has contributed to the alleged infringement of their civil rights. And the Sept. 11 attacks, they believe, have moved U.S. policy in the Middle East against the Palestinians.

"We have always felt from the beginning that the discrimination we faced and the discrimination in the media is inextricably tied to differences in opinion on the Middle East between the Arab American community and those in media and government," Ibish said.

Nisrine Barakeh, a 28-year-old Palestinian who moved to the United States a year ago from Great Britain, said it is important for Arabs' civil rights to be protected, so that they are free to voice their opinions on the Middle East.

"They help each other," she said. "The view Americans have of us largely comes from stereotypes the American media has portrayed of terrorists in the Middle East."

As ADC members lobbied Congress on June 6, some spoke of the domestic issues while others expressed their views on the Middle East conflict. Each participant spoke of the issues he or she felt passionate about, Ibish said, but were particularly careful when lobbying Jewish legislators.

He also notes that some Jewish lawmakers who disagree completely with the group on the Middle East still are advocates for Arabs in their civil right battles.

Arab American groups also have been garnering support on the civil rights front from American Jewish groups who sit with them on the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights.

But while Arab Americans see similarities between their struggles and the previous and current fights of Jewish lobbyists, they say protecting their rights and making their voices heard will be harder for them than it has been for American Jews, who have established fund-raising networks and possess decades of political experience. □