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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Bomber strikes in Jerusalem

At least seven Israelis were killed when a suicide bomber struck Wednesday at a hitchhiking post in Jerusalem's French Hill neighborhood.

Two of the fatalities died in surgery after the attack, which injured at least 38 Israelis.

Four of the wounded were listed in critical condition. [Page 3]

Israel fires missiles at Gaza

Israeli forces fired missiles Wednesday at targets in the Gaza Strip.

Missiles were fired at Palestinian Authority military targets in and around Gaza City and at the northern end of Gaza, according to the Jerusalem Post. Targets also were hit in Khan Yunis and Rafah in the south, the paper reported, citing Palestinian sources.

In another development, a Palestinian intelligence officer was killed and three Israeli soldiers were wounded during a clash Wednesday in Kalkilya. Fighting erupted after soldiers surrounded the officer's home, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

Bush to propose 'soft' timetable

President Bush reportedly plans to propose a Palestinian state with provisional boundaries, but will make the plan contingent upon dramatic Palestinian reforms.

A senior U.S. official told The Associated Press on Wednesday that Bush may propose a "soft" timetable that could take as much as a year to implement before statehood is achieved.

Bush will not support provisional statehood without the sweeping reforms, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

E.U. frees up Palestinian aid

E.U. legislators voted Wednesday to unblock some \$17 million in aid to the Palestinian Authority. The money had been held up amid charges that the aid was being used to help fund terrorism.

"We have found no evidence of E.U. funds being used for any purposes other than that for which they were intended," said the European Union's external affairs commissioner, Chris Patten.

He conceded, however, that corruption in Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority made it impossible to know where every dollar finally wound up.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Israel to seize land after attacks; how will it affect chance of peace?

By Leslie Susser

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Just 36 hours after a bus bombing in southern Jerusalem that killed 19 Israelis — and before another bombing in the northern part of the city killed at least seven — Israeli soldiers were digging in around the Palestinian city of Jenin.

It was obvious they were planning a long stay.

The mobile homes, water pipes and electricity lines the soldiers brought with them were harbingers of a radical new policy.

In recent weeks, the Israel Defense Force has moved rapidly in and out of Palestinian cities and villages on the basis of pinpoint intelligence.

Following Tuesday's bus bombing, however, the government announced that the IDF will take over large swaths of Palestinian-ruled territory, for relatively long periods of time, in a renewed effort to stop Palestinian terrorism.

The move came as President Bush was putting the finishing touches on a major speech on Middle East policy that was expected to spell out the American vision of a "provisional" Palestinian state whose borders would be defined later. In addition, Bush was expected to send Secretary of State Colin Powell to the region to try to gather momentum toward an international peace conference some time this summer.

The key question is how Israel's new policy will affect any prospects for peace. If Israel indeed seizes Palestinian land, how will that mesh with Bush's anticipated support for a Palestinian state in those areas?

So far, the Americans are showing considerable understanding for the Israeli move.

Even before Tuesday's attack was followed by another bombing Wednesday at a hitchhiking post, the White House had put out a strong statement condemning the outrages and supporting Israel's right to defend itself.

At the same time, however, the Bush administration gently urged Israel "to remember to take into account the consequences of its actions, and keep open the path to peace, the political path."

That, in a nutshell, is the dilemma Israel faces: How to defend its citizens, while retaining international support and not closing the door to peace?

Though Israel has American backing for now, its new policy of holding Palestinian-ruled areas for long periods may soon put it back in the international doghouse. The idea of seizing land first was mooted several weeks ago by Shin Bet Chief Avi Dichter, who argued that the Palestinian Authority was not doing anything to fight terror in the areas under its control.

The West Bank is divided into three areas called A, B and C, with Israel responsible for security in areas B and C. The Palestinians nominally are responsible in A, which is made up of all the Palestinian cities and their immediate surroundings, and includes some 97 percent of the Palestinian population.

According to the Oslo accords, Israeli forces can move freely in B and C, but are not supposed to enter Area A — except in hot pursuit of suspected terrorists. Dichter, however, maintains that since the Palestinians are doing nothing about terror attacks, including suicide bombings, emanating from Area A, Israel must take charge there to protect Israeli lives.

This week, Israel began work on a security fence along its former border with the West Bank. Yet until the fence is built, Dichter told the government, the only effective way to fight terror is to combat it at its source in Area A. Dichter's plan is not meant to

MIDEAST FOCUS

Unknown victim to be buried

The victim of a bus bombing in northern Israel two weeks ago is to be buried in an anonymous grave.

No family members had come to identify the man, believed to be in his 60s, who was among 17 Israelis killed in the June 5 attack near Megiddo.

Anti-Israel P.R. planned

Arab ministers discussed implementing a \$20 million public relations campaign against Israel. The information ministers from 12 Arab countries met Wednesday in Cairo to discuss a campaign that would target the international community.

The ministers also said Arab television stations will not be allowed to interview Israeli officials, to prevent the Israeli point of view from reaching the Arab world.

Palestinians call for end to terror

A newspaper ad backed by 55 prominent Palestinians called for an end to terrorist attacks inside Israel. "We urge those behind military attacks against civilians inside Israel to reconsider their positions and to stop pushing our youth to carry out these attacks, which only result in deepening hatred between the two peoples," the ad in Wednesday's Al Quds newspaper said.

Among those signing the ad were Sari Nusseibeh, the top Palestinian official in Jerusalem, and Palestinian legislator Hanan Ashrawi.

1,400 illegal Palestinians nabbed

Israeli police arrested more than 1,400 Palestinians said to be living in Israel illegally.

They were detained as part of a national roundup following Tuesday's deadly suicide attack aboard a Jerusalem bus. Most of the Palestinians were sent back to the West Bank or Gaza Strip, but some were reportedly detained for questioning.



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replace the fence but to complement it, especially during the scheduled yearlong construction process. Once the fence is in place, Dichter says, the army won't have to stay in Area A any longer.

The government initially rejected the Dichter plan, but the new wave of suicide bombings and the imperative of saving Israeli lives overcame earlier reservations.

Some may have hoped, too, that the policy would have a deterrent effect, showing Palestinians that each new terror attack would cost them control of additional land.

Cabinet ministers had been concerned about world reaction, with Israel expected to be accused of subverting peace prospects if it reoccupies some Palestinian-ruled areas. They also were worried that Israel might be sucked into a creeping reoccupation of the entire West Bank and Gaza Strip, which would entail responsibility for civilian life for 3 million Palestinians.

This the government wants to avoid at all costs. Former military governors of the West Bank shudder at the thought of dealing with everyday Palestinian life — from food supplies to health, education and welfare, to town planning and housing permits.

"This was bad enough in 1967 when there were only 800,000 Palestinians to care for," says the first Israeli governor of the West Bank, Gen. Shlomo Gazit.

Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer is adamant that Israel has absolutely no intention of falling into the reoccupation trap. "Holding Palestinian areas," he says, "is meant only to defend Israeli citizens, not to reoccupy the territories as a whole."

Only the most hawkish members of the Cabinet, like National Religious Party leader Efraim Eitam, favor total reoccupation.

But that was not what the Cabinet voted for. The idea rather is to hold different parts of Area A at different times, without taking on civil functions.

Yet even this is a radical departure from previous Israeli policy — and, significantly, it was supported by Labor Party members of the Cabinet, including party leader Ben-Eliezer.

However, legislator Haim Ramon, who intends to challenge Ben-Eliezer for the Labor leadership in October, already is calling the move a mistake. Israel, he says, should be seeking separation from the Palestinians, not closer contact. His criticism is sure to be echoed by left-wing opposition lawmakers.

The Palestinians already are talking about launching an international campaign against any Israeli move into parts of Area A. Chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat says they intend to complain to the U.N. Security Council. □

Leslie Susser is the diplomatic correspondent for the Jerusalem Report.

S. African Jews try to prevent forum from turning into an anti-Israel circus

By Michael Belling

CAPE TOWN (JTA) — South African Jewish groups are concerned that an upcoming environmental summit in Johannesburg could turn into another Israel-bashing session under U.N. sponsorship.

A meeting of several Jewish organizations has been scheduled for the end of June in Jerusalem to prepare for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which is scheduled to take place Aug. 26-Sept. 4.

Some 60,000 people are expected to attend "Earth Summit 2," which comes 10 years after a similar conference in Rio de Janeiro. The fear is that the conference could repeat, or even surpass, the anti-Semitism that characterized last year's U.N. conference against racism, which was held in Durban, South Africa.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies has adopted a proactive approach, including meeting with Mohammed Valli Moosa, the South African minister of environmental affairs and tourism, and arranging media tours of local Jewish outreach programs.

At preparatory meetings for this year's summit, various allegations of Israeli actions that have damaged the environment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have been leveled. None of these accusations was raised at the final high-level preparatory meeting in Bali, Indonesia, earlier this month — but several Muslim countries called for an end to "foreign occupation" in "Palestine." □

JEWISH WORLD

Swiss Jews face attacks, threats

The leader of Swiss Jewry decried a recent wave of anti-Semitic threats. Appearing on Swiss television, Alfred Donath read a letter in which someone vowed that last year's murder of Rabbi Abraham Greenbaum "will definitely not be the last such attack." Visiting from Israel on a fund-raising mission, Greenbaum was shot and killed on the streets of Zurich after attending prayer services.

Donath also told television viewers that Orthodox Jews have been attacked and insulted with increasing frequency on the streets of Switzerland.

In another development, the Prosecutor's Office in Zurich announced it is closing the Greenbaum case after police were unable to find the murderer.

Rio council honors Arafat

Rio De Janeiro's City Council awarded its highest honor to Yasser Arafat. The move reversed a recent close vote not to award the Pedro Ernesto Medal to the Palestinian Authority president. Gerson Bergher, a leader of Rio's 40,000 Jews since the 1960s and a former council president, said the reversal took place while he took some time off from his council duties for health reasons.

"It was a cowardly procedure. I was betrayed," Bergher told reporters. "Many of the council members who had first voted pro-Israel switched sides during my medical absence." Four council members soon will travel to the Middle East to present the medal to Arafat.

Ted Turner apologizes

Ted Turner apologized for saying that both Israel and the Palestinians are engaged in terrorism.

"I want to make it absolutely clear that my view was — and is — that there is a fundamental distinction between the acts of the Israeli government and the Palestinians," the founder of CNN and the vice chairman of AOL Time Warner said Tuesday. "I believe the Israeli government has used excessive force to defend itself, but that is not the same as intentionally targeting and killing civilians with suicide bombers."

In comments published Tuesday in a London newspaper, Turner was quoted as saying that "both sides are involved in terrorism."

Interfaith meeting turns nasty

An interfaith gathering in Brazil that brought together Jewish, Catholic and Muslim clergy took an anti-Semitic turn. During Tuesday's conference in Sao Paulo, one Muslim cleric blasted Jews in general while condemning Israeli actions against the Palestinians.

Another Muslim cleric said the "only true Jews are the Neturei Karta," a fervently Orthodox group that is anti-Zionist.

For second straight day, bomber turns Jerusalem into terror scene

By Matthew E. Berger

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Hadassah Lipszyc came from London to Jerusalem to study for a year.

She might not have realized how close she would get to a war.

"It's really scary," said Lipszyc, 17, who lives a block from the French Hill bus stop where a Palestinian suicide bomber blew himself up on Wednesday afternoon, killing seven Israelis and wounding at least 38.

"You feel like it's really near you and that it could happen to you," she said. "I could have been there."

Sometimes it seems that terror is becoming more the norm than the exception for residents of Jerusalem.

Wednesday's attack was the second straight day that a suicide bomber struck in Israel's capital.

The bomber got out of a car and began running toward a bus stop and hitchhiking post where Israelis — many of whom are afraid to use buses these days — waited for rides.

The bomber detonated himself as a border policeman chased him.

The Al-Aksa Brigade, a militia of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, claimed responsibility for the attack.

A day earlier, 19 people, including several schoolchildren, were killed when a Palestinian terrorist blew up a bus. More than 50 people were injured.

Israel's Security Cabinet announced late Tuesday night that it would begin seizing chunks of Palestinian land in response to each terror attack.

After Wednesday's attack, Israel launched airstrikes in the Gaza Strip and entered Palestinian cities in the West Bank, searching for suspected terrorists.

Witnesses said Israeli helicopters fired at least five missiles at targets in the Gaza Strip.

The French Hill bus stop is on a main highway near the northern exit from Jerusalem, near roads leading to Ramallah and Jericho.

Behind the bus stop is a large retaining wall topped with grass. After Wednesday's bombing, emergency workers used ladders to reach the top of the wall, searching for body parts.

The explosion blew out the back and sides of the bus stop, leaving just a concrete bench and roof.

Several body bags were lined up nearby, and blood stained the street.

A relatively affluent neighborhood close to the Hebrew University, French Hill has been the site of previous attacks, and the police presence there was high.

Neighborhood resident Ran Partock said he tries not to think about how close the attacks are to his home.

"All of Jerusalem is under attack. It makes no difference, neighborhood to neighborhood," Partock said.

He also tries not to alter his daily routine because of potential attacks, he said.

"It won't help," he said. "If they want to hurt someone they will, and it will destroy the fabric of our life."

The suicide attacks in Jerusalem have become so common that some people even seem unaffected by the carnage. On Wednesday, young children rode their bikes around streets blocked off for emergency vehicles, while others took pictures.

"We try to come after each attack to protest and make our voices heard," Ya'akov Fauci said.

Fauci said he blamed the Israeli government for the attack because it had not sustained its measures to fight the Palestinian terrorist infrastructure.

Tzvi Taz, a university student from New Jersey who was at the scene of the attack, said he believes the United States wants to support Israel but cannot do so for political reasons, including pressure from the European Union and Arab states.

"If America was doing what it thinks should be done, we wouldn't be in this situation," Taz said. □

FOCUS ON ISSUES**Sephardi Jews to sue Arab League to fight Palestinian refugee claims**

By Rachel Pomerance

NEW YORK (JTA) — Jews who once made their homes in Arab nations are planning to sue the Arab League for lost and stolen property.

Some 800,000 Jews fled Arab lands in the aftermath of Israel's creation — roughly the same number of Palestinians who became refugees in the wake of Israel's War of Independence.

Their claims are regarded as a pivotal bargaining chip in future negotiations with the Palestinians.

The lawsuit, considered more symbolic than likely to reap any reparations, was the idea of Amram Attias, a Moroccan-born Jew who lives in New York.

Attias, whose International Committee of Jews from Arab Lands is part of the American Sephardi Federation, won approval for the lawsuit at a meeting of the World Sephardi Federation, an umbrella group for organizations of Jews from Middle Eastern and North African nations. The group met Monday in Jerusalem in conjunction with the World Zionist Congress gathering.

The plan to sue comes amid a broad resurgence of activity on the issue, which gained credibility after former President Clinton acknowledged refugees on both sides at the Camp David peace negotiations in July 2001.

But not all the parties engaged in the issue are pleased with the news of the first collective claim against the 22-nation league.

Israel's Moroccan-born justice minister, Meir Sheerit, who last month unveiled a major partnership between his department and the American Sephardi Federation to preserve, collect and computerize claims of Jewish refugees, said the lawsuit diverges from his ministry's goal.

"Every organization can act independently as it feels fit," Sheerit said on learning of the lawsuit from JTA.

But "the goal of the Ministry of Justice is to gather information regarding the loss of Jewish property in the Arab states" to counter Palestinian claims to lost property in future negotiations, he said.

"Israel is not going to take this issue to court," said Sheerit's spokesman, Yonatan Beker. And to do so is "premature," not to mention that they have only begun the process to collect and calculate claims.

The lawsuit does not estimate a financial figure, but is seeking restitution for 200,000 houses, 6,000 synagogues, and hundreds of schools, cemeteries and other assets confiscated from once-thriving Jewish communities across the Arab world.

Attias, who drafted the resolution, doesn't expect compensation. "Knowing the culture," said the 63-year-old Attias, "I do not believe" Arab nations will "give us anything whatsoever."

Past claims by individuals have all been ignored, he said.

In fact, money isn't the point, he said.

The lawsuit, he said, is a strategy to raise awareness of the issue to "counterbalance" the Palestinian proposal for a right of return to Israel and alleviate pressure on Israel to accept it.

Calls to representatives of the Arab League were not returned.

The Palestinian claim of a "right of return" is rejected by virtually all Israelis and Jews, who agree that such a move would vanquish the Jewish character of Israel.

It is widely believed that any final agreement with the Palestinians would include some sort of financial compensation for those who lost their homes.

Still, the issue was seen as a primary reason for the collapse of negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians at Camp David.

Attias would not say when the lawsuit would be filed, but that it would be soon and that there would first be consultations with major Jewish organizations.

Sheerit's spokesman, Beker, was more blunt. The issue should be left for the negotiating period with the Palestinians, "and not before."

The claims are a "diplomatic tool" for use in the discussion of compensation of refugees and to show that "if anyone is wrong, they have done it before and in larger quantities," Beker said.

Attias said in the face of strong objections by Israel, he would consider postponing the lawsuit.

The Justice Ministry is sifting through more than 10,000 claims, yellowed with age from decades of collecting dust in the department.

The issue of Jewish refugees from Arab lands has seen unfruitful fits and starts since the creation of Israel.

Attias said part of the problem is that the issue was submerged under the deserved attention and reparations paid to Holocaust victims.

He also said Jews were eager after the Holocaust to erase any sign of living as refugees. But Clinton's reference to the issue at Camp David gave it new prominence.

"There is some interest, interestingly enough on both sides, in also having a fund which compensates the Israelis who were made refugees by the war which occurred after the birth of Israel," Clinton stated in an interview on Israeli television shortly after the Camp David negotiations.

"Israel is full of people, Jewish people, who lived in predominantly Arab countries who came to Israel because they were made refugees in their own land," he added.

For the last 1,400 years, or since the dawn of Islam, Jews in Arab countries endured the dhimmi laws, rooted in the Koran, which discriminated against but tolerated Jews and Christians as "people of the book," said Maurice Roumani, a professor of political science and Middle Eastern studies at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.

These laws required Jews to pay special taxes and live separate from Muslims. And in some cases, they were subjected to humiliating laws.

While the situation varied from one country to the next, anti-Jewish violence escalated in many Arab countries throughout the 1930s and 1940s, coinciding with the rise of European anti-Semitism and World War II.

After the war, the vehement Arab reaction to the 1947 U.N. plan to partition Palestine and to the establishment of the Jewish state the following year prompted widespread insecurity and a mass exodus of Jews from Arab lands.

Many of the Arab states made it difficult for Jews to emigrate, forcing clandestine operations or in the case of Iraq, stripping the departing Jews of all their assets and possessions.

Sheerit's project to assemble the claims of refugees and their families is intended for historical preservation as well as political leverage and individual compensation, he said.

The project is expected to cost more than \$1 million and take between six and eight months. □