



Daily News Bulletin

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85th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel anti-terror funds delayed

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee said it is disappointed that the Bush administration has delayed \$200 million in anti-terrorism assistance for Israel.

Earlier Tuesday, President Bush blocked a portion of a spending bill that included the \$200 million in aid to Israel and \$50 million in aid for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. But Bush noted that he would request that Congress include the funds in amendments to the 2003 budget.

Ninth victim in Hebrew U. attack

The death toll in the Hebrew University terrorist bombing rose to nine.

Revital Barashi, 30, died Monday night of head injuries she sustained in the July 31 attack at the Frank Sinatra cafeteria at the university's Mount Scopus campus. Barashi was a university employee.

Palestinian deportations delayed

Israel's High Court of Justice postponed the deportations of three relatives of Palestinian terrorists.

The postponement was ordered Tuesday to give the court time to hear their appeal. The deportations originally were slated to take effect Tuesday, after an Israeli military court ordered the deportations a day earlier.

Prague Jews brace for flood

Volunteers from Prague's Jewish community are working frantically to erect barriers around key Jewish sites Tuesday as the city prepares for its worst flooding in more than a century.

The Old-New Synagogue and the Jewish Town Hall are among buildings threatened as the Vltava River is expected to burst its banks and engulf parts of the Old Town. Torah scrolls and religious artifacts have been removed from synagogues and taken to secure sites. [Page 3]

Fatah to focus its attacks

The Fatah movement has decided to halt attacks inside Israel, a political leader of the group said Tuesday.

West Bank Fatah leader Hussein Sheik said the Fatah leadership instead plans to focus its struggle in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

As November polls approach, Jews eye candidates' views on Israel, terror

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — With Israel under attack and seemingly at its most vulnerable in decades, American Jews are trying to ensure that the next U.S. Congress maintains a strong pro-Israel bent.

Education, health care and the economy probably will be the key issues for most voters when they go to the polls in November.

But candidates also want to have a strong anti-terrorism platform in the election — the first since Sept. 11 — and “support for Israel is one way to do that,” Democratic pollster Mark Mellman said.

The election also comes after an upsurge in anti-Semitism in Europe and at international forums such as last year's U.N. World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa.

The dual concern over Israel and anti-Semitism is spurring special interest in the elections — and fund-raising for candidates “far from home” — among Jewish activists.

A particularly important test case for Jewish involvement will take place Aug. 20, when Rep. Cynthia McKinney (D-Ga.), who has long angered many in the Jewish community, faces a primary challenger who has received support from the Jewish community.

The race has attracted the involvement of members of the local Jewish community in Georgia and the national Jewish community.

McKinney's vote against a pro-Israel resolution in May added to a record of remarks over the years that the pro-Israel community has considered insensitive, even outrageous at times.

One instance that particularly rankled American Jews was connected to a \$10 million disaster relief donation from a Saudi prince who sought to tie the Sept. 11 terror attacks to U.S. support for Israel.

New York's former mayor, Rudolph Giuliani, rejected the gift because of its political message, but McKinney, who agreed with the Saudi's assessment, asked that the prince's check be accepted.

Denise Majette, a retired state judge, is challenging McKinney in the Democratic primary. She has taken a strong pro-Israel stance and is now neck-and-neck with the five-term incumbent.

Several pro-Israel groups have contributed to Majette's campaign, and a number of individuals who have donated to the campaign in recent months have Jewish-sounding surnames. Morris Amitay, a pro-Israel activist and founder of Washington PAC, a pro-Israel group, said there is “a lot of activity” by Jews on behalf of Majette.

“There is mounting interest in the race by pro-Israel observers,” said Alan Sechrest, a Democratic strategist.

McKinney's campaign, by contrast, shows a number of donations from individuals with Arab- or Muslim-sounding surnames, including many from outside McKinney's district.

The campaign also has received contributions from Muslim advocacy groups.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations has asked its members to support McKinney because she supports a Palestinian state and is against U.S. aid to Israel.

Some of the contributors to McKinney's campaign have come under federal

MIDEAST FOCUS

Barghouti trial set to open

The trial of Palestinian militia leader Marwan Barghouti is slated to begin Wednesday in Tel Aviv.

Barghouti, the West Bank chief of Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, faces charges of orchestrating and inciting terror attacks that killed or wounded scores of Israelis. Israeli officials hope the trial will prove that senior Palestinians are orchestrating the wave of Arab terror.

Barghouti insists that he is merely a political leader and is not responsible for his group's violence.

Haifa mayor seeks Labor post

Haifa's mayor announced he will seek the leadership of Israel's Labor Party. Amram Mitzna is a former general who supports dismantling some Jewish settlements as part of a peace deal with the Palestinians.

Announcing his candidacy at a news conference Tuesday, Mitzna said he supports an immediate and unconditional resumption of peace talks with the Palestinians, regardless of who their leader is.

Weekend polls suggested that Mitzna would easily defeat the two other candidates to lead Labor, Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer and legislator Haim Ramon, in party primaries scheduled for Nov. 19.

Israel's next national elections are scheduled for October 2003, but Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has said he may seek early elections.

Pro-Israel march in Jerusalem

An estimated 1,500 Jews and Christians from around the world marched Tuesday in Jerusalem to show their support for Israel.

Participants came from the United States, Canada, Britain, France, Sweden and Russia.

The grass-roots effort was spearheaded by a volunteer group, Rally in Israel, based in Englewood, N.J.

investigation for suspected links to terrorist organizations.

McKinney's campaign coordinator told the Atlanta Journal-Constitution that the individuals were "American citizens learning to use their money like the very small population which sways a lot of opinion with their money — the Jewish community. That's the American way."

The McKinney race follows a triumph for Jewish involvement in an Alabama congressional race in June.

Jews from around the country opened their pocketbooks for attorney Artur Davis, who defeated Rep. Earl Hilliard in the Democratic primary runoff for Alabama's 7th district last month.

Activists considered Hilliard anti-Israel because of his voting record in Congress.

The hundreds of thousands of dollars that Davis managed to raise from the Jewish community underscored Jewish concern that pro-Israel legislators get elected or stay in office when voters go to the polls Nov. 5.

Some Jewish officials said they would not be surprised if Majette gets at least as much support as Davis did.

"McKinney is the leading anti-Israel voice in Congress today," one Jewish official said. "She is far more vulnerable than Hilliard ever was."

With other congressional races looming, Jewish voters are continuing to look beyond their own backyards and past the usual foreign and domestic concerns to focus on just how good on Israel a candidate can be.

People are looking at a number of races with an interest to getting involved, activists say.

"There is a willingness to get active," said Matt Brooks, executive director of the Republican Jewish Coalition. "There is a tremendous amount of political fund raising."

Leaders of the RJC have hosted individual fund raisers and raised over a quarter of a million dollars for Norm Coleman, the Republican challenger to Sen. Paul Wellstone (D-Minn.).

While both candidates are Jewish, Coleman's pro-Israel stance has gratified Jewish leaders, who are troubled by the Arab American community's support of Wellstone.

In the end, the pro-Israel majority in Congress is likely to be strengthened as a result of the 2002 races and the departure of anti-Israel voices, such as Hilliard and Rep. James Traficant (D-Ohio), from Capitol Hill.

Other races garnering attention include New Hampshire's senatorial race, where much of the talk about the Republican primary between Rep. John Sununu and incumbent Sen. Bob Smith has revolved around the candidates' records on terrorism and Israel.

Sununu has come under fire for supporting U.S. aid to the Palestinian Authority, though he also has voted for U.S. aid to Israel and has returned campaign contributions from Arab leaders who backed Hamas.

Smith has accused Sununu, who is of Lebanese and Palestinian descent, of being soft on terrorism and supporting radical, anti-Israel causes.

Smith has signed on to pro-Israel legislation and supports the Arafat Accountability Act, which would freeze the PLO and Palestinian Authority assets in the United States.

But in many races, voters find it hard to distinguish between the candidates' records on Israel. In South Dakota, for example, the Senate race pits Democratic incumbent Tim Johnson against Republican Rep. John Thune; the two are about even in polls.

Johnson has a "perfect record on Israel-related issues," but Thune also is "good on Israel," according to the pro-Israel Joint Action Committee.

Analysts agree that Jewish voters are looking harder at a candidate's record on Israel because it's more salient with the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian violence.

But the issue is not going to make or break most races, said Ira Forman, executive director of the National Jewish Democratic Council, echoing the view of others.

David Fink, a Jewish Democrat running for a congressional seat in Michigan's 9th District, said both he and his opponent are pro-Israel.

It will be domestic issues of import to the Jewish community — such as abortion and school prayer — that voters will look at when they decide, he said.

"There are very few races where Israel is the deciding factor," Fink said. "It will come down to domestic issues." □



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JEWISH WORLD

Conversions for Jews rejected

Jewish and Catholic officials issued a joint statement affirming that Jews should not be targeted for conversion.

"While the Catholic Church regards the saving act of Christ as central to the process of human salvation for all, it also acknowledges that Jews already dwell in a saving covenant with God," the statement says. "Jews are also called by God to prepare the world for God's kingdom." The statement was issued by the National Council of Synagogues and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs.

Report: German Arabs aid terror

German car dealers of Arabic background are helping Islamic fundamentalists launder money for the "war against Christians and Jews," according to one of Germany's leading newspapers.

The Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung said its source was the German Bureau of Criminal Investigation in Wiesbaden, but the department refused to confirm the report.

Far rightists to meet in Moscow

Plans are under way for an all-European congress of far-right parties in Moscow, according to Russian ultranationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. Zhirinovskiy said he expects representatives of 30 to 40 parties to participate in the mid-September event.

French National Front leader Jean-Marie Le Pen has already confirmed his participation. Austria's Jorg Haider is also likely to attend.

Vienna community growing

The Jewish community of Vienna is growing, according to the community's leader. With several hundred newcomers arriving over the last few years, mostly from the former Soviet Union and the Balkans, the population now stands at about 6,650, according to Ariel Muzikant, who called the development "truly gratifying."

Before World War II, there were some 188,000 Jews in Vienna. Most were deported to Nazi death camps and murdered. In 1945, after the end of the Nazi era, there were about 2,000 Jews in the city.

Sugihara cherry trees ailing

Officials in the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius authorized emergency funds to save ailing cherry trees planted in honor of a Japanese diplomat who saved thousands of Jews during the Holocaust.

The 100 cherry trees, planted one year ago to mark the 100th anniversary of Chiune Sugihara's birth, haven't received enough water and may soon die.

Jewish sites in Prague, Vienna try to deal with rising flood waters

By Magnus Bennett

PRAGUE (JTA) — Prague's Jewish leaders are waiting anxiously to find out whether the city's worst floods in more than 100 years will cause serious damage to Jewish buildings and artifacts.

Dozens of volunteers, including visitors from Israel, worked virtually around the clock along with community staff Tuesday in an attempt to protect synagogues and other sensitive Jewish sites from being engulfed by flood waters from the Vltava River, which is flowing at 30 times its normal rate.

One of the biggest concerns was that flood waters could seriously damage the Pinkas Synagogue, where the names of 80,000 Czech Holocaust victims are painted on the walls. "I am afraid that the names at Pinkas will peel off if the water comes," said Tomas Jelinek, chairman of Prague's Jewish community. "At the moment, there is no water around the synagogue, but you never know what will happen."

Volunteers began building sandbag barriers around synagogues on Monday, when it became clear the city was facing a high risk of flooding.

However, there were reports that sandbags were in short supply as city officials focused on other areas of Prague facing the greatest threats.

Because of flooding fears, Torah scrolls and religious artifacts were removed from several synagogues around the Old Town and taken to the Jewish Town Hall for safety.

Prague's Jewish Museum canceled a number of exhibitions in the city center and moved paintings and other artworks to higher levels in the buildings where they were on display.

Community staff worked until the early hours of Tuesday morning moving items to safety — and then resumed work just a few hours later.

Leo Pavlat, director of the museum, said some objects were still at risk.

"There are some Jewish books held in depositories that are on a level that can be reached by water," he said. "All we can do is pray not only that the rain stops but that the Vltava River becomes less wild."

In an attempt to hold back the floods, city officials have erected large steel barriers on the river embankment leading to the Old Town, where the old Jewish quarter stands.

An official said it was too early to estimate whether the precautions would work.

At least eight Czechs have died in 10 days of flooding, and more than 70 other people died as near-record summer rains brought flooding to many European cities this week.

Some of the worst flooding occurred in Austria. In Salzburg, more than 1,000 buildings were reportedly under water. In Vienna, the city's oldest Jewish cemetery was closed Tuesday due to emergency conditions brought on by days of torrential rain.

"Several trees fell because the ground became soft in the aftermath of prolonged rain, and there was imminent danger for visitors," said Jewish official Avshalom Hodik.

"We closed the Central Cemetery temporarily so we can check for damage and have it repaired, and cut the trees that need cutting."

He said the local Jewish community had not received any reports of deaths or major property damage due to the severe weather.

A community spokesperson said none of the historical sites of the Viennese Jewish community had been flooded. The Central Cemetery, which dates back to the 1870s, contains about 50,000 graves, not all of them marked with stones. □

(JTA correspondent Toby Axelrod in Berlin contributed to this report.)

Reward for cemetery vandals

BERLIN (JTA) — The German city of Lingen is offering a nearly \$1,000 reward for information leading to the arrest of those who vandalized a Jewish cemetery there.

Police reported earlier this month that vandals had damaged and knocked over seven gravestones in the cemetery. "Everyone is stunned that something like this could happen in Lingen," said Mayor Heifer Pott. □

Synagogue study offers fresh data, but few surprises after half-century

By Joe Berkofsky

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Orthodox movement claims the lion's share of synagogues in the United States, despite being the smallest of the three major branches, according to a new census by the American Jewish Committee.

Of 3,727 synagogues in the United States, 40 percent are Orthodox, 26 percent are Reform and 23 percent Conservative, according to the census, the first to count U.S. synagogues since 1936. Other groups, including Reconstructionist, Sephardic, traditional, humanistic and gay/lesbian, each make up 3 percent or less of all synagogues, according to the census.

The study, by Jim Schwartz, Jeffrey Scheckner and Laurence Kotler-Berkowitz, does not try to count synagogue membership, which Schwartz called "a very tricky" area that is difficult to define.

Yet the study offers the most detailed tabulation of U.S. synagogues in decades. The researchers cross-referenced the movements' synagogue lists with Jewish directories, phone books, phone surveys and other data to compile the first such report since the 1936 Census of Religious Bodies survey.

That U.S. government study counted 3,728 "congregations," though this study's authors said it remains unclear how many of those were housed in synagogue buildings.

Of the Orthodox synagogues, 36 percent were not officially tied to any organization; 23.5 percent belong to the Orthodox Union; 23.1 percent to Chabad/Lubavitch; 10 percent to the National Council of Young Israel; 4 percent to the fervently Orthodox Agudath Israel of America; and 6.5 percent to Sephardic organizations.

With the Orthodox movements representing only 8 to 10 percent of American Jews, according to surveys, it's a matter of debate why they have built so many synagogues.

"It's true there's been an Orthodox resurgence, but the number of Orthodox synagogues has always been larger than their proportion of the population," said Lawrence Grossman, editor of the AJCommittee's American Jewish Year Book, which will carry the full study in its 2002 edition.

"Any time you get 10" Orthodox "people together, they'll break off and form their own minyan," he added.

Rabbi Avi Shafran, a spokesman for Agudath Israel, agreed that many Orthodox shuls have only 20 or 30 members, compared to some 200-300 members in many Conservative and Reform synagogues.

Orthodox Jews take very seriously the nusach, or liturgical style, of their shul's prayers, according to traditions usually based on family habits, he said.

"We tend to be very religious about our observance," he said. "When you live in a shul instead of visiting it once or twice a week, you want to feel comfortable there."

Some disputed his analysis.

Rabbi Jerome Epstein, executive vice-president of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, said Orthodox congregations are largely "neighborhood" congregations because members refuse to drive on Shabbat.

"The real issue is the riding issue," he said. "It's not that the Orthodox take services more seriously."

In many large Conservative and Reform synagogues, he added, members also follow "different styles of prayer," but form their own minyans to accommodate their preferences, rather than entirely new shuls.

Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations, said the number of synagogues "doesn't really mean anything." He will look more seriously at the upcoming National Jewish Population Survey, which should show how many Jews belong to each denomination, Yoffie said.

The AJCommittee study "is useful information, as long as one doesn't draw inappropriate conclusions from it," he said.

Trying to avoid a dispute over "What is a synagogue?" the census defined one as a place whose primary purpose is religious; that features a permanent physical location for prayer; where services are scheduled regularly; that is led by a rabbi, cantor, or laypeople; and that is considered a synagogue by its members.

Most leaders seemed to agree that the study offered few surprises.

"This is not a tremendously important study — it just confirms what any observer of the Jewish scene would get by looking around," Shafran said.

Rabbi Hayim Herring, executive director of STAR: Synagogue Transformation and Renewal, an independent group that aims to build U.S. synagogue life, said the study will provide a "baseline" on which future studies can build.

More frequent surveys that counted the number of American synagogues would be useful to reveal trends and dynamics in synagogue life, Herring and others said.

Meanwhile, Schwartz said this census affirmed some long-held assumptions about synagogues in the United States:

- The 50 metropolitan areas with the largest Jewish populations contain 82 percent of all synagogues.
- Within the 50 areas with the densest Jewish populations, seven metro areas contain more than 100 synagogues, or 58 percent of all synagogues in the country.
- The New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island area, which has the heaviest Jewish population in the United States, contains one-third of all U.S. synagogues. Next came the Los Angeles-Riverside-Orange County area, with 7 percent, and Boston-Worcester-Lawrence, with 5 percent.
- Three other communities have more than 50 synagogues, including 65 in Washington, 56 in Baltimore and 51 in Detroit-Ann Arbor.
- New York has the most synagogues, with 995, followed by 425 in California, 331 in New Jersey, 263 in Florida and 201 in Massachusetts. These five states also have the largest Jewish populations — except for Pennsylvania, which has slightly more Jews than Massachusetts but four less synagogues.

• The highest synagogue density — measured as the number of synagogues per 1,000 Jews — is in medium-sized cities such as Providence, R.I., Albany, N.Y., Buffalo, Cincinnati and Milwaukee. That's because these cities have old Jewish communities with more traditional Jews and place a higher priority on institution-building, according to the study's authors.

• States with the highest synagogue density are rural ones with small Jewish populations, including Arkansas, Mississippi, Montana, Oklahoma, South Dakota, West Virginia, Wyoming and Vermont. That may be because many synagogues in these states were built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but have outlived the Jewish populations they once served. □