

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### **Palestinian leader in Israeli court**

Palestinian militia leader Marwan Barghouti was charged with murder Wednesday in a Tel Aviv court. [Page 3]

### **Senior Hamas member killed**

A senior Hamas member was killed in an Israeli military operation Wednesday near Nablus. Nasser Jerar helped recruit suicide bombers and had planned a major terror attack to bring down a high-rise building in Israel, Israeli officials said.

Jerar lost both legs and one arm in a "work accident" a year ago, when a bomb he was preparing exploded prematurely. Hamas vowed to avenge his death.

### **Victims' relatives angry at Bush**

Relatives of the Americans killed in the July 31 terror attack at Hebrew University reportedly are angry at President Bush for not sending condolences.

"My cousin was murdered, and you didn't even make a phone call or write a letter to her family," Stephen Bennett, a cousin of victim Marla Bennett, wrote Bush, according to a report Wednesday in *The Washington Post*. Bennett's family, as well as relatives of victim Janis Coulter, told the paper that they had received calls from Democratic Party officials.

### **Red Cross to aid Palestinians**

The Red Cross announced a relief program to aid Palestinians in the West Bank.

Under the program, vouchers will be given to residents of nine cities and towns to allow them to purchase food and household items, according to a German news agency. The Red Cross already operates an assistance program for rural residents of the West Bank.

### **Shul bomb suspect arrested**

Russian police arrested a man who was allegedly preparing to blow up a synagogue in southern Russia. The man arrested Wednesday in the city of Nalchik told police that "Jews as the ruling caste do not let other people live," according to the Moscow office of the Anti-Defamation League.

The suspect was identified as a 24-year-old man with a criminal record who had acquired explosives and other bomb-making materials.

## **Call for reform of umbrella group elicits both skepticism and debate**

*By Rachel Pomerance*

NEW YORK (JTA) — A public call for reform of the umbrella group of American Jewish organizations has made some noise, but doesn't appear to be going anywhere.

The leader of the Reform movement, Rabbi Eric Yoffie, has blasted the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations for a process that lacks consultation in formulating positions and leaves "virtually all power" in the hands of its leadership.

In an opinion piece in the *Forward* earlier this month, Yoffie also accused the Presidents Conference of showing "greater enthusiasm for Israeli governments of the right than for those of the left."

The representative body of 52 American Jewish groups; the conference's chairman, Mortimer Zuckerman; and executive vice chairman, Malcolm Hoenlein; often act as ambassadors of the community, especially on issues related to Israel and world Jewish affairs. The group speaks to presidents and diplomats, issues news releases and sponsors newspaper ads, and is often seen by world leaders and policymakers as the voice of the American Jewish community.

There has long been a debate among Jewish groups over whether the conference reflects a consensus position when issuing statements.

But the leaders of the conference say they try to balance differing views and see no need for change.

"Consensus doesn't necessarily mean unanimity," Zuckerman said.

"We have followed the procedures that were in place" — an informal process of meetings and conversations, he said.

As for the right-left divide, Zuckerman said, "Everybody has their own view of where the politics of the conference or of the Jewish community is."

The views of American Jews have mirrored the opinion in Israel, and "there's been a great shift" in "confidence about what the peace process was all about."

Yoffie's call for change came after the conference leaders issued a statement last month attacking a prominent Palestinian leader, Sari Nusseibeh, without consulting its member groups, he charged.

That statement came in between Israel's closure of Nusseibeh's office and, bowing to American pressure, Israel's reversal of the decision. In his piece, Yoffie advocated the formation of an executive committee that would include the largest organizations and would implement new procedures to determine consensus.

The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Reform's congregational arm, of which Yoffie is president, is one of the largest organizations in the conference.

The concept of an executive committee has been rejected several times by committees of the conference over the years, Zuckerman said.

Meanwhile, it appears that Yoffie is a long way from reaching consensus for his own proposal.

While many member organizations support the concept of reform, they disagree sharply with Yoffie's approach, saying his proposed guidelines might sideline them.

Others rebuke him for airing his concerns publicly, especially at a time when Israel is engaged in a war with the Palestinians.

And groups across the political and religious spectrum suggest that Yoffie's idea for reform would just advance his own organization's interests and politics.

"Eric Yoffie has a political agenda here. It seems to me as long as Yoffie's views

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Cabinet approves security fence

Israel's Security Cabinet on Wednesday approved part of the route of a planned fence separating Israel from the West Bank.

At the recommendation of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, the route of the nearly 70-mile section will place several Jewish settlements — including Elkana, Alfei Menashe and Shaked — on the "Israel side" of the barrier. The section is expected to be completed within a year.

Sharon promised to convene the Cabinet next week to discuss construction of a security barrier around Jerusalem, Israel Radio reported.

### Mideast talks to resume

Israeli-Palestinian talks were slated to resume. Prior to the meeting, Israel indicated it was prepared to make the remaining two payments of some \$45 million in tax revenues owed to the Palestinians and frozen since the outbreak of the intifada in September 2000, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported.

Israel already has transferred some \$15 million.

### Israel to distribute antidote

Israel has decided to provide its citizens with an antidote against radiation from nuclear fallout.

Defense Ministry Director General Amos Yaron on Wednesday confirmed a report in the Israeli daily Ha'aretz that officials decided to include iodine capsules in gas-mask kits distributed to the public.

### Katsav talks to Al-Jazeera

Israeli President Moshe Katsav was interviewed for the first time on Qatar's Al-Jazeera television.

During the interview, Katsav said Israel does not consider the Palestinian people its enemies, and that its only precondition for negotiations is an end to the bloodshed.



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are promoted, he would be fine with it," said Morton Klein, president of the hawkish Zionist Organization of America.

As for the rightward shift, Klein said, "If the conference hadn't moved more toward the right they'd be out of step with American Jewry, with Israeli Jewry and with the Israeli government," which have become more hawkish amid the Palestinian uprising.

Yoffie insists that those who frame his argument as a debate about politics or ideology have it wrong. He says he is concerned only with fair representation.

Venting to the media is what irked David Harris, executive director of the American Jewish Committee. "It's not our style," he said.

"Any umbrella organization will inevitably have its tensions and those tensions will only grow at defining moments," Harris said. "Even so, we prefer private discussions when we have concerns and public airings only as a last resort."

Yoffie said he took his views public after years of frustration that there was no movement toward change.

He said leaders of the UAHC complained to the Presidents Conference five years ago about their desire for a structural change.

But beyond talking to other organizations to determine how to proceed, Yoffie said he has no concrete plan of action.

"Surely, there has been a lot of sympathy for the things I've articulated," Yoffie said. But "where it will go from here, I don't know."

"If I were to summarize, I would say that people don't necessarily agree with the specifics of the proposal, some do, some don't," and some say it "wouldn't work" or that it "needs to be revised," he said.

But "the sense that the conference would benefit by taking a careful look at some of these concerns" is broadly shared by a variety of organizations of different sizes and religious and political affiliations, Yoffie said.

Indeed, Yoffie has his supporters, including Rabbi Jerome Epstein, the executive vice president of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, the large Conservative congregational organization.

The executive committee would help the Conference reach speedy consensus, Epstein said.

But while some endorse the call for change, they also question Yoffie's method.

There are "more examples of nonconsultation and nonprocess than there are of consultation and process," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League.

Referring to Hoenlein, Foxman said: "Every time he burps he speaks in my name" and in the AJCommittee's name and in Eric Yoffie's name.

And there "needs to be a process where" Hoenlein speaks and the ADL leader hears about the comments before reading them in the paper, Foxman said.

Foxman supports the idea of an executive committee, but disagrees with Yoffie's approach to set the committee by membership standards.

"I don't endorse his formula," Foxman said. "We don't have members, so what are you going to do with us?"

To which Yoffie responded, "Membership should not be the sole criteria, but people using common sense would be able to arrive at appropriate criteria."

Still, Yoffie said he sees a problem with a process that gives equal say to a group of 3,000 members and one with 1 million members.

As a system check, Yoffie said, the general membership could always override the executive committee.

Ari Chester, executive director of the Labor Zionist Alliance, said he also finds the Conference of Presidents exclusionary. And he said Jewish organizations are more right wing than the whole of American Jewry.

But Chester took issue with Yoffie's method. "It's as if he would want" the Reform and Conservative movements to be the "authoritarian voice," Chester said.

Other Presidents Conference members don't understand what the brouhaha is about. Yoffie's remarks are "puzzling," according to Betty Ehrenberg, director of international affairs for the Orthodox Union, the congregational arm of the Orthodox movement.

"It's a mystery to me as to what motivated him to do that," she said. "I think that there is quite a sense of unity on support for Israel — the primary concern of the conference." □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Sweden OKs naming Nazis

The Swedish government reportedly approved publication of a book that reveals the names of some 28,000 wartime members of the Swedish Nazi Party.

According to Israel Radio, the book also reveals that the party had planned to establish a puppet government and establish two concentration camps in southern Sweden where the country's Jews would be sent for extermination. In another development, a Danish newspaper reported that the Danish government has refused to release the names of thousands of Danish Nazis in its archives.

### Israel offers aid to Czechs

Israel offered aid to the Czech Republic, which has been left reeling by severe flooding. Israel's Foreign Ministry plans to evaluate Czech needs before deciding on the nature of the aid, Israel Radio reported Wednesday. Some 50,000 Czechs have been evacuated from their homes. Damage across the country is estimated in the billions of dollars.

### Racist incidents in Berlin rise

The number of anti-Semitic incidents in Berlin nearly doubled from 2000 to 2001, according to official statistics released Tuesday. In 2001, there were 105 such cases, up from 56 the previous year, according to the state of Berlin's interior minister. The majority of cases involved anonymous mail threats sent to German Jewish officials.

### Sugihara widow files lawsuit

The wife of a Japanese diplomat who helped thousands of Jews flee the Nazis sued a Tokyo publisher over a book she claims libels her dead husband. Yukiko Sugihara asked a Tokyo court to stop the sale of the book about her late husband, Chiune, and asked for some \$86,000 in damages.

The book, "Chiune," is the Japanese translation of a 1998 book, "In Search of Sugihara," written by Boston University professor Hillel Levine. Yukiko Sugihara has complained that the book contains hundreds of distortions and fabrications about her husband. Known as the "Japanese Schindler," Chiune Sugihara saved more than 6,000 Jews during World War II by issuing them transit visas from Lithuania to safe areas.

### Russian text called anti-Semitic

A new high school textbook in Russia is both anti-Semitic and racist, according to human rights activists.

"Fundamentals of Russian Orthodox Culture" was recommended by the Ministry of Education for use at high schools in Moscow and at least two other Russian regions, according to the Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union.

## Both sides see political dimension in trial of Palestinian militia leader

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — When one of the Palestinians' most popular figures goes on trial in Israel next month, the proceedings are likely to be filled with fiery charges and countercharges.

Israeli officials are hoping that the trial of Palestinian militia leader Marwan Barghouti will prove that members of the Palestinian leadership have been directly involved in terrorism against Israel.

Barghouti's lawyer has a different agenda: He said Wednesday that he plans to use the trial to focus on what he described as Israel's actions as an occupying power. The judge, however, has already made his stance clear. He said at Wednesday's indictment hearing that he would not permit the defense to "turn this court into a political stage."

At the hearing in a Tel Aviv court, Barghouti — who ranked second only to Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat in recent polls of Palestinians — was charged with orchestrating terror attacks that killed scores of Israelis.

Israeli security officials have linked Barghouti to numerous attacks in which more than a dozen Israelis were killed, including a shooting attack at a Bat Mitzvah celebration in Hadera, a shooting spree on Jerusalem's Jaffa Road and a shooting at a Tel Aviv restaurant.

After shouting the "uprising will be victorious" as he was led into court, Barghouti later said during the hearing that he was a peaceful man, "trying to do everything for peace between the two peoples. I believe the best solution is two states for two peoples." When a reporter asked about his health as he entered the court, Barghouti said "Baruch Hashem" — Hebrew for "thank God" — an expression often used by observant Jews.

Barghouti learned Hebrew from previous times he was held in Israeli jails during the first intifada, which lasted from 1987 to 1993. The indictment sheet described Barghouti as an "arch-terrorist whose hands are bloodied by dozens of terrorist actions."

He is the most senior of five Palestinian officials whom Israel is bringing to trial. Two of Barghouti's deputies have already been indicted. After the seven-count indictment was filed, the judge set the next hearing for Sept. 5.

Barghouti was arrested in Ramallah in mid-April during an Israeli anti-terror operation in the West Bank. He insists that he is merely a political leader and is not responsible for his group's violence.

Once considered a moderate who was involved in the peace efforts with Israel, Barghouti became a highly popular symbol of Palestinian resistance after the start of the intifada in September 2000. According to the charge sheet drawn up by the Israeli Justice Ministry, Barghouti was in charge of the West Bank operations of Fatah, the Tanzim and the Al-Aksa Brigade. The charges against him include murder, incitement to murder, and membership and activity in a terrorist organization.

Once considered a possible successor to Arafat, Barghouti is a member of the Palestinian legislative council. During the intifada, he evolved into an outspoken advocate of armed struggle to achieve Palestinian aims.

Observers suggested that his arrest and trial would only increase his popularity among the Palestinian public. □

## Palestinian activist: Arafat, resign

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A prominent Palestinian human rights activist called on Yasser Arafat and other leading Palestinians to resign.

Bassem Eid, executive director of the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group, said Tuesday he did not believe Arafat and other officials in the Palestinian Authority are capable of carrying out reforms to root out corruption and ease 22 months of Israeli-Palestinian violence. "We are looking for a young leadership, for local Palestinians who can understand the situation right now and who can negotiate with the Israelis much more strongly," Eid told Reuters. □

## Poll shows students back Israel, even as activities flare on campus

By Joe Berkofsky

NEW YORK (JTA) — U.S. college students back Israel over the Palestinians by a 4-1 margin, according to a new survey.

The mid-July survey of 300 students found that 43 percent of respondents called themselves supporters of Israel, while only 11 percent backed the Palestinians.

Another 29 percent did not take either side in the conflict, however, and 10 percent said the United States should stand behind both sides equally, according to the poll taken by Washington pollster Stanley Greenberg.

Half of the students also favored the creation of a Palestinian state while 31 percent opposed it. Some 55 percent said the United States should use military force if Israel came under attack.

Officials of the American Jewish Committee, which underwrote the survey — part of a larger study of American attitudes toward Israel — said it showed that American students largely support Israel despite recent flare-ups of anti-Israel activity on campuses such as the University of California at Berkeley and San Francisco State University.

“While several highly publicized anti-Israel demonstrations on the West Coast this spring gave the impression that campuses were unfriendly, the truth is that support for Israel among students is about the same as in the general population,” said David Harris, AJCommittee’s executive director.

But the results sparked some debate about just how closely they measured student attitudes, with one critic saying the study distorts the real picture on campus.

Gary Tobin, president of the San Francisco-based Institute for Jewish and Community Research, said the poll was “absolutely not” reflective of prevailing campus attitudes about the Mideast.

“On college campuses, the overwhelming sentiment is about justice for the Palestinians with the solution of a Palestinian state,” he said.

Tobin also said the ethnic and religious makeup of the sample — 4 percent of whom were Jews, and 40 percent of whom refused to disclose their background — skewed the results.

Jews are more likely to support Israel, he said. In addition, with Jews disproportionately represented on college campuses relative to their percentage of the overall population, some of those who refused to reveal their backgrounds may also be Jewish.

One observer who agreed with the poll’s findings was Larry Sternberg, associate director of the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University in Waltham, Mass.

Sternberg said the survey was “consistent” with other polls showing most Americans in general, and students in particular, support Israel. The poll “shows that we’re in no worse shape on campus than anywhere else, or we’re in equal shape,” he said.

Campuses such as Berkeley and San Francisco State “are exceptions, not the rule,” he said.

Several polls from 2001 bear out Sternberg’s view.

A poll taken in the week after the Sept. 11 attacks by the Institute for Jewish and Community Research in San Francisco and the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at the Hudson Institute showed that 92 percent of Americans wanted “full cooperation” between the United States and Israel in the war on terror.

A CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll, also taken just after Sept. 11,

said 55 percent of Americans back Israel and only 7 percent back the Palestinians. In October, 2001, a CBS/New York Times poll said 60 percent felt very or somewhat favorable toward Israel, mirroring other polls taken in the past decade.

Among the results of the latest poll:

- Asked whom they supported in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, 11 percent of students said they were “strong” Israel supporters; 32 percent called themselves supporters of Israel; 9 percent said they supported the Palestinians; and 2 percent were “strong” Palestinian supporters.

- Asked if they oppose or favor the establishment of a Palestinian state in “the current situation,” 29 percent said they “somewhat” favor one; 21 percent “strongly” backed one; 23 percent were “somewhat” opposed; and 8 percent were “strongly” opposed.

- Eighty-nine percent of the students agreed with the statement, “the final goal, at the end of any negotiations, must be two states — Israel and Palestine — which accept each other’s right to exist and live in peace.”

Tobin dismissed the survey as a “whitewash.”

“This doesn’t help the Jewish community and the college community deal with the growing level of coarseness, hate speech and rising anti-intellectualism on many campuses,” he said.

A more revealing poll would have compared the attitudes of Jewish with those of non-Jewish students and should have covered a larger sampling of about 1,000 students, Tobin said.

In fact, “the only near unanimous opinion is that nearly 9 of 10 respondents said they support a two-state solution,” Tobin said.

Much of the anti-globalization, anti-colonial, anti-white and anti-West fervor sweeping college campuses encompasses an anti-Zionist ideology, he added.

Tobin is conducting his own survey of student attitudes that he will release in the fall. The results show “unequivocally” that U.S. college campuses are tilted toward pro-Palestinian opinion, he said.

But an AJCommittee spokesman, Kenneth Bandler, defended the latest survey, saying it accurately reflected broad student support of Israel despite the recent focus on anti-Israel activities.

“It’s hard for people to accept results that disprove a widely held perception,” Bandler said.

Perhaps the most important finding in the poll, Sternberg said, was that many students are undecided about where they stand on the Mideast conflict. To shape this undecided group, he added, Jewish and pro-Israel groups “want to continue to advocate effectively on Israel’s behalf.”

Other findings were that:

- Twenty-eight percent of students said the United States supports Israel because the Jewish state is an ally.

- Nineteen percent said the United States takes Israel’s side because “Israel is fighting against terrorism and Islamic extremism.”

- Ten percent said the United States favors Israel because it is the only democracy in the Mideast.

- Twenty-three percent said they have grown more sympathetic toward Israel in recent months, while 15 percent have grown more sympathetic to the Palestinians.

- Twenty-six percent agreed that the United States should back Israel because the Christian Bible predicts that Israel must be under Jewish control “before Christ will come again.”

The survey carried a margin of error of plus or minus 4.9 percent. Respondents were 79 percent white, 5 percent black and 3 percent Hispanic. Some did not identify their race. □