



Daily News Bulletin

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85th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Brouhaha at U.N. conference

Pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli activists verbally clashed on the first day of a U.N. summit. Police stepped in Monday to keep the activists apart at the U.N. World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. Jewish activists have been working to keep the summit from turning into a repeat of last year's U.N. anti-racism conference, which featured virulent anti-Israel and anti-Semitic activity.

Later in the day, South African police forced 50 Israelis to leave a Palestinian news conference at the summit after the Israelis shouted down the wife of jailed militia leader Marwan Barghouti. The fracas erupted after Fadwa Barghouti accused Israel of torturing her husband, and Barghouti's lawyer accused Israel of torturing 230 Palestinian children.

Iran pressed on jailed Jews

Iran's only Jewish legislator called on Iran to free eight Jews imprisoned on charges of spying for Israel. Maurice Motamed urged the country's top leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, to pardon the men before Rosh Hashanah.

In a closed-door trial in 2000, 10 Jews were found guilty of spying for Israel and sentenced to prison terms ranging from four to 13 years. Two have been released. Many of the accused "confessed," but Jewish groups contend the confessions were forced. Israel denies that any of the Jews were its spies.

Despite many unsuccessful discussions with officials during the Jews' imprisonment, Iran's Jewish community hopes that this time the plea will be successful, sources say.

Israeli Arabs arrested in bombing

Seven Israeli Arabs have been arrested on charges that they assisted in a recent suicide bombing that killed nine people and wounded 50.

According to information released for publication Monday, seven members of a Galilee clan were arrested several weeks ago and have confessed to allegations regarding the Aug. 4 attack in northern Israel.

Two of the principal suspects, Ibrahim and Yassin Bakri, allegedly helped the Palestinian bomber choose a bus to bomb and drove him to the stop where he boarded. Other family members allegedly provided shelter to the bomber.

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

New community center at Babi Yar generates heated debate among Jews

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — When Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma laid the cornerstone for a new Jewish memorial and community center at Babi Yar last September, few imagined that the project would generate such a heated dispute in the Ukrainian Jewish community.

As start of the construction draws near, the issue centers on one question: Is it right to build a communal facility on a site such as Babi Yar, site of a Nazi-era massacre?

Supporters say the center, which is being funded by American Jews and will include a memorial to the Holocaust and the rich history of Ukrainian Jewry, is a way to perpetuate the memory of the victims. Opponents say it is inappropriate to build on the site of so much devastation.

The Babi Yar massacre began in late September 1941 when Nazi forces occupying Kiev forcibly marched 33,000 Jews to the steep ravine and shot them over a period of several days. Killings continued throughout the two-year Nazi occupation of Ukraine.

Altogether, 200,000 people, including non-Jewish citizens of Kiev, Soviet prisoners of war, members of the Ukrainian national resistance movement, gypsies and mentally disabled persons are believed to have been shot or killed in truck-mounted gas chambers, and then dumped into the ravine.

Before their 1943 retreat, the Nazis forced the concentration camp inmates to burn corpses and spread the ashes across the vast territory next to the ravine.

In more recent years, Babi Yar came to symbolize Soviet attempts to suppress Jewish identity. When a memorial to victims was erected there 35 years after the tragedy, it mentioned only "citizens of Kiev and prisoners of war," but not Jews.

In 1991, Jewish groups erected their own memorial, a 10-foot menorah about a mile away from the Soviet monument. Last year, Ukrainian and Jewish leaders unveiled a monument to children killed at Babi Yar.

Advocates of a multifaceted Jewish center argue that the plot of land in the municipal park at Babi Yar allocated by the City of Kiev contains no human remains.

To support the point, the 12-member committee, comprised of leaders of various local Jewish organizations, commissioned a survey of the land beneath the site to determine if there are bones buried there.

The survey, conducted under the supervision of a rabbinical expert from Israel, was completed last week. The survey has not yet been made public, but JTA has learned that experts found no evidence of human remains where the center is to be located.

Critics say it is still inappropriate to build on the site.

"It is impossible to prove whether killings were carried out on or near the site," said Josef Zissels, a longtime Jewish leader and former dissident imprisoned in the 1980s, who launched a campaign to change the original plan or cancel the construction.

"Victims were being burned and ashes were being spread across the area that no excavations would show," he said.

The idea of the center was conceived by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. JDC will fund the construction, which is expected to top \$6.5 million, with money from a \$50 million special fund established to support the construction and first three years of operation of Jewish community centers serving the largest communities in the former Soviet Union, including Moscow, St. Petersburg and Kiev.

According to JDC, the money was raised from dozens of North American donors, including the Weinberg and the Schusterman family foundations. The first such center

MIDEAST FOCUS

Jenin Hamas leader arrested

Israel arrested a Hamas leader during a raid Monday in the Jenin refugee camp. The arrest of Jamal Abu Haji came as Israel staged operations in the West Bank. An Israeli officer sustained light to moderate wounds in Jenin as he accompanied an Israeli television crew, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported.

In Tulkarm, troops demolished the home of a Palestinian suspected of involvement in terrorist attacks that killed eight people.

Army chief warns on withdrawal

A unilateral Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza Strip would be seen as a submission to terrorism, Israel's army chief said.

Addressing a conference of rabbis on Sunday, Lt. Gen. Moshe Ya'alon said the Palestinian Authority's adoption of terrorism as a tactic reflected its refusal to accept Israel's existence.

Israel must defeat the intifada so the Palestinians do not conclude that terrorism pays, Ya'alon said

Israel to French activists: Allez-y

Israel's Supreme Court upheld an Interior Ministry decision barring a group of French pro-Palestinian activists from entering Israel. The court said a Jerusalem District Court judge erred in allowing the activists to enter the country. In its ruling Sunday, the Supreme Court refrained from issuing deportation orders since 37 members of the group were planning to fly back to France on Monday, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported.

Palestinians ban kids' photos

The Palestinian press association banned journalists from taking photos of Palestinian children holding weapons because such photos harm the Palestinian cause. The Foreign Press Association called on the Palestinian Journalist Syndicate to withdraw the statement, saying it limited press freedom.



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was opened last year in downtown Moscow.

Israeli architects have been chosen to design the new Jewish Heritage Community Center in Kiev, as the project is known.

In addition to a panel of judges that included professional architects, over 300 members of Kiev's Jewish community participated in the selection of the winning design last May.

JDC and many community activists say that construction almost anywhere in Kiev would most likely trigger a similar dispute. Out of the prewar population of 900,000, only 180,000 were left at the end of the war, said Vladimir Glozman, the JDC's representative in the Ukrainian capital.

"The entire city of Kiev was turned into a killing ground during the war," said Glozman.

Supporters say building a center for Jewish life is the best way to honor the memory of the victims.

"The idea is to have a place that would defy" the Holocaust and that "would be a statement of 'Am Yisrael Chai,'" Amos Avgar, the JDC country director for Central, Western and Southern Ukraine, said, using a Hebrew phrase meaning "the Jewish people lives."

JDC and the community leaders who support the project point out that the area has already undergone major development in the postwar decades. Today, the Babi Yar site has a main highway across it with a housing development, a television antenna, a subway station and adjacent recreational and residential properties.

All this makes it even more appropriate to create a meaningful Jewish presence in the area, the proponents say.

The opponents disagree, saying that Babi Yar bears such historical connotation for all the people of Kiev, Jewish and non-Jewish, that the Jewish community should not undertake any construction in the area. They argue that JDC and its backers do not care about community sensibilities.

Glozman said the project came about precisely because his organization cares about the community and its needs.

The conflict took an unexpected turn two weeks ago when one of the most outspoken critics of the proposed construction, Vitaly Nakhmanovich, left his position as editor-in-chief of the Kiev-based biweekly newspaper, the Jewish Observer.

He told JTA he was forced to resign under pressure from supporters of the center who were unhappy with the newspaper's critical coverage of the project.

Critics say that although the project enjoys the full support of the Ukrainian government and the city of Kiev, non-Jewish public opinion will not favor the project once construction begins next spring.

Leonid Finberg, the only member of the Jewish center's steering committee to resign from the body, is concerned that the construction will outrage some Ukrainians, particularly in the wake of recent evidence that some Ukrainian nationalists were shot on the site where the center is planned.

But Kiev's leading rabbinical authority, Rabbi Ya'akov Dov Bleich, sees no problems with the construction unless there is proof that killings took place on the site or that there are human remains in the ground.

"There is no halachic or moral problem with building the center on this site," Bleich, who is the chief rabbi of Ukraine and Kiev, said, referring to Jewish law.

The communal leaders who object to the project appear to be in the minority, but are actively using the media to press their case. They insist that the evidence is still insufficient, as the Germans and the Soviets destroyed many wartime documents that could shed light on the tragedy.

Finberg, the director of the Kiev Judaica Institute, said, "If there were no killings or burials at the actual construction spot, but we know that" just a few hundred yards from there Jews were ordered to undress before being shot, "does this make the place look any better?"

Zissels has recently come out with an alternative to a community center at Babi Yar. He suggested that the memorial part of the center be constructed on the site and a separate facility to serve other community needs be built elsewhere in Kiev.

There are currently two other community centers serving the city's estimated 70,000 to 100,000 Jews. □

JEWISH WORLD

Rabbis: Revise Law of Return

Israel's chief rabbis called for revisions to the Law of Return. Speaking at a convention of rabbis in Jerusalem, Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau and Chief Sephardi Rabbi Elyahu Bakshi-Doron said 70 percent of new immigrants to Israel, many of them from the former Soviet Union, are non-Jews.

The Law of Return grants full citizenship rights to all individuals with at least one Jewish grandparent.

N.Y. school halts Israel program

A New York university is suspending its study program in Israel. The State University of New York cited safety concerns for its decision, according to the New York Jewish Week.

The program, launched in the 1970s, sent an average of 40 students a year to Israel until recently, according to a school spokeswoman. The decision was prompted by the July 31 bombing at Hebrew University that killed nine people, including five Americans.

Visa denied to Iranian-born Israeli

American security measures are causing trouble for an Iranian-born Israeli academic trying to attend a physics conference in the United States. Avshalom Elitzur of Bar-Ilan University said the trouble started when he went to the U.S. Embassy to ask that his tourist visa to the United States be stamped onto his new passport, the Jerusalem Post reported.

Elitzur said he was told that it would require a security check, which would take months, because he was born in Iran. Elitzur left Iran at the age of 3.

Benefits for Uruguayan Jews?

The chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel is calling for special benefits for Jews from Uruguay who want to emigrate to Israel. Sallai Meridor said deteriorating economic conditions in the South American country, home to 21,000 Jews, make the new package necessary. Meridor made the comments Monday as he began a 10-day mission to South America.

In a related development, the Jewish Agency announced that 3,125 Argentine Jews have moved to Israel since the beginning of 2002, as compared with 1,413 during all of 2001.

Man who aided Wallenberg dies

Per Anger, who helped Raoul Wallenberg save Hungarian Jews during World War II, died Monday at 89.

Anger and Wallenberg, Swedish diplomats stationed in Hungary, handed out passes that eventually allowed more than 30,000 Hungarian Jews to survive.

In 1983, the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial named Anger a Righteous Gentile for his efforts.

As bombings accelerate in Israel, so do grass-roots efforts for victims

By Max Heuer

NEW YORK (JTA) — When Aviva Tessler came back from a sabbatical in Israel, she told her friend Jocelyn Krifcher about visiting a young girl who had been wounded in a drive-by shooting by Palestinian terrorists.

"She could not get the image of this one girl out of her head," Krifcher recalls. "We hear about the fatalities in detail, but the people injured have often been forgotten."

Last November, Krifcher and Tessler, along with Avivah Litan and Anne Clemons — all of Potomac, Md. — decided to try to help. The foursome founded Operation Embrace, delivering help and gifts to Israelis wounded in the intifada — anything from cards and letters from schoolchildren to laptop computers and video games.

Observers say Operation Embrace is part of a trend: Around the United States, more and more Jews are getting involved in grass-roots efforts to help Israel during the two-year-old intifada. "Certainly interest in Israel" has grown over the past two years, says Andi Milens, national director of community relations and communications at the Jewish Council for Public Affairs. "More people are getting connected, so more are aware of what's going on."

The size and scope of efforts depend on each community, Milens said, but the bottom line is that "people care and want to do something."

Krifcher, whose husband Dany is a JTA board member, already was connected, doing some work for the United Jewish Communities and the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. But that work "was not really hands-on," she says.

Operation Embrace is. What began small — with a trip to Israel to bring letters and visit with intifada victims — expanded as donation checks poured in.

Often it seems that such grass-roots movements can acquire a momentum all their own. After witnessing the "Passover massacre" suicide bombing in Netanya, which killed 29 people at a seder last March, Michael Dittleman of New York sent an e-mail to about 100 friends and acquaintances. He and his wife had decided to help buy a much-needed ambulance for Magen David Adom, Israel's Red Cross equivalent.

From that one e-mail on April 25, donations in the form of faxes and letters flooded the home of Dittleman, a marketing director for The Sporting News. His success even compelled him to hold two fund-raisers, and within a few months he had raised the \$69,000 needed to bring the group an ambulance with the most up-to-date features.

Some grass-roots movements even have grown into major organizations.

Neil and Susan Thalheim, of Long Island, are co-founders of the Israel Emergency Solidarity Fund, which has raised \$5.5 million for the families of terror victims.

In October 2000, the Thalheims organized a benefit concert on Long Island to help intifada terror victims' families — of whom there were only about 10 at the time. The event was a huge success, raising about \$40,000. When the Thalheims couldn't find an organization to distribute the money, they decided to go to Israel to deliver the funds personally.

The group works with congregations, Jewish groups and schools around the United States to fund-raise for needy Israeli families hit by terror. They currently aid some 150 families, and hope to help more than 500 by the end of the year.

Like many smaller grass-roots campaigns, the organization relies less on major benefactors than on creative fund-raising. Its donor base is now close to 40,000 people.

The fund also sells \$5 silver bracelets imprinted with the name and age of a terror victim. So far they have sold 75,000 bracelets. The bracelets were modeled after ones for American POW's in the Vietnam War, but they have a special resonance for Jewish activism: Such bracelets also were used to show support for Soviet Jews.

Many American Jews clearly share Thalheim's commitment.

"We are finding there have been coalition groups of synagogues" in several New York suburbs "that have banded together, pooling resources and information," says Harriet Mandel, director of Israel and international affairs for the New York chapter of the Jewish Community Relations Council. The synagogue groups monitor the media and communicate with elected officials to lobby for Israel.

Other efforts work to rebuild trust destroyed by the violence. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**Discovery of Jerusalem terror cell prompts look at stewardship of city***By Gil Sedan*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Since the intifada began two years ago, Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert had boasted that Arab residents of eastern Jerusalem had opted to stay out of the violence for fear of losing Israeli social service benefits.

With the exposure last week of an eastern Jerusalem terrorist cell deemed responsible for several recent attacks — including the July 31 bombing of a Hebrew University cafeteria that killed nine people — Israelis were left asking: Arabs in eastern Jerusalem, too?

The discovery of the cell nearly coincided with a survey by the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, which reported on the standard of living in Jerusalem's Old City and raised questions about 35 years of Israeli rule in eastern Jerusalem.

Unlike Israeli Arabs, Arab residents of eastern Jerusalem who came under Israeli rule following the 1967 Six-Day War do not carry Israeli citizenship. They are not entitled to Israeli passports, are not entitled to vote and cannot be elected to national bodies.

They are eligible to vote in municipal elections, though most choose not to — under threat from Palestinian groups — so as not to legitimize Israeli rule in the city. Still, they do have Israeli identity cards, which allow them free movement throughout Israel and relatively free movement in and out of the West Bank — freedom that the terrorist gang allegedly put to bloody use.

Most importantly, Arabs in eastern Jerusalem are entitled to the range of social benefits available to all Israelis, such as national health insurance, unemployment payments, minimum-wage benefits, child allowances and other social security benefits.

It was access to such services that Olmert figured would deter residents of eastern Jerusalem from joining the Palestinian campaign of terror — a calculation authorities say was wrong.

True, the level of terrorism emanating from eastern Jerusalem has been low in comparison with terrorism from the adjacent West Bank. Though far fewer Israelis and tourists visit the Old City today than in past years, very few hostile acts have been carried out against those who do come. But the hatred is still there. The eyes of the frustrated merchants sitting in front of their empty souvenir stalls on David Street in the Old City tell all.

The merchants look at the few Israelis who dare to enter the Old City walls — mostly religious Jews on their way to the Western Wall or other sites in the Jewish Quarter — with sad and angry eyes.

“Why don't you understand? We don't want you here,” said tour guide Ali Jadda, who spent 17 years in Israeli jails for throwing a grenade in the western part of the city, wounding nine Israelis. “You are welcome as tourists, but as occupiers you are not wanted here.”

That is the story in a nutshell: Many Jerusalem Arabs see the Jews as occupiers.

In Israel's 1948 War of Independence, Arab soldiers forced the Jews from the Old City's Jewish Quarter, ending a presence dating back centuries. In the ensuing 20 years of Jordanian occupation, evidence of Jewish history was systematically destroyed. In 1967, after it was attacked by Jordan, Israel conquered the Jewish Quarter and the other parts of eastern Jerusalem.

The conquered parts were annexed to Israel, but — fearful of changing the country's demographic balance — the inhabitants were not offered citizenship. Thus, just as the Arabs do not want the Jews in Jerusalem, many would say that the Israeli authorities do not regard the city's 220,000 Arabs as equal partners.

The Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies report showed the poor living situation in the Old City. With some 280 people per acre, the Old City is one of the most crowded places on earth. The population has grown rapidly since 1967, both due to natural growth and the illegal immigration of Arabs from the West Bank who wanted to enjoy Israeli social service benefits.

Israeli authorities could not cope with the phenomenon: They lacked the space, budget and tools to provide the Arab population with modern housing inside the Old City walls. Providing alternative housing would be too costly — and would go against the Palestinians' nationalist credo.

Suppose the government offered you a decent sum to build a home elsewhere, a reporter asked Umm Raed, a stocky woman in her 40s, who covers her hair with a traditional headscarf and lives in a shabby flat in the Old City's Muslim Quarter.

“You mean, bribe us to get out of here,” she responded angrily. “We will never get out of here.”

The result: illegal construction, with rooms crowding on top of each other and basements turned into living quarters. Some 25 percent of the flats in the Muslim Quarter have no shower, and a number of families often will share the same toilet.

Some Jewish families also are moving into the Muslim Quarter, living in homes purchased from Arab owners in round-about ways. Under the guidance of the Ateret Cohanim settlers' organization, these Jews hope one day to outnumber Arabs in the Old City.

The Jewish families live under heavy protection: Surveillance cameras transmit images of people approaching the Jewish residences to Old City police headquarters, and armed guards respond to knocks on the doors.

Some 6,000 families, or about 35,000 people, live in the Old City. Sixty-eight percent of them are Muslims, 24 percent Christians and 8 percent Jews. Unlike the Muslims and Jews, the Christians are eager to leave, often emigrating overseas.

Umm Raed, who has diabetes, receives a regular unemployment allowance from the Israeli government. That's enough of an incentive to make sure none of her nine children join Hamas.

But, given the heavily politicized atmosphere and the incitement by Palestinian Authority agents, economic incentives aren't enough to win Israel much loyalty from Jerusalem's Arabs.

The seizure of the terrorist gang is unlikely to change political views about the fate of eastern Jerusalem. Critics like former Deputy Mayor Meron Benvenisti say Israel can only hope to keep the situation under control.

Hawks like Internal Security Minister Uzi Landau and his deputy, Gideon Ezra, say the cell's capture shows that anti-Israel feelings are endemic in the Palestinian population, regardless of their social and economic condition. The fact that the cell members received Israeli social benefits and worked in Israel proves it is not poverty that causes terrorism, they say.

The Jerusalem Institute study points at eight alternative solutions to the conflict over Jerusalem. Ruth Lapidot, a law professor who chaired the report team, prefers that both Israel and the Palestinians relinquish sovereignty claims in the Old City and try to reach a functional agreement on running the holy area. □