



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 80, No. 168

Tuesday, September 10, 2002

85th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Palestinian legislators meet

Yasser Arafat told the Palestinian legislative council that he condemns "every act of terror against Israeli civilians," but he did not say such attacks should be halted.

A draft version of the speech obtained by The Associated Press contained several paragraphs calling for an end to suicide bombings in Israel, but Arafat left those paragraphs out of the speech he delivered.

During his address when the legislature convened Monday, Arafat also said presidential, parliamentary and municipal elections would be held at the beginning of January. The United States has been seeking a delay in presidential elections in hopes of having the Palestinians create the office of prime minister, a move aimed at turning Arafat into a figurehead president.

Israel prepares for Sept. 11 terror

Israeli reservists are reportedly being stationed at Patriot anti-missile batteries in the event of a strike timed to coincide with the Sept. 11 anniversary.

A senior defense source told the Israeli daily Ha'aretz that the decision stemmed from intelligence information that terror groups may attempt an air strike on targets in Israel when the anniversary is marked Wednesday.

Netanyahu speech canceled

Former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu canceled a speech at a Montreal university after pro-Palestinian demonstrators wreaked havoc.

Police fired tear gas at demonstrators at Montreal's Concordia University on Monday after the protesters threw chairs and other objects at police. Later, the demonstrators argued with Netanyahu supporters. Concordia recently has been a hotbed of anti-Israel activity. Netanyahu is slated to speak in Toronto on Tuesday.

Peres: Oslo still alive

The Oslo accords are still alive, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said Monday. Peres made the comment after Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said in an interview that the accords are no longer valid.

Speaking on Israel Radio, Peres said no one has decided to cancel the Oslo accords. Despite nearly two years of Israeli-Palestinian violence, there is no alternative to the accords, Peres added.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Reform movement sets teach-in to stimulate debate about Israel

By Joe Berkofsky

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Reform movement is organizing a nationwide teach-in to debate the Israeli-Arab conflict and mobilize support for Israel and the moribund peace process.

Called "In Search of Peace and Security: A National Teach-In on Israel," the push will also launch a Reform campaign to deepen ties between American and Israeli Reform Jews.

So far nearly 300 Reform synagogues across the United States and Canada have committed to conducting teach-ins either on the suggested date, Sept. 29, or shortly thereafter.

Organizers said the teach-in, which coincides with the two-year anniversary of the Palestinian uprising, is meant to reopen debate about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict — a debate they say has been stifled since the current intifada erupted.

"At a time when Israelis are getting blown up in the streets, it does tend to suppress criticism here, which I think is understandable," said Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Reform congregational umbrella group.

"But in the long term, we need those vibrant discussions. It's important to connect people if they feel that they can't enter the discussion. The question is, how do we emerge from this morass we're in, and how do we do it in a way that's consistent with Jewish values?"

One path to Mideast peace the Reform movement has long promoted, and continues to advocate with the teach-in, is a two-state solution.

Critics of the teach-in, meanwhile, say such a public debate promotes a Palestinian state in the face of Palestinian terrorism, and is an unnecessary addition to public discussion about the conflict.

But Reform leaders insist the teach-in is meant at the very least to educate American Jews, many of whom feel confused about the complexities behind the conflict, and at the most to get Jews more engaged and active in helping Israel and the peace process.

One of the forces propelling the teach-in, Reform officials said, is a kind of American Jewish tribalism that has set in.

Those concerns surfaced after the April 15 Israel Solidarity Rally in Washington, when Paul Wolfowitz, the U.S. deputy secretary of state, was booed for mentioning Palestinian suffering and the need for compromise.

Too often, debate about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict descends to "the lowest common denominator" level, while in Israel itself discussion is far more open, said Mark Pelavin, associate director of the Reform movement's Religious Action Center in Washington.

"We are not doing as good a job as we need to in creating an atmosphere where discussion can be as expansive as possible," he said.

Esther Lederman, project director of UAHC's "Seeking Peace, Pursuing Justice" project, which is organizing the teach-in, said the goal is to provoke "open conversation" about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a setting that inspires respect and civility — the synagogue.

To nudge the debate forward, organizers are sending synagogues a package of background material, including opinion pieces from hawks such as Benjamin Netanyahu and settler leader Yisrael Harel to more liberal voices such as analyst Joseph Alpher and

MIDEAST FOCUS

Two Palestinians killed in Gaza

Two Palestinians suspected of trying to plant explosives in the Gaza Strip were killed by Israeli tank fire Sunday night. The two were spotted near the fence separating Israel from Gaza.

In another incident, Israeli troops tore down the home of a Palestinian wanted for involvement in terrorist attacks. They also razed a building containing a weapons workshop. Also on Sunday, Israeli troops shot and lightly wounded a Palestinian woman who approached a settlement carrying two packages and ignored soldiers' orders to stop. No suspicious objects were found in the packages. In the West Bank, Israel began gradually lifting curfews imposed on Palestinian towns over Rosh Hashanah.

Israeli Arab loses citizenship

Israel's interior minister revoked the citizenship of an Israeli Arab accused of terrorism.

Exercising the authority granted him under Israel's citizenship law, Interior Minister Eli Yishai stripped the citizenship of Nahad Abu Kishaq. Currently held in an Israeli prison, Kishaq faces charges of helping Hamas carry out terrorist attacks. Unlike two other Israeli Arabs whom Yishai wants to strip of their citizenship, Kishaq did not take any steps to appeal the decision within the 30-day period granted by Yishai.

Three arrested in poison plot

Israeli officials arrested three Palestinians accused of plotting to poison drinks at Jerusalem's Rimon Café. Two of the suspects confessed to their role in the plot, police said. They were expected to be formally charged Monday, according to the Jerusalem Post. The third, who is the alleged ringleader, is a chef at the café.

The suspects were apprehended three weeks ago, shortly before they were to have carried out the attack, the paper reported.

Hirsh Goodman, the founding editor of the Jerusalem Report.

The package also includes reading lists, Web resources, selections of Jewish religious and Zionist texts, the PBS Frontline documentary "Shattered Dreams of Peace: The Road From Oslo," and a list of elected officials to contact on getting the peace process back on track.

Part of the package focuses on Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Using statistics gathered by Americans for Peace Now — whose methodology often is criticized as partisan — the packets show a 53 percent growth in settlement housing since the Oslo process began in 1993.

But Lederman and others insist they are not framing the debate from the left or hoping to shape a specific response. The teach-in material reflects a broad range of opinion, and reflects their mission to provoke debate.

But teach-in organizers want more than talk. First, they said the teach-in aims to educate an American Jewish community dazed by shocking television images and shouting heads.

Rabbi Ammiel Hirsch, executive director of ARZA/World Union — Association of Reform Zionists of America, said there is a "deep intellectual and even greater emotional need" among Reform's 900 congregations and 1.5 million members "to receive information and deal with and study events in Israel."

Organizers hope that those who attend the teach-ins will also organize interfaith activities on the conflict, write letters to elected officials, use the material in synagogue schools and support Israel by investing there or hosting fairs selling Israeli products.

At the Reform movement's highest levels, the debate about Mideast peace has been shifting for some time. The movement strongly backed the Oslo peace process, but by 2001 Yoffie acknowledged he had badly "misjudged" Arafat.

Yoffie also criticized anti-Israel images in the Palestinian and Arab media that he described as "neo-Nazi."

Like other Jewish leaders, Yoffie rebuffed calls to denounce Israel's conduct during the battle in the Jenin refugee camp last spring, or Israel's bombing of a Hamas leader in Gaza in July that also resulted in civilian deaths.

Yet far from signaling any radical policy shift for the Reform movement, the teach-in reaffirms the movement's long-standing support for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which itself reflects a mainstream position nationally, Yoffie said.

But Morton Klein, president of the Zionist Organization of America, blasted the tenor and timing of the teach-in.

Klein was especially critical because teach-in material includes the UAHC plank that "the key to peace will be two states, Jewish and Palestinian, side by side."

"Promoting this is promoting the most dangerous policy possible, and Eric Yoffie is doing that," Klein said. "At a time when Israeli Jews are being murdered on an almost-daily basis, the focus should be solely on how to end the regime that promotes and finances the murder."

Others also questioned the need for the teach-in.

"I think people are able to sort out the issues, they're able to talk about questions such as what's happening to the Palestinians and what will happen to the Palestinians as a result of actions Israel does or doesn't take," said Rabbi Joel Myers, executive vice president of the Conservative movement's Rabbinical Assembly.

Rabbi Steven Dworken, executive vice president of the Orthodox movement's Rabbinical Council of America, questioned the efficacy of "going on a vast initiative with a great deal of publicity."

Dworken said there is open debate about Israel in his religious Zionist community. The key, though is "how we do it, what language is used, in front of what audience it's done and what media is used," he said.

Reform leaders, meanwhile, said the teach-in is only the beginning.

Hirsch of ARZA said the teach-in launches an "aggressive" effort called the Israel Awareness Campaign that will begin after the High Holidays.

The program will feature missions to Israel in the next two years with rabbis and lay leaders, new organizational ties between American and Israeli Reform synagogues, Web projects and personal exchanges between U.S. Reform Jews and Israelis.

"This is all being done out of our deep love for Israel and our deep pain as we've watched terrible things happen in Israel over the past two years," Lederman said. □



Daily News Bulletin

Norman H. Lipoff, *President*

Mark J. Joffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*

Lisa Hostein, *Editor*

Michael S. Arnold, *Managing Editor*

Lenore A. Silverstein, *Finance and Administration Director*

Paula Simmonds, *Marketing and Development Director*

JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.
© JTA Reproduction only by previous arrangement.

JEWISH WORLD

Jewish Journal writer dies at 54

Marlene Adler Marks, a columnist and former managing editor of the Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles, died Sept. 5 at 54. Marks, who had been suffering from lung cancer, penned the column "A Woman's Voice" and hosted an interview series, "Conversations with Marlene Marks."

She was the recipient of several Rockower and Smolar awards, the highest honors in Jewish journalism. During the past two years, she wrote about her struggle with lung cancer with characteristic courage, perceptiveness and wit in the pages of the Jewish Journal.

Ban on Islamic forum sought

The Simon Wiesenthal Center urged Britain to ban a radical Islamic conference in London. Shimon Samuels, head of the center's Paris office, said in a statement Monday that he had made the request in a letter to British Home Secretary David Blunkett.

The conference, planned by the radical Islamic group al-Muhajiroun, is planned to coincide with the first anniversary of the Sept. 11 terror attacks in the United States.

Allowing the conference to proceed as planned, Samuels wrote, would "make a mockery of the war against terrorism and encourage its perpetrators."

Fund to help Dresden shul

A fund has been established to help pay for repairs to the new synagogue and community house in Dresden, Germany. The buildings were among those damaged in the recent floods that affected eastern Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic and Russia.

According to Peter Fischer, a board member of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, the buildings suffered about \$50,000 in damage. Wooden floors, electrical equipment and wiring and an elevator need to be replaced, Fischer told JTA.

Contributions can be made to the Bank fuer Sozialwirtschaft in Mainz, Germany, to account number 181818, with the designation "Flutopfer" (flood victims) to be written on any check. The bank identification code is 550 205 00.

Book eyes 'Brazilian Schindler'

A new book sheds light on the man known as the "Brazilian Schindler."

"Quixote in the Darkness," by historian Fabio Koifman, describes how Luis Martins de Souza Dantas saved some 425 Jews from the Holocaust by granting them diplomatic visas to enter Brazil.

Souza Dantas, who was in charge of the Brazilian diplomatic mission in France during World War II, later said he had been inspired by a "Christian feeling of mercy."

Tour of Israel brings legislator insight for U.S. homeland security

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Traveling through Israel recently, Rep. Jane Harman (D-Calif.) caught a glimpse of what homeland security in the United States might look like 50 years from now.

"Fifty years of violence hardened two populations in dealing with these kinds of lethal threats," Harman said of the Israelis and Palestinians. "Fifty years of exposure focuses the mind."

Harman designed for herself a five-day tour of the inner workings of the Israeli political, intelligence and security systems. As the ranking Democrat on the U.S. House of Representatives' Terrorism and Homeland Security Subcommittee, she has been playing an integral role in the formation of the new U.S. Homeland Security Department, which was passed in the House and is now being debated in the Senate.

Garnering information from Israel's experience is one of her top priorities, Harman said.

"Israel is the test pad for terror attacks on the homeland," she told JTA after she returned to Capitol Hill. "Whatever could be out there, they've experienced."

Harman also met with Mohammad Dahlan, a security adviser to Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, and P.A. Interior Minister Abdel Razek Yehiyeh.

Touring Israel, the Jewish lawmaker found tactics she believes the United States should emulate. For example, she spoke excitedly about Israel's civil guard, a volunteer force that carries weapons, is trained in police tactics and is used to augment the police force.

She liked Israeli advancements in airline safety, including new technology that can identify a plane's pilot before it enters Israeli airspace to make sure the plane hasn't been hijacked.

She also was encouraged by the clout and authority of Public Security Minister Uzi Landau, Israel's homeland security chief.

"Uzi Landau has the power we need to give our secretary of homeland security," she said.

But the two countries' situations are not entirely analogous. She repeatedly noted Israel's small size and population. Controlling the terrorist threat and managing bureaucracy would be considerably more difficult in the United States than in Israel.

And Israeli protection for its citizens' civil liberties are not as developed as in the United States, Harman said.

"Historically, there has been a lot of contrast between Israel's view of human rights and ours," she said. "But it is drastically becoming more similar than different."

For months, Landau and other Israeli officials have been urging that the U.S.' new security department include an office for international cooperation. Harman said she is confident that the office will be included.

Harman's conversations also taught her that even thorough security is not a panacea. Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert told her that a bakery he was shopping in blew up less than a minute after he left the store, despite the vast security detail he travels with.

"Even the best security in the world cannot protect against everything," she said. "Suicide bombers blend in."

There could be potential suicide bombers in the United States right now, Harman says.

Harman's meetings also focused heavily on Iraq and the threat that President Saddam Hussein poses to Israel.

Virtually all political and security leaders she met with — including Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer — strongly support U.S. military action against Iraq, she said.

"Breaking the chain between Iraq, Iran and Syria is critical, and if we break the chain, we would change the dynamic in the region," Harman said Ben-Eliezer told her. "Any change is better than the status quo." □

German officials offer reward after WWII memorials attacked

By Toby Axelrod

BERLIN (JTA) — A team of crime experts has been asked to investigate a recent series of attacks on Jewish and anti-fascist memorials after what is being described as the worst anti-Semitic attack on a Holocaust memorial in a decade.

In what one Jewish leader called a clear act of Holocaust denial, vandals last week firebombed a museum commemorating the April 1945 death march of 45,000 concentration camp inmates deeper into Germany as the Soviet armies approached at the end of World War II.

They also scrawled a swastika and SS symbols outside the museum at Belower Wald — German for Below Forest — near Berlin.

Germany is offering a \$10,000 reward for information leading to the arrest of those responsible for the attack, which occurred Sept. 5, the night before Rosh Hashanah.

The attack was similar to one in 1992 that nearly destroyed a barrack at the site of the former Sachsenhausen concentration camp.

That crime also took place just before Rosh Hashanah.

The barrack has been partially reconstructed as part of the Sachsenhausen memorial museum, but some of the charred original structure remains as a reminder of the physical and psychological damage vandals can inflict.

Local political and religious leaders joined in condemning the latest attack. Some 500 people attended a demonstration last Friday to show their disgust with the incident.

The attack took place against a backdrop of rising anti-Semitic incidents in the former eastern German states of Brandenburg and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

In Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, the number of such crimes registered during the first half of 2002 nearly equaled the total for the entire previous year.

In a few of the incidents, vandals placed pigs' heads on Holocaust memorials.

Some observers say the increase in such crimes may be related to anger about the continued Israeli-Palestinian violence.

But Peter Fischer, a member of the Central Council of Jews in Germany who oversees Jewish communities in the former East Germany, said he believes Holocaust denial was behind the latest attack.

"It fits with a whole series of attacks against locations that have to do with remembering the death march and other Nazi-era crimes," Fischer told the German Press Agency.

Original items belonging to prisoners were destroyed in the fire, according to Gunter Morsch, director of memorials for the state of Brandenburg.

In addition, vandals defaced a memorial stone with swastikas, SS symbols and the statement, "Jews have short legs."

Fischer said the graffiti was a play on the expression "Lies have short legs," a saying frequently used in Nazi-era anti-Jewish propaganda.

"The idea was that Jews were notorious liars and one should not believe them," Fischer told JTA.

"It is a clue that this is not a spontaneous act by a bunch of

idiots, but rather a clearly symbolic act."

The fact that the crime was committed on the 10th anniversary of the arson attack on the Sachsenhausen memorial was evidence that the perpetrators "knew exactly when and how they should commit their act," Fischer said.

Fischer said police found similarities in the handwriting and paint used in the graffiti in this and other incidents in the area this year.

"What impresses me is that in the 10 years since the attack on Sachsenhausen not much has improved, and in fact it has gotten worse," Fischer said. "It is common for them to attack the weakest — in this case, the dead. But those who are hurt most are the living."

If anything has changed, it is the readiness of local people to stand up against the neo-Nazis, he said.

Fischer added that he was "deeply moved" to see local residents coming "on bikes, in cars, and buses" to last Friday's demonstration.

"It was clear that they were not going to let this incident go with comment.

"This is a difference from 1992. The people are really ready to stand up," he said.

The museum at Belower Wald was created in the 1970s as a memorial to the concentration camp prisoners who were forced by the Nazis on death marches at the end of World War II.

Throughout the states of Brandenburg and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, there are markers showing the routes along which Jews and other prisoners were herded.

Thousands died of exhaustion or were shot by their Nazi guards.

Two sites along the death march routes were vandalized earlier this year.

Those incidents may well be linked to the attack at Belower Wald, officials said.

Investigators said the latest attack was most likely committed by members of a small circle of violent right-wing extremists who timed their act to coincide with Rosh Hashanah.

Investigators said they doubted that local skinhead groups were sophisticated enough to have planned an attack to coincide with the Jewish holidays.

The governor of the state of Brandenburg, Matthias Platzeck, interrupted a session of the state legislature to visit the scene.

He called the incident "extremely disgusting."

The head of the Communist Peoples Democratic Party in Brandenburg, Ralf Christoffers, said the case made it clear that politicians still have much to do in the fight against right-wing extremism and anti-Semitism. □

Sharon: No visits to Temple Mount

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Ariel Sharon said the time is not right for Jews to visit the Temple Mount.

"When the situation quiets, we will visit there again, but I don't think we need to make demonstrative steps at this time," the Israeli prime minister told the Yediot Achronot newspaper.

The Palestinian intifada began two years ago after Sharon toured the Temple Mount.

The mount is the holiest site in Judaism and is also a holy site for Muslims. □