



Daily News Bulletin

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85th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Security alert over Yom Kippur

Israeli security forces were on alert for possible terrorist attacks during Yom Kippur.

As in previous years, Israel imposed a total closure on the West Bank and Gaza Strip on Sunday morning.

The closure was to last until Tuesday morning, following the end of the holiday.

As activity around the country wound down Sunday, bicycle shops were during a brisk business. On Yom Kippur, children on bicycles traditionally take over the streets, which are virtually free of motor traffic.

Report: U.S. to notify Israel

U.S. officials reportedly told Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres that Israel will have adequate advance warning of any attack on Iraq.

"We know that Israel is likely to be attacked," one diplomatic source quoted Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage as telling Peres. "You will know ahead of time." A similar message was conveyed to Peres by Vice President Dick Cheney and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, according to the Jerusalem Post.

Iraq aiding Palestinian terror

Iraq reportedly has stepped up its attempts to send weapons and money to the Palestinians to step up terror attacks against Israel. Iraq hopes to refocus international attention on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, possibly to open a second front in case of a U.S. attack on Baghdad, according to the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz.

Amid the new signs of attempted Iraqi weapons smuggling to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Iraqi-backed Arab Liberation Front held a rally in Gaza last week.

The rally included an appearance by Hamas leader Sheik Ahmed Yassin, who called for "unity in the ranks of the resistance" and drew a connection between Palestinian resistance to Israel and Iraq's standoff with the United States.

REMINDER: The JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Tuesday, Sept. 17.

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

Hopes for release of Iranian Jews dashed as holiday comes and goes

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — Another Jewish New Year has come and gone, and eight Iranian Jewish prisoners remain locked up in Iran on charges they spied for Israel.

Some observers had tracked recent rumors that the Islamic regime, with its membership in President Bush's "axis of evil," might be rethinking some of its policies — including a possible pardon for a group of pious Jews believed to have been wrongly jailed in the first place.

For the third straight year, the lone Jewish member of the Iranian Parliament, Maurice Motamed, took to the floor of the legislative body in advance of Rosh Hashanah and appealed for freedom for the "Iran 10" — now down to eight, as two were released after serving their sentences.

Their release failed to materialize, though the authorities reportedly permitted their families to visit them in prison to celebrate a Rosh Hashanah service together.

"We'd started seeing some changes with respect to attitudes toward religious minorities in general, and we were hoping this would translate into some actual movement on the ground," said Sam Kermanian, secretary-general of the Iranian-American Jewish Federation in Los Angeles, a community that boasts some 40,000 Iranian Jews.

"As far as we're concerned, we always felt these people did not belong in prison, that the charges against them were wrong. We would welcome the pardoning of these prisoners as an excellent first step forward in a more equitable treatment of religious minority groups."

That the holiday passed without the prisoners' release did not surprise more pessimistic Iran-watchers, who have long maintained that the mullahs in charge are tone-deaf to international concerns and never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity for a goodwill gesture.

"I don't think they're smart enough to make these kinds of overtures," said Pooya Dayanim, spokesman for the L.A.-based Council of Iranian-American Jewish Organizations.

"If they understood good P.R. work, they wouldn't have put these men in jail to begin with — and they wouldn't have landed in the 'axis of evil.'"

Thirteen Iranian Jewish men were first arrested in January and March 1999 and eventually charged with spying for the Mossad, Israel's foreign intelligence service.

Their real offense, said American Jewish observers, was that their increasingly fervent brand of Orthodox Judaism became a source of irritation to the authorities.

Most of the men were religious leaders and came from the southern Iranian city of Shiraz, said to be a bastion of religious conservatism in general.

The arrests were believed intended to send a signal to the rest of the community.

But the issue was soon sucked into the vortex of the political dynamic at the time — a power struggle between conservative forces, led by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and the reformist faction, led by President Mohammad Khatami, observers said.

The Islamists seized upon the issue to whip up anti-Israel fervor, which is often seen as a galvanizing factor among all Iranians. After a year-plus in solitary confinement, in May 2000 the Jews were brought before Iran's Revolutionary Court and delivered "confessions" that they had indeed spied for Mossad. However, media and

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel seeks U.S. mediation

The United States may intervene in a mounting water crisis between Israel and Lebanon. According to diplomatic sources in Lebanon, the United States may send a water expert to the region to try to mediate a solution to the crisis, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported.

The Lebanese project would divert water from the Hatzbani River. The water flows from Lebanon into the Sea of Galilee, Israel's largest reservoir.

Last Friday, Lebanon urged the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council to intervene in the water dispute.

Hebrew U. bomb was second try

The bomb that killed five Americans and four Israelis July 31 at Hebrew University first was planted three days earlier but failed to go off. Four Arab residents of Jerusalem were indicted Sept. 12 for the bombing and for several other attacks that killed a total of 35 people.

One of the four suspects allegedly planted the bomb at the university's Frank Sinatra cafeteria on July 28 and tried to set it off by remote control, the Israeli newspapers Ma'ariv and Yediot Achronot said, citing the indictment. When the device did not explode, he retrieved it, had it repaired and planted it again three days later.

Poll: Oslo is dead

Nine years after the famous handshake on the White House lawn, four out of five Israelis believe the Oslo accords are dead.

According to a poll in Ma'ariv last Friday — the ninth anniversary of the handshake between then-Israeli premier Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat — 80 percent of respondents believe Arafat is irrelevant, and only 15 percent see the Palestinian Authority president as a viable peace partner.



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foreign observers were barred from the courtroom, the prosecutor served as judge and Israel denied it had had any contact with the men. Most foreign diplomats and human rights activists assailed the process as a sham.

There was initial fear the men might be executed. Since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, 17 Jews had been condemned to death, primarily for being accused spies.

But three of the 13 arrested in 1999 were acquitted, with the 10 others convicted on July 1, 2000, on various national security charges. They were sentenced to terms ranging from four to 13 years. The men appealed, and under international criticism, Tehran reduced the jail time in 2000 to two to nine years.

In March 2001, merchant Ramin Nematizadeh, who had taught religious school, was released after serving out his term. And this past January, a second Jew, Hebrew teacher Faramarz Kashi, completed his term.

For the remaining eight, their lone hope seems to be a pardon from Khamenei.

Much of the Iranian Jewish community — both here and there — has become resigned to the fate of the prisoners.

"Iran now has too much to face besides this issue," Dayanim said.

"Unless Iran feels that releasing the prisoners will win them some kind of international brownie points, they will remain in prison and serve out their sentences."

Indeed Iran's greatest problem may come from within.

With unemployment said to be 14 percent — particularly hard-hit are the young and educated — and stifling social restrictions, the significant strata of university students are reportedly ever more restive and disappointed with Khatami's promises of reform.

But it's not only U.S. Jews who are keeping up the pressure.

Foreign dignitaries visiting Tehran continue a steady drumbeat of criticism of Iran's treatment of its minorities, including the Jews behind bars.

In late July, for example, Javier Solana, the European Union's foreign policy and security chief, listed the concerns that impede improved relations between Iran and Europe: disregard for human rights, a muzzled media, acquisition of weapons of mass destruction and meddling in the Middle East.

For its part, Washington has become increasingly concerned about Iran's support for Palestinian terror groups. Iran has long been seen as aiding Islamic Jihad and Hamas in the Palestinian territories, and Hezbollah on Israel's northern border.

And in January, ties between Iran and the Palestinian Authority surfaced with the Israeli interception of the Karine-A, a ship carrying more than 50 tons of weapons from Iran to the Gaza Strip.

Bush's now-famous "axis of evil" speech followed on Jan. 29.

Some in Washington suggest that Iran poses a much greater threat than Iraq.

If nothing else, Iran's inclusion in the axis may be playing a part in Tehran's recent rally to the defense of arch-nemesis Iraq as Iran seeks to form a united front against Israel and the United States.

Meanwhile, Iran's intense focus on Israel's actions against the Palestinians — coupled with the widely publicized arrest of the Shirazi Jews on spying charges — has fomented a hostile climate for the Jews remaining in Iran, Dayanim said.

An estimated 22,000 to 25,000 Jews remain in Iran, down from a peak of 100,000 or so before the 1979 revolution.

Dayanim said he has heard of Jewish children being beaten and harassed at school, with their fathers accused of being "Zionists."

"We're actively engaged in efforts to increase emigration," Dayanim said.

Those efforts, though, are hindered by the fact Jews face obstacles in trying to liquidate their assets, Dayanim said.

Those seeking to immigrate to the United States also face greater scrutiny from American immigration and FBI officials once they get to the immigrant way station in Vienna, given new post-Sept. 11 restrictions.

Kermanian, meanwhile, remains somewhat optimistic about the future of Iran's Jews. "Jews have lived in Iran for 2,500 years, always lived there as loyal citizens, and they loved their country," he said.

"Even though there were ups and downs, Iranians and Jews found a way to live together in peace and cooperation. I have no doubt that with some good will, those days will return." □

JEWISH WORLD

Pro-Israel ads hit the air

TV ads trumpeting Israeli democracy and its common values with the United States are hitting the nation's cable stations.

The 30-second ads, which the American Jewish Committee is sponsoring, began running on CNN, CNBC, Fox News and MSNBC in the Washington area Sept. 12, and they are set to hit the New York market Tuesday on CNN and Fox, an AJCommittee official said.

The ads, which should air nationally in the next few weeks, are part of a major pro-Israel public relations campaign by the AJCommittee, a group of high-tech entrepreneurs called Israel 21C, and pollsters Stanley Greenberg, Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi and Frank Luntz. The ads show such images as Israeli newspapers and Israel's Parliament. A narrator in the ad says that in "Israel, unlike in other countries in the region, all people — Christians, Muslims and Jews — enjoy freedom of religion, press and speech. Israel and America — shared values, shared visions for peace."

Students protest Ashrawi

Some 300 demonstrators protested a speech by Palestinian spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi at Colorado College.

Ashrawi, a former Palestinian Authority Cabinet minister and Arab League spokeswoman, spoke Sept. 12 at a three-day symposium called "September 11: One Year Later."

Her invitation to the private liberal arts school provoked controversy and criticism last month from Jewish and conservative Christian organizations, who said it was disrespectful to the Sept. 11 victims to invite someone closely associated with what they consider terrorist groups.

Protesters carried signs that read, "Palestinians danced when Americans died" on Sept. 11.

Shoe bomber angered by Israel

A man accused of trying to blow up a plane last year with explosives in his shoes said he was driven by anger over Israel's treatment of Muslims.

Richard Reid, a British citizen and convert to Islam, told FBI interrogators he traveled to Jerusalem in June 2001 and was angered to see "Jews with guns" at the Al-Aksa Mosque, an apparent reference to Israeli police guarding the entrance to the Temple Mount.

Reid said his trip to Jerusalem "further emboldened him to act against the West when he witnessed the many checkpoints and travel restrictions on Muslims," according to an interrogation transcript. He is charged with trying to detonate explosives on an American Airlines flight from Paris to Miami last December.

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

Uruguayan Jews hope young can fuel their revitalization efforts

By Henry Benjamin

SYDNEY, Australia (JTA) — Uruguayan Jews are working to create a Jewish renaissance in their beleaguered country, where economic problems are mounting.

The major force behind the revitalization effort in Uruguay, whose economic woes are less well-known than neighboring Argentina's, is the education-focused group Yavne, headed by 26-year-old accountant Marcelo Ellenberg.

Ellenberg recently visited Australia for the Nahum Goldmann Fellowship conference, which brought together 37 young Jewish leaders from 15 countries.

"Listening to and debating with some of the world's leading Jewish academics and sharing experiences with other young communal leaders from all over the world will revitalize my drive to re-establish the Montevideo community," Ellenberg told JTA. He was referring to Uruguay's capital, where most of the country's Jews live.

Once, the city was home to 50,000 Jews. Today, just 20,000 Jews remain in Montevideo, which has more than 3 million residents in total. Many moved to Israel, while others chose Spain, Italy or the United States.

A run on the banks early in the year raised fears of an economic crisis in Uruguay like that in Argentina, where a deep recession has brought banks to the verge of collapse.

The economic turmoil has seriously harmed Uruguay's Jewish population. In June, the World Zionist Congress declared Uruguay's Jewish community to be in a state of emergency.

Jews first settled in Uruguay in the 1770s, with many becoming farmers, ranchers and cowboys. The main wave of immigration took place at the turn of the 20th century from Eastern Europe. The community grew further as Jews sought refuge from the ravages of World War II.

Most Jews belonged to the city's middle class, but many today find themselves impoverished. As a result of the economic crisis, more than 3,000 Jews now live below the poverty line. Many families cannot afford basic essentials such as dental care and health insurance.

Jewish families in Montevideo are being evicted from their homes as they fail to pay mortgages or rent.

The Pincus Fund, established in Israel by a former South African lawyer, Louis Pincus, has come to the country's aid. The fund has contributed more than \$11 million to Jewish educational projects worldwide.

With a \$50,000 grant from the Pincus Fund — along with additional aid from local fund raising and the Jewish Agency for Israel — Ellenberg and his co-leaders at the Yavne school, Dani Cohn and Marcelo Cynovitch, have injected new life into the struggling community.

That has included developing the modern Orthodox school, which was "reinvigorated" in 1994 and now has 350 pupils.

The community has implemented a kosher soup kitchen and provides daily meals to help impoverished Jews and needy students. It also has established a medicine bank for those who cannot afford to buy life-sustaining drugs.

Within the school, Ellenberg and his co-workers have established the only synagogue in Montevideo, offering three services a day and attracting more than 400 people to Shabbat services — and 2,000 for the High Holidays.

But problems loom. The Pincus Fund grant for the school was intended as seed money, in expectation that the community would then be able to maintain it on its own. No more funds are due after October — but the community may not be able to finance the rest.

As efforts continue to re-energize Uruguay's Jews, others are encouraging community members to move to Israel. Following a recent request from the Jewish Agency, it was decided that Uruguayan immigrants to Israel would receive extra benefits, in line with those being offered to Argentine Jews moving to Israel. □

With holiday package, group seeks to encourage debate about Israel

By Joe Berkofsky

NEW YORK (JTA) — Reconstructionist Rabbi Elizabeth Bolton of Baltimore based her Rosh Hashanah sermon on the story of God saving Ishmael, who tradition says is the ancestor of the Arabs.

Reform Rabbi Ellen Lippman of Brooklyn is studying an essay on grief for her Yom Kippur Yizkor (Remembrance) service that suggests Jews grieve for Jewish and Palestinian victims of Middle East violence.

And in Palo Alto, Calif., Amy Eilberg, a Conservative rabbi and cantor, found herself moved by a new misheberach prayer for the ill that enjoins Jews to be "open to the suffering of all people who struggle for freedom and justice."

These rabbis are heeding a nationwide call by the new American chapter of the Israeli group Rabbis for Human Rights. The group is urging liberal Jewish leaders during these High Holidays to question Israel's treatment of the Palestinians and condemn human rights violations by Palestinians and Israelis alike.

Such criticism of Israel has been rare in the United States since the outbreak of the Palestinian uprising in September 2000, but some rabbis say they are using the new year to speak out.

"Only by recognizing that all of us — on both sides of this story — have known terrible losses, can there be a chance for all of us to live at long last in peace and safety," says Eilberg.

Eilberg, of Palo Alto's Congregation Kol Emeth, was among 3,000 North American rabbis in the Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist and Renewal movements who in August received the human rights group's Days of Awe Rabbinic Resource Packet.

The packet was a collection of liturgy, contemporary writing and study texts intended to stir debate not only about Israel's immediate security needs, but ultimately about its Jewish soul, says the U.S. chapter's executive director, Rabbi Brian Walt of Philadelphia.

"The intent is to soften the natural, vengeful and angry reactions to terrorism," Walt says. "I am not a person in solidarity with the Palestinian people. But I want justice."

Timed for the High Holidays but crafted to be used by congregations throughout the year, the packet reflects the rabbinic group's stance that "every human being is created in the eyes of God, and every human being deserves basic human rights."

Founded in 1988 to protest alleged Israeli human rights abuses in battling the first Palestinian uprising, or intifada, this group is unusual on the Israeli civil rights scene in several respects.

The group employs highly visible tactics that it calls "direct actions," such as rebuilding Palestinian homes in eastern Jerusalem demolished by Israel, or replanting West Bank olive trees on Tu B'Shevat that were uprooted by Israeli forces during anti-terror operations. Its 100 Israeli members, including rabbis and rabbinical students, span the denominational spectrum, which is rare in Israeli religious life.

The new U.S.-based chapter of 200 members includes mostly liberal rabbis, but a tiny number of Orthodox rabbis as well.

The High Holiday packet was the group's most ambitious U.S. project since it was launched in January. It sent its message to liberal Jews across North America, as well as to more than 200

liberal rabbis worldwide from Argentina to the Virgin Islands.

The High Holiday materials are aimed at provoking debate about Israel's treatment of the Palestinians at a time when Walt says "some red lines have been crossed" by Israel.

In battling terrorism, Walt says, the army has engaged in collective punishment of all Palestinians by cutting off water and electrical lines, imposing curfews in towns and villages, shooting at ambulances it believes are being used to transport terrorists or bombs and keeping emergency medical vehicles stopped at roadblocks.

While debate about such actions has remained strong in Israel, Walt adds, American Jewish criticism has been muffled in favor of blanket support for the Jewish state.

"It is hard for Jews," given the Palestinian terror "attacks on us, to feel the pain of the Palestinians," Walt says.

The U.S. chapter hopes that the collection of religious texts and commentary on the conflict it is sending to Diaspora rabbis will foment more open Jewish debate.

The package includes revised versions of prayers used in the Ma'ariv evening and Shacharit morning services, Torah commentaries for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, revised versions of High Holiday services such as tashlich — the casting away of sins — and study texts.

One Shacharit essay called "Sharing a Holy Land," by Rabbi Arthur Green, says the only way Jews can show the world how to live in the Holy Land is by "sharing it with others."

For Bolton, her rabbinic credo remains the Rosh Hashanah story of how God saved Abraham's child Ishmael and Ishmael's mother, Hagar, from dying of thirst in the desert after their expulsion by Abraham. According to the midrash, God ignored the pleas of an angel who said Ishmael's descendants would ultimately harm the Jewish people.

"Ishmael is a young child, a victim of forces he didn't cause," she says. "That's not some abstract ethic — we need to recognize the holiness of every human life, and the tragedy of every loss."

For Bolton, that story translates into the current need to defend the religious values underpinning the Jewish state. Current Israeli policies are threatening Israel's moral character "to such a degree that we may soon reach a point of no return," she says.

But Lippman, of the independent Kolot Chayeinu: Voices of Our Lives, in Brooklyn, says rabbis run certain risks by voicing anything less than total support of Israeli actions.

"The voice from the American Jewish community has been pretty monolithic — you're quickly labeled anti-Israel if you say anything critical of Israel," she says.

Not every rabbi who received the High Holiday package felt so inspired.

Rabbi Gerald Wolpe, former spiritual leader of Har Zion Temple, a Conservative congregation in Penn Valley, Pa., wrote an opinion piece in the Philadelphia Jewish Exponent highly critical of the rabbinic group's move. Wolpe says it is "totally off-base" for the group to be tailoring the High Holiday prayers to "be more sensitive to our enemies," in part because Jewish prayers are already aimed at the suffering of all people.

But Eilberg says that while Israel's security is vital, so, too, is the fight for the Torah's values and "the Jewish morality that flows from it. Until we begin to understand that there are peace-loving Palestinians, peace will not be possible, and in some small way, we will have contributed to obstructing peace." □