

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel: U.S. pressure was strong

Israeli officials said Monday that U.S. pressure to end the siege on Yasser Arafat's headquarters had been greater than anticipated.

A day after Israeli tanks and troops pulled back from the Ramallah compound, several Cabinet ministers said Israel had failed to correctly assess the American reaction to the siege.

The decision to lift the siege followed heavy pressure from the United States, which said the action was disruptive to U.S. preparations for a possible attack on Iraq.

Meanwhile, there was much finger-pointing among Israeli officials following reports that some of the wanted Palestinians who had been in the compound with the Palestinian Authority president escaped when the siege was lifted.

Poet laureate creates controversy

The poet laureate of New Jersey is ignoring calls to quit for reading a poem insinuating that Israel knew in advance about the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center.

New Jersey Gov. James McGreevey called for Amiri Baraka's resignation after Baraka read the following at a festival earlier this month: "Who knew the World Trade Center was gonna get bombed/Who told 4,000 Israeli workers at the Twin Towers/To stay home that day/Why did Sharon stay away?"

Baraka later defended the poem.

"Everything said about Israel in the poem is easily researched," he said. "If you criticize Israel, they hide behind the religion and call you anti-Semitic."

Baraka, a controversial black poet once known as LeRoi Jones, has run afoul of Jewish groups in the past.

Sharon visits Moscow

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon met Monday with Russian President Vladimir Putin during a two-day visit to Moscow.

During their discussions, the Israeli leader was expected to discuss Israeli concerns about Iraqi and Iranian efforts to acquire nuclear weapons from Russia.

Sharon also was slated to meet with Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov and heads of the Jewish community.

A long-awaited population survey to unveil new portrait of U.S. Jewry

By Joe Berkofsky

NEW YORK (JTA) — American Jews soon will see the fullest picture of their community ever developed.

The initial results of the much-anticipated National Jewish Population Survey 2000 will be made public Oct. 8, nearly 12 years after the last survey.

If the 1990 survey is any indication, the data will generate many interpretations and spark intense debate in the community.

The NJPS is widely considered the benchmark measure of U.S. Jewry.

By measuring demographic information and issues of Jewish identity, it can help steer spending and policies by the Jewish federation system and other Jewish organizations in areas from synagogues to day schools to programs for the elderly.

The 1990 NJPS became best known as the bearer of the controversial news that 52 percent of the nation's 5.5 million Jews who had married in the previous five years had wed non-Jews.

The finding stirred years of debate and communal introspection — and spurred millions of dollars of spending on programs to keep Jews in the faith and to build Jewish identity.

In many ways propelled by that controversy, the upcoming NJPS is shaping up as the most ambitious demographic study yet of American Jewry.

"We think this gives a very nuanced view of what it means to be Jewish today," said Jim Schwartz, who is overseeing the NJPS 2000 for the United Jewish Communities, the umbrella organization of North American Jewish federations that is sponsoring the study.

The results are "as representative of the Jewish population as possible," he said.

The data is being closely guarded; only a handful of researchers and officials involved in the NJPS are privy to the findings as they continue to crunch the numbers.

When UJC does hold its news conference on the initial results next week, it will release only basic findings such as the total number of U.S. Jews, number of Jewish households, population locations, birth rates, incomes and occupations.

The data on other findings, including those related to questions of Jewish identity and affiliation, won't be released until UJC's annual General Assembly, taking place in Philadelphia on Nov. 20-22.

To create this detailed picture, and to avoid the type of criticism that greeted the previous survey, researchers used a large study sample of 4,500 Jewish households, almost double the number questioned in 1990.

"We wanted a sample the results of which could not be challenged," said Mandell "Bill" Berman, who co-chaired NJPS 2000 and chaired the 1990 study as president of the former federation umbrella, the Council of Jewish Federations.

The NJPS team hopes that no single issue will overshadow the other findings this time, as happened in 1990 when other details were lost in the uproar over intermarriage, Berman said.

The intermarriage controversy forced a sea change in the U.S. Jewish landscape, Berman added, with a minimum of "tens of millions of dollars" spent on Jewish education, identity-building programs and outreach efforts to unaffiliated Jews.

"Clearly, people are very anxious to find out if things have improved" in rates of intermarriage and Jewish identification, he said.

The 1990 study found a "core" Jewish population — Jews by religion, parentage or upbringing — of 5.5 million. The numbers alone are likely to spark a debate about

MIDEAST FOCUS

Palestinians say teen killed

Israeli soldiers killed a 13-year-old Palestinian boy while enforcing a curfew Monday in Nablus, according to Palestinian sources. Soldiers also wounded 25 other people, the sources told The Associated Press.

The army said it is investigating the incident.

Amnesty: Both sides guilty

Israel and the Palestinian Authority are both at fault for the large numbers of children killed during the past two years of fighting, according to Amnesty International.

In a report released Sunday, Amnesty said Israel has not investigated wrongdoing by its soldiers, while the Palestinian Authority has failed to prevent terror attacks or bring those responsible to justice. According to The Associated Press, 236 Palestinian and 61 Israeli children have been killed since the outbreak of the intifada in September 2000.

145 suicide bombers in intifada

Since the start of the Palestinian uprising two years ago, 145 suicide bombers have been dispatched to carry out attacks in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Israeli officials said.

The figure, based on data compiled by the Shin Bet domestic security service, includes would-be bombers caught before carrying out attacks, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported.

Families of kidnapped in D.C.

The families of Israeli soldiers kidnapped by Hezbollah along the border with Lebanon will speak Wednesday at a U.S. congressional briefing.

Four relatives of the victims, who were kidnapped in October 2000, will testify before lawmakers, including Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.) and Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.).

who is counted as a Jew, and what that means for the future of the American Jewish community. In a 2000 study for the American Jewish Year Book, published by the American Jewish Committee and based on local community counts, Schwartz found 6.1 million core Jews.

And just last week, a study by Gary Tobin of the Institute for Jewish & Community Research found 6.7 million Jews, defined as those who were either born to Jewish parents, were raised Jewish, primarily practice Judaism or consider themselves Jews culturally or ethnically.

Tobin also found an additional 2.5 million people connected to Judaism in some way, such as by practicing Judaism as a secondary religion. In addition, he found, another 4.1 million Americans claim Jewish heritage because of a Jewish grandparent or other ancestor. That gives a total of 13.3 million "Jewishly connected" Americans, showing that the community is not dying out but in fact shows "enormous potential" for growth, Tobin said.

Just what the upcoming NJPS numbers will reveal about changes in population, Jewish identity and the future of U.S. Jewry remains a subject of intense speculation.

If intermarriage rates continue to rise, for example, some will say the outreach efforts of the past decade have failed, while others will say they need to be expanded, said Ed Case, president and publisher of Interfaithfamily.com, which promotes Jewish life and identity in interfaith families.

The 1990 study also indicated that the children of intermarriages were not being raised as Jews. The new study delves into that issue more deeply, surveying how these children are being raised.

At \$6 million, the new study carries a far heftier price tag than the 1990 study, which cost some \$400,000.

For the new study, the UJC raised \$4 million from its nearly 200 constituent federations, family foundations and individuals, and used \$2 million of its own.

The project was budgeted over seven years.

A bulk of the money funded more than five years of research — including field work and data compiling — the length of time it took to conduct as comprehensive and scientific a survey as the sponsors envisioned.

The budget for the next two years will support publication of the findings, as well as publicity and analysis, UJC officials said. More than 900 people — including a 20-member National Technical Advisory Committee of leading demographers, sociologists and other academicians — helped shape the survey.

Out of that process emerged a thick survey with 330 questions examining areas such as Jewish heritage, behavior, education, charitable activity, ties to Israel, Web habits and attitudes toward a range of Jewish issues. The actual survey was conducted between August 2000 and August 2001 by RoperASW, a research and polling firm.

Because of the survey's depth — the average interview took 42 minutes — and the random calling method used until Jewish homes were found, surveyors on average had to make 1,300 to 1,400 calls before completing one survey, UJC officials said.

That meant it took 1.3 million phone calls to arrive at the final sample, they said.

Because of the time commitment needed to answer all the questions, the NJPS team began offering \$25 "incentives" to those who agreed to take part. Respondents also had the option of donating the money to charity.

The incentives cost about \$10,000 in total, Schwartz said.

Calls were not made on Shabbat or Jewish holidays. After the 1990 study, many Orthodox groups criticized the NJPS for failing to fully take their community into account.

After a few months of surveys, the NJPS team had reached 3,100 people, Schwartz said, some three times what typical Gallup surveys generally include.

But UJC officials wanted to increase the sample to their original goal of 4,500, and delayed the study while they raised the necessary money.

Lorraine Blass, UJC's senior planner and project director for NJPS, said the team sought that figure in order to build a sample twice the size as the previous study and to have sufficient data to analyze subgroups within the Jewish population.

Originally scheduled to be released at the 2001 G.A., the report's delay nevertheless prompted yet more conjecture about the project and heightened debate about the new figures. □



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JEWISH WORLD

Group to aid Jewish refugees

An organization seeking redress for Jewish refugees from Arab countries was launched Monday.

The new group, the International Committee of Justice for Jews from Arab Countries, will document the claims of Jews who fled Arab countries during or after Israel's 1948 War of Independence, and will press those claims during any Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.

The "historical truth" of the 865,000 Jews displaced from Arab countries has been swept under the "Persian carpet," said the group's honorary chair, Richard Holbrooke, the former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations.

Pro-Palestinian forum planned

A national student conference slated for next week at the University of Michigan will consider what to do about "apartheid Israel."

According to the Jerusalem Post, the conference's promotional materials refuse to condemn Palestinian terrorism.

Scheduled to start Oct. 12, the conference promotes an end to U.S. aid to Israel and encourages universities and corporations to divest any holdings in the Jewish state, the paper reported.

Family meets organ recipients

The family of a Jewish activist killed in a traffic accident met in Israel with some of the patients who received his organs. Jonathan Greenberg, the executive director of the Jewish Life Network, died Sept. 14 in Israel, a day after he was hit by a car while riding his bicycle.

Greenberg also was a founder of Makor, a Jewish center on New York's Upper West Side.

His organs were transplanted into six patients, including an Arab resident of eastern Jerusalem. His parents, Rabbi Yitz and Blu Greenberg, described Jonathan as full of life and giving, and said that his good deeds would live on in others, the Israeli daily Ma'ariv reported.

Compensation talks stalled

Talks on compensation for a Jewish family that lost its business empire under the Nazis are deadlocked, Jewish and German government officials said Monday.

Because of Hitler's Aryanization laws, the Wertheim family was forced to sell its department store chain and other property in Berlin. Heirs in the United States now are seeking compensation.

The German government opened talks in July with lawyers and officials from the Claims Conference. A Sept. 27 meeting ended inconclusively and no new date was set, according to The Associated Press.

Jerusalem, Israel? Not so fast; White House may block steps

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The White House is considering ignoring a law, expected to pass Congress, that calls on the State Department to take steps recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

The State Department Authorization Act, which passed the U.S. House of Representatives on Sept. 25 and the Senate last Friday, includes language requiring the State Department to bring the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem under the auspices of the American Embassy in Tel Aviv and to recognize that Jerusalem residents live in Israel.

The State Department currently treats Jerusalem as a separate entity to avoid complicating efforts to forge an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement. The Palestinians reject the designation of the city as Israel's capital and hope to establish their own capital in eastern Jerusalem.

Most State Department publications do not describe Jerusalem as part of either Israel or the West Bank. American citizens who are born in Jerusalem have only the city name, without any country, listed in their passports.

And the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem deals predominantly with Palestinians, working independently of the embassy in Tel Aviv.

But the authorization act, which sets Congress' policy priorities for the State Department, includes language that would prohibit the use of funds for the Jerusalem consulate or for State Department publications until the department changes the way it relates to the city.

The bill is expected to be signed by the president. However, sources tell JTA that the White House will ignore the Jerusalem provisions, claiming that they violate the separation of powers between Congress and the executive branch.

"It is going to be challenged under the idea that the legislative branch has exceeded its authority to advise and consent on foreign policy, and has crossed into policy formulation," one source said.

Sources say the Bush administration believes Congress' stance on this issue obstructs the White House's freedom in setting foreign policy, and that it can basically ignore the provisions. Instead of vetoing the legislation or seeking a compromise, however, the administration is expected to simply ignore the provisions.

Mary Cheh, a constitutional law professor at George Washington University, said the constitution grants the president discretion on foreign policy matters, which would allow him to ignore the provisions in the authorization act with near impunity.

Congress cannot take the matter to court, Cheh said; only a person who has been harmed by noncompliance with the provision could do so, and would have to prove actual damage.

"It's plausible for the president to ignore this, claiming it intrudes on his authority of foreign policy," Cheh said. "If the president chooses to do nothing, he can do it without going to Congress."

Courts tend not to get involved in cases like this, viewing them as political issues, Cheh said. Even when they do intervene, the law remains murky.

The status of Jerusalem has been a hot-button issue both in the Middle East and in Congress.

In 1995, Congress passed the Jerusalem Embassy Act, which required the president to move the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. But the bill included a national security waiver, and presidents have postponed the move every six months since the law was enacted. Since then, lawmakers have been trying to take other actions against the State Department's stance on Jerusalem, but couldn't garner enough bipartisan support until this year.

Lawmakers who supported the act are furious over the White House's stance.

One congressional official called the White House strategy "curious," noting that Congress regularly stipulates provisions on the use of funds and the White House doesn't object.

White House spokespeople were unavailable for comment. □

NEWS ANALYSIS

Will Ramallah withdrawal invite Hezbollah aggression in North?*By Gil Sedan*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli officials are wondering how the rushed withdrawal from Yasser Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah will affect Israel's deterrent capability on a different front — the border with Lebanon.

The Ramallah fiasco raised difficult questions for Israeli policy-makers, who fear a similar scenario on Israel's northern border: If Hezbollah steps up attacks against Israeli targets, should Israel retaliate? What if the Bush administration orders Israel to stop, as it did in Ramallah, so as not to endanger an American push against Iraq?

The question takes on added relevance amid warnings that Iran and Syria have helped Hezbollah stockpile thousands of missiles that can hit Haifa and other Israeli population centers from southern Lebanon.

Israeli leaders see the disarming or overthrow of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein as a major priority. With the United States trying to build international support for a strike at Saddam, Israeli officials are determined to avoid disputes with U.S. leaders — as evidenced by Israeli acquiescence to American pressure to end the Ramallah siege without the handover of terrorist suspects inside.

But that precedent may put Israel at the mercy of Hezbollah, which Israeli officials fear may try to provoke Israel in order to disrupt U.S. plans against Iraq.

According to Israeli intelligence, Hezbollah's arsenal now contains close to 10,000 Katyusha rockets with a range of about 12 miles, enough to terrorize Israeli communities in the Upper Galilee. Hezbollah also has received several hundred longer-range systems from Iran that can hit targets 25 miles to 45 miles away.

In coming weeks, Hezbollah could try to provoke Israel into a counterattack — disrupting U.S. moves against Iraq or fragmenting an anti-Iraq coalition — or at least to harm Israel when the Jewish state does not feel free to respond, Israeli officials fear.

The wild card in the equation is Damascus, which is the main power broker in Lebanon and is believed to pull Hezbollah's strings.

In the 1991 Persian Gulf War, Syria was part of the anti-Saddam coalition; this time Syria, like most of the Arab world, is part of the anti-war coalition.

Will Syria give Hezbollah the green light to open another Middle East front?

Hezbollah tried to goad Israel into war last April, hoping to make Israel fight on another front at the same time as it faced the Palestinian intifada in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Hezbollah began lobbing mortars and rockets at Israeli military positions in the foothills of Mount Hermon, which Hezbollah claims as Lebanese territory. With Israel threatening retaliation, the Bush administration urged Syria to restrain Hezbollah, and it worked.

That warning has outlived its effectiveness, officials now believe.

Despite the fears, some experts, like Eyal Zisser of Tel Aviv University's Dayan Center, believe Syria and Hezbollah are

unlikely to take advantage of the Iraq crisis to push for a confrontation with Israel.

"It will not necessarily happen for two reasons: They do not have an interest in helping the Iraqis and they fear that they will be next on the American list," Zisser told JTA.

Therefore, he said, Syria and Hezbollah are likely to keep a low profile.

In Zisser's view, Hezbollah's calculations are based more on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"Hezbollah will hit Israel whenever they do not risk reaction," he said.

"Despite American calls for restraint" from Israel, Hezbollah "still fears a reaction."

Hezbollah also will need to take into account internal Lebanese politics.

Relations are delicate between Hezbollah, which effectively controls southern Lebanon, and the central government in Beirut.

The government publicly supports Hezbollah's militancy, but it has urged Hezbollah to refrain from escalating the situation to a point that would trigger massive Israeli retaliation.

The Shi'ite militia retains its aura of heroism for its role in forcing Israel to withdraw from southern Lebanon in May 2000, but many Lebanese are not willing to see the country's hard-won stability threatened by the group's continuing belligerency.

Lebanese leaders remember Israeli threats in the past to attack Lebanese infrastructure if Hezbollah hits Israeli towns. While Hezbollah continues to stir up tension along the border every now and then, it refrains from major attacks such as the outright shelling of Israeli population centers that it favored in the past.

During the recent Sukkot holiday, hotels and recreation centers in northern Israeli were packed with Israeli tourists.

That showed a confidence in the stability of the situation that had not been seen since the Palestinian intifada began two years ago.

But signs for a possible escalation do exist. According to Israeli intelligence reports, Syria, which in the past served as a transit point for Iranian rockets bound for Hezbollah, recently began supplying Hezbollah with rockets as well.

Another indication that Hezbollah and the Syrians are willing to raise the stakes is Lebanon's determination to go ahead with a project to pump water from the Wazzani River. The Wazzani is a tributary of the Hatzbani River, which is one of three key sources of the Jordan River. That flows into the Sea of Galilee, Israel's main water reservoir.

Israel at first responded angrily, saying the water diversion was a potential cause for war. It soon toned down its rhetoric, and Zisser believes all the parties involved are trying to de-escalate the situation.

But today's calculations can change if the United States goes to war with Iraq. Iraq may lash out at Israel, and if Israel retaliates against Iraq — or if things heat up on the Palestinian front — Syria and Hezbollah may decide to jump in.

Also in the equation are the long-range missiles held by Syria and Iran, allowing both countries to hit almost any point in Israel from within their own territory.

Experts agree that, in the present political configuration, Syria and Iran are unlikely to use the missiles.

But their very existence poses a much graver threat to Israel than the Hezbollah arsenal. □