



# Daily News Bulletin

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85th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### 13 Palestinians killed in Gaza raid

At least 13 Palestinians were killed and more than 100 injured in an Israeli raid of a Hamas stronghold in the Gaza Strip.

The Israeli army denied Palestinian claims that a military helicopter fired a missile at a crowd of civilians outside a mosque.

The commander of Israeli forces in Gaza said the missile was fired at armed Palestinians who were shooting and throwing grenades at Israeli soldiers.

### Court rejects appeal in N.J. race

The U.S. Supreme Court paved the way for former Sen. Frank Lautenberg to run as the Democratic candidate for senator next month.

Without comment, the court refused an appeal by New Jersey Republicans that replacing Sen. Robert Torricelli with Lautenberg so close to Election Day violated New Jersey law.

### AIPAC summit protested

Palestinians and black leaders protested a summit of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee held in Atlanta last weekend.

Members of the New Black Panther Party and the Concerned Black Clergy protested an event at the governor's mansion Saturday, claiming AIPAC recently directed millions of dollars to unseat Rep. Cynthia McKinney (D-Ga.).

On Sunday, about 50 Palestinian protesters waived flags in front of the hotel where the summit was held.

The summit, which brought together 500 members and donors to the lobbying group, heard from National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice via satellite and from Walter Isaacson, chairman and CEO of CNN.

### Lanner plans to appeal conviction

Rabbi Baruch Lanner plans to appeal his conviction for sexually abusing two teen-aged girls. Lanner, 52, was sentenced last Friday to seven years in prison for fondling the two students between 1992 and 1996, when he was their principal at the Hillel High School in Ocean Township, N.J.

The judge denied Lanner's request for a new trial and for bail pending appeal of the sentence, instead ordering him to prison.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### As Christian right prepares rally for Israel, some Jews are uneasy

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Thousands of people will gather in Washington this week in support of Israel, but there won't be many Jews there.

The participants in Friday's rally are evangelical Christians, gathering in the nation's capital as part of a Christian Coalition of America conference.

According to the coalition, the Christian Support for Israel rally will "tell the world that Christians stand firmly behind the Jewish state and are unalterably opposed to trading land for a paper peace."

Such strong talk is not surprising from a group that, along with other evangelicals, has come out strongly in support of Israel despite growing international condemnation of Israeli policy toward the Palestinians and a worldwide spike in anti-Semitism.

The relationship between evangelicals and Jews for years has been an uneasy one, but it appears to be solidifying as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues and Israel finds itself increasingly isolated.

Nevertheless, many American Jews and Jewish organizations remain wary of the evangelicals, suspecting their motives and disagreeing with them on domestic policy.

Even many of the groups who accept evangelical support for Israel don't see the relationship broadening.

"There is no alliance," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League. "The relationship is based on this one, specific issue."

The ADL took some heat in May when it ran an ad reprinting an open letter from Ralph Reed, the former executive director of the Christian Coalition, calling for support of Israel.

Rutgers University sociology professor Arlene Stein dismisses the idea that the evangelical community is a natural ally. The alliance with Christian conservatives could alienate large sectors of the Jewish community, she warns.

Foxman counters that the Jewish community ought to appreciate the evangelicals' support.

The American Jewish community also can see how enthusiastically Israel is accepting evangelical support.

In a recent speech to an international group of Christian pilgrims visiting Israel for Sukkot, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon called the evangelicals "friends" and asked for their help.

"I have a message I'd like you to carry home: Send more of yours to come visit Israel," he said.

Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert will speak at the Washington rally, which is expected to attract thousands of people. Also expected to attend are former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Knesset member Benny Elon and representatives from Israel's Tourism and Foreign Affairs ministries.

For years, Israel has welcomed evangelical support. Former Prime Minister Menachem Begin once said Israel would welcome evangelical help but "agree to disagree" with them theologically.

"Jews should have enough self-confidence in their own identity not to fear or be intimidated by Christian groups that are supportive of Israel," said Mark Regev, spokesman for the Israeli Embassy in Washington.

Sometimes the relationship can be awkward for other reasons. In an interview

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Comptroller: Israel's P.R. flawed

Israel's P.R. efforts are badly flawed, according to a report issued by the country's comptroller.

In an audit of the efforts of a number of government bodies — including the Government Press Office, the Foreign Ministry, the Defense Ministry, the army and police — the comptroller found that repeated efforts to improve the state's official P.R. have failed to create a coordinated system to put forward Israel's positions during the ongoing conflict with the Palestinians. As a result, many mishaps during the intifada have "damaged Israel's public relations efforts overseas," the report said.

### Tape vows to hit 'Jewish agents'

Islamic terrorists will seek revenge on "the band of criminals in the White House, the Jewish agents, who are preparing for an attack on the Muslim world," according to an audio tape purportedly made by Osama bin Laden.

The Arab satellite network Al-Jazeera, which broadcast the tape Sunday, said it was not clear when the recording was made, adding that the voice "sounded like" bin Laden. U.S. officials have said they don't know whether bin Laden is still alive. The U.S. State Department had no reaction to the tape.

### Fatah blasts Nusseibeh

Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement criticized the top Palestinian official in Jerusalem for his readiness to compromise with Israel. The statement blasts Sari Nusseibeh for trying to organize a referendum on a document he drafted with the former head of Israel's Shin Bet domestic security service, Ami Ayalon, according to the Jerusalem Post.

The document says Palestinian refugees should be allowed to return to a future Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, not to homes they abandoned in Israel.

Sunday with the CBS news magazine "60 Minutes," Rev. Jerry Falwell, who is scheduled to speak at the coalition's conference and rally, stressed the Christian right's support for Israel.

"There is nothing that would bring the wrath of the Christian public down on this government like abandoning or opposing Israel in a critical matter," he said.

Yet in the same interview, Falwell called the Islamic Prophet Mohammed a "terrorist," saying he believes Mohammed was a "violent man, a man of war."

Jewish and Islamic groups lashed out at the conservative Baptist leader.

"The Rev. Jerry Falwell has once again demonstrated his intolerance by his outrageous charge about the Prophet Mohammed," Foxman said. "He owes an apology to the millions of good people who follow the Muslim faith. As a man of the cloth, he should be working toward bringing faith communities closer together, not driving wedges through them."

The Christian Coalition would not comment on Falwell's remarks except to say that Falwell does not represent their organization.

Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, the founder and president of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, said he disagrees with Falwell's comments, but believes the view that Islam is inherently evil and seeks to dominate the world is prevalent among both Christians and Jews.

Eckstein stressed that comments from one evangelical Christian, albeit from a leader, should not prompt Jews to dismiss the good will of evangelicals.

Using this episode to undermine the good will of the community by simply pointing at Falwell is "outrageous," Eckstein said.

While the Christian Coalition is not as powerful as it once was, it still wields some clout in U.S. politics.

In August, when U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld doubted the wisdom of giving the Palestinian Authority more territory and accused it of promoting terrorism, the president of the Christian Coalition of America, Roberta Combs, praised him.

"There's been too much talk of a Palestinian state," Combs said. "This only encourages the terrorists to keep murdering innocent civilians in hopes of forcing Israel to reach a settlement which would imperil its survival."

The group also has a petition denouncing Palestinian suicide bombings as genocide and crimes against humanity.

The petition gives support "clearly and unequivocally" to the Israeli government's military moves against terrorism, which have sparked international criticism.

Some Jewish community relations councils have been working with evangelical groups on the local level for years, primarily on interfaith efforts.

The Jewish Community Council of Greater Washington sent a notice to the Washington Jewish community about Friday's rally, but did not sponsor the event.

The Christian Coalition wants to hold similar rallies in major cities around the country.

Even those who have been working to foster better relations between Jews and evangelicals, like Eckstein, are not anticipating major long-term changes.

But Eckstein says Jewish attitudes toward evangelicals have changed more in the last few months — because of Christian support for Israel — than in the 25 years he has been working on interfaith efforts.

"The Jewish community is starting to get it," Eckstein told JTA from Holland, where he was traveling to build Christian support for Israel. "Our friends are these Christians."

The fellowship's Stand for Israel campaign, an effort to mobilize leadership and grass-roots support in churches, is organizing a nationwide "Day of Prayer and Solidarity" with Israel on Oct. 20.

Jewish groups are more willing to invite evangelicals to speak at Jewish events and Jews are starting to acknowledge the Christian support. But a wholesale change in attitudes remains unlikely, Eckstein said.

"The barriers of resistance and suspicion are falling down," he said, "but we're not there yet."

Some suspect that the Christian right supports Israel because it wants to convert Jews. Eckstein called the argument "hogwash." □



## Daily News Bulletin

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## JEWISH WORLD

### Report on religion slams Israel

Most non-Jewish Israeli citizens continue to be subject to religious discrimination, according to a State Department report.

Reiterating much of its criticism from last year, the department said in its annual International Religious Freedom report that Israeli government funding to religious institutions still tends to favor Jewish citizens. In Russia, the report said, anti-Semitic leaflets, graffiti and articles continue to appear.

### Law sought to enable poet's firing

The governor of New Jersey is seeking the power to fire the state's poet laureate, who read a poem insinuating that Israel knew in advance about the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Legislation giving the governor the authority to end Amiri Baraka's two-year term could be introduced as early as Monday, Gov. James McGreevey said Sunday.

### Hotel owner accused of hate

The Simon Wiesenthal Center is protesting an Irish hotel owner's refusal to have Jewish guests.

Brian O'Shea said last week he objected to Jewish guests for political reasons, Efraim Zuroff, the Wiesenthal Center's representative in Jerusalem, told JTA. In a letter to Ireland's ambassador to Israel, Zuroff said O'Shea's position is a "blatant case of anti-Semitism," and asked the ambassador to deal with the incident.

### Greece asked to condemn racism

The Anti-Defamation League called on the Greek government to speak out against anti-Semitic depictions of Israelis and Jews in the Greek media.

"Even in nations like Greece where the press is free, it is essential that the government take responsibility to set a tone of tolerance and speak out strongly against these anti-Semitic, hateful sentiments," the ADL said in a letter to Greek Foreign Minister George Papandreu.

### Astronaut's dad davens

The father of an American Jewish astronaut prayed for his son's well-being before he blasted off into space. Harry Wolf, father of David Wolf, met Monday with Rabbi Zvi Konikov to recite a prayer for his son's safe and successful flight. "A little pulling of the strings from above won't hurt," said Konikov, the Lubavitch emissary to the Space Coast area.

Atlantis, after months of delays, lifted off Monday to bring the crew to work on the international space station. Israeli Col. Ilan Ramon, whose launch has been delayed until January, has also met with Konikov to discuss how to keep the Sabbath in space.

## Boos and cheers in Russia as far-right party is registered

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA)—The Russian Justice Ministry's decision to register a far-right political party is generating both protests and support.

Some liberal politicians and Jewish organizations protested the decision that gave the National Great Power Party, known as NDPR, the right to participate in elections.

But some experts say the move actually will make it easier for authorities to take legal steps to close down the organization.

"To put it simply, in order to close a party you first have to register it," said Alexander Verkhovsky of the Panorama think tank.

The controversy comes as Russia grapples with issues of hate groups in the post-Communist era.

NDPR was registered without any fuss on Sept. 16, but the decision became public only 10 days later when the Moscow daily newspaper *Novye Izvestiya* ran a front-page article under the headline "Justice Ministry Registers Nazis."

Two of the party's leaders have a long history of anti-Semitic statements.

One of them, Boris Mironov, told participants at the party's founding congress near Moscow last February, "We have a common enemy — the Yid; a common goal — regime change." Mironov, a Cabinet minister under former President Boris Yeltsin, is one of the most outspoken nationalist leaders in Russia.

Another co-chairman, Alexander Sevastyanov, publishes a small ultranationalist newspaper, *National Gazette*, where he once wrote in an editorial that "Jews are the most dreadful" enemy of the Russian people.

NDPR claims to have 11,000 members and offices in some 70 out of Russia's 89 regions. A party executive told the *Moscow Times* recently that NDPR sought to become a "regular bourgeois party" with broad appeal.

NDPR became the first ultranationalist party registered after the adoption of the new Russian law on political parties, which restricts elections to registered parties.

Some Jewish organizations appealed to the Kremlin and the Prosecutor General's Office to have NDPR's registration revoked.

"If the NDPR's founding documents do not correspond with the legal norms of the Russian Federation, the registration of the NDPR should be annulled," said a statement signed by Alexander Brod, director of the Moscow Bureau on Human Rights, which serves as the Moscow office of the Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union.

The Moscow office of the Anti-Defamation League issued a similar statement.

Justice Ministry officials insist that no anti-Semitic or unconstitutional statements were found in the party charter or other paper work the NDPR submitted for registration.

"It would be unwise to play only on anti-Semitic sentiments to win public support. The number of anti-Semites in Russia is small, and the media would give us a vigorous thrashing," Viktor Korchagin, a publisher of anti-Semitic literature and a senior NDPR member, told the *Moscow Times*.

But the party's several Web sites abound with anti-Semitic, racist and xenophobic content. The Web site of NDPR's regional branch in the Siberian city of Tomsk quotes from Mironov: "We must unite all indigenous peoples" of Russia "in the struggle against Yids." Another document on the site suggests that "nonindigenous peoples" — the term used for Jews and other non-Slavic minorities — should be excluded from all branches of power.

A leading expert on Russian ultranationalist organizations said he sees no problem with NDPR's registration.

"I believe they can close the party in a court procedure after the very first check," said Verkhovsky of Panorama.

Verkhovsky said he is convinced NDPR will not be allowed to take part in parliamentary elections slated for late next year, and that the party will be closed down "one way or another" before the campaign starts. □

## Suicide of Jewish official in Poland accompanied by fraud accusations

By Ruth E. Gruber

WARSAW (JTA)—The recent suicide of a prominent Jewish community leader in Poland has drawn unwelcome publicity to alleged fraud in the restitution of prewar Jewish property.

Feliks Lipman, an Auschwitz survivor who was chairman of the Jewish community in the southern city of Katowice and a vice chairman of the Union of Polish Jewish Religious Communities, shot himself in the head at the end of August.

He was in his 80s.

"We knew he had many debts and there was talk of mismanagement, but we did not know details," said Jerzy Kichler, chairman of the union.

An article late last month in the Polish daily *Rzeczpospolita* implicated Lipman in real estate fraud involving restituted buildings. The report described alleged shady dealings related to the restitution of prewar Jewish communal and private property.

The Katowice Jewish community has put in restitution claims for about 100 communal properties.

Lipman apparently was using Jewish community money — including part of \$400,000 received in the process of communal restitution — for his private business, planning to pay it back when the business brought income, said a Jewish community source in Warsaw, who did not want to be quoted by name.

"Apparently he lost money and began nervous borrowing, signing IOUs, etc.," the source said. "Probably he was faced with threats that his other transactions would be brought to light."

According to media reports and Jewish sources, police are investigating several restitution cases in which Lipman was involved.

One of these, according to *Rzeczpospolita*, is that of a Chana Goldfeld from Israel, who apparently gave power of attorney to a lawyer from Katowice in 1997.

A house was returned to Goldfeld and then sold, but it turns out that Goldfeld died before she allegedly signed the power of attorney.

In a suicide note, Lipman reportedly said certain failed deals forced him to take his life.

One case he reportedly mentioned was that of a Solomon Szelewik from Israel, who in July took back from Lipman the right to manage the building restituted to him.

"The fact is that neither his colleagues nor his family knew what was happening," the Warsaw source said of Lipman. "He ruled the kehillah," or Jewish community, "single-handedly, and, because of the autonomy of the kehillah, we in Warsaw had no way to intervene," he said.

Though still unproven, the allegations have shocked, saddened and disturbed local Jewish leaders — and are sure to cast a long shadow.

"We struggle to maintain the highest level of integrity, as our responsibility to the past requires of us," Michael Schudrich, the American-born rabbi of Warsaw and Lodz, told JTA. "What is more important than the fact that scandals occur is how we react to them. There must be full disclosure and no tolerance or accepting of such acts or people, even though it is painful and embarrassing. We owe it to those who came before us to clean house."

Restitution of prewar communal property is regulated by a 1997 law, but no specific legislation regulates private property restitution.

"Private property is a contentious issue, not just for Jews but for all Poles," Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski recently told a group of visiting foreign reporters. "Part of the problem is the fact that borders shifted so much after the war."

For example, in addition to Jewish private property that was seized or reoccupied, millions of ethnic Germans abandoned private property when they were forced to leave Silesia after that region became part of Poland in the postwar years.

Despite the lack of cohesive legislation, many individuals have begun to obtain their former property or their ancestors' property through existing legal mechanisms.

The allegations about Lipman came in the wake of earlier accusations involving fraud connected with these private restitution requests. According to media reports and Jewish sources, a "considerable" number of claims have turned out to be fraudulent.

"There are serious indications that in Katowice crooks have benefited from the lack of regulations concerning" the property, *Rzeczpospolita* said. "This is a reminder of the need of a comprehensive legal solution."

News articles have detailed how several buildings in Krakow, in particular, were restituted and later sold on the basis of falsified wills or through proxies.

Krakow prosecutors say organized networks of swindlers are carrying out such scams.

The prosecutors have turned to the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw to help trace the legal heirs of properties.

"Krakow prosecutors have been investigating the scandal for more than a year," said a source at the institute.

"We are cooperating in helping find out if the claimants are real."

The Lipman case is believed to be the first time that a Jewish community, rather than individual thieves or a gang of swindlers, has been implicated in restitution fraud. There is concern that the revelations will impact the progress of communal property restitution.

"I'm afraid it will have an effect," said Eve Anderson, CEO of the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland, which was set up to administer restituted communal property. "I'm afraid it will affect the psyche of Polish officials."

The 1997 restitution law named Poland's Jewish communities as the legal entities entitled to submit restitution claims for communal property. It set a May 11, 2002, deadline for filing such claims.

Though there do not appear to have been other accusations of fraud, some Jewish community sources have raised questions about a lack of transparency in how individual Jewish communities are handling claims. □

## Jewish group sues AmeriCorps

NEW YORK (JTA) — The American Jewish Congress is suing the AmeriCorps program, claiming it sponsors the teaching of religion in sectarian schools.

The lawsuit claims that AmeriCorps participants have taught religion in schools since 1999. AmeriCorps officials claim religion is taught only during time not used for the program. □