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85th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

14 Israelis killed in bus attack

At least 14 Israelis were killed and more than 45 injured when a bus exploded Monday in northern Israel.

The explosion near the city of Hadera was caused by a suicide car bomber who was driving alongside the bus. [Page 3]

Settlers return to enclave

Israeli settlers returned Monday to an illegal West Bank outpost to rebuild structures taken down the previous day by the army.

The army, however, blocked roads leading to Gilad Farm to prevent the settlers from bringing equipment to the site.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon sought to smooth coalition tensions that flared over the issue of illegal settlement outposts.

Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer reportedly threatened to quit the coalition over what he said was the government's failure to back his efforts to dismantle dozens of outposts.

The Labor Party, in turn, was demanding the resignation of National Religious Party Cabinet minister Efraim Eitam, who lashed out at Ben-Eliezer over the weekend. [Page 1]

Israel extends benefits

Immigrants to Israel from prosperous countries, including the United States, will now get the same benefits as emigres from poorer nations.

The decision is aimed at increasing the number of those making aliyah.

Israel Radio reported Monday that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon made the decision the night before at a meeting with the deputy minister of absorption, Yuli Edelstein.

U.S. envoy meets with Saudi king

A U.S. envoy discussed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with Saudi Arabia's King Fahd.

According to the official Saudi Press Agency, during Monday's meeting in Riyadh with the assistant U.S. secretary of state, William Burns, "The king renewed his call upon the United States to stand on the right side to help the Palestinian people restore their stripped rights and establish their independent state."

NEWS ANALYSIS

Hilltop struggle has implications for the fate of Israeli settlements

By Leslie Susser

JERUSALEM (JTA) — On the face of it, the struggle between Israeli troops and a group of unruly young settlers for control of a windswept West Bank hilltop does not seem all that important.

The illegal outpost known as Gilad Farm is minuscule; evacuating it was not part of any breakthrough deal with the Palestinians; and leaving it up or taking it down doesn't make any substantial difference to the map of Jewish settlement in the West Bank.

But the battle for the Gilad Farm goes to the heart of Israel's most divisive political dilemma: Should the Jewish state evacuate settlements for peace — and, even if it decides to, will it be able to do so?

Israelis long have feared that a political decision to dismantle settlements could result in a civil war, pitting left against right and Israeli settlers against Israeli soldiers carrying out government orders.

Yet an unwillingness to evacuate some settlements would appear to complicate the chances for a comprehensive peace deal with the Palestinians.

The importance of the battle for the Gilad Farm lies largely in its being a dress rehearsal for a much bigger confrontation if Israel and the Palestinians finally sign a peace agreement that includes Israeli evacuation from most of the West Bank.

In addition, failing to impose the rule of law on unruly settlers who feel they answer to a higher morality has obvious ramifications for the stability of the state.

The standoff also is part of a domestic political struggle that could have implications for Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's national unity government.

Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer is widely seen as using the evacuation issue to shore up his fading chances in next month's Labor Party leadership race. He has gone so far as to threaten to resign if he feels he doesn't have Sharon's backing for evacuating the illegal outposts.

The start of the evacuation of Gilad Farm did not augur anything like the violence that was to follow. Moshe Zar, the father of Gilad Zar — who was killed by Palestinians at the site and for whom the farm is named — urged dozens of young settlers who had gathered to oppose the army to disperse quietly and enable a peaceful evacuation.

But the young settlers paid no heed.

When soldiers and policemen tried to move them they lashed out wildly, showing utter contempt for the organs of state sent in to uphold the rule of law — including soldiers whose efforts to protect West Bank settlers from Palestinians frequently places the soldiers in life-threatening situations.

Leaders of the settlers' Yesha Council say they no longer can control an unruly element among the "hilltop youth" that listens to no one. The hilltop dissidents, they said, were acting on their own and certainly not doing the settler movement's bidding.

But left-wing politicians charge that settler leaders' calls for the protesters to desist were disingenuous.

The settler leaders, they noted, spoke out against striking soldiers or police, but said nothing about evacuating the site peacefully. The National Religious Party, the main settler political party, also was accused of condemning the violence with an ambivalence that might have encouraged the settlers. In fact, almost immediately after the Yesha Council denounced the violence, some settler leaders turned up to demonstrate against

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel delays Hebron move

Israel postponed plans to reduce forces in Hebron for at least several days.

Military sources said Monday the delay would give the army time to coordinate the move with Palestinian officials.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon agreed on Sunday to redeploy Israeli forces in Palestinian-controlled parts of the West Bank city.

Olive grove clashes erupt

Israeli settlers and Palestinian olive-pickers clashed Monday near the West Bank city of Nablus. Israel Radio reported that an Israeli field and three Palestinian cars were torched.

There was no immediate word on any injuries suffered in the clash.

Israeli security officials said the confrontation was sparked when Palestinians, who had heard a rumor in nearby mosques that settlers had killed a Palestinian, burned the settlers' field, according to Israel Radio reports.

Monday's clash was the latest in recent disputes between Israeli settlers and Palestinians harvesting olives.

Meanwhile, in an operation near Jenin, the army said it destroyed the house of a Palestinian militant accused of organizing a suicide bombing in Tel Aviv in January.

Melchior to be honored

Israel's deputy foreign minister is to be honored in Britain this week for efforts to advance religious tolerance and dialogue.

Michael Melchior will share the International Prize for Tolerance and Peace with Palestinian Authority official Sheik Talal Sidr and Latin Patriarch Michel Sabah for their efforts to advance interreligious dialogue.



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the evacuation. The settlers and NRP politicians understood that what happens at the Gilad Farm could create a precedent for future attempts to evacuate settlements.

Some analysts believe the violence suited them fine, as they want to show the Israeli public and decision-makers just how difficult it will be to evacuate the settlements.

"If that's what we get when we evacuate one tiny outpost, just think what will happen if we try to move the inhabitants of Kiryat Arba, Elon Moreh, Tamar, Yitzhar, Susiah and all the other isolated settlements into the big settlement blocks," political analyst Shalom Yerushalmi wrote in the Ma'ariv newspaper.

The left also is concerned by what it sees as a return to the confrontational atmosphere that preceded the 1995 assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, with militant young settlers flouting the law and rabbis authorizing resistance to the state in the name of a higher morality.

Moreover, according to some reports, the Shin Bet is concerned about the growing number of threats on Ben-Eliezer's life.

"History does not repeat itself on a one-to-one basis, but the processes are similar. God help us if this time it also ends with three bullets in the back," Alex Fishman wrote in an editorial in the Yediot Achronot newspaper.

As for the danger to the unity government, few in the Israeli political establishment take Ben-Eliezer's threat to quit the government seriously.

On the contrary, pundits are saying he engineered the crisis with the settlers and the NRP to impress Labor Party primary voters and flaunt his readiness to quit over ideology.

The truth, the pundits say, is that Ben-Eliezer and Sharon have been working in cahoots, with Sharon helping Ben-Eliezer's candidacy by allowing him to move against illegal outposts and Ben-Eliezer keeping his party in the coalition for as long as possible.

Sharon prefers Ben-Eliezer to the other Labor candidates precisely because he knows that if either Haifa Mayor Amram Mitzna or legislator Haim Ramon wins the party leadership, Labor will leave the government quickly.

Ben-Eliezer is said to have planned the evacuations meticulously a few weeks ago and deliberately ordered an evacuation on Saturday night — with soldiers moving into position during the Sabbath — knowing that the Sabbath desecration would lead to outcries from the NRP.

NRP leader Efraim Eitam's vicious personal attack on Ben-Eliezer — he called him a "stupid, cowardly liar" who was unfit to be defense minister — was, according to the pundits, music to Ben-Eliezer's ears.

The more the right attacks him, the thinking goes, the more votes Ben-Eliezer is likely to pick up on Labor's left, which otherwise tends to support Mitzna or Ramon. Time will tell who has played the best hand: Sharon, Ben-Eliezer or the settlers. □

(Leslie Susser is the diplomatic correspondent for the Jerusalem Report.)

All that glitters is — glass

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli officials are planning to pave a road with crushed glass and asphalt as part of an effort to find a use for discarded bottles.

Some 30,000 tons of crushed glass are to be used in the 200-yard section of road in the Haifa area, the Israeli daily Ma'ariv reported.

The paper said that according to research done at the Technion in Haifa, the use of crushed glass in road-building could rid Israel of the all its glass refuse, an estimated 150,000 tons annually. □

Home ec. of a different kind

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's Education Ministry has asked teachers to give sensitivity lessons to help students whose families have been hit hard by the economic downturn. The lesson plan includes anecdotal stories about young people whose lives have been affected by unemployment, the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot reported.

The paper said part of the campaign would include putting motivational posters up in schools, with sayings such as "It's only temporary" and "Money doesn't make the person." □

JEWISH WORLD

Bin Laden planned to hit Israel

Osama bin Laden planned a series of attacks against Israeli targets throughout Asia, according to a top aide.

Omar Farouk spoke of the plan, which was later abandoned because it would not have a large enough impact, when he was interrogated by CIA agents after his arrest in Indonesia in June, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

He told investigators that bin Laden and other Al-Qaida terrorists had a variety of plans to kill Westerners, Indonesians and Israelis, including a plan to shoot Americans and Israelis staying in hotels in Indonesia.

JNF mission raises funds

A Jewish National Fund mission to Israel raised \$280,000 for projects in the Jewish state.

The mission brought 24 donors from the United States on a solidarity trip to Israel, where participants got a chance to see some of the projects funded by JNF.

German politician resigns

A German politician accused of inciting anti-Semitism resigned as leader of his party in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia.

Jurgen Mollemann quit the post Sunday amid allegations that he financed an anti-Israel and anti-Semitic campaign with illegal donations.

In September, facing allegations that his anti-Israel, pro-Palestinian positions were responsible for his party's poor electoral showing, Mollemann resigned as national vice president of the Free Democratic Party.

AJCommittee blasts clergyman

The American Jewish Committee criticized comments by a Miami clergyman who described the Bush family as neo-Nazis.

The Rev. Victor Curry, former president of the Miami chapter of the NAACP, told The Washington Post last week that President Bush and his family are "on a neo-Nazi, right-wing mission against the American people."

The AJCommittee said charges of neo-Nazi conduct "should not be bandied about lightly."

Czechs honor deportees

Czech Jewish leaders attended a ceremony Sunday to remember more than 1,200 Jews transported from the town of Tabor to Nazi concentration camps.

Only 80 Jews returned at the end of the war. A special memorial listing the names of the victims was unveiled at Sunday's ceremony.

Israeli officials mull response after bus bombing kills at least 14

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli officials are blaming the Palestinian Authority for a suicide bus bombing in northern Israel, but political sources say the government is unlikely to respond this time by isolating Yasser Arafat.

At least 14 people were killed and more than 45 injured Monday when a bus traveling from Kiryat Shmona to Tel Aviv exploded in northern Israel. The explosion occurred when a jeep packed with explosives drove up behind the bus near Hadera and blew up.

While Israeli officials had not announced a response, analysts said they seemed unlikely to renew the sort of siege imposed on Arafat's Ramallah headquarters following a Sept. 19 suicide bombing in central Tel Aviv that killed six people and wounded more than 50.

That siege revived popular support for the Palestinian Authority president and badly strained relations with the United States, which was trying to build international support for a possible attack on Iraq.

Following heavy U.S. pressure and criticism, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon called off the siege. Commentators then predicted that Arafat could count on a grace period from strong Israeli retaliation for terror attacks, at least until after the Iraqi crisis plays out.

Monday's attack came as Israel, urged on by U.S. officials, was making efforts to ease hardships on the Palestinian population and seeking ways to advance the diplomatic process.

In the days before the attack, Israel had been lifting curfews imposed over the past few months on Palestinian population centers in the West Bank to prevent terrorists from infiltrating Israel.

Israeli police said the explosives-packed jeep apparently came from the Jenin area, three days after Israeli troops pulled out of the city and lifted its curfew.

As Israeli officials determine their response to Monday's terror attack, they may well start by reimposing the curfews.

Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer recently said Israel's dilemma is that as soon as it eases restrictions on the Palestinian populace, terrorists exploit the situation to carry out attacks.

The military wing of Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for Monday's attack, saying it was revenge for the killing of eight Palestinians during clashes in the Gaza Strip last week.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres blamed the Palestinian Authority for the attack, saying it is doing nothing to fight terrorism.

"We know it may be impossible to prevent all acts of terror, but the least we expect is that the Palestinians really show an effort to stop it even if they did not organize it," Peres told Reuters television from Luxembourg, where he met with E.U. foreign ministers on Monday.

Public Security Minister Uzi Landau, who advocates hitting hard at the terrorist infrastructure, said the attack should surprise no one. He called on Israel to step up its pressure on all Palestinian terrorist centers.

"We have to look for all the terrorist infrastructures in all the Palestinian cities," Landau was quoted as saying by Army Radio.

President Bush condemned the bombing, calling it another reminder of the importance of achieving peace and halting terrorism.

The attack came as the assistant U.S. secretary of state, William Burns, was holding talks in the region on ways to revive the diplomatic process.

Israeli officials charged that the attack was aimed at undermining the mission by Burns, who was due to arrive in Israel on Wednesday.

According to reports, the No. 841 Egged bus had stopped to pick up passengers at Karkur junction when the jeep pulled alongside and blew up.

The massive fire that engulfed the bus hampered rescue efforts. Witnesses spoke of watching helplessly as people inside were burned alive. □

Tolerance bad, monitoring good, say new reports on hate in Russia

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — There's less tolerance of minorities in Russian society and better monitoring of hate crimes, according to two recently released reports.

Hate crimes increased significantly in most Russian regions in 2001, a report by a Jewish watchdog group says. The 250-page report, *Antisemitism, Xenophobia and Religious Persecution in Russia's Regions in 2001*, also states that the country's criminal justice system is unable to respond effectively.

The Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union, or UCSJ, prepared the report, released last week in Washington.

The Russian version is slated to be released in Moscow next month.

The annual report documented hundreds of hate crimes, incidents of illegal hate speech, acts of xenophobia, anti-Semitism and religious persecution in the majority of Russia's 89 regions.

The report is "twice as big as our previous one, which doesn't only reflect a rise in xenophobia and anti-Semitism but a better monitoring network," said Micah Naftalin, UCSJ's national director.

In the last two years, the UCSJ has built an extensive monitoring ring in Russia's major regions providing regular updates on anti-Semitic manifestations in provinces often overlooked by other groups.

Another new report on Russian anti-Semitism, released recently by the Anti-Defamation League, also reported a rise in anti-Semitic incidents.

According to the ADL's semiannual report on Russia, the first eight months of 2002 saw a slight increase in the number of incidents over the same period in 2001.

In contrast to previous years, ADL said, this year's anti-Semitism in Russia was more violent, in some cases mimicking the methods used by terrorist organizations.

Last summer, a spate of booby-trapped anti-Semitic signs throughout Russia injured at least three people.

Recent opinion polls show that over the last several years Russian society generally has become less tolerant of ethnic minorities.

The primary targets of hate and violence are dark-skinned people from the Caucasus Mountains, a fact attributable to their visible presence in Russian cities and Moscow's ongoing war in Chechnya.

Jews and foreign students from developing countries constitute other "risk groups."

"Our greatest concern, however, is not so much the growing number of violent neo-Nazis but the continuing indifference of many municipal police forces to attacks on ethnic and religious minority groups, including Jews," Nickolai Butkevich, editor of the UCSJ report, told JTA.

Because many incidents go unreported or are classified as "hooliganism" in an effort by local authorities to downplay hate crimes, Jewish organizations are reluctant to publish the tally of anti-Semitic manifestations in Russia.

"The end result is that the statistics are artificially lowered and look small compared to hate crimes statistics in the U.S. or Europe, where the authorities are much more honest about these problems,

giving the impression that the situation in Russia is much better than it actually is," Butkevich said.

The UCSJ generally takes a more militant stance on the issue of anti-Semitism and xenophobia in Russia. Some of the most important trends highlighted in this report are:

- The most problematic regions are the southern parts of Russia such as Krasnodar, Stavropol, Rostov and Volgograd. Resentment in these areas against recent newcomers from the Caucasus and Central Asia leads to significantly higher support for paramilitary and neo-Nazi groups, who sometimes redirect their hatred away from Muslim immigrants toward Jews and other minorities.

- Islamic fundamentalism has engulfed much of Chechnya and the neighboring republic of Dagestan, and there is a danger that it will spread to other traditionally Muslim regions, putting their Jewish populations in danger. The attempted bombing of the Nalchik synagogue in August is the most recent example of the trend.

- Regional authorities are registering ultranationalist groups, putting into serious question the attitude of local authorities toward Jews and other minorities.

The report documented multiple cases of police indifference toward skinhead attacks against dark-skinned foreign students in some cities.

But it said police in Moscow and some other cities in central Russia have started to arrest neo-Nazi skinheads and put them on trial.

Jewish leaders in Russia all agree that state-sponsored anti-Semitism now belongs to the past. Russian President Vladimir Putin has earned praise from the Jewish community for his repeated statements against xenophobia and nationalist violence.

But UCSJ and some other human rights groups in Russia criticize the government for paying lip service to the struggle against racism in order to deflect Western criticism, without having any intention of backing up words with action.

Two major umbrella organizations of Russian Jews, the Federation of Jewish Communities and the Russian Jewish Congress, issued statements on anti-Semitism earlier this week.

Both groups gave credit to Putin for speaking out on issues of xenophobia, but demanded that the government do more against anti-Semitism.

Borukh Gorin, a spokesman for the federation, said his group is now appealing more often to the authorities on issues of anti-Semitism.

"We are doing this not because there is more anti-Semitism but because we see the authorities have begun to fight it," he said.

"After every major anti-Semitic act there is some follow-up from the authorities," Gorin said. "That's something that never happened during" the rule of former President Boris "Yeltsin, when all our appeals went unanswered." □

Israeli, FSU businesswomen meet

MOSCOW (JTA) — Jewish businesswomen from Israel and the former Soviet Union met in Moscow over the weekend.

Some 35 Israeli women, 70 businesswomen from the former Soviet Union, and representatives of the region's emigre community in Germany are forming a social and professional network.

The meeting was sponsored by the Jewish Agency for Israel's "People to People" program, which is building an international forum of Jewish businesswomen. □