



Daily News Bulletin

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86th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel targets Hamas in Gaza

Israeli troops killed a Hamas leader Monday in the Gaza Strip.

Riad Abu Zeid was shot by Israeli troops in an operation that targeted Hamas operations in Gaza after Hamas claimed responsibility for a deadly attack Saturday on an Israeli tank crew. He died later in an Israeli hospital.

Abu Zeid was believed to have taken over from Mohammad Deif, who was seriously wounded in an Israeli military missile raid in the Gaza Strip several months ago.

Earlier Monday, Israeli tanks entered Gaza City and demolished the house of a Hamas terrorist believed to have been involved in planning Saturday's bomb attack on an army tank in which four soldiers were killed. Following Saturday's incident, Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz vowed that Israel would strike a heavy blow to the Hamas infrastructure in Gaza. In another development, six Hamas members were killed Sunday in an explosion in Gaza City.

Hamas blamed Israel, but Israeli sources said the blast may well have been a "work accident" caused when a bomb the Hamas members were making went off prematurely.

Israel OKs Ethiopian immigration

Israel's Cabinet approved a plan to immediately bring some 17,000 Falash Mura from Ethiopia.

The plan OK'd Sunday was proposed by Interior Minister Eli Yishai following a call by the spiritual leader of the fervently Orthodox Shas Party to "save the souls" of the Falash Mura, whose ancestors converted from Judaism to Christianity in the 19th century. Most of the Falash Mura say they have returned to Judaism.

The plan reverses existing policy, which calls for Ethiopian immigrants to be brought to Israel gradually based on the Law of Return and family reunification efforts.

Knesset members sworn in

Israel's 16th Knesset was sworn in Monday. Legislators are slated to hold a secret ballot Wednesday to choose a new speaker.

The Knesset is scheduled to conclude in November 2007, but could it end sooner if early elections are called before then.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

As world prepares for Iraq war, American Jews prepare to help Israel

By Rachel Pomerance

NEW YORK (JTA) — Phillip Miller calls it his "hot war" list.

And in one week, he has enlisted seven American Jews to aid Israel at a time of need.

The 75-year old New Jerseyan is recruiting volunteers to jet to Israel if an American war with Iraq brings an attack on the Jewish state.

"If a hot war breaks out and Iraq starts messing with Israel in any way, shape or form, then I and the others will probably be on the first plane we can get to Israel," Miller said.

"The Israelis will probably need as much help as they can get, and we'll do our part to help them."

As an American war on Iraq appears imminent, some U.S. Jews anticipate a repeat performance of America's 1991 Gulf War with Iraq, when Saddam Hussein lobbed Scud missiles into the thick of Tel Aviv.

At the time, Israel abided by America's request not to strike back.

But Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has stated Israel might not take another round of attacks without retaliating.

In any case, many American Jews and American Jewish organizations are responding to the threat of a U.S. war on Iraq by trying to fortify Israel. The efforts include shoring up Israel's blood supply, readying volunteer doctors and assembling gas masks.

In the past few weeks, American Red Magen David for Israel, the U.S. organization supporting Magen David Adom, Israel's equivalent of the Red Cross, has stepped up its activities.

Among its efforts, it has funded additional security at Israel's blood banks, fearing they could be targeted; trained Israeli paramedics and bought them armored vests; and purchased packages for collecting blood and freezers for plasma storage along with 12 new machines to extract and separate blood parts to function for more than one patient and purpose — like creating antibodies.

The group encourages solidarity missions in Israel to donate blood to Magen David Adom, in some cases shuttling bloodmobiles to hotels.

It has also brokered a deal with the American Red Cross to enable Americans to designate donated blood for Israel.

The Red Cross will credit the amount donated for future use by Magen David Adom.

And this week, the latter group was mailing 400,000 letters to its contributors, asking for funds in case of war: "As the imminent threat of war with Iraq looms just over the horizon," the letter begins, "the people of Israel will be caught in the middle of the battle."

At the American Physicians Fellowship for Medicine in Israel, each time the government or media broadcasts a message of war, "our phones don't stop ringing," said Barbara Samulevich, the group's executive director.

The group, which runs a program for American doctors to cover for Israeli civilian doctors who are called for military duty, has a registry of 800 physicians.

Several of them, Samulevich said, are constantly calling the group to ensure their documents have been received and approved. While Israel's Ministry of Health has not

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel unmoved by Arafat's words

Israeli officials expressed doubt over Yasser Arafat's announcement that he would appoint a prime minister to oversee day-to-day operations of the Palestinian Authority.

Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz told the Cabinet on Sunday that Arafat's declaration last Friday was apparently fueled by a desire to improve world opinion of him.

Congress cuts Israel aid

U.S. foreign aid to Israel was cut last week during the annual congressional appropriations process. Due to a budget crunch, spending, including aid to Israel, was cut across the board at a rate of 0.65 percent.

The spending package, awaiting the president's signature, includes language that says no U.S. funds can be used to support a Palestinian state unless the State Department finds that the Palestinians have instituted reforms, including a change in leadership and the creation of a Constitution.

It also has provisions that require the United States to review the aid going to Palestinian-controlled areas and to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency.

Jerusalem to get new mayor

Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert announced his resignation Sunday, paving the way for the capital's first fervently Orthodox mayor. Olmert submitted his resignation before he was sworn in to the Knesset on Monday, marking the Likud Party member's return to national politics.

By law, legislators are barred from serving in another public office. Olmert reportedly was promised a senior portfolio by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. After Olmert resigned, Deputy Mayor Uri Lupoliansky of the fervently Orthodox Agudat Yisrael Party will serve as acting mayor until a special election is held.

yet called for any doctors, the group is organizing its paperwork to be prepared if its volunteers are needed.

In the last four months, it has directed more than 100 American doctors to Israel for weeklong training sessions with the Ministry of Health.

Phone calls have increased from five per day over the course of the intifada to 10 to 15 per day in the last few months, Samulevich said.

But she added that the group is "fueling that fire" by publicizing its Emergency Medical Volunteers program to other Jewish agencies and with articles in the Jewish Medical Journal.

During the last few months, the U.S.-based Volunteers for Israel has also seen an increased demand by Americans eager to assist Israel in crisis.

On top of its regular two- or three-week stints for volunteers to aid army bases or hospitals, the group, known as Sar-El in Israel, has added a special one-week program to assemble gas masks.

"Just as during the Gulf War, the number of volunteers who went through us increased, so now we are getting a lot of volunteers who are anxious to go to Israel to help out because they know they're needed now," said Jeanne Schacter, the national president of Volunteers for Israel.

Not everyone, of course, feels comfortable going to Israel if war with Iraq occurs.

The threat of war "raises a level of concern, and it's another consideration," said Bernard Shapiro, 53, a disability attorney in Stamford, Conn.

Shapiro has hoped to return to volunteer for Israel since his first participation in Volunteers for Israel in June 2002.

He knows the likelihood of being hit by a Scud missile is slim.

Still, Shapiro says he worries about his responsibility to his two children and wonders if "perhaps there is some more useful thing I can do on this side of the ocean."

But for David Rendsburg, 20, volunteering in Israel with 24 other students from the University of Pennsylvania on his winter break was laden with meaning.

The group labored in a warehouse with stacks of thousands of gas masks to be assembled.

Participants prepared an estimated more than a thousand a day, "so you can see the progress you're making," said Rendsburg, who helped coordinate the trip.

"We felt that our presence there was needed in order to prepare the country."

Aviva Weinberg, 19, who also helped organize the trip, felt inspired by the "incredible fortitude and optimism" of the Israelis she met.

They're "fighting for their country and we're here studying in university. It's a rather easy ivory tower existence," said Weinberg, who said the trip motivated her to further her activism on campus and "help people find their own form of Zionism for themselves."

For Miller, the prospect of war leads him to make an equation.

"I feel that if a friend of mine got into trouble, I would certainly try to help him, and Israel is our friend and I'm trying to help," he said, choked-up with emotion.

Furthermore, Miller said, the country is a cornerstone of Jewish identity. "If we don't have an Israel," he asked, "what sense does it make?" □

Stanford gets Judaica collection

NEW YORK (JTA)—California-based Stanford University announced it acquired a library of Hebrew books that was assembled over several centuries by the Jewish community in Copenhagen.

The collection was concealed by Danes during the Nazi occupation and returned to the Jewish community after World War II.

The library, known as the Samson/Copenhagen Judaica Collection, was later acquired by Herman Samson, a Copenhagen native who now lives in Tel Aviv.

The collection includes close to 2,000 works printed in more than 115 locations from 1517 to 1939.

They cover topics including biblical and talmudic texts and commentaries, Jewish law and ritual, Jewish liturgy, and publications relating to the Jewish communities of Denmark and other Northern European countries. □



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JEWISH WORLD

Swiss can't find rabbi's killers

Swiss officials said they have given up on finding those responsible for the 2001 shooting death of an Israeli rabbi.

Prosecutors said last Friday that they have run out of leads in the search for the killer of 71-year-old Abraham Greenbaum.

A father of 12 and the dean of a yeshiva in Bnei Brak, Greenbaum was visiting Zurich on a fund-raising mission when he was gunned down on the streets.

Weekend rallies against war

Some 1,500 Israelis attended a Tel Aviv rally Saturday against a war in Iraq. The demonstration was part of worldwide anti-war demonstrations held over the weekend.

In Bern, some participants in an anti-war march burned Israeli and U.S. flags and called for the destruction of the State of Israel.

In Cape Town, a mainly Muslim crowd of thousands marched on the U.S. Consulate.

Marchers carried posters blasting both the United States and Israel.

Iraqi refuses Israeli's question

Iraq's deputy prime minister refused to answer a question by an Israeli journalist at a news conference following his audience with Pope John Paul II last Friday.

Menachem Gantz, Rome correspondent for Ma'ariv, asked Tariq Aziz whether Baghdad might attack Israel should the U.S. go to war against Iraq.

Aziz's refusal to answer prompted boos and whistles from several of the 100 or so journalists in the room. About 20 reporters, including journalists from Israel and Germany, walked out.

On Sunday, the mayor of Rome refused to meet with Aziz after Aziz refused to answer the question from Gantz.

"I cannot accept that a public figure like yourself, the representative of another country, can set a veto and discriminate against someone, denying them the right to express themselves, no matter what position they may represent," Mayor Walter Veltroni said in a letter to Aziz.

Israeli film wins in Berlin

An Israeli film won the Audience Favorite award at the Berlin Film Festival.

Nir Bergman's "Broken Wings" was also honored by the international association of cinema owners.

The movie tells the story of a family coping with the accidental death of its patriarch. Since premiering at the Jerusalem Film Festival last year, the film has garnered several awards, including prizes for Best First Film at the Jerusalem and Tokyo festivals.

Scholars don't expect to find much as Vatican opens its prewar archives

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — The Vatican has paved the way for scholars to examine thousands of documents relating to the Holy See's relations with prewar Nazi Germany.

But archivists and scholars acknowledge there is little chance that researchers will turn up any shocking new evidence to bolster accusations that Pope Pius XII did too little to stop the Holocaust.

"They will find copies, contextual elements and some new details, but they probably won't find any sensational revelations," the Rev. Sergio Pagano, the prefect of the Vatican Secret Archives, told the *Corriere della Sera* newspaper.

He said the 650 files of diplomatic documents unsealed Saturday consist mostly of correspondence, not internal Vatican documents, and that scholars already have had access to copies of many of them in German and other archives.

The newly public documents all date from the era of Pope Pius XI, who reigned from 1922 until his death in February 1939.

During this period Eugenio Pacelli, who became Pope Pius XII on March 2, 1939, served as Vatican ambassador in Berlin and as Vatican secretary of state.

In these positions, he both wrote and received regular reports on the situation in Germany.

The documents include thousands of pages of material from the diplomatic collections of the Papal Nunciatura in Munich and Berlin and the Vatican State Secretariat.

The Pius XI-era documents were originally slated to be released in 2009, in line with Vatican policy to make available the material from each pope's reign all at once, about 70 years after the death of the pope in question.

But the Vatican announced a year ago that it would speed up the release of records relating to its relations with Nazi Germany as a response to the bitter debate over the Vatican role in the Holocaust — and particular over the role of Pius XII, whom critics have long accused of turning a blind eye to the Holocaust and allowing Jews to die because of his silence.

The recent movie "Amen," which is based on a 1963 play, "The Deputy," reinforces these accusations and has placed the church's behavior during the war in the public spotlight.

Scholars and Jewish groups in particular have long called for the secret archives to be opened to clarify the matter, particularly as a process is under way to beatify Pius XII, who reigned until his death in 1958.

Peter Gumbel, the Jesuit priest promoting the beatification process — the last step before sainthood — told the *National Catholic Reporter* that staff at the archives had assured him there was no "smoking gun" in the new material.

He said, however, that one item known to be in the collection was a letter to Pius XI concerning the Nazi threat to European Jews written in 1933 by the Edith Stein — a Jewish convert to Catholicism who became a nun, was killed at Auschwitz and was proclaimed a saint by Pope John Paul II.

Another set of documents released Saturday include a set of prewar dossiers opened by the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which in that period compiled numerous confidential studies on Nazism, fascism and communism.

Seymour Reich, the immediate past chairman of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations, called the Vatican's decision to accelerate the opening of the archives "a major step forward" in strengthening Vatican-Jewish relations.

In 1999, Reich had helped set up a Catholic-Jewish team of scholars to study previously published wartime Vatican archives.

The team bitterly collapsed in 2001 after it was unable to gain access to all the archives.

"Access to the Vatican's unpublished secret files have been an issue of controversy for a number of years," he said.

"Historians, church researchers and Jewish groups have long pressed the Vatican to open the archives, but until now have been unsuccessful." □

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD**Presentation at Rio's Carnival creates stir among Jewish circles***By Marcus Moraes*

RIO DE JANEIRO (JTA) — A Brazilian Jewish group has touched off a controversy with its decision to sponsor a presentation at this year's Carnival celebrations.

Last December, the Jewish Culture Center in Sao Paulo launched a partnership with the Mangueira samba school with an eye toward having a Ten Commandments presentation at the Rio de Janeiro Carnival, which is being held on March 2 and 3 this year.

Reports that the center was sponsoring Mangueira to the tune of \$1 million fueled the controversy.

Some Jewish activists blasted the center for being willing to spend so much, charging that the money could be better spent helping financially strapped Brazilian Jewish institutions.

But the Jewish center defended its decision.

"The samba parade in Rio is the largest popular culture expression in the world. This is an opportunity for the Jewish community to promote its values," David Feffer, president of the center's board, said in an open letter to the Jewish community.

The Rio Carnival, an annual two-day event that draws some 200,000 spectators, is broadcast to more than 200 countries worldwide.

In 2002, Mangueira was the winning school in Rio's Carnival.

According to Flavio Bitelman, the director of the Jewish Culture Center, the widely reported \$1-million sponsorship figure is untrue.

"It's much less. People like to publish any kind of information just to satisfy their obligation to write anything," he told JTA.

Moreover, Bitelman said, the center is not spending a single penny of its own, adding that the money came from "friends" of the center.

"The Jewish Culture Center decided to support this project because it matches the institution's mission to deliver Jewish culture to the society of this country, which has received us Jews so warmly," he said. "I am certain that everyone in the Jewish community will be very proud when they see Mangueira's parade boasting the story of the Jewish slaves in Egypt being freed by Moses."

Mangueira will show how the Ten Commandments "have become not only the fundamentals of the Jewish religion and ethics, but also of the Christians and Muslims. The idea also to show how these peoples and religions live in peace, harmony and happiness in Brazil," Bitelman added.

Criticism of the center comes at a time when several Jewish organizations in Brazil have been facing serious financial difficulties — particularly among Sao Paulo's 60,000 Jews and Rio's 40,000-member community. Together, the two communities represent the vast majority of Brazil's estimated 120,000 Jews.

The difficulties stem from the general financial crisis affecting Brazil, as well as from a series of other factors, including the growing numbers of assimilated Jews who no longer support their Jewish institutions.

Among those opposing the center's sponsorship is the Sao Paulo State Jewish Federation, the umbrella organization for some 54 Jewish institutions, which has decided neither to support the initiative nor raise funds for it.

"As a Jewish federation, we must focus on our people — and the Jewish community's needs come first," said the federation's newly elected president, Jayme Blay.

On the other hand, Rio's Jewish federation is backing the Carnival project, but not financially.

When asked if the Rio federation is providing any money for the Carnival project, the federation's president, Osias Wurman, was categorical: "We can barely pay our own bills." □

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD**Disagreement all in the family at German Jewish youth forum***By Toby Axelrod*

BERLIN (JTA) — Gabriel Wolff, an Israeli conscientious objector, froze in mid-sentence.

Rabbi Jacob Ebert was shouting: "How dare you blaspheme our people, our country? I can't hear this anymore!"

The roomful of Jewish students fell uncharacteristically silent.

Participants in the recent Winter University of the Union of Jewish Students in Germany, they had been listening — many with discomfort — to Wolff's story of conscientious objection.

Tension was building, and now it seemed all hell might break loose. But it didn't.

"Gaby will finish speaking now, and then we can ask questions and make comments," said Uriel Kashi, the newly elected president of the Union of Jewish Students, who helped coordinate the recent three-day event at the Jewish Community Center in the Bavarian city of Wurzburg.

The discussion that followed was tense, but respectful.

An example of typical German orderliness? Perhaps. But more importantly, this exchange showed that active Jewish students in Germany today are not afraid to rock the boat.

While Jewish leaders here are busy bringing new Russian-speaking immigrants closer to Judaism, combating anti-Semitism in the mainstream society and supporting the State of Israel, the younger generation is looking inward.

And younger German Jews do not shy away from controversy.

"What Jewish community organizations do is essential," Kashi, 27, said. "But our goal is to listen and discuss in a Jewish atmosphere, to learn about our Jewish identity."

For example, does it make more sense to be a religious Zionist or to refuse military service in Israel? Is Israel's "Law of Return" undemocratic? Should one laugh at anti-Semitism? Is homosexuality an illness, a crime or neither? Should Israel accept support from Christian fundamentalists? Does anti-Semitism boost Jewish identity?

These were among the questions some 65 students from across Germany debated at the second Winter University.

Of the 100,000 Jews in Germany today, about 15,000 are between the ages of 18 and 25.

And about 1,000 are on the mailing list of the Union of Jewish Students, said the group's outgoing president, Wicka Dolburd, 22. Most are from the former Soviet Union, including Dolburd, whose family emigrated from Moscow in 1990.

For security reasons, the union has not been using posters and other public means to attract new members, Dolburd said.

"But we are planning to make an effort, because it is the most important thing" to bring Jewish students together. □