



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 81, No. 43

Wednesday, March 5, 2003

86th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Palestinian killed in Jenin

One Palestinian was killed and two Israeli border policemen were wounded Tuesday in the West Bank city of Jenin.

The man was killed after a Palestinian fugitive being sought by a group of undercover police opened fire on them.

The fugitive was wounded and arrested.

An 18-year-old Palestinian who threw a firebomb at the police was killed, the army said.

In another development, a Palestinian boy in the West Bank was wounded by gunfire, apparently after an Israeli car was stoned.

Panel: Wallenberg case fumbled

The Swedish government mishandled the investigation into the disappearance of diplomat Raoul Wallenberg at the end of World War II, a Swedish commission said.

Making use of documents found in government archives, the panel said Foreign Ministry officials assumed Wallenberg was killed after his arrest in Budapest by Soviet troops in January 1945.

The officials also failed to follow up leads regarding Wallenberg, who helped save tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews during the war.

The commission also found that the diplomat's links to Washington were closer than first thought. "One important thing we are emphasizing is he was a Swedish diplomat, but his task was formulated by the U.S. government," a commission member told Reuters. "The Soviets might have wanted to know more about his mission and they could have thought he was more than an humanitarian agent."

Palestinian mogul for premier?

A wealthy Palestinian businessman reportedly is the front-runner if Yasser Arafat creates the post of prime minister within the Palestinian Authority. Arafat, the P.A. president, is considering billionaire Monib Al-Masri for the premier's job, Israel Radio reported.

Until now, Arafat's deputy, Mahmoud Abbas, had been considered the likely candidate. Arafat, who agreed to create the position under international pressure, discussed the issue with members of his Fatah movement on Monday. Al-Masri previously has turned down offers to serve in the P.A. Cabinet.

JDC upsets federation system with appeal for emergency funds

By Rachel Pomerance

NEW YORK (JTA) — In an extraordinary move to meet pressing human needs abroad, the organized Jewish community's main rescue and relief agency has made a direct appeal to local federations for emergency funding.

In doing so, it has circumvented the established overseas allocation process, angering officials of the United Jewish Communities, the federations' coordinating body, which has been struggling to unify members with divergent goals for the umbrella group.

The move by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the angry response by some federation officials have sharpened the debate about overseas priorities and the capacity of the federation system to fund them.

While the JDC has appealed directly to federations before, its Feb. 20 letter to federations across the country marked the first time it calculated and asked federations for their "fair share" — a determination made by the UJC. The letter was a plea to raise nearly \$20 million in emergency funding to aid desperate Jews in Argentina and the countries of the former Soviet Union.

UJC leaders meeting in Miami in January had authorized the JDC to raise \$10 million in supplemental funds for Argentina. But a specific amount of money was never authorized to aid elderly Jews in the FSU — though the UJC's overseas committee had earlier validated this as an "elective" need.

That gave the JDC authorization to raise additional funds from the local federations. But the JDC letters went a step further: They calculated each community's share of the nearly \$19.8 million that the JDC determined it needed for Jews in both Argentina and the FSU.

The move triggered confusion among local federations and a rebuke by UJC leaders, who penned a sharply worded response to the JDC. The response said the agency's direct appeal would "undermine our national effort to distribute scarce financial resources in a rational manner."

"It's an affront to the UJC system," said Robert Schroyer of Chicago, who chairs UJC's Israel Emergency Campaign. "I think we should tell the JDC if they're going to do that, then we won't allocate them money through UJC. They can't have it both ways."

But Steven Schwager, the JDC's executive vice president, said he would make no apologies for the direct appeal.

Schwager said he can "sit back or try and raise money to feed hungry Jews. I'm going to try to raise money to feed hungry Jews," he said in a telephone interview.

The organization's appeal is its latest maneuver to cope with the fact that federations are falling increasingly short of meeting UJC's recommended overseas allocations. JDC's president, Eugene Ribakoff, said the group took the measure because UJC's Overseas Needs Assessment and Distribution Committee "isn't in a position to allocate enough funding to cover our welfare programs."

The UJC — a three-year old merger of the Council of Jewish Federations, United Jewish Appeal and United Israel Appeal — was formed, in part, to reverse a trend over the last decade: Federations have been allocating fewer dollars for overseas needs and keeping more of their campaign proceeds at home to fund local needs.

While the UJC has managed to stabilize the drop in overseas allocations, federations are still falling short of the total that UJC has requested to meet needs in

MIDEAST FOCUS

Mofaz: U.S. war coming soon

Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz said he expects a U.S. military strike against Iraq to be launched any time after the middle of March.

Speaking Tuesday during the new Israeli government's first meeting, Mofaz said Israel is in a high state of readiness.

As part of Israel's civil defense system, Patriot missile batteries were deployed Tuesday on beach areas near Tel Aviv to protect against possible Iraqi missile attacks.

Israeli accused of revenge attack

An Israeli woman was charged with attempting to kill a Palestinian by running him over with her car. The woman, whose brother was killed in a terror attack one year ago, denied the charges during a court hearing Tuesday and said Saturday's incident at the Erez industrial zone in the Gaza Strip was an accident.

According to the indictment, Irena Starashnatzev intentionally ran over Ibrahim Martaga after attempting to run over several other Palestinians in the area.

Martaga was taken to a hospital in Beersheba, but has not yet regained consciousness, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

In another development, police from the southern city of Arad detained a Palestinian suspected of stabbing and wounding an Israeli woman as she waited for a ride at the exit to the city.

A civil guard volunteer saw the incident and summoned police, who caught the attacker.

Arab gets life for killing relative

An Israeli Arab was sentenced to life in prison Tuesday for murdering a 14-year-old relative because she attended a Jewish school. Another member of the family received a five-year sentence for inciting other relatives to threaten another child for similar reasons, Israel Radio reported.

Israel and elsewhere overseas. According to Richard Wexler of Chicago, who serves on UJC's Budget Committee, federations fell short by \$7 million in UJC's first year, \$17 million its second year, and they "will fall significantly short" again this year.

Though the intifada has returned Israel to the forefront of North American Jewish concerns — the UJC's Israel Emergency Campaign has raised \$345 million in pledges to date — many federations' annual general campaigns are down. And consequently their overseas allocations are expected to fall short of UJC requests.

In response, the UJC is planning to launch an overseas advocacy committee.

But the JDC has taken matters into its own hands.

In addition to its letter, Schwager has spent the last 10 months canvassing the country to press federation leaders to earmark more money for his organization's humanitarian work.

The JDC's key gripe is the federation system's longtime 75-25 split in overseas allocations, in which the Jewish Agency for Israel, which runs absorption and other programs in Israel, gets three times the amount of federation dollars than the JDC.

The JDC argues that since immigration to Israel has decreased, while Jewish humanitarian needs elsewhere have risen, it deserves a larger share of funds. Jewish Agency proponents point to the JDC's large endowment and the Jewish Agency's long-standing debt.

They say current immigration packages are costly, and that funds should not be diverted from Israel at a time of crisis for the Jewish state.

Caught in the middle of the flap are local federation leaders.

"Why aren't our partners doing this together," asked Gary Weinstein, executive vice president of the Jewish Federation of Greater Dallas.

"That's frustrating, it's confusing, and at the middle of which we're being asked to raise money" for an Israel Emergency Campaign and Ethiopian resettlement program. "All of this coming together causes great confusion and anxiety."

The situation highlights a complaint among many federations that the national system is not working as effectively as hoped.

In a Jan. 13 letter to the UJC, the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston criticized the system for, among other charges, poor planning, exclusive decision-making and a flawed overseas allocations process.

UJC's overseas allocations process "has caused our key overseas partners, the JDC and JAFI, to inflate and expand their infrastructure to maximize funding from federations at a time when they should be increasing services," the letter read.

"A multitude of overseas agencies are now approaching federations on an individual basis for funding, creating chaos and greater inefficiencies."

In its letter to the JDC, the UJC took the organization to task for adding to the chaos. The federations are "sensitive to the full range of Jewish needs in Argentina, the FSU, in Israel and throughout the world," the letter said. "Unfortunately, it is unlikely that we will ever raise sufficient money to pay for all of them."

"However, the answer to the problem of growing needs cannot be for one of our overseas partners to act unilaterally," the letter said. "This will only serve to subvert our national effort."

According to Daniel Allen, executive vice president of the Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford, UJC's response corrected the JDC for overstepping its bounds.

"The UJC did exactly what they should have done in a timely manner," said Allen, who formerly chaired the United Israel Appeal, which represents the Jewish Agency. Others thought the UJC should have been firmer.

"It was disconcerting to see one of our partners deviate from the process," said Jay Sarver, president of the Jewish Federation of St. Louis. "I hope that UJC will put policies in place that make such a deviation more difficult."

UJC spokeswoman Gail Hyman said this is "an internal issue that we're in conversation with JDC on.

"We recognize that there are needs in the former Soviet Union," she said. "We're working hard with JDC to address those needs."

For his part, JDC's president, Eugene Ribakoff, said his organization remains committed to a national allocations system. "We believe in the UJC process, and we're following it," he said. □



Daily News Bulletin

Norman H. Lipoff, *President*

Mark J. Joffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*

Lisa Hostein, *Editor*

Michael S. Arnold, *Managing Editor*

Lenore A. Silverstein, *Finance and Administration Director*

Paula Simmonds, *Marketing and Development Director*

JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.
© JTA. Reproduction only by previous arrangement.

JEWISH WORLD

ADL campus campaign launched

The Anti-Defamation League launched a new Israel advocacy campaign on campus.

The ADL will target college students with fliers promoting Israel's democratic values, which will be distributed by Jewish student groups in the United States and Britain. More information is available at www.adl.org/facts.

Vienna appointment creates stir

A controversy has been sparked by the appointment of a man with alleged neo-Nazi leanings to the board of Vienna University.

Friedrich Stefan made no secret of his extremist leanings, according to *Profil* magazine. A spokeswoman of the university's student union charged that Stefan had "repeatedly committed himself to Nazism."

Portuguese Jews raise funds

Portugal's Jewish community is holding its first central fund-raising campaign in 30 years.

The campaign is part of ongoing efforts to restructure local Jewish communal organizations.

Siberian synagogue desecrated

A Russian synagogue was desecrated over the weekend.

Vandals painted a swastika, the word "death" and a Star of David on a wall of the synagogue in the Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk, Russian television reported Monday. Police have been unable to identify the perpetrators.

Holocaust seminar in Macedonia

Macedonia's Holocaust Fund is co-sponsoring a seminar on Holocaust memory, anti-Semitism and multicultural coexistence.

The seminar is being held this week to mark the 60th anniversary of the roundup and deportation of more than 7,000 Macedonian Jews.

The seminar, co-sponsored by the Institute for Sociological and Political and Legal Research, is scheduled ahead of high-profile official events next week to commemorate the destruction of Macedonian Jewry.

The Holocaust Fund was established last year with funds granted by the government in compensation for the heirless private property of Macedonian Jews killed in the Shoah.

Vandals hit cemetery in Hungary

A Jewish cemetery was desecrated in Hungary. Gravestones at the cemetery in southwestern Hungary were found overturned Monday.

A wooden crucifix was burned and Stars of David were spray-painted on some graves.

Designer's plans for Ground Zero focus on both sadness and hope

By Toby Axelrod

BERLIN (JTA) — Daniel Libeskind is coming back to New York to help heal the wounds created on Sept. 11. He won't be working with words or medicine, but with stone, cement, glass and steel.

"My hopes are that out of the tragedy that happened, from the depths of the ground, something will soar into the life of New York that reaffirms the values we share: democracy and family and freedom and independence," said Libeskind, whose architectural designs were chosen to replace the World Trade Center, which was destroyed in the Sept. 11 terror attacks.

The decision, announced Feb. 27 in New York, means both a homecoming for Libeskind and the weaving together of themes that wind through much of his work: openness, contrast of dark and light, the interplay of memory and dreams for the future.

While Libeskind's Jewish Museum in Berlin is a sprawling zigzag that hugs the earth, his main tower in Manhattan would soar toward the heavens. Yet the two designs have something in common: Both contain elements of sadness and hope.

"I have learned many things" through working in Berlin, including that "one has to believe the future holds something better than the past," Libeskind, 57, told JTA.

Like his Jewish Museum, which contains a space for meditation on the destruction of European Jewry, the design for lower Manhattan includes a memorial at the original foundation of the World Trade Center, where some 2,800 people were killed.

Libeskind was born in Poland in 1946 to two Holocaust survivors. He became an American citizen in 1965, and studied music in Israel and New York. He was described as a musical genius but ultimately decided to study architecture.

Libeskind and his wife, Nina, moved to Berlin with their three children in 1989, after Libeskind won the competition to design the city's Jewish Museum.

It was his first contract, but his first completed building was the Felix Nussbaum Haus, a museum that opened in Osnabruck, Germany, in July 1998. His Imperial War Museum in North Manchester, England, opened in July 2002.

He has a number of other works in progress, including the Jewish Museum in San Francisco and the Maurice Wohl Auditorium at Bar-Ilan University near Tel Aviv.

The Jewish Museum, the work for which he is most famous, was completed in 1999. Its unique design drew hundreds of thousands of visitors even while the building was still empty.

The museum was to open to the public on Sept. 11, 2001, but the event was postponed two days because of the tragic events in the United States.

Working on the Berlin museum "prepared me to compete for the project in New York," Libeskind said. "I believe the memory of what happened" in New York "is an eternal part of the place and has to be seriously addressed. And it is so important to also have something that soars."

Libeskind said it was essential that people feel comfortable going to work again at the site.

So he created a memorial with gardens, an observatory and a restaurant as it rises to 1,776 feet, symbolizing the year of American independence.

The main tower would be the world's tallest building. Several smaller structures would surround it, with the original World Trade Center foundation as a focal point.

Libeskind has said it would cost some \$330 million to build his design. Construction reportedly would be funded partly by insurance payments for the destroyed buildings.

The plan may go through changes before it is realized, Libeskind said.

"I think every design evolves, if it is good, and this one will also," he said.

Libeskind's museum has changed Berlin: One of Germany's most visited institutions, its exhibits on nearly 2,000 years of German Jewish life are expecting their one-millionth visitor, according to Eva Soederman, press spokesperson for the Jewish Museum.

School classes provide a large number of the visitors, and students come away with an understanding that Jews are not merely Holocaust victims but a people with a rich history, tradition and faith. □

Conservative movement asked to reconsider its stance on gays

By Joe Berkofsky

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Conservative movement's rabbinical union has formally asked the movement's legal body to study whether homosexuality is allowed under Jewish law.

Rabbi Reuven Hammer, the president of the Rabbinical Assembly, told JTA that this week he requested the movement's Committee on Law and Standards to "revisit" its 1992 ruling barring homosexuality.

The Jerusalem-based Hammer, an ex-officio member of the law committee, said he did not specify whether the committee should examine ordination for gays and lesbians, same-sex commitment ceremonies or its policy on gay and lesbian rabbinical students, but asked the panel to "reread" its ruling "and decide what, if anything, they want to do with it."

Hammer's move comes as momentum is building across the Conservative movement for the legal body that issues rulings on matters of halachah, or Jewish law, to review its earlier decision.

That decade-old decision included two teshuvot, or rulings, upholding the biblical injunction against homosexuality while calling on the movement's synagogues to welcome gays into their midst.

Since that time, many in the movement say they have grown increasingly supportive of formalizing the move toward equal treatment of gays and lesbians under halachah, or Jewish law.

Rabbi J.B. Sacks-Rosen, who is among the few openly gay Conservative pulpit rabbis, welcomed the step towards reconsideration this week amid what he called increasing "frustration" over the issue.

The movement attempted to "draw a thin line between getting no publicity and putting out the message they're welcoming gay Jews and their families, without doing anything really to welcome them and without dealing with many of the larger issues involved," said Sacks-Rosen, now rabbi of Congregation Beth Shalom in Corona, Calif.

Those issues include whether the movement should admit openly gay students to its rabbinical and cantorial seminaries, whether to ordain openly gay rabbis and whether rabbis can officiate at same-sex unions.

Judy Yudof, president of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, the movement's congregational arm, was preparing her own request to the law committee asking it to review the general question of homosexuality and halachah.

Yudof welcomed the new effort, but is likely to continue formulating her own effort.

"I am pleased that a request for reconsideration is coming from another source in addition to mine," she said.

The current chairman of the law committee, Rabbi Kassel Abelson, has opposed legalizing homosexuality. He is likely to oversee the matter when it comes before the panel, Hammer said.

Abelson could not be reached for comment, but the panel's vice chairman, Rabbi Elliot Dorff, rector of the University of Judaism in Los Angeles, said Abelson would handle the issue fairly.

Dorff, an outspoken advocate for overturning the gay ban, denied earlier press reports that he would soon replace Abelson and would seek to reverse the earlier ruling.

Dorff said he and Hammer discussed "who should preside

over" the homosexual debate, and "we both agreed it would be a better thing" if Abelson remained in his position for at least one more year due to Dorff's public stance on the dispute.

Dorff said he supports revising halachah because the relevant verse in Leviticus assumed being gay and lesbian is voluntary, while in modern times "we know people are born with a sex orientation that, if not there at birth, is there by age 6."

Since the law panel meets only four times a year, it is not likely to actually take up the question until June 2004, Dorff added.

However, Hammer's request is more than likely to set the debate in motion, with the panel handing his request to its subcommittee on sex and family life.

That subcommittee then solicits rabbinic opinions on the matter, Dorff said, and several opinions will likely be written this year so the panel can discuss them and return them to the full body.

The law committee was set to meet Wednesday at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York for a previously scheduled session that does not include taking up the issue of homosexuality, several movement members said.

However, Keshet, a student gay rights group at JTS, organized a day-long teach-in, "Tse U'leamad: Come Out and Learn," timed to coincide with the law committee session.

The teach-in includes talks by leading movement officials like Dorff and gay rights leaders such as David Bianco, and a showing of the film "Trembling Before G-d" about gay and lesbian Orthodox Jews.

At the same time, Dror Yikra, a similar group at the movement's West Coast seminary, also was set to hold sessions about the controversy.

Keshet's chairperson, Jeremy Gordon, a fourth-year rabbinical student, said he also would circulate an online petition addressed to the movement generally and the law committee specifically in support of gay rights.

That petition, which he said has gathered more than 300 signatures by midweek, supports same-sex "commitment ceremonies"; urges the admission of gay, lesbian and bisexual members into the movement's rabbinical and cantorial unions; and calls for opening "all lay and professional leadership positions" in the movement to gays and lesbians, among other declarations.

The seminary's chancellor, Rabbi Ismar Schorsch, who has opposed changing the gay ban, has declined to discuss the issue so far.

JTS spokeswoman Jane Rosen said neither Schorsch nor any seminary official would comment on the law committee matter.

However, Rosen said the mere fact of Keshet's teach-in showed the seminary was opposed to any kind of "censorship."

"The fact that the day of learning is taking place here" expresses "the importance we place on allowing students to express themselves freely," she said. □

French Jews, Greens mend fences

PARIS (JTA) — French Jewish leaders held talks with senior Green Party representatives to heal a rift following recent remarks by a senior Jewish leader that were seen as equating the Greens with the far right.

In a joint statement following the meeting last week at Green Party headquarters in Paris, the two sides pledged to avoid criticism that "creates a climate of hate between partisans of both sides of the Middle East conflict." □