



Daily News Bulletin

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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Soldier killed in Hebron clash

The Israeli army decided to increase its presence in Hebron.

The decision followed a firefight with Palestinian gunmen Monday in which one soldier was killed. Staff Sgt. Tomer Ron, 20, was killed when reinforcements were sent in to back up an army foot patrol that came under fire on the road between Kiryat Arba and the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron.

Five soldiers were wounded in the dash, including an officer who sustained serious injuries.

In another development, Labor Party leader Amram Mitzna said the Hebron clash provided proof that there is no military way to protect Israeli soldiers and civilians in Hebron.

In response, the spokesman for the Hebron Jewish community accused Mitzna of seeking to uproot the Jewish enclave instead of uprooting terror.

Haifa bus bombing toll rises to 17

The death toll from last week's Haifa bus bombing rose to 17. Moran Shoshan, 20, of Haifa, died of injuries sustained in the March 5 attack. She was buried Tuesday. In another development, Israel is planning to deport from Hebron to the Gaza Strip several relatives of the terrorist who carried out the bombing, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

Iran reacts to AMIA charges

Iran may sever diplomatic ties with Argentina after an Argentine judge indicted four Iranian officials in connection with the 1994 bombing of Buenos Aires' main Jewish institution.

"We're looking at a range of responses, from cutting off diplomatic relations entirely to recalling our charge d'affaires, or reducing our staff in Buenos Aires to the bare minimum," a government source told Reuters on Tuesday. The four Iranians, including a former intelligence minister, are wanted by Argentine authorities in connection with the bombing of the AMIA Jewish community center. Iran has long denied any involvement in the attack. [Page 3]

Arab deputy mayor for Tel Aviv

A former soccer star became the first Israeli Arab to be appointed a deputy mayor of Tel Aviv-Jaffa. Mayor Ron Huldai called the appointment of Jaffa-born Rifat "Jimmy" Turk "historic."

Reform movement accepts transgendered rabbinical student

By Joe Berkofsky

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Reform movement's rabbinical seminary has accepted a transgendered person, paving the way for what is believed would be the first ordination of a rabbi to have switched genders.

The Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati confirmed this week that it accepted a male rabbinical school applicant who used to be a woman.

The prospective rabbi, Reuben Zellman, 24, of Oakland, Calif., who considers himself "transgender and queer," said he is not attempting to spark religious debates nor become a political lightning rod.

"As far as I know, I am the first person to do this, but that's not why I'm doing it," Zellman said.

"I realize it has political ramifications and I think those are positive, but I'm becoming a rabbinical student because that's what I want to do with my life," he said in a telephone interview.

Zellman — who was open about being transgender throughout the admissions process — was accepted "on his own merits," said the school's national director of admissions, Rabbi Roxanne Schneider Shapiro.

"Certainly we listened to the story he had to tell," Shapiro said. "But Reuben was an outstanding candidate."

When Zellman begins his rabbinical training late this summer, he will be breaking new ground for the nation's largest denomination.

In 1990, the Reform movement became the first to ordain gays. Three decades ago, it pioneered the ordination of women.

It also comes as the Conservative movement, the next largest stream in America, wrestles with the question of how Jewish law should treat homosexuality. And at least one Conservative rabbi has raised a question about transgender issues, according to a top Conservative official.

Rabbi Richard Address, director of the department of Jewish family concerns of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Reform movement's congregational arm, hailed the news of Zellman's admission.

"I see it as a historic move, but I also see it as a continued progression of the philosophy of the Reform movement," Address said.

Zellman will join between 57 and 65 rabbinical students who will begin their rabbinical training later this year.

Many, including Zellman, are expected to spend their first of five years at HUC's Jerusalem campus.

It will be Zellman's first time visiting Israel.

Raised in what he called a "not very observant" Reform home in Los Angeles, Zellman went to Hebrew school and became a Bat Mitzvah. He declined to reveal his previous name.

In 1996, Zellman, then still a female, entered the University of California at Berkeley and studied linguistics, later earning a second degree in classical voice.

In 1999, Zellman said he "transitioned" from being a woman to a man, though he would not discuss the emotional or physical details of that process.

"I just felt, at the time, that I would be happier living in the world as a man, and so far I'm right."

Zellman would not say whether he's undergone a sex-change operation, but he should be considered a man if he is living as one, said Scott Gansl, president of the

MIDEAST FOCUS

2 Palestinians killed in Gaza

Israeli troops killed two Palestinians suspected of trying to plant a bomb near the Gaza settlement of Kfar Darom.

After a firefight the night before, the Palestinians' bodies were found Tuesday. In their backpacks were pipe bombs.

U.S.: Iran will have nuke capacity

Iran's first nuclear power plant, which the United States claims can be used to make nuclear bombs, is nearing completion, Iranian officials said Tuesday.

While maintaining that their country is not developing nuclear weapons, Iranian officials argue that they have a right to such weapons, if only to balance Israel's arsenal.

Y.U. cuts ties with Israeli yeshiva

Yeshiva University cut ties with an Israeli yeshiva amid charges that a rabbi suspected of sexual and psychological abuse is maintaining improper influence over some students.

A Y.U. official confirmed reports that the university severed ties with Yeshivat Derech Etz Chaim in Jerusalem after it learned that 10 sophomores who had studied with a certain rabbi during their Year in Israel program continued to study with him via e-mail instead of attending regular classes.

Court questions appointment

Israel's High Court of Justice gave Prime Minister Ariel Sharon 30 days to explain his appointment of Likud member Tzachi Hanegbi as public security minister.

Responding to a petition filed by the Movement for Quality Government, the High Court on Monday asked Sharon to explain the appointment, given the fact that Hanegbi faces a number of conflict of interest charges.



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World Congress of Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Jewish Organizations.

Soon after he made the transition, Zellman joined Congregation Sha'ar Zahav in San Francisco, a largely gay synagogue affiliated with the Reform movement that bills itself as including "people of all sexual identities."

At first Zellman attended Shabbat and holiday services, but began growing more interested in studying Hebrew and Jewish texts. When other members realized Zellman could "carry a tune," he began singing with the synagogue's chavurah, and led some services.

A Bay Area cantor took Zellman on as a student in 2001.

That spring Zellman was hired to perform High Holiday services at Temple Beth Sholom in San Jose, Calif.

Zellman originally hoped to become a cantor, but eventually decided that it "doesn't encompass the full scope of what I want to do." He wants to study Torah, get trained as a pastoral counselor and "give others the kind of vibrant, living Judaism my congregation has given me."

Zellman also sees tikkun olam, or repairing the world, as part of his rabbinical mission — and as a transgendered person, Zellman feels he has much to contribute.

"I've had a unique and complex experience which has deepened my connection to, and love for, the Jewish people's complex and unique experience," he said.

Zellman hopes to become a pulpit rabbi, yet recognizes that he may encounter problems finding a job because of his background.

"I realize some people believe there is something wrong with transgendered people, but I have a lot of faith in the Jewish people, and faith that people will take this opportunity to apply the best of our Jewish values and be open-minded," he said.

The UAHC's Address said Zellman should not prove as "revolutionary" a rabbi today as he would have even 15 or 20 years ago.

"It will always be a concern for some who want to make it an issue," he said. "But I am confident that five or six years from now, Reuben will find a place within the community that suits his needs, and vice versa."

Representatives of Judaism's other major movements are more uncertain about transgendered rabbis.

Officials at the Conservative movement's rabbinical school, the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, and at the Orthodox Yeshiva University, which is affiliated with the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, would not comment on Zellman's acceptance by HUC.

Daniel Aronson, dean of admissions and recruitment at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in suburban Philadelphia, said the movement's seminary and the movement in general would accept transgendered Jews "wholeheartedly."

"Whether a person is transgendered or not, that in itself would not be a cause for rejecting a person," Aronson said.

Though the Reconstructionist seminary has never received applications from transgendered people nor had any post-graduates change sexes, Aronson added that some years ago one male rabbinical student "was feeling his way around" changing his sex, before deciding not to.

Meanwhile, Rabbi Joel Meyers, executive vice president of the Conservative movement's Rabbinical Assembly, maintained that according to Jewish law "a transgendered person would be violating the halachah against self-mutilation."

"I think what we would want to ask is, what is the status of such a person?"

Meyers said one Conservative rabbi he would not identify has raised that very question. The movement's Committee on Law and Standards would have to consider the matter and issue a response that would form the basis of an official stance.

Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb, executive vice president of the Orthodox Union, said transsexual and transgendered people pose a "fascinating" and ongoing debate in Orthodoxy.

Rabbi Edward Reichman, a physician at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University and an authority on Jewish law and gender change, said halachah "considers sexual identity to be innate, and not changeable by any kind of operation."

However, those who feel trapped in the wrong gender are encouraged to undergo medical or psychological treatment short of any procedure that alters their sexual organs, he said. □

JEWISH WORLD

Human rights panel pressed

As the U.N. Commission on Human Rights prepares to convene, Jewish groups are lobbying members against adopting anti-Israel resolutions. In advance of the commission's annual session, which begins March 17, the Anti-Defamation League called on panel members to reject one-sided condemnations of Israel.

In letters to members, the ADL asked that they "examine human rights issues around the world in a proportional, respectful and constructive manner," noting that the body has become increasingly politicized and repeatedly singles out Israel for criticism. The American Jewish Committee's Geneva-based affiliate, U.N. Watch, has met with key panel members and called for a "democratic caucus" to reform the Commission.

NPR protests planned

Critics of National Public Radio's coverage of the Middle East are organizing a nationwide protest against the network. The head of a group called the Boston Israel Action Committee told JTA it has organized March 27 demonstrations against local NPR affiliates in Baltimore, Boston, Los Angeles, Newark, New York, Philadelphia, Washington and St. Louis.

UJC announces new hires

The United Jewish Communities said Tuesday it hired Doron Krakow, a former national director of Young Judea, as vice president of its Israel and Overseas Pillar. It also named Beth Mann, who has worked for Jewish and social welfare agencies, as director of its Young Leadership Department.

Rabbis meet French Muslim

A delegation from the North American Boards of Rabbis visited Paris' Grand Mosque. During Tuesday's visit, the rabbis held talks with the mosque's rector, Dalil Boubakeh.

Describing the talks as "friendly and positive," the board's president, Rabbi Marc Schneier, told JTA that Boubakeh had been clear in condemning attacks against Jews in France as well as expressing criticism of Saudi Arabia for its support of Islamic fundamentalist groups around the world.

Suspect nabbed in shul attack

French anti-terror police arrested a man Tuesday in connection with the attack last April on a synagogue on the Tunisian island of Jerba. The man, who has yet to be identified, is suspected of providing documents and other items to Nizar Ben Mohammed Nawar, who is suspected of carrying out the attack. Three men, including Nawar's brother, have already been charged by French police in connection with the attack.

Argentine Jews say indictments in '94 bombing are too little, too late

By Florencia Arbiser

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — The indictment of four Iranian officials in connection with the 1994 bombing of Buenos Aires' main Jewish institution has provoked more criticism and disappointment than hope in the local Jewish community.

The indictments came too late, Adriana Reinfeld, president of Memoria Activa, a group of victims' relatives, told JTA. "It's regrettable."

Reinfeld's sister, Noemi, died in the July 18, 1994, attack on the AMIA center, which killed 85 people and wounded hundreds.

While local connections to the attack are still being checked, the investigating judge, Juan Jose Galeano, last week asked Interpol to arrest four former Iranian government employees for allegedly helping to plan the attack.

Galeano said he is certain "radical elements from the Iranian Republic" were behind the attack. The indictment was completed on March 5 but wasn't made public until March 7, so Argentina could make arrangements to protect its diplomats and embassies abroad from possible Iranian reprisal.

The indicted men are Iran's former cultural attache in Buenos Aires, Mohsen Rabbani; a former security and intelligence minister, Ali Fallahijan; and former diplomats Ali Balesh Abadi and Ali Akbar Parvaresh.

Rabbani was named as the operational director of the attack.

But Galeano did not follow prosecutors' recommendation that senior Iranian officials, including Iran's spiritual leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, also be indicted.

Abdolghassem Mesbahi, an Iranian defector whose testimony served as one of the bases for the report, earlier directly implicated Khamenei and then-Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani for the attack, and for a 1992 bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires that killed 28. Galeano's refusal to file indictments against the highest Iranian officials drew criticism from Argentine Jewish leaders.

Jewish leaders here and abroad have said Argentina's inability to find the culprits is due to incompetence, corruption and anti-Semitism among security and government officials. Nothing was done while the accused Iranians were still in Argentina and could have been arrested, Reinfeld said.

None of the men still lives in Argentina, and it is unlikely they will be arrested unless they travel outside of Iran. "In addition, there are no international agreements that would guarantee that they will actually be extradited and judged," Reinfeld said. "It's utopian to think they'll be caught. Personally, I'm not happy or hopeful."

Reports last year said the bomber who drove a van carrying some 600 pounds of explosives that destroyed the AMIA center was a Hezbollah member.

In his report, Galeano cited intelligence reports linking Hezbollah to the attack, although no specific member of the Lebanon-based group was named.

Pablo Jacoby, a lawyer for Memoria Activa, is upset the judge's resolution describes Hezbollah as being linked to liberation struggles.

"We all know, from a Western point of view, that Hezbollah's methods are reprehensible," Jacoby said. Yet the report "softens Hezbollah," he added.

The link between the Iranians and the local people who are believed to have placed the bomb is crucial, but it hasn't been sufficiently researched, the Latin American representative of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, Sergio Widder, and Rabbi Daniel Goldman, of Buenos Aires' Bet-El Synagogue, told JTA.

"The investigation has to center on who are the accomplices in the high local political levels and their relation to the ones who carried out the terrorist acts," Goldman said. "We know almost nothing about them — and that is serious in our country."

The trial against people accused of local involvement in the attack continues. Witnesses are testifying three days a week, and this stage of the trial is expected to last until May. For its part, Iran condemned news of the indictments. A spokesman for the Foreign Ministry dismissed the charges as "made up by Zionist circles."

The Iranian government also warned that Argentina would have to "repair the mistake or the Islamic Republic of Iran will take the appropriate measures," an official told Iranian radio over the weekend. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Lawmaker under fire predicts Jewish opposition to re-election

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Rep. James Moran (D-Va.) says he understands why Jewish leaders are furious with him over a history of comments against Israel and the Jewish community, and predicts the Jewish community will mount a fierce opposition to replace him in the next congressional primary.

Moran, 57, told JTA on Monday that he felt "hurt" and would not heed the call for his resignation by six local rabbis. They made the call after the congressman told constituents last week that the Jewish community is behind the Bush administration's push for war with Iraq.

"If I were a rabbi and seeing those remarks, I would have reacted the same way, maybe worse, given my emotional makeup," the seven-term lawmaker said in a candid telephone interview.

Moran, whose daughter is in the process of converting to Judaism, has been at odds with the local Jewish community for years.

He has often tried to climb out of holes, which he admits he has mostly dug for himself by speaking ill of Israel and its supporters.

"I'm insufficiently cautious in the way I express myself," said Moran, the former mayor of Alexandria, Va. "I tend to be too blunt and too graceless."

Morris Amitay, treasurer of the pro-Israel Washington PAC, indicated that Moran's prediction about his future is correct.

Amitay said he already has someone in mind to challenge Moran in the Democratic primary, and expects that person to receive strong support from the Jewish community.

"We now have a vulnerable incumbent," said Amitay, a former executive director of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

Rabbi Jack Moline, the spiritual leader at the Conservative Agudas Achim Congregation of Northern Virginia, says the Jewish community's long-standing tiff with Moran stems from his support for Palestinians.

"Moran's empathy for people who are suffering has expressed itself as antagonism for the state of Israel and the people of Israel," said Moline, who led the call for Moran's resignation this week.

Among the lawmaker's actions in recent years that have prompted Jewish fury:

- On the eve of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's visit to Washington in June 2001, Moran told a national convention of the American Muslim Council that the Israeli leader was "probably seeking a warrant from President Bush to kill at will with weapons we have paid for";

- In 2001, the lawmaker was also forced to return \$2,000 in political campaign contributions from Abdulrahman Alamoudi, the former executive director of the American Muslim Council, because of remarks Alamoudi made in support of Palestinian terrorist groups;

- In 1994, Moran told the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee that the killing of 29 Muslims by an Israeli doctor, Baruch Goldstein, was "not committed by a lone individual but collective acts of complicity in a pervasive injustice."

In the latest controversy, Moran told a town hall meeting with constituents March 3, "If it were not for the strong support of the Jewish community for this war with Iraq, we would not be doing

this," according to the Virginia-area Connection newspapers.

His latest comments were rebuked by Jewish leaders, local officials and his peers in Congress. Even the White House called the remarks "shocking."

"Congressman Moran suggested that the reason that the president is thinking about using force in Iraq is because of the influence of the Jewish community," White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said Tuesday. "Those remarks are shocking. They are wrong, and they should not have been said."

Democratic congressional leaders — including Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.) and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) — chastised Moran, as did the National Jewish Democratic Council.

Moran has spent this week apologizing, and was scheduled to meet with local Jewish leaders Thursday.

"I slipped up and I said something that has been properly taken as offensive," Moran said in his interview with JTA. "I wish I had caught myself and reflected on it before I said it."

Moran says the comments were not taken out of context, but he is trying to make clear that his response came from a questioner who identified herself as Jewish and asked why more Jews were not expressing their concerns about the impending war with Iraq.

"I was trying to explain my sense that mainstream elements of society and communities of faith were in support of war and if they weren't, we wouldn't be going to war," Moran said. "If she had identified herself as a Catholic, I would have said the same thing."

Moran paused, sighed, and said, "I wish she would have identified herself as a Catholic."

Moran has consistently told Jewish audiences that his support for Muslim and Arab groups was "pandering" and that he has at times lacked knowledge on Middle East issues.

Moran, whose northern Virginia congressional district includes roughly the same number of Jews and Arab Americans, has supported pro-Israel resolutions in Congress in the past — which his adversaries say was an attempt at pandering to them.

But Moran's long-term voting record on Israel has been of concern to the Jewish community.

He was one of 17 lawmakers who voted against a congressional resolution commemorating the reunification of Jerusalem in 1997 and one of 37 who opposed legislation in 1995 that required moving the U.S. Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv.

Moran says he is a strong supporter of the Labor Party in Israel and has forged good relations with Yossi Beilin, the dovish former justice minister and one of the architects of the Oslo peace process.

Despite his controversial oratory and actions, Moran has until now been able to maintain the support of a number of Jewish lawmakers. Last October, in a pre-election letter to Moran's constituents, 11 Jewish senators and U.S. representatives called Moran a friend of Israel.

Some of the signatories of that letter said this week that they viewed Moran's recent comments as anti-Semitic, but that it was too early to say whether they would support his re-election.

But at least two of those signatories, New York Democrats Jerrold Nadler and Gary Ackerman, both strong Israel supporters, indicated they would stick by their colleague.

For his part, Moran says he believes his re-election battle will get tougher next year because of his comments.

"I would have a safe district if it were not for my Herculean efforts against it," he said, anticipating that Jewish constituents would "fund heavily" a primary opponent against him. □