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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Blair: 'Road map' soon

Britain's prime minister said a plan aimed at jump-starting Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts will be published as soon as the new Palestinian prime minister has formed his Cabinet.

Tony Blair said Thursday that the new Palestinian Authority prime minister, Mahmoud Abbas, had agreed to the time frame, but Palestinian officials denied the claim.

P.A. official Saeb Erekat said leaders, including P.A. President Yasser Arafat and Abbas, had not agreed. "We want the road map to be introduced immediately and without further delay," Erekat said.

3 Palestinians killed in Gaza

Three Palestinians were killed in clashes with Israeli soldiers in the northern Gaza Strip. An Israeli military helicopter fired a missile Wednesday night at a Palestinian police post, killing two officers and a civilian, after the Palestinian security forces opened fire on the troops, Israel Radio reported.

During the operation in Beit Hanoun, troops detained three Palestinians suspected of planning to carry out terrorist attacks in the near future, the report said.

Group: French hate up

Racist and anti-Semitic attacks in France last year were the worst in almost a decade, a leading human rights organization said.

In its annual report, presented Thursday to French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin, the National Consultative Commission for Human Rights said 313 violent racist acts had been recorded in 2002, up from just 71 in 2001. Anti-Semitic attacks made up more than 60 percent of the total. In addition, there were 992 acts of racist intimidation or threats, of which 731 were anti-Semitic in character. Raffarin said he is particularly concerned by a blase reaction to racist and anti-Semitic attacks, adding that the French state itself is "not innocent" of this charge. [Page 1]

Palestinians: Gas Tel Aviv

Palestinians called on Iraq to attack Israel with chemical weapons. The chants were made Thursday by demonstrators in the West Bank cities of Tulkarm and Tubas, according to the Jerusalem Post. Demonstrators also stomped on Israeli and U.S. flags.

WAR IN IRAQ

As anti-war fever roils France, Jews suffer anti-Semitic attacks

By Philip Carmel

PARIS (JTA) — France may have chosen not to take part in the U.S.-led war against Iraq, but French Jews already are experiencing some of the war's effects.

With polls showing more than 90 percent of the public opposed to the war, major cities across France have been convulsed by large anti-war demonstrations that often have taken on a strong anti-American and anti-Israeli character.

The atmosphere exploded into violence last weekend when pro-Palestinian demonstrators attacked two Jewish youths outside the offices of the Hashomer Hatzair youth movement in Paris. The youths were taken to a nearby hospital and treated for light injuries.

Politicians issued belated, if forceful, condemnations of the incident. But French Jewish leaders are worried about further attacks — as well as the possibility that attempts by Jewish vigilantes to defend the community may devolve into street battles.

Earlier on the day of the Hashomer Hatzair attacks, Steve Soussan had been walking around Place de La Nation with his fiancée when he noticed a banner depicting the Israeli flag with a swastika at its center. "I told them that 6 million Jews died in the Holocaust and they had no right to carry that banner. They told me that the flag represented the Zionist entity, so I tried to take it down myself," Soussan said. "Then they jumped on me and threw me to the ground and started kicking me."

According to the Paris-based Bureau for Vigilance Against Anti-Semitism, the march was characterized by a number of anti-Semitic incidents, including insults hurled at Jewish passers-by and forms of Holocaust imagery depicting Israel. Estimated at around 100,000 people, the demonstration was far from a minority affair.

Apart from the regular sprinkling of far-left and pro-Palestinian groups, representatives from some of France's mainstream political parties were present, including former Prime Minister Laurent Fabius, Green Party presidential candidate Noel Mamere and Socialist Party leader Francois Hollande.

Despite the fact that the Hashomer Hatzair attack was filmed by a camera crew, it took more than two full days for organizers of the demonstration to offer a clear condemnation. Official responses were slow to emerge, and began to filter through only after Paris Mayor Bertrand Delanoë visited Hashomer Hatzair's offices.

A spokeswoman for the Green Party said she hadn't learned of the March 22 attack until two days later — not surprising, given sparse media coverage of the incident.

In fact, many papers carried an Agence France Presse dispatch claiming there had been "clashes" near the Hashomer Hatzair premises.

That implied that Jewish activists from Betar or the Jewish Defense League had clashed with members of the pro-Palestinian group Joint Appeal for Peace and Justice in the Middle East, known by its French acronym CAPJPO.

CAPJPO's president, Olivia Zemor, told JTA that Betar supporters had attacked activists from her group.

"We are going to be speaking to the police and asking for protection," Zemor said. "Of course we're not anti-Semitic. I have a Jewish mother and father."

Asked by JTA how many people from CAPJPO had been injured in the alleged fracas, Zemor said she did not know the "exact figure." She then admitted that no one from her group had been hurt.

Zemor's version of events was rejected out of hand by Hashomer Hatzair

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israeli officers go into hiding

Five Israeli police intelligence coordinators and their families were sent into hiding after they received terrorist threats.

The police chief for the West Bank and Gaza Strip said security had been stepped up for all intelligence coordinators in the territories, Israel Radio reported.

Palestinian official blasts Zionism

A Palestinian U.N. official said Zionism is worse than Nazism. The "Zionists" have committed crimes that are "even worse than what was done by the Nazis," Nabil Ramlawi, the PLO representative to the United Nations in Geneva, said Thursday at a meeting of the U.N. Commission of Human Rights.

U.N. Watch, a watchdog body affiliated with the American Jewish Committee, condemned the remarks. Ramlawi accused Israel of committing "genocide against Palestinians," asked why the world "has not yet eliminated New Zionist Nazism" and called the creation of Israel "a crime against humanity that continues today."

Peres heads to Germany, U.S.

Shimon Peres left for Germany for talks with leaders on the war in Iraq.

The former Israeli prime minister's talks also were expected to address the international "road map" for Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Peres is scheduled to participate in next week's American Israel Public Affairs Committee conference in the United States.

Israeli Arabs arrested in bombing

Two Israeli Arabs have been arrested on suspicions they helped the suicide bomber who carried out a Haifa bus bombing earlier this month.

Seventeen people were killed and 40 others were wounded in the March 5 attack.

spokesman Yoni Smadjar. Smadjar's testimony was backed up by the camera crew, whose footage of the attack was made available to police investigators.

The crew belonged to the independent press agency Digipresse, which transmits online reports through the French Yahoo site.

Valerie Labrousse, one of the Digipresse reporters covering the event, told JTA that there were no clashes and no Betar activists around. She laughed off the CAPJPO claims that they had been attacked.

"This was just a basic anti-Semitic attack with metal bars," she said.

Digipresse attempted to sell its video footage to two national French television channels, which said they didn't have enough air time.

Even among Parisian Jews, however, some still clung to the view that there had been clashes rather than an attack. Some even welcomed that version of events, telling JTA they were happy Betar had laid into them.

The possibility that Jewish extremists could take the law into their own hands has begun to worry community leaders, already wary of the increasing radicalization of French Muslims because of the war in Iraq and the ongoing Palestinian intifada.

Just days before the Paris demonstration, Betar youths clashed with demonstrators outside a pro-Israel gala in a Paris suburb. Over 100 riot police were required to restore order.

Many community leaders have issued statements saying that dealing with attacks against Jews should be left to the police.

"There should be no question of creating militias," said Michel Rottenberg, president of the large Jewish community in the middle-class Paris suburb of Vincennes.

Rottenberg's comments were supported by Maurice Fellous, president of the Jewish community in Noisy le Sec, a more mixed, working-class area.

Recently, when it appeared the community's rabbi was about to be attacked, local police reacted immediately, Rottenberg said.

Ariel Goldmann, spokesman for the CRIF Protection Service for the Jewish Community, or SPCJ, also praised police efforts.

"Our work is done in perfect harmony with the police and the Ministry of the Interior at the highest level," Goldmann told the Jewish weekly Actualite Juive. "We only intervene inside the buildings, leaving the police to take care of events outside."

The SPCJ runs a 24-hour hotline to provide community protection, and also offers legal advice and psychological counseling.

It's not the only official organization dealing with security issues.

The Bureau for Vigilance Against Anti-Semitism, run by former police commissioner Sammy Ghozlan, is based in the offices of the Paris Consistoire, the assembly of rabbis and laymen that governs Jewish affairs in the city.

"We catalogue every single anti-Semitic act, and we insist that local police groups deal with each and every incident," Ghozlan told JTA.

"In virtually every case the perpetrators are Arab-Muslims, but there is always a strong correlation between anti-Semitism in a given area and the amount of anti-Israel activity supported by the political groups who run the municipality," he said. "If there weren't the political incitement and the climate to go with it, the situation would be much better."

Following the clashes at the pro-Israel gala, Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy assured Roger Cukierman, president of the CRIF umbrella organization of secular French Jewry, that police would take extra measures to protect Jewish institutions.

That would be over and above "Vigipirate," an operation put in place at the start of the war to protect some 700 Jewish institutions across France.

Cukierman told Sarkozy that the community was very worried about anti-Semitic manifestations at anti-war demonstrations on March 15 and 20, including the burning of an Israeli flag.

Support for the community also came from Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin, who said that "French youth should take advantage of their feelings against the war and their struggle for peace to also fight against racism and anti-Semitism."

And just a day after Cukierman met Sarkozy, the cardinal-archbishop of Paris, Jean-Marie Lustiger; the rector of Paris's Grand Mosque, Dalil Boubakeur; and French Chief Rabbi Joseph Sitruk issued a joint appeal "for calm and mutual respect in this difficult international context." □



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JEWISH WORLD

Reform rabbis back troops

Divided over the war in Iraq, Reform rabbis issued a resolution Wednesday praying for the safety of U.S. troops.

The Central Conference of American Rabbis, which represents 1,800 Reform rabbis, issued the pro-troops plank at its 2003 convention in Washington, though it "acknowledged that its ranks are of varied opinion" about the war.

The group "stands together in its prayers for the security and safe return of military personnel and civilians, separated from home and family, serving bravely far from home," and mourned for the loss of "all human life" in the war.

Looted Nazi art returned

The Israeli heirs of a Czech Jewish art collector whose collection was looted by the Nazis in 1939 will receive more than 100 of the looted works.

Last week, legal representatives for the descendants of Brno-based lawyer Arthur Feldmann signed a restitution agreement that will return 135 drawings by Dutch, Italian and German masters from the 16th to the 18th centuries, currently held in the Moravian Gallery.

Ambassadors pray for peace

The U.S. and British ambassadors to Israel attended a special prayer service at Bar-Ilan University for the safety of the allied forces in Iraq. Rabbi Aharon Katz, who heads the Institute for Advanced Torah Studies, read a prayer he composed for Wednesday's occasion.

Both U.S. Ambassador Daniel Kurtzer and British Ambassador Sherard Cowper-Coles, who spoke in Hebrew, thanked the Israeli public for its support for the soldiers in Iraq.

Jews, Latinos meet

Jewish and Latino lawmakers met in Washington for a roundtable discussion on issues of joint interest. Thursday's discussion was the second in a series marking the creation of the Jewish-Latino Leadership Council, created to strengthen cooperation on policy issues that are important to the two communities.

About 10 lawmakers joined the discussion, which focused on immigration and homeland security, foreign policy and U.S. support for Israel.

Court: Russian text can stay

A Russian textbook that describes Jews as power hungry and greedy can remain in the country's schools. A Russian court this week upheld an appeals court ruling that refused to allow an investigation into the textbook. The book on Russian Orthodoxy says Jews forced Pontius Pilate to crucify Jesus.

OBITUARY

Jews recall Moynihan as an ally on Israel, fight for Soviet Jewry

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Daniel Patrick Moynihan once received a \$1,000 political contribution from a woman who wrote that she would have doubled the amount if only Moynihan would spend less time speaking out against the infamous "Zionism Equals Racism" resolution in the United Nations.

Moynihan, who had been U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, sent the check back, noting that "no one is going to dictate to me my conscience."

Moynihan, who died Wednesday at age 76 of complications from surgery, is being remembered in the Jewish world as a tireless fighter for some of the key issues of his time, including Soviet Jewry and the status of Jerusalem.

The four-term Democratic senator from New York, who retired in 2001, was viewed as more than a legislator; he was a frequent consultant to the Jewish community on how to advance its political agenda.

"He had a whole perspective that was fascinating on these issues," said David Luchins, who served as Moynihan's adviser for 20 years. "What he didn't know about, he asked about."

Moynihan was born in Tulsa, Okla. on March 16, 1927, and moved to New York shortly thereafter. He studied at the London School of Economics before starting his political career on the New York mayoral campaign of Robert F. Wagner.

After earning a doctorate in international relations at Syracuse University, he worked at the Labor Department and later served as ambassador to India.

By the time Moynihan became the Ford administration's envoy to the United Nations in 1975, he already was well known for his policy statements on minorities and urban affairs in previous White House administrations. But it was at the United Nations that he first came to the attention of the Jewish community, as he battled the resolution denigrating Zionism that the international body had approved.

"He was a scholar, he thought that words mattered," Luchins said.

Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.), who served with Moynihan in Congress, said the fight against the U.N. resolution will be the senator's legacy.

"I think he was genuinely shocked and outraged at the reality of anti-Semitism in the United Nations," Nadler said. "I think it was an issue of right and wrong for him."

Luchins said Moynihan went "door to door" on the issue at the United Nations. His outspokenness led to tensions with Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and his departure from the New York post after only eight months.

He continued to speak out against the U.N. resolution after being elected to the Senate in 1976. It ultimately was repealed in 1991.

Moynihan also became intimately involved in the fight for the rights of Jews in the Soviet Union. Jewish leaders said Moynihan often attended Soviet Jewry rallies in New York, and would meet directly with Jewish leaders on the issue, rarely delegating to his staff. "For him, it came down to inequities among people," said Zeesy Schnur, the former executive director of the Greater New York Coalition for Soviet Jewry. "He couldn't understand why a country would spend so much time, energy and money to hamper a basic human right for people."

But Moynihan also knew when to stop. He convinced Jewish leaders to take a two-year hiatus from the rallies as a gesture to the new Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, who had shown a willingness to take action on the plight of Soviet Jews.

Moynihan was a great advocate for Israel in the Senate as well championing a bill to move the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

The bill passed with much fanfare in 1995, but presidents have consistently avoided making the change, claiming that the move would hurt America's status as a negotiator in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Moynihan's relations with the Jewish community centered on foreign affairs, but also involved domestic policy. Moynihan, who chaired the Senate Finance Committee, pushed social security and welfare reform, and worked with Jewish leaders on education issues. □

WAR IN IRAQ

Palestinians torn between support for Saddam and their need of U.S.*By Gil Sedan*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Hardly a day passed since the outbreak of the new Gulf War before the Palestinians had their first war hero.

Ahmad Baz, 33, a bus driver from the West Bank city of Jenin, reportedly was hit March 20 by an American missile just as he was about to cross the border with his bus from Iraq into Jordan.

Mourners who gathered over the weekend at the family's mourning tent noted how symbolic it was that a Palestinian should be one of the first casualties of the war: Of all Arab peoples, the Palestinians are probably the closest supporters of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.

Thousands have poured into the streets just as in the 1991 Persian Gulf War, chanting the familiar slogans "Darling Saddam, send your rockets to Tel Aviv."

Saddam has been among the most generous underwriters of the intifada, dispersing payments of \$10,000 to \$25,000 to the families of those killed fighting Israel. Special premiums are paid to the families of suicide bombers.

In addition, Palestinians value his willingness to stand up to the United States, which is seen here as the patron of Israel.

The war finds the Palestinians at a delicate crossroads, and they are rather confused.

The man in the street hates the United States for its support of Israel, but the recent appointment of Mahmoud Abbas as the new Palestinian Authority premier, following heavy pressure on P.A. President Yasser Arafat from the countries that drafted the "road map" toward Israeli-Palestinian peace, shows the Palestinians' dependence on American goodwill.

Indeed, British Prime Minister Tony Blair pushed President Bush in mid-March to commit to implementation of the road map, while French President Jacques Chirac proposed a French initiative for a post-war conference on the Middle East to discuss implementation of the road map.

Even though they know the road map's path to an independent state is long and bumpy, the Palestinians realize it is the only formula now on the table for an independent state.

Many Palestinians hope the American attempt to reconstruct Iraq after the war ends up as a nasty, failed entanglement. That might weaken U.S. standing in the world, while strengthening those players — the United Nations, Europe and Russia — that opposed the war and are seen as more sympathetic to Palestinian interests in the road map.

On the other hand, as the Israeli daily Ha'aretz notes, a successful war could result in the weakening of the United Nations and Europe.

Last Friday, Jerusalem police had to disperse by force a demonstration of Palestinians coming out of weekly prayers on the Temple Mount.

The protestors chanted slogans against Israel, the United States and Arab countries which were accused of standing idle in the face of an attack against another Arab nation.

Protestors burned Israeli and American flags and raised Iraqi flags instead, as well as Saddam posters — along with posters of yet another Arab hero, Osama bin Laden.

The demonstrations carried a clear message: The war in Iraq and the ongoing confrontation between Israel and the Palestinians are part and parcel of the same Western offensive against the Arabs.

That line was stressed by Abdul Aziz Rantisi, the Hamas spokesman in the Gaza Strip.

Some members of Hamas and Arafat's Fatah movement have called for suicide bombers to attack American targets.

But Rantisi said Hamas would not attack American citizens "because we limit our fight to the Palestinian arena and the struggle against the Zionist enemy."

But Hamas declared Monday to be a day of fasting in support of Saddam Hussein.

In contrast, the Palestinian Authority has maintained a low profile since war broke out. Palestinian policemen did not try to disrupt the pro-Saddam demonstrations, as they did the pro-bin Laden demonstrations after the Sept. 11 terror attacks. But Palestinian officials refrained from making strong anti-American statements.

By contrast, the Al-Aksa Martyrs Brigade called for attacks on U.S., British and Israeli targets around the world because of the war in Iraq.

The group, which is affiliated with Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's Fatah Party, said the three countries are attempting to take control of Arab and Muslim resources through "terror and massacres." P.A. officials said the statement does not reflect official Fatah policy.

They realize that if they hope to gain anything from the war it will be thanks to American and European efforts to appease the Arab world by pushing toward an Israeli-Palestinian settlement.

Bush's road map speech on the eve of war elicited positive reactions from influentials in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the Arab League and even the Central Committee of the PLO.

But Palestinian leaders — even within the Palestinian Authority — are at odds among themselves regarding the plan, which was drafted by the diplomatic "Quartet" of the United States, European Union, United Nations and Russia.

The PLO's Central Committee issued a statement expressing gratitude to Bush for "his special vision regarding the solution which would lead to the establishment of an independent and democratic Palestinian state."

But the statement added that the road map should not be opened to amendments — as Bush hinted and as the Israelis would like — but should be implemented immediately as is.

That, at least, was the view of Palestinian figures such as Arafat adviser Nabil Abu-Rudeineh; Saeb Erekat, the P.A.'s minister for municipal affairs; and Ahmed Karia, chairman of the Palestinian legislative council.

Desperate for a way to climb down from the tree of the intifada without surrendering or losing face, the Palestinian leadership is backing the road map because of its call for an end to the negotiations by 2005 with the establishment of a Palestinian state.

The Palestinian position is that it is necessary to set a precise timeline for implementation of the plan as is, and not to be drawn into endless procrastination due to changes and corrections as demanded by the Israeli government.

However, other senior P.A. officials such as Nabil Sha'ath, minister of planning and international cooperation, expressed disappointment with Bush's speech, describing it as a hollow attempt to address international anti-American sentiment. □