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86th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

3 die in Afula suicide bombing

Three people were killed when a suicide bomber struck in the northern Israeli city of Afula.

Some 50 people were wounded in Monday's attack at a shopping center.

The bomber detonated his explosive belt after a security guard prevented him from entering the shopping center. The bombing was the fifth attack in the past several days.

Bush: 'Road map' still stands

The Palestinians should do more to crack down on terrorists, President Bush said.

Speaking Monday at a news conference in Washington with Philippine President Gloria Arroyo, Bush said the "road map" for Israeli-Palestinian peace "still stands" and that the United States will not get off the "bumpy road" until peace is achieved.

"People in the Palestinian Authority who care for peace must work with us to fight off terror," Bush said. "People in Israel who care for peace will work with us to fight terror."

White House spokesman Ari Fleischer added that the new Palestinian prime minister, Mahmoud Abbas, "thinks differently about peace and about reform" than other Palestinian leaders, but it is unclear whether he will be able to fight terrorism.

Bomber body identified

A body that washed up off the Tel Aviv shore last week has been identified as the would-be British bomber in last month's suicide attack at a pub.

Omar Khan Sharif fled the scene of the April 30 attack at Mike's Place after his explosives belt failed to detonate.

A second British citizen blew himself up, killing three. Sharif's body was found May 11 and DNA testing confirmed his identity, police said Monday.

Germany to preserve sites

The United States and Germany have entered into a formal pact to preserve sites of historical significance, including those relating to the Holocaust.

The joint declaration, signed Monday at the White House, also affirms both countries' commitment to preserving the cultural heritage of ethnic and religious groups in the country and to prevent discrimination. [Page 4]

NEWS ANALYSIS

New peace plan, same old terror: So what should Sharon do now?

By Leslie Susser

JERUSALEM (JTA) — It has become a familiar equation: Hope for progress toward peace leads not to a drop in Palestinian terror attacks but to their acceleration.

Throughout the 1990s, Palestinian terrorists often tried to sabotage the peace process by stepping up their attacks whenever progress seemed likely.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon finds himself in a quandary: Does he halt recent momentum toward peace talks until the new Palestinian Authority prime minister, Mahmoud Abbas, proves that he is willing to confront the terror groups?

Or, as the international community is demanding, does Israel make concessions to show Palestinians that Abbas' stated opposition to terror can pay dividends?

With Abbas in office less than a month, members of Sharon's inner circle already are expressing doubts about whether he can deliver.

And they believe the concessions they already have made toward Abbas — such as easing restrictions on Palestinians' movement in the West Bank — directly contributed to the renewed wave of attacks.

Senior Palestinian officials argue that Sharon has yet to give the embattled Abbas the concessions he needs to persuade Palestinian terrorists to agree to a cease-fire that could breathe life into the "road map" to Israeli-Palestinian peace, which the United States presented to the two sides late last month.

On both sides, there is uncertainty over how much time and energy the United States is prepared to invest to make the road map work.

Sharon had hoped Abbas's installation on April 29 would presage a drop in Palestinian terror and at least some initial political movement. But a new wave of suicide bombings, P.A. President Yasser Arafat's incessant machinations against Abbas and open defiance of Abbas by terrorist groups such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Al-Aksa Brigade have led Israeli officials privately to pronounce Abbas too weak to deal with Palestinian terrorism or take the peace process forward.

Arafat and the terrorists are using the bombings not only to hit at Israel but also to make Abbas's position untenable, the officials say.

Abbas "finds himself in an awkward position that the man who appears to be in charge there, Yasser Arafat, is in collusion with the terrorist organizations because he has a common interest to make the peace talks fail," Israeli government spokesman Avi Pazner told JTA.

In a three-hour meeting between the two prime ministers Saturday night, the first at such a high level since the Palestinian intifada erupted in September 2000, Sharon offered to withdraw Israeli troops from the northern Gaza Strip, allowing Abbas' forces to take control and show that they could maintain peace and quiet.

Over the last several months, the area has been used to fire Kassam rockets and mortar shells at nearby Israeli towns and villages, especially the Negev town of Sderot. It also is the area in which Mohammed Dahlan, the new Palestinian Authority minister responsible for security, is strongest.

Sharon also offered to withdraw from Palestinian city centers as soon as Abbas and Dahlan felt ready to take over. In both cases, Israeli officials say, the Palestinians "found excuses" to decline, insisting that Israel formally accept the road map first.

These exchanges reveal a fundamental difference in approach: Sharon wants to see Abbas taking over wherever possible and, if necessary, using force to impose his will

MIDEAST FOCUS

3 soldiers wounded in attack

Three Israeli soldiers were lightly wounded in a suicide attack in the Gaza Strip.

A Hamas bomber rode a bicycle up to the soldiers' position near the settlement of Kfar Darom on Monday and blew himself up. In other violence, Palestinians fired on workers building a fence at an Israeli settlement and fired on an Israeli civilian convoy. There were no injuries.

Palestinians also fired a Kassam rocket at the Negev town of Sderot and two mortars at Israeli communities in Gaza. Two people in Sderot were treated for shock.

Security tight for Lag B'Omer

Israeli security and rescue forces were on high alert over Lag B'Omer, which falls on Tuesday. Some 3,000 police and volunteers were stationed around Mount Meron, in northern Israel, where the main celebrations were to be held at the tomb of Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yochai.

Kenya flights canceled

El Al suspended its flights to Kenya amid fears of an increased terrorist threat.

The move ordered by the Shin Bet came after security warnings, issued by Britain and the United States, of alleged Al-Qaida activity in the African country. In November 2002, an Israeli charter plane taking off from Kenya and an Israeli-owned hotel in the country were the targets of terrorist attacks.

Israeli wins judo championship

Israeli Arik Ze'evi reclaimed the European judo championship in Germany. Ze'evi took only 69 seconds Sunday to defeat the defending European champion in his class, Elco Van Der Geest. He reclaimed the title in the 100-kilogram class that he won at the games two years ago in Paris.



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on the terrorists. Abbas says he is not yet strong enough and wants to bring about an end to terror through an agreement, rather than confrontation, with the terrorist groups.

The renewed attacks don't "mean that Sharon won't meet with Abbas again, but you will certainly understand that you can have no meaningful progress as long as blood is running in the streets," Pazner said.

Abbas urged Sharon to give him time to negotiate a hudna, or cease-fire, with the terrorist groups, saying he could succeed if Israel stopped its counter-terror raids and targeted killings of terrorist leaders.

What he had in mind was a yearlong cease-fire that would allow Israel and the Palestinians to negotiate without the threat or use of force, Abbas explained.

Dahlan added that it would take about a year to rehabilitate the Palestinian Authority security forces, after which they would be in a position to force the militants to adhere to an extended cease-fire.

Until the Abbas meeting, Sharon had opposed this approach on the grounds that the militants would simply use the cease-fire to regroup before launching a new round of terror. However, Palestinian sources say Sharon intimated at the meeting that if a cease-fire is achieved he would be ready to give the approach a chance.

If true, this constitutes a major change in the Israeli position.

Sharon's dilemma is how to continue fighting terror without undermining Abbas to such an extent that he will be too weak either to negotiate a cease-fire or use force against terrorists.

Getting the balance right will not be easy: If Israel continues targeted killings and major raids, Palestinians may see Abbas as a straw man who has not eased their suffering. If Sharon holds back, on the other hand, Hamas may be encouraged to launch even bigger attacks on the assumption that Israel will not retaliate.

Another major Israeli dilemma is what to do about Arafat. His alleged role in encouraging terror and deliberately undermining Abbas has led to renewed calls for his expulsion. Three government ministers from Sharon's own Likud Party — Dan Naveh, Yisrael Katz and Tzachi Hanegbi — maintain that there will be no effective cease-fire as long as Arafat is around.

Sharon for now is against expelling Arafat. In Sunday's Cabinet meeting, Sharon, Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz and the army's chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Moshe Ya'alon, argued that Arafat would be more dangerous jetting around Europe playing for international sympathy than confined to his headquarters in Ramallah.

More than Arafat, though, it is the ongoing terror that constitutes the biggest threat to the road map and Abbas' chances of success.

According to Israeli security officials, there have been almost 50 attempted attacks in the three weeks since Abbas took office. Five attacks in a space of two days early this week left 11 Israelis dead and scores wounded.

Hamas terror threatens not only Israel and the road map but Abbas himself, especially after some Hamas leaders charged that Abbas is considering trading the Palestinian refugees' demand to return to homes they abandoned inside Israel 55 years ago for Israeli acceptance of the road map.

Osama Hamdan, a Hamas representative in Lebanon, issued an open threat over the weekend: "Anyone who bargains over the refugees' right of return is bargaining over his neck," he declared.

Given the new wave of terror, many Israeli and Palestinian analysts agree that only a major American effort can save the road map.

And they are not optimistic. Reuven Paz, an expert on fundamentalist terror at the Herzliya Interdisciplinary Center, says that "without a strong American lead, there will simply be more of the same: terror, counter-terror and indecisive meetings between Sharon and Abbas."

Other Israeli pundits argue that Sharon willingness to cancel a crucial meeting this week with President Bush because of the bombings does not augur well.

They believe it shows that Sharon, worried about possible American pressure on the issue of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, is stalling — and that President Bush, with an eye on the Jewish vote as he moves into an election year, may allow Sharon to go on playing for time. □

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

JEWISH WORLD

Court to hear religious aid case

The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to hear a case that some observers say could blur the constitutional separation between church and state.

The high court agreed Monday to take a case that would determine whether it is discriminatory to deny state scholarship funds to students who attend theology programs at Christian schools.

Marc Stern, a lawyer for the American Jewish Congress, says that if the appeals court ruling is affirmed, religious schools would receive state funds as easily as private, nonreligious schools. The case is likely to be heard in the fall.

Study: Far-right sites up

The number of far-right Web sites in Germany has tripled during the past few years, says a new study.

There were 1,000 such sites in Germany in 2002, up from 330 in 1999, according to the study, which was conducted by Germany's Family Ministry.

"Far-right extremists are using emotionally charged arguments to appeal to the feelings and fears of young people," said Germany's family minister, Renate Schmidt.

Gas bomb thrown at Paris mosque

A man apparently angry over a French Muslim leader's conciliatory statements toward Jews attacked Paris' Grand Mosque.

The man threw a gas bomb at the mosque Sunday before breaking into a car parked near the mosque and fleeing the scene.

According to testimony gathered by mosque rector Dalil Boubakeur, the man, who was in his early 30s, may have been angry that Boubakeur has spoken out against attacks on Jewish targets in France, and that he issued a statement condemning last Friday night's bombings in Morocco.

Ari Fleischer resigns

White House spokesman Ari Fleischer will resign in July. Fleischer, one of the senior Jewish officials in the Bush White House, announced Monday that he will leave to pursue a job in the private sector.

Jews cheer for St. Petersburg

Hundreds of Russian Jews marked the beginning of St. Petersburg's 300th anniversary celebrations.

Conductor Zubin Mehta and members of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra performed Sunday at the event at the just-renovated St. Petersburg synagogue.

"Jews have always been numerous in St. Petersburg," said Mark Grubarg, chairman of the community. "And historically these have always been Jews of some special sort, prominent in arts and science."

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

Moroccan Jewish emigres in Paris express shock at weekend bombings

By Philip Carmel

PARIS (JTA) — For most Parisian Jews with roots in Casablanca, the news that their home community had been targeted by Islamic terrorists came like a bolt from the blue.

"Sure, it's happened in every other Arab country, in Egypt, even Tunisia, but we never thought it would happen in Morocco," Valerie Ben-Chimon told JTA as she brought her children to school Monday morning. "People there said they thought it was a gas explosion or an earthquake. Nobody ever imagined it was a bomb."

Ben-Chimon left Morocco for France in 1987, but her parents still live in Casablanca. They recently visited her in France for Passover.

Her father returned to Morocco just after the holiday, but Ben-Chimon's mother returned only on Sunday, two days after five suicide bombings in Casablanca — four of them aimed at Jewish targets — killed 29 people.

"Of course it's worrying," she said, "but you know, there's no security anywhere — not in France, not in Israel either."

Ben-Chimon and other Jews born in Casablanca felt more shock than anger after the attacks. "People there have always had enormous faith in the king to protect the Jews," she said.

Indeed, the head of Morocco's 4,000-strong Jewish community, Serge Berdugo, was minister of tourism under Hassan II, father of the present monarch, Mohammed VI. One of Mohammed's most trusted advisers, Andre Azoulay, is a Jewish banker.

"We are deeply shocked, but we are not afraid," Berdugo said. "People here know it is a global fight against the terrorists, the same for Muslims as for Jews. There were no victims from our own community, but this has come like a bolt from the blue."

Even in Paris, there was a sense of disbelief.

One man, who described himself as "50-50" — half-Moroccan, half-Tunisian — said "they can't have been Moroccans, they must have been Islamists from outside the country."

But Ben-Chimon corrected him.

"They were Moroccans," she said sadly.

According to Simon Attias, president of the Society of Former Moroccan Jews, Mohammed's visit to the scene of the attacks was important "to send the right message" to the Moroccan people.

"But why didn't he do anything before the attacks?" Attias asked.

However, Morocco is "a tolerant country," he told JTA, and the terrorists were "as much against Moroccan Muslims as Jews."

Asked about the community's future, Attias said things had been going downhill steadily since Morocco ceased to be a French protectorate in the 1950s.

"There's no future for the Jews there," he said. "Virtually everyone has left for Israel, France or Canada."

Nevertheless, for many of those who left Casablanca — Morocco's largest Jewish community — the feelings toward Morocco remain strong.

"The king sent soldiers to protect us in Casablanca during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, "and I remember how he spoke on television during the Six-Day War" in 1967, Solange Rumi told JTA. "He said that the Jews were Moroccan citizens just like everybody else, and no Jew was touched."

The targeting of the Cercle d'Alliance, a Jewish club, showed that the aim was to kill as many Jews as possible, Ben-Chimon said.

"This is a community where everyone knows everyone else and everyone goes to the Cercle," she said.

"It's a miracle. If they had bombed the Cercle d'Alliance on any day other than Shabbat, many more people would have been killed."

Ben-Chimon said her parents would stay in Casablanca.

"We have always been treated well there," she said. "It's very special, really, 'la belle vie.'" □

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

Number of Canadian Jews rises, but not as fast as local Muslims

By Bill Gladstone

TORONTO (JTA) — Newly released population statistics show that Canada's Jewish community is growing, mainly due to immigration.

According to tabulations from Canada's 2001 census, the number of people who identify themselves as Jewish in Canada increased by 3.7 percent during the 1990s, to nearly 330,000.

The census also found that the country's Muslim population has more than doubled in the past decade.

More than half of Canada's Jews — 190,800 — live in the province of Ontario, the census figures show. Of those, about 175,000 live in the Toronto area.

The census also shows that nearly one-third of Canada's Jews were born outside Canada and that they are a relatively older population, with a median age of 41.5 years, compared to 37 years for the general Canadian population.

Jewish communal officials acknowledge that the latest statistics reflect high rates of intermarriage, assimilation and non-affiliation among young Jewish adults, problems they have been contending with for years.

But many see the glass as half-full.

"I think it's a good sign that we are one of the few Jewish communities in the world that is growing from year to year," said Martin Lockshin, director of the Center for Jewish Studies at Toronto's York University.

Jewish populations are rising in "Israel, Canada and only a few other places in the world," according to Lockshin.

The largest source of Jewish immigration to Canada has been the former Soviet Union, though that flow has lessened in recent years.

"My understanding is that the reason we have some growth is because there is still more immigration of Jews into Canada than emigration out," he said.

That also happens in other countries, such as the United States.

"But the drop-out rate in the United States is so high that the number of Jews that self-identify as Jews in the United States is going down precipitously," Lockshin said. "It's not going down in the same way in Canada."

The data shows that the number of Muslims in Canada was 579,600 in 2001, more than double the total a decade earlier.

According to the latest figures, Muslims represent 2 percent of the total population.

Jews represent 1.1 percent.

There is a disagreement among analysts as to whether the substantial growth of the Muslim community explains the emergence of an increasingly strong anti-Israel and pro-Palestinian political lobby in Canada since the mid-1990s.

"I understand the concern that people have, but I'm not certain that it's justified," Lockshin said. "Many people have pointed out that a very significant percentage of the Muslim immigrants here are not from Arab countries; they're from Indonesia and other Muslim countries. It's not certain that all people that come from Muslim countries are going to be against the interests of the State of Israel."

The latest numbers show that Canada is still predominantly Roman Catholic and Protestant, with seven out of 10 Canadians indicating an affiliation with one of the two major Christian denominations.

Statistics Canada released the figures in mid-May as part of a package of new data derived from the 2001 census.

Lockshin and others involved in Canadian Jewish studies are awaiting the release of more detailed data from Statistics Canada.

The data will provide information on the number of people in Canada who speak Yiddish and Hebrew, as well as the number of homes in which people profess more than one religion.

"I'm just delighted that the government of Canada asks questions that have to do with religion and ethnicity, which allows us to get a better picture of the Jewish communities of Canada than we have for many other countries of the world," he said. □

Germany, U.S. ink agreement to preserve some historic sites

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The United States and Germany have signed a pact to preserve sites of historical significance, including those relating to the Holocaust.

The joint declaration, signed Monday at the White House, also affirms both countries' commitment to preserving the cultural heritage of ethnic and religious groups in the country and to prevent discrimination.

Warren Miller, chairman of the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad, said the agreement is ironic, given that the United States did little to prevent the Nazis from destroying the Jews and their communities in Europe.

"Even in death, most were not afforded a burial place — they were burned, their bodies crushed, their ashes scattered," said Miller, who signed the declaration on behalf of the United States.

"Today, in the White House, the German and American governments are committing to preserve Jewish burial sites and sites associated with the murder of Jewish people."

Miller said Germany's interest in this issue predates this week's formal agreement. A year ago, the United States and Germany welcomed a memorial to the victims of the "Little Camp" at Buchenwald.

The commission is also working on other projects in Germany, such as a new museum at the site of the Mittelbau-Dora camp and preventing construction on other significant sites for the Jewish community in Germany.

At the signing here, Wolfgang Ischinger, Germany's ambassador to the United States, said he is proud to represent a generation of Germans that has "accepted the historical and moral responsibility" of preserving the legacy of the Holocaust.

"We want to commemorate the victims of genocide as well as those who gave their lives to stop the Nazi evil," Ischinger said. "At the same time, the sites serve and should serve as a reminder of the atrocities committed by the Nazi dictatorship, something we must never forget and we will never forget."

The commission has garnered similar bilateral agreements from numerous Eastern and Central European countries, such as Estonia, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Slovenia, Ukraine, Romania, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. □