



Daily News Bulletin

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86th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Al-Qaida calls for attacks on Jews

Muslims should attack "Crusaders and Jews," an Al-Qaida leader said on a new audiotape aired by Al-Jazeera. "The crusaders and the Jews only understand the language of murder, bloodshed and of the burning towers," the man said on the tape, aired Wednesday on the Qatari-based network.

Analysts say the man may be Ayman Al-Zawahiri, a key aide to Osama bin Laden. American Jewish leaders say they were not told of any threats to the Jewish community.

Bush may head to Mideast

President Bush is considering a trip to the Middle East. According to Wednesday's New York Times, Bush may visit American troops in Qatar and Kuwait after meeting with heads of leading industrial nations in France at the end of the month.

He could meet with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas on the trip, the paper reports, but a trip to Israel is considered "possible but unlikely."

Two Palestinians killed

Israeli troops killed two Palestinians and wounded five in the West Bank. The two killed Wednesday were a teen-ager and a 65-year-old woman. Also Wednesday, Israeli troops found two large bombs near a settlement in the Gaza Strip. The bombs were safely defused.

Israel re-enters northern Gaza

Israeli troops returned to the northern Gaza Strip, a day after ending a five-day incursion.

Palestinian sources said Israeli army armored vehicles and bulldozers were operating Wednesday around Beit Hanoun, an area that Palestinians often use to launch rockets against Israeli communities.

The Israeli incursion prompted Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas and his security minister, Mohammed Dahlan, to cancel a visit to Beit Hanoun.

Because of the Memorial Day holiday in the U.S., the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Tuesday, May 27.

NEWS ANALYSIS

New terror campaign puts Abbas — and Sharon — in a tough spot

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Tough luck for Mahmoud Abbas.

Just as a wave of Islamic terror ignited the Middle East from Casablanca to Afula to Riyadh, and as Israel launched a legal offensive against its own Islamic Movement, the new Palestinian Authority prime minister found himself hosted by his Israeli counterpart to find out what he was going to do about Palestinian violence against Israel.

But with even his own boss, P.A. President Yasser Arafat, putting spikes in Abbas' wheels, how much could be expected?

That was among the key questions confronting Israeli policy-makers this week as the country reeled from five terror attacks in barely 48 hours: Is Abbas strong enough to fight the rejectionists? Does he really want to? And what can be done as long as Arafat is still the Palestinian Authority's main power broker, working to embarrass Abbas and prevent him from succeeding?

As a starter, Israel is demanding that Abbas disarm terrorist organizations, as the Palestinian Authority has pledged repeatedly to do over the past decade.

Fearful of a civil war, however, Abbas prefers to renew negotiations with Hamas to reach a one-year cease-fire, during which he would rebuild the P.A.'s security apparatus.

However, with the continued closure on the territories and intensive Israeli counter-terror operations on the one hand, and the wave of terrorism on the other, the Palestinian Authority and the terrorist groups are still divided even on the basic terms of negotiations. Alas, their differences seem irrelevant for the time being. As far as the terrorists are concerned, they are ready neither for disarmament nor cease-fire. Their attitude seems to be, to use a favorite phrase of Arafat's, "Let Abbas drink the waters of the sea in Gaza."

Following the terrorist attack in Afula on Monday, Abdul Aziz Rantisi, a Hamas leader in the Gaza Strip, promised to increase attacks so that the Israelis "will pay a heavy price, God willing."

Abbas this week found himself besieged on three fronts: by Sharon, the terrorist groups and Arafat.

Israeli policy-makers agree that Arafat appears determined to make Abbas fail.

In addition to the control he has maintained over most of the P.A.'s security organizations, Arafat recently appointed one of his proteges as head of the powerful Preventive Security force, without seeking the approval either of Abbas or Mohammed Dahlan, the P.A. minister ostensibly in charge of security.

Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz said Monday that the Palestinian Authority now has two leaderships — that following Arafat and that following Abbas — with conflicting interests.

"The weights that do not allow the peace process to take off are, first of all, Arafat, who makes every possible effort to make the process fail, and the terrorist organizations, which receive outside help," Mofaz said at Tel Aviv University.

Israel's immediate reaction to the wave of terror was to close down the West Bank and Gaza Strip once again.

The closure had been temporarily lifted last week in honor of visiting Secretary of State Colin Powell, but it was renewed in an attempt to give Israeli citizens a sense of security following the five attacks within a short period. But the closure conflicts with

MIDEAST FOCUS

'Road map' team stays home

Israel told a U.S.-led team that is to monitor progress on the "road map" peace plan to stay at home.

"We don't need monitors when there is nothing to monitor," an Israeli official told the Jerusalem Post. In a related development, Dov Weisglass, a senior aide to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, met Wednesday with President Bush's national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice.

Minister: Restrict citizenship

Israel's interior minister recommended that people who convert to Judaism in Israel no longer be granted automatic citizenship.

Instead, Avraham Poraz of the secularist Shinui Party recommended that local converts seek citizenship through means other than the Law of Return — such as the Law of Entry, family reunification, humanitarian concerns, identification with the Zionist cause, or based on their potential contribution to Israeli society as scientists, artists, actors or athletes.

Poraz presented his idea in an opinion to the attorney general in response to a convert's petition seeking to be acknowledged as a citizen under the Law of Return, which grants automatic Israeli citizenship to all Jews who seek it.

Poraz said he was concerned that people were exploiting the conversion process in order to receive the social and economic benefits given to citizens, the daily Ha'aretz reported.

Fake bomber not checked

A routine check showed lax security at several potential terrorist targets in central Israel. Israeli guards repeatedly failed to check a police officer who posed as a suicide bomber for a security check Wednesday at a train station in Petach Tikva and at shopping centers in Petach Tikva and Rosh Ha'ayin.



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Israel's interest in improving Abbas' stature in the eyes of the Palestinian public.

After months of relative quiet, and after hopes that the U.S.-led war against Iraq would lead to a revival of the peace process, Israelis once again sought in vain for insight into when the bloodshed would end.

Justice Minister Yosef "Tommy" Lapid joined those who blamed Arafat for the terrorism.

"We have good reason to believe that Arafat stands behind the attacks, whether actively or passively," Lapid said.

For his part, Arafat told the media he opposed all violence against civilians and that the purported evidence of his involvement in orchestrating the terror was Israeli propaganda.

"Although we are under complete siege and under occupation," he said, the P.A. security services had managed to prevent many "activities," a euphemism for terror attacks, in the past 10 days, Arafat claimed.

The diplomatic "Quartet" that developed the road map "and senior security officers in Israel are well aware of it, but it is unknown to the Israeli public," Arafat said.

Some Israeli officials again are recommending that Arafat be deported.

At Sunday's Cabinet session, Sharon and Mofaz agreed that deporting Arafat now would not serve any purpose, would cause considerable damage to Abbas' political standing and would even allow Arafat to cause greater damage to Israel abroad.

Yet that just highlighted a bitter truth: After 31 months of the intifada, even after Israel regained military control of the West Bank, Palestinian terrorism is alive and kicking, and Israel has failed to come up with an answer.

Even after suffering severe casualties and with thousands of its members in Israeli jails, Hamas still is calling the shots.

Israel must decide if it wants to gamble on Abbas, and even more so on Dahlan, who says he is determined to weaken the terror organizations.

Judging from this week's attacks, Dahlan's potential for success is limited. On the contrary, the terrorist groups — including the Al-Aksa Martyrs Brigade, a branch of Abbas' own Fatah Party that claimed responsibility for the Afula bombing — sent a clear message that they will not allow the new Palestinian premier to change the name of the game.

Despite all the hope when the road map was presented three weeks ago, prospects for peace depend on what happens locally on the ground, at least as much as on outside forces.

When they met last Saturday night, Sharon told Abbas that he did not have a majority for the road map in the Cabinet, mentioning his hawkish transportation minister, Avigdor Lieberman, as a major obstacle — to which Abbas responded that he had a thousand Liebermans of his own. □

Israel to deport activist

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel said it would deport a Canadian activist who was arrested in the West Bank city of Hebron.

Greg Rowllins, a volunteer with the Christian Peacemaker Team, was arrested Monday while trying to cross into the Palestinian section of Hebron.

Israel has tightened restrictions on foreign activists in recent days, following news that two British citizens responsible for a suicide attack that killed three people in a Tel Aviv pub on April 30 had met beforehand with members of one prominent group of pro-Palestinian activists. □

Knesset mulls chief rabbi bill

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Knesset gave preliminary approval to a bill that would reduce the number of chief rabbis in Israel from two to one.

There are currently both Ashkenazi and Sephardi chief rabbis.

"The separation of Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews is no longer relevant," the bill reads.

A bill must pass three Knesset votes before it becomes law. □

JEWISH WORLD

Lieberman: I won't be silent

Joseph Lieberman said he and other Democratic presidential candidates should be free to speak out on President Bush's Middle East policy.

The Connecticut senator said the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is "too important for American security and regional security for us to accept some kind of gag rule." He was responding to a request from Jewish Democratic donors for candidates to avoid criticizing the "road map" to Israeli-Palestinian peace or other presidential efforts in the region.

Lieberman said he supports the road map's goal, but doesn't think the plan will be effective.

Judge: Settle Concordia dispute

A dispute between a Canadian university's student union and its Hillel should be solved in-house, a Canadian judge ruled recently.

The Hillel at Concordia University in Montreal is suing for \$100,000 in punitive damages after the school temporarily suspended the Hillel after a Hillel table included fliers about a program that encourages Diaspora Jews to volunteer in the Israeli army.

Hillel has refused to sign a statement that would allow it to receive money from the student union, since it would obligate Hillel not to distribute material that the student union finds offensive.

Judge Francois Belanger suspended proceedings in the case, which will be resumed only if the university is unable to handle the issue.

Jerusalem synagogue vandalized

A Reform synagogue in Jerusalem was vandalized. Windows in Mevakshei Derech were smashed and rocks were thrown inside earlier this week, Israel Radio reported. There was no damage inside, the report said.

Berlusconi vows to help Jews

Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi on Wednesday pledged to promote sympathy for Israel in Europe. Speaking Wednesday to World Jewish Congress leaders in Rome, Berlusconi also said he would fight anti-Semitism and work to broker Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Speaking less than two months before Italy takes over the six-month rotating E.U. presidency, Berlusconi told a WJC delegation that he planned to fly to Israel next month to meet with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Brazil gets a Hillel

Hillel opened its first office in Brazil. Some 400 people attended the grand opening earlier this week in Sao Paulo.

A second Brazilian branch of Hillel is expected to open soon in Rio de Janeiro.

McDonald's to sponsor kosher ed. after lawsuit proceeds divvied up

By Rachel Pomerance

NEW YORK (JTA) — McDonald's and kashrut? Only in Israel, one might think.

But an Illinois court ruled Tuesday that the world's most ubiquitous burger joint must sink \$1 million into education about Judaism's kosher laws.

The money is part of \$10 million that McDonald's must divide among a variety of plaintiffs after it was found that french fries and hash browns advertised as vegetarian in fact contained some beef flavoring.

The ruling by the Cook County circuit court ended a lawsuit that cobbled together class-action suits by plaintiffs around the country.

Ultimately, \$6 million was assigned to vegetarian groups, \$2 million to Hindu and Sikh organizations, \$1 million to children's charities and \$1 million to Jewish groups.

Jeff Rubin, director of communications for Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life — which will receive \$300,000 in the settlement — compared the case to the Chanukah miracle.

"It's another positive thing that came out of hot oil," he said. "This will help us to promote an understanding of kashrut on college campuses around the world."

The plaintiff's lawyers determined the allocation based on the number of individuals that likely were affected by the mislabeling, said Cory Fein, a Houston lawyer who coordinated the allocation recommendations.

The following five Jewish groups were selected to divide the \$1 million:

- The Jewish Community Centers Association will receive \$200,000 to develop curricula about kosher food laws and practices. The curricula will be distributed to JCC's throughout the country and staff will be trained to develop new educational programs.

- The Orthodox Union will receive \$150,000 for education about kosher observances via meetings and publications and on its Web site. The money also will go toward educating kosher food supervisors, through national seminars, for example.

- Star-K/Torah.org will receive \$300,000 to expand its Web site to offer an online, interactive course for schools, hospitals, synagogues and others on creating and maintaining a kosher kitchen. Among other services, the site will respond to questions from individuals who observe dietary laws less strictly and will provide research on the kosher status of nutritional supplements.

- CLAL — National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership will get \$50,000 to host conferences on kashrut and disseminate the resulting ideas.

- Two-thirds of Hillel's allotment will go toward building and renovating kosher dining facilities on campus. The remaining amount will be used for an educational program, "You Are What You Eat: A Kashrut Conversation," and to supply students with kosher recipes.

Several other Jewish organizations supplied educational proposals for consideration, but the lawyers wanted to select only a handful of groups.

Last month, the court rejected one of the selected groups, National Ramah Commission, which was slated to receive \$450,000, because a McDonald's attorney was affiliated with the Conservative camps, Fein said. The group was removed to avoid the appearance of impropriety.

In its place, the court approved Hillel. The remaining funds apportioned to Ramah were split between the JCCA, which received an extra \$50,000, and Star-K and Torah.org, which got an extra \$100,000.

Some vegetarian charities that did not receive funds are discussing an appeal, which must be filed within 30 days of the ruling. If there is no appeal in that time, McDonald's will begin disbursing the money.

A McDonald's spokesman said the beef flavoring was added at the facilities of their potato suppliers, not in McDonald's restaurants.

He also denied that the products were "mis-labeled," saying the company's use of the term "natural flavoring" fell within FDA guidelines. But, he added, "in isolated instances" the company "unintentionally gave vegetarian consumers inaccurate information about our fries." □

Canada denies man refugee status, citing link to Israeli 'war crimes'

By Bill Gladstone

TORONTO (JTA) — Canada has denied refugee status to a Lebanese man on the grounds that he was an accomplice to alleged Israeli war crimes, including murder and torture, in southern Lebanon.

The claimant, known only as Mr. X, spied on Hezbollah in southern Lebanon for Israel's Mossad intelligence service, according to the Immigration and Refugee Board, which denied Mr. X's application.

Ronen Gil-Or, a representative of the Israeli Embassy, rejected the board's allegations that Mr. X had participated in war crimes in Israel's service. "Israel did not and has not been involved in any war crimes or crimes against humanity in southern Lebanon or any other place," he said.

Mr. X, 41, reportedly was a merchant with business throughout Lebanon.

According to a partially classified document from the immigration board, Mr. X supplied the Mossad with a wide range of information about Hezbollah operatives, including the names of some 40 members of the organization. He was paid \$800 a month in 1998 and 1999 for this information.

Concerned for his safety after Israel withdrew from its security zone in southern Lebanon, Mr. X came to Canada in May 2000 and applied for refugee status later that year, after reading a report in an Arabic-language newspaper in Montreal that convinced him that Hezbollah was aware of his involvement with the Mossad.

A representative of Canada's Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration took the rare step of intervening in the case, arguing for Mr. X's exclusion because of his alleged involvement in war crimes, including "civilian displacements, house demolitions, murders, torture" and other acts.

However, the citizenship and immigration minister, Denis Coderre, repudiated the board's decision during a media scrum in Ottawa last Friday, saying it did not reflect Canadian policy toward Israel.

The board is a quasi-judicial independent body that operates at arms-length from the government.

The government representative who intervened, identified in the board document as a Ms. Shahin, cited a Geneva Convention article in her argument against Mr. X. Those articles relate to someone who has been involved in war crimes or crimes against humanity.

Several members of the right-wing, pro-Israel Canadian Alliance Party, the official opposition party in the Canadian Parliament, denounced the board's allegations about Israel, which came six months after the Canadian government listed Hezbollah as a terrorist organization.

"I think that the government of Canada as a whole has been confused and inconsistent about the true nature of Hezbollah," Jason Kenney, a member of Parliament from Canadian Alliance, told JTA.

"It was only a few months ago that our foreign affairs minister was referring to Hezbollah as a legitimate social and cultural organization, and it was less than a year ago that our prime minister shared a platform with" Hezbollah leader Sheik Hassan "Nasrallah, without blinking an eye.

"So I think it's fair to say that the government of Canada has had a less than sterling record about recognizing the evil of Hezbollah," he said.

Jewish groups also reacted angrily to the board's depiction of Israel as a rogue nation that routinely commits atrocities.

Joseph Wilder, national chairman of the Canada-Israel Committee, said the board's conclusion was "baseless" and reflected "a blatantly biased stance."

Stephane Handfield, the board adjudicator who penned the 10-page decision, based the conclusion on secondary sources such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and a Yahoo news service but failed to note that Canada has listed Hezbollah as a terrorist entity, observed David Goldberg, the Canada-Israel Committee's director of research.

"This is a civil servant who is ostensibly nonpartisan, and dealing with information that is clearly well beyond" his knowledge base," Goldberg said.

For reasons of confidentiality, the board has declined to comment on the case. Refugees whose claims are denied have 15 days to request leave to appeal from a federal court, according to Simone MacAndrew, a spokesperson for the Citizenship and Immigration Ministry.

Both the Canadian Jewish Congress and B'nai Brith Canada have sent letters of protest to the government.

"Mr. Handfield cites no credible support for his accusations of war criminality and breaches of the Geneva Convention, relying on anecdotal 'evidence' and speculations from newspaper clippings and NGO reports," the congress letter read, referring to non-governmental organizations.

The letter also noted that both Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International "have habitually accepted at face value egregious anti-Israel Arab propaganda and have displayed an unseemly willingness to rush to judgment to condemn Israel for events, such as the putative 'massacre of Jenin,' that never happened."

B'nai Brith Canada officials expressed dismay that the board "would apparently take the position that Israel is guilty of war crimes, based on 'documentation' that comes from sources that are known to be predisposed against Israel."

Kenney said he would attempt to raise the matter in Canada's House of Commons when it reconvenes later this month. □

Holocaust hero dies at 85

NEW YORK (JTA) — Irene Gut Opdyke, a native of Poland who agreed to serve as a German officer's mistress to save the lives of Jews during the Holocaust, died Saturday at 85.

In 1940, Opdyke, who was later named a Righteous Gentile, befriended 12 Jews who were forced to work as dressmakers and tailors for the Nazis in Tamopol, Poland. She hid them in the laundry room of a confiscated villa where she worked as a housekeeper for a German officer.

One day, the 70-year-old major discovered her secret and said he would keep it only if she became his mistress. Whenever Opdyke overheard Nazi plans to destroy Jewish ghettos, she warned residents.

She also stole food and supplies that she would deliver to about 150 Polish partisans and Jews hiding in a nearby forest. Opdyke's 1999 book, "In My Hands: Memories of a Holocaust Survivor," is being turned into a movie. □