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86th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel may release prisoners

The Israeli Cabinet approved criteria for releasing Palestinian prisoners. At Sunday's Cabinet meeting, the measure passed in its third vote by a 13-8 count.

The ministers agreed to the resolution after it was amended to include the creation of a ministerial committee on prisoner releases, and after a clause was added stressing that the release is dependent upon Palestinian fulfillment of the commitment to fight terrorism.

According to the criteria, Sharon said no Palestinian prisoners who have murdered Israelis would be released, reports said. During the Cabinet meeting, families of terror victims demonstrated outside the Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem against the prisoner release.

P.A. demands prisoner release

Israel must release all Palestinian prisoners or the cease-fire will be null and void, a Palestinian Authority official said.

Hisham Abdel Razek, who is responsible for prisoner affairs in the Palestinian Authority, was quoted Sunday as saying that an Israeli failure to release all prisoners would push Palestinians to abrogate their cease-fire. He told Army Radio that Israel could implement the releases gradually.

Hamas and Islamic Jihad have also said they would consider the cease-fire broken if Israel does not release their members.

Sharon headed to White House

Ariel Sharon accepted an invitation to a White House meeting with President Bush in September. Bush phoned the Israeli prime minister July 2 to congratulate him on the recent progress in contacts between Israel and the Palestinians.

Europeans back hate crimes laws

European lawmakers passed a resolution urging their respective governments to pass legislation that would fight anti-Semitism. Meeting in the Netherlands on Sunday, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe adopted the resolution. The resolution says unhappiness with Israeli policies toward the Palestinians is being used to camouflage anti-Semitism.

Under pressure from France, E.U. decides against Hamas ban

By Philip Carmel

PARIS (JTA) — Under heavy pressure from France, the European Union has said it will not freeze all assets belonging to the Palestinian organization Hamas, stating that a clear distinction should be made between the political and social wings of the Islamist movement.

The European Commission, the E.U.'s legislative body, announced late last month that it would not be acting against the political wing of Hamas, although it would retain an E.U. ban enforced last year on Hamas' military branch, which it regards as a terrorist organization.

The commission view was confirmed on July 3 at a meeting of European ministers in Brussels, where a unanimous decision was made to delay a verdict on the political wing of Hamas.

Moreover, no date has been set to review the position.

The decision not to ban Hamas' political wing marks international uncertainty over whether it has a constructive role to play in Middle East peace talks — or whether it is simply a terrorist entity.

The decision also marks a clear change in direction from the E.U. summit in Salonika, Greece, at the end of last month when it appeared that those backing a total ban were in a clear majority. According to a statement from commission spokesman Reijo Kempinen, Hamas' political wing is legitimate because it provided social welfare services such as running clinics and hospitals.

"You can't say that the whole of Hamas is a terrorist organization, and certainly that is not our position," Kempinen told reporters in Brussels.

However, a more likely reason for the E.U. decision appeared to be that the union did not want to undermine the position of Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas in his attempts to broker an agreement with Hamas.

"The situation is still evolving in the region, and because of that it is important to keep studying it," the news agency AFP reported an unnamed British diplomat as saying.

One of the major E.U. members arguing for the bloc to refrain from enforcing a total ban on Hamas was France, which continues to believe that the organization has a role in the Middle East peace process.

The French position also appeared somewhat vindicated by the announcement early last week of a cease-fire by Hamas and another Palestinian Islamist group, Islamic Jihad, as well as by the armed wing of Yasser Arafat's Fatah organization.

Spokespeople with the French Foreign Ministry rejected demands from the U.S. administration to place both the armed and "welfare functions" of Hamas in the same category, a position they said was "not shared by France," which regarded Hamas as "representing a wide body of opinion in the Palestinian territories."

"The E.U. has listed the armed wing, but social organizations of Hamas have also got to be listed," the U.S. national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, said at a conference last month in London.

"The notion that on the one hand, Hamas is peaceful, and on the other hand, is trying to blow up the peace process is just illogical and, we're saying, will not work," Rice said.

Such a view, however, was rejected by a spokesman from the French Foreign Ministry.

"There has been a very clear distinction between the two wings, and the minister

MIDEAST FOCUS

Mofaz, Dahlan meet

Israel's defense minister, Shaul Mofaz, and his Palestinian counterpart, Mohammed Dahlan, were due to meet Sunday to discuss further Israeli army withdrawals from Palestinian cities.

The Palestinian Authority publication Al-Ayyam said the Palestinians were expected to demand that Israel withdraw from Ramallah or Hebron this week, Israel Radio reported.

However, Mofaz said Israel should not rush into any further redeployments after withdrawing from parts of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank city of Bethlehem last week. Mofaz also said that the number of terrorist alerts have decreased since a Palestinian cease-fire went into effect early last week.

New group joins cease-fire

A breakaway Palestinian group said it would join the cease-fire.

In a statement released Sunday, the Popular Resistance Committees, a coalition of Palestinians mainly from Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, said it would join the week-old truce. But a spokesman for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine said his group would not join the cease-fire.

Overseas student enrollment up

Overseas applications are up at Israeli universities. Tel Aviv University said it has already accepted more than three times as many students as last year into an English-language graduate studies program, the daily Ha'aretz reported.

The report said that applications to master's programs for overseas university students at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem are also returning to pre-intifada levels. Before the outbreak of the intifada, some 340 students were enrolled in the programs through the Rothberg International School for Overseas Students, the report said.



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himself has called for that distinction to be made between the armed wings and the social organizations in the Palestinian territories," the spokesman said at a Foreign Ministry news conference.

According to Francois Zimeray, a French member of the European Parliament, the position adopted by the European Commission is "totally artificial."

"Only a diplomat cut off from the human reality of the situation in the Middle East could make such distinctions," Zimeray told the JTA. "There is only one branch of Hamas."

Zimeray, who has led a campaign in the European Parliament to demand an investigation into the misuse of E.U. funds by the Palestinian Authority, said French policy was "like running with the hare and the hounds and the highest form of hypocrisy."

Until the decision, France was the only nation among the 15 members of the European Union to publicly say it opposed a ban on the non-military branch of Hamas, a policy it said would force the organization underground and prevent any possibility that it would agree to a cease-fire.

However, most of the E.U. members, led by Britain, continued to back Washington's line that no distinction be made between the different organizations operating under the Hamas umbrella.

The E.U. position took on a different perspective, probably because as a member of the "Quartet" of Middle East peace-brokers, it was already aware of the likelihood that Hamas might accept a cease-fire.

At a meeting late last month with E.U. leaders in Washington, President Bush said the group should take "decisive measures against terrorist groups like Hamas, to cut off their funds and their sources of support."

Such comments, however, drew a firm rebuke from the office of the E.U.'s commissioner for foreign affairs, Chris Patten, whose spokesman said the group "does not need to take lessons from anybody about how to combat terrorism."

Ironically, the current French position regarding Hamas comes at a time when France has been seeking to present a more balanced approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Recently, a number of government ministers were present at an event in Paris titled "12 Hours for France-Israel Friendship."

The event brought together politicians from across the political spectrum who affirmed their support for the State of Israel and expressed a wish that French foreign policy would return to its more favorable stance toward the Jewish state which had been lost in the aftermath of the 1967 Six-Day War.

Moreover, French Jewish leaders were keen to assert the historic bonds between Israel and France at a time when relations had deteriorated, with France adopting a strong anti-war position in response to the U.S.-led military operation in Iraq.

Despite a general tone of mutual back-slapping at the pro-Israel event, Meyer Habib, the head of the event's organizing committee and a member of the executive committee of the CRIF umbrella organization of French Jews, drew widespread applause when he criticized current French policy toward Israel.

Habib said he was unable to understand a policy which did not recognize Hamas and the Lebanese Shi'a group "Hezbollah as terrorist organizations, and which did not recognize Jerusalem as the eternal and indivisible capital of Israel." □

Second anti-Semitism conference planned

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Colin Powell confirmed plans to hold a second international conference on anti-Semitism next year in Berlin.

The U.S. secretary of state met July 3 with representatives from the U.S. delegation to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's conference on anti-Semitism last month in Vienna, including Rudolph Giuliani, the former mayor of New York, and Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League.

Giuliani said a "tremendous amount of work" will be needed between now and next year to fight anti-Semitism.

"I believe this can have a very, very big impact," he said. "But it's going to have to be sustained over a long period of time." □

JEWISH WORLD

Death camp lawsuit dropped

A lawsuit to block a monument being built at the Belzec death camp in Poland has been withdrawn.

Norman Salsitz of New Jersey, a Holocaust survivor and author who lost 23 relatives at Belzec, said he withdrew a federal court injunction request against the American Jewish Committee, which is leading the \$4 million project, because his wife is terminally ill.

Salsitz, who was supported by the Coalition for Jewish Concerns-Amcha, said he still opposes the monument because it includes a "trench" for a walkway through the camp that he alleges will disturb the remains of Jewish victims. The AJCommittee has denied the charges.

Suspect: Jewish sites targeted

A Palestinian terror suspect has admitted in a German court that he took part in planning hand-grenade attacks on Jewish targets in Dusseldorf and Berlin.

The attacks, however, were never carried out.

The information was divulged last Friday during a trial of suspected members of the Al-Tawhid group, which is considered to be part of the Al-Qaida network.

Claudia Neeuhaus, spokesperson for Dusseldorf's Higher Regional Court, told JTA that the Palestinian suspect, Mustafa A., said the targets were to be a Jewish-owned bar in Dusseldorf, as well as a local discotheque that is popular among a Jewish clientele and the Jewish Museum in Berlin.

Judge: Hamas must pay

A U.S. judge ruled that Hamas is liable for more than \$116 million in damages for the deaths of two Israeli settlers. The July 3 ruling involves the 1996 killings of Yaron Ungar, an American citizen, and his Israeli wife, Efrat.

The case was filed under the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1991 that allows American victims of overseas terrorism to seek financial damages in U.S. courts.

O.U. picks youth leader

The Orthodox Union named a veteran Canadian youth leader as head of its national youth group, which had been clouded by a sex-abuse scandal. On July 3, the centrist Orthodox group named Zale Newman of Toronto, a 35-year veteran of its National Conference of Synagogue Youth, as national director.

Newman, the creator of the educational program "Uncle Moishy and the Mitzvah Men," vowed to fight assimilation and intermarriage. Rabbi Baruch Lanner was imprisoned last year after being found guilty of sexually abusing two teen-aged girls while serving as a yeshiva principal and as an NCSY executive and youth leader.

White House's new Jewish liaison is conservative, Orthodox — and known

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The White House has named domestic policy adviser Tevi Troy as the administration's new liaison to the Jewish community.

Troy was a policy director for Attorney General John Ashcroft when Ashcroft was a Republican senator from Missouri. He publicly defended Ashcroft against criticism from Jewish leaders during Ashcroft's confirmation hearings for the attorney general post in 2001.

Troy, who was sworn in early last week, will retain his domestic policy portfolio but will also assume responsibility for communicating with the Jewish community on domestic and foreign affairs issues. He replaces Adam Goldman, who had served as liaison since Bush came to office but who announced in the spring that he was leaving the White House for the private sector.

Troy was unavailable for comment.

Troy, who is Orthodox, previously served the Bush administration as deputy assistant secretary for policy at the Department of Labor.

Nathan Diament, director of the Orthodox Union's Institute for Public Affairs, called Troy "philosophically very much a political conservative."

"He sees an opportunity for President Bush and Republicans to make gains in the Jewish community," Diament said.

The White House has made numerous efforts in recent weeks and months to court the American Jewish community's vote and its political and financial influence. Goldman and others at the White House were said to have angered more liberal leaders of American Jewish organizations by allegedly bypassing their counsel in favor of more conservative Jews.

Troy's appointment may concern Jewish leaders who oppose Ashcroft's views on the separation of church and state and on civil liberties issues. But he is considered a known entity within Washington Jewish circles, and one who works well with Jewish organizational leaders.

Troy may have an advantage in enunciating administration policy to liberal members of the Jewish community because of his familiarity with the players, as opposed to Goldman, who served with Bush in Texas and had no Washington experience when he joined the White House.

"It's good to have somebody who has a sense of the community in that position," said Jess Hordes, Washington director of the Anti-Defamation League. "The key to his success will be to have an open door to the community and explain the views of the community to the White House."

Some have speculated that Troy's retention of the domestic policy portfolio could hurt the Jewish community by diverting his time and attention. But supporters note that Goldman also held other portfolios, and that Troy will have access to senior White House officials.

"It helps the community in that they have a very strong, smart person who understands the varied issues the Jewish community cares about, and he has access to the top decision makers," said Matthew Brooks, executive director of the Republican Jewish Coalition.

Troy is the author of "Intellectuals and the American Presidency: Philosophers, Jesters or Technicians?" The book, which came out last year, discusses how presidents can benefit from seeking the counsel of intellectuals.

During Ashcroft's 2001 confirmation hearings, Troy wrote in *The New Republic* about his experiences with the former senator, whose devout religious beliefs concerned many liberal leaders of Jewish organizations.

"What most liberals and most Jews don't understand about people like Ashcroft is that their deep respect for religious faith genuinely transcends sectarian divides," Troy wrote. "And that often makes it easier for me, as a religious Jew, to work for them than for Jews or Christians who don't take any religion seriously as a force in people's lives." □

Contentious BBC documentary proves to be last straw for Israel

By Andrew Morris

LONDON (JTA) — Tensions over media coverage of the Middle East has reached new heights with Israel's decision to boycott the BBC after it re-aired a controversial documentary.

The head of Israel's Government Press Office, Danny Seaman, described the BBC as having a "biased and hostile coverage policy." He condemned the decision to rebroadcast the documentary, "Israel's Secret Weapon," on the international channel BBC World.

The recent decision by Israeli officials to sever ties with the world's largest broadcaster is seen as a final step in an ongoing dispute over BBC reporting on Israel, which Israeli officials increasingly see as infused with anti-Israel and anti-Semitic sentiment.

In response, the British media organization said it stands behind its decision to broadcast the film.

Israel chose not to respond when the film first was shown here in March. By airing the program a second time, however, the BBC was allowing "ridiculous false assertions" to be broadcast, Seaman said.

The documentary focuses on Israel's unconventional weapons program and claims that Israel used unspecified nerve gas against the Palestinians — a claim unsupported by any evidence, and which Israel strenuously denies.

The film also compares Israel to the former Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein, saying double standards exist with regard to Israel's alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction.

Before the documentary was broadcast, trailers ran asking: "Which country in the Middle East has undeclared nuclear weapons? Which country in the Middle East has undeclared biological and chemical capabilities? Which country in the Middle East has no outside inspections? Which country jailed its nuclear whistle-blower for 18 years?"

Calling the broadcast "the last straw," Seaman maintained that Israel had no choice but to take action against the broadcaster.

"We decided that we had to draw a red line rather than just complain about a consistent attitude in which successive BBC programs attempt to place us in the same context as totalitarian, axis-of-evil countries such as Iraq and Iran," Seaman said.

Practical steps Israel will take against the British state broadcaster include sparing issuance of press credentials and a refusal to honor BBC requests for assistance in passing military roadblocks into the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

BBC journalists will be allowed to attend news conferences and cover news freely but will not be given access to official spokesmen, and restrictions on their visas will be rigorously enforced.

According to reports, Israel repeatedly asked the BBC not to rebroadcast the contentious documentary. The decision to impose sanctions on the organization was reached by the Prime Minister's Office, the Foreign Ministry and Israel's media office.

Commenting on what Jerusalem sees as the litany of anti-Israel reportage by the BBC, Seaman said the overall attitude of the broadcaster was "verging on anti-Semitic."

"There is no recognition inside the corporation of the sensitiv-

ity of a people who faced attempted annihilation," he said. "The attitude of the BBC is more than pure journalistic matter; it is dangerous to the existence of the State of Israel because it demonizes the Israelis and gives our terrorist enemies reasons to attack us."

A BBC spokesperson, however, said no official complaint had reached the corporation in London or its six-person Jerusalem bureau.

"Once we are notified we will respond, but we regret anything Israel might do to hinder BBC journalists. We would like to continue our excellent relationship with all parties in the country," the spokesperson told JTA.

Richard Sambrook, director of BBC News, said the corporation "stands behind the veracity of the film."

Previously, Israel has lodged complaints against a number of individual reporters and programs. These include the BBC's June 2001 episode of the investigative program, Panorama. Entitled "The Accused," the episode focused on the alleged role of Israel's then-defense minister, Ariel Sharon, in the 1982 massacre of Palestinians by Lebanese Christians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. The program, which implied that Sharon should be placed on trial for crimes against humanity, ignored material that exonerates him.

The Israeli government also has taken the BBC to task for describing groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad as militants rather than terrorists — even though Britain's own government deems them terrorist groups.

The Board of Deputies, the umbrella organization that represents most British Jews, complained to the BBC earlier in the year about inaccuracies in Israel's country profile on the BBC Web site. The site suggested that Israel was solely responsible for the failure to reach a peace agreement with the Palestinians.

The board declined to comment to JTA about Israel's recent step.

Meanwhile, Seaman told the London Times, "The BBC will discover that bureaucracy can be applied with goodwill or without it. And after the way that they have repeatedly tried to de-legitimize the State of Israel, we, as hosts, have none left for them."

Some members of the U.K. media were puzzled by Israel's actions. A former freelance news reporter and producer for the BBC told JTA that despite the perception that the BBC indeed is prone to anti-Israel sentiment, Jerusalem is harming itself with the boycott.

"It is a very British thing to side with the perceived underdog, and in this case the Palestinians take that role," said the reporter, who asked not to be named. "The BBC is reflecting that widespread public opinion." □

Law may hurt Papon

PARIS (JTA) — Convicted Nazi-era war criminal Maurice Papon could be forced to hand over his pension under a new law, Justice Minister Dominique Perben said.

Speaking last Friday, Perben was reacting to a decision by a Paris court earlier the same day that reinstated Papon's pension as a former government minister. The former Vichy official had been deprived of his pension rights after he was sentenced to 10 years in prison in 1999 for crimes against humanity for his role in deporting some 1,500 Jews during World War II. □