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86th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Kidnapped cabbie rescued

An elite unit of Israeli soldiers rescued an Israeli cab driver who was kidnapped by Palestinians.

Special forces located Eliyahu Gurel, 61, who had been missing since Friday afternoon, near the West Bank city of Ramallah close to midnight Tuesday, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported.

Soldiers broke into an abandoned building to find Gurel alone and bound after his captors apparently fled. Gurel was taken to a hospital for medical tests.

Red Cross funding criticized

Jewish leaders are reacting with dismay to the news that Secretary of State Colin Powell has certified that Israel's emergency relief agency is fully participating in the functions of the International Red Cross.

Powell's designation allows the U.S. government to give \$11 million in aid to the international movement.

Last week's decision comes even though the Red Cross movement has not allowed Magen David Adom to formally join because it does not utilize a cross or crescent as its emblem, and Arab groups have prevented the movement from accepting the star of David.

"We will be satisfied when Israel is a full member. We shouldn't give up our leverage until Israel is admitted," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

Earlier this year, the Red Cross and Magen David Adom agreed to international committee support for the Israeli agency in emergency medical preparation, disaster management and tracing of missing persons.

Israeli killed in stabbing attack

One Israeli was killed and two were wounded Monday night in a terrorist stabbing on the Tel Aviv seafloor.

The eastern Jerusalem resident who carried out the attack was shot in the leg by a passerby and arrested. A cell that said it was part of the Al-Aksa Brigade, the militia of Yasser Arafat's mainstream Fatah movement, claimed responsibility for the stabbing, but Al-Aksa later denied the claim.

The victim, Amir Simhon, 24, of Bat Yam, was buried Tuesday. Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas condemned the attack.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Wiping egg from his face, pollster learns it's tough to change culture

By Matthew Gutman

TEL AVIV (JTA) — One of the central points of the "road map" peace plan is for the Palestinians to cease anti-Israel incitement and move to a style of public discourse that favors reconciliation.

Some might say that a recent poll of Palestinian refugees, indicating that few would want to implement a "right of return" to their former homes inside Israel, does just that — promoting reconciliation by helping to defuse one of the most controversial issues separating the two sides.

But that might have been precisely the problem.

About 200 rioters stormed the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research on Sunday as the center was about to publish a poll indicating that the overwhelming majority of refugees preferred to receive monetary compensation or settle in other areas, rather than return to their former homes.

In the end, center director Khalil Shikaki — himself a refugee — cancelled the news conference called to discuss the survey results, wiping not just metaphorical but actual egg off his face.

"They ran in here, smashing everything. They broke all of our furniture, the windows, throwing eggs and physically attacking us," one of the center's researchers told JTA. "It was horrifying."

For advocates of reform, the incident served as a nasty reminder of how difficult — and potentially bloody — it will be to change the Palestinian culture of violence and rejectionism.

This is hardly the first such incident that reform-minded Palestinians have encountered: Last October, following his statement that the Palestinians would have to compromise on the right of return, Sari Nusseibeh received death threats.

Leaflets attributed to Fatah, the ruling Palestinian political party, circulated in Ramallah condemning to death all those who would compromise on the right of return. Most Israelis see the call for a right of return as a veiled demand to dismantle the Jewish state through demography.

Nusseibeh, president of eastern Jerusalem's Al Quds University and at the time the top P.A. representative in Jerusalem, publicly downplays the threats. In private, however, he acknowledges that a sniper's bullet could cut him down at any time.

Still, since the road map was launched last month, many in the Palestinian media are trying to change the political culture to foster a gentler image of Israel.

Even Israeli officials say they see the beginnings of moderation in the Palestinian media, which are heavily influenced by the governing Palestinian Authority.

"We are trying to support the hudna," Gaza television host Hazem Abu Shanab told JTA, using an Arabic word for the temporary cease-fire Palestinian terror groups declared a few weeks ago. "Much of our efforts are now concentrated in selling the hudna to the people."

According to Abu Shanab, television programs have adopted new terminology and increasingly are geared to presenting "the Israelis as partially responsive to peace."

Palestinian media officials also are trying to filter out "Israeli statements about violence, possible reinvasions and aggression," Abu Shanab said.

Israeli troops left the Gaza Strip three weeks ago and Bethlehem two weeks ago in the initial stages of the road map. But Israel has refused to withdraw troops from other

MIDEAST FOCUS

Sharon presses Britain on Abbas

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is urging British leaders to press the Palestinian Authority prime minister, Mahmoud Abbas, to crack down on terrorists now.

Sharon's remarks came in talks Monday and Tuesday with British Prime Minister Tony Blair and other British leaders, according to an Israeli diplomat.

A spokesman for Blair called the meeting "warm and constructive," according to Reuters.

3 suspected terrorists arrested

Israeli troops arrested six wanted Palestinians in the West Bank, including three suspected of planning to carry out a suicide attack in the near future.

In the Gaza Strip, mortar and gunfire were directed at Israeli troops, but caused no injuries.

Karine-A sold for scrap metal

The Israeli navy sold a Palestinian weapons ship it seized to an Indian buyer for scrap metal.

The Karine-A weapons ship set sail for India this week from a navy base in the Red Sea resort of Eilat, Israel Radio reported.

In January 2002, Israeli navy commandos seized the Karine-A ship, loaded with some 80 tons of weapons from Iran bound for the Palestinian Authority.

The Israeli navy had considered sinking the ship off the coast of Eilat and turning it into a diving site, the report said, but the army dropped that plan because of maintenance costs.

Israeli army chief in Washington

The Israeli army chief was due to meet with senior U.S. administration officials and military officers in Washington on Tuesday.

Lt. Gen. Moshe Ya'alon's visit is a routine working trip scheduled several months ago, Israel Radio reported.



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Palestinian cities in the West Bank until it is confident that the Palestinian Authority will crack down on terrorist groups operating there.

In Bethlehem, Nasser Laham, who owns the influential local cable station "Bethlehem TV," increasingly relies on local Palestinian reporters rather than those of the massive Gulf satellite conglomerates, finding them more sensitive to local issues and generally less prone to incitement.

"We are also trying to concentrate on the future and not the past," he said, presenting viewers with images of "a quieter, more comfortable future."

Most importantly, Laham said, Bethlehem TV is working to counter the clout of local clans and small neighborhood groups, fostering "a greater, unified Palestinian structure, one with a single Palestinian policing force."

Laham, who comes from a family of refugees — his cousin is an administrator of the Dehaishe refugee camp — believes Israel and a future Palestinian state can coexist peacefully. An avid reader of Israeli newspapers, his office is plastered with pictures clipped from the mass circulation dailies, Yediot Achronot and Ma'ariv.

Paramount right now is the need to wean Palestinian viewers and readers from what was, until a few weeks ago, a steady diet of "martyrs," gore and "Israeli atrocities."

The Palestinians have grown so addicted to the violent images screened nightly that "we have forgotten what it is to live a normal life," Laham said.

Some of the efforts to reduce anti-Israel incitement are not well received. While the whitewashing of some anti-Israel graffiti in Gaza met with great fanfare, the vast majority of the sprawling Palestinian city was left untouched.

Few are willing to take on the job, both because the workload is so great — pictures of dead terrorists, Kassam rockets, AK-47s and other Palestinian symbols mark miles of walls in the maze-like refugee camps — and because it is highly unpopular.

Likewise, Palestinian journalists and researchers find it increasingly difficult to overcome the anti-Israel sentiment that their own outlets have helped stoke.

"Our work is not having an effect on the people because Israelis are acting differently, not fully accepting the truce," Abu Shanab claimed. "The people feel that there are no real changes on the Israeli side."

But the real pressure may be coming from his own side.

"We are constantly threatened for this stance. I personally have had to reduce my TV time," Abu Shanab said. "It's not because I don't believe in peace, it's just that the people don't think the hudna does anything for them."

Part of this stems from P.A. Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas' failure to secure a blanket prisoner release from Israel.

Other factors are the first tentative steps by the P.A.'s minister for security, Mohammed Dahlan, against terrorists in the Gaza Strip.

Abbas and Dahlan "are losing their strength in the fight for Palestinian public opinion, which makes things very hard for us," Abu Shanab said.

Like many Palestinians, he harbors misgivings about Shikaki's poll.

"I believe that he was well-paid to publish those figures," said Abu Shanab, alleging that the United States might have been behind the "doctored" results.

"How can it be that only 10 percent of Palestinians supported the full right of return, when 70 percent of Palestinians worldwide are refugees?" he asked.

By pressing on the most sensitive issue for Palestinians — the right of return — Shikaki "strayed too far from the line," Abu Shanab said.

"For us, these issues should be restricted areas," he said. □

Guides sue for lost earnings

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Forty-two Israeli tour guides are suing the Palestinian Authority on Tuesday for lost earnings allegedly due to intifada violence.

The lawsuit, which seeks more than \$12 million in damages, was filed in Jerusalem District Court on Tuesday.

It says the violence that began in September 2000 reduced the guides' earnings by 80 percent and, in some cases, put tour guides out of business entirely. In a similar move, more than 300 flower growers have filed a class action lawsuit demanding more than \$30 million in compensation from the government and the Palestinian Authority for lost earnings due to a shortage of workers since the intifada began. □

JEWISH WORLD

U.S. to evaluate anti-Semitism

The U.S. House of Representatives passed a provision requiring the State Department to check for anti-Americanism or anti-Semitism in foreign textbooks.

The provision, added to the House's version of the State Department Authorization Act, requires the department to include information about the promotion of violence and hatred in foreign schools as part of the department's annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices.

Lawmakers praise Palestinian aid

Several Jewish lawmakers praised President Bush's decision to provide direct aid to the Palestinian Authority.

Reps. Gary Ackerman (D-N.Y.) and Howard Berman (D-Calif.) have joined Rep. Lois Capps (D-Calif.) in a letter to President Bush, expressing support for the \$20 million in aid to the Palestinian Authority that Bush approved last week.

Bush's move was the first time the United States has provided aid directly to the Palestinian Authority.

ONAD hears funding requests

The overseas partners of the Jewish federation system made formal proposals to the committee that determines their allocations.

In meetings Sunday and Monday in New York, the Jewish Agency for Israel, which runs immigration and absorption, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, which runs relief and welfare abroad, and World ORT, a Jewish education and training group, made requests for aid in 2004 to the United Jewish Communities' Overseas Needs Assessment and Distribution Committee.

The Jewish Agency requested more than \$160 million and JDC requested \$70 million.

ORT asked that a group study the organization to better define its financial needs. In 2003, the groups said they received \$143 million, \$45 million and \$3.5 million, respectively.

ONAD will reconvene in Chicago in September, but allocation decisions are not expected until the end of this year or the start of 2004.

Germany sets up art commission

Germany established a commission to deal with Holocaust-looted art.

The commission established Monday is expected to mediate between German museums and galleries and those who claim ownership of disputed artworks.

Many pieces have been returned to their rightful owners, but Jewish organizations say the art restitution is still unfinished.

Sharon trip to Britain called success, but some disagreements still remain

By Richard Allen Greene

LONDON (JTA) — Israeli officials are expressing delight with the results of a three-day visit to London by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Sharon's meetings with top British officials have largely laid to rest tensions that have flared between the two countries in the past year, they say.

"This was a very positive and warm visit," Israeli Embassy spokeswoman Shuli Davidovich said as Sharon's trip came to an end Tuesday night.

She emphasized the importance of a two-and-a-half hour private dinner Sharon had at Prime Minister Tony Blair's official residence, an honor accorded few visiting politicians.

The visit — Sharon's first major trip to a foreign capital since last October — was designed to put an end to the frustration London and Jerusalem have felt with each other for months.

Israel was particularly upset when London rolled out the red carpet for Syrian President Bashar Assad, widely considered in the West to be a major sponsor of terrorism.

There also was anger at a perceived snub to Benjamin Netanyahu, who visited Britain last year as Israeli foreign minister; a British-backed conference on Palestinian reform that excluded Israel; and British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw's apparent comparison of Israel to Saddam Hussein's Iraq.

Straw incensed Israel in March by saying that there were "double standards" at work in the West's treatment of Iraq and Israel.

But Straw welcomed Sharon warmly on Monday, praising "the huge amount of work you have been doing to help — in very great difficulties — the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians."

Israel and Britain resolved to "acknowledge that there were difficulties in the past, but to put aside those arguments and start better relations on a personal basis," Davidovich told JTA. "There is a willingness from both sides to highlight the issues they agree upon."

Despite the positive messages, there were still disagreements.

At the request of Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas, Britain urged Sharon to free more Palestinian prisoners as a confidence-building measure.

Israel has jailed about 6,500 Palestinians. It recently freed several hundred to boost Abbas' standing among the Palestinian public, but Sharon has said he cannot release prisoners with "blood on their hands," meaning those who have participated in terrorist attacks against Israel.

Blair also expressed unease about the security fence Israel is building to prevent terrorists from entering the country from the West Bank.

Sharon deflected Blair's comment, calling the fence "neither a political nor a military border, but an obstacle to infiltration," the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported.

For his part, Sharon had little success in convincing Britain to sever links with P.A. President Yasser Arafat.

"I think it's a major mistake to keep contact with Arafat because Arafat is undermining Abu Mazen's government," Sharon said in an interview with two British papers before his departure for London, referring to Abbas by his nom de guerre. "All those visits and telephone calls only postpone the solution here."

"Arafat is not interested in having a peace process or in reform," Davidovich agreed.

While terrorist groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad have agreed to a temporary cease-fire, the Al-Aksa Brigade — the terrorist militia of Arafat's own Fatah movement — has been more ambiguous. Statements Monday from Britain's Foreign Office seemed to indicate that Sharon had failed to persuade London to turn its back on Arafat. However, one insider advised against reading too much into the remarks.

"Behind the scenes, it's completely clear that Arafat is a discarded figure," David Mencer, director of the Labor Friends of Israel lobbying group, told JTA. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Release of diary entries harms Jews' fondness for Truman's show

By Peter Ephross

NEW YORK (JTA) — All children must come to grips with the news that their parents aren't infallible.

For many American Jews, something similar may be happening following the recent revelations that President Truman made anti-Semitic comments in his diaries, discovered last week at the Truman Library in his home state of Missouri.

"I think we're all upset to hear it because it's so much easier to hold the view of him as the great defender" of Jews and of Israel, said Deborah Dwork, director of the Strassler Family Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University in Worcester, Mass. "It was comforting to hold that view, and now that view is challenged."

Before the diary comments were released, Truman was best known in Jewish circles for making the United States the first country to recognize Israel after the Jewish state was declared in 1948 — and for passing refugee acts that allowed many Jews languishing in displaced persons camps to immigrate to the United States.

But the diary entries reveal another side to the buck-stops-here Truman, who succeeded Franklin Roosevelt as president in 1945 and served in the White House until 1952.

"The Jews, I find, are very, very selfish. They care not how many Estonians, Latvians, Finns, Poles, Yugoslavs or Greeks get murdered or mistreated as" displaced persons, "as long as the Jews get special treatment," Truman wrote in 1947.

"I know anti-Semitism when I see it. And that's anti-Semitism," said Deborah Lipstadt, the Dorot Professor of Modern Jewish and Holocaust Studies at Emory University in Atlanta.

Such comments were not out of character for Truman.

In 1946, he reportedly asked his Cabinet, "If Jesus Christ couldn't satisfy the Jews while on earth, how the hell am I supposed to?" said Warren Bass, author of "Support Any Friend: Kennedy's Middle East and the Making of the U.S.-Israel Alliance." Truman was not a particularly dedicated Zionist, Bass said. But he was "someone who was committed to alleviating the plight of refugees."

And that he did: The 1948 and 1950 Displaced Persons Acts allowed 200,000 additional European refugees, more than 80,000 of them Jews, to enter the United States.

Indeed, Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, remembers passengers on a ship of fellow displaced persons collecting money to send a cable of thanks to Truman for opening up U.S. shores to them after the war.

The entries show "how Truman reacted to being pressured. He would often express anger and exasperation when he was under pressure," said Mitchell Bard, author of "The Water's Edge and Beyond: Defining the Limits to Domestic Influence on United States Middle East Policy."

Right before the United Nations voted to partition Palestine in 1947, Truman received 35,000 letters from Jews supporting the plan, which eventually led to the State of Israel.

Truman reportedly said, "If the Jews would just keep quiet, everything will be all right," Bard said.

But Truman still committed the United States to vote for the partition plan, and even named a pro-Israel envoy, James McDonal, as the first U.S. ambassador to Israel.

"What's more important is the substantive decisions that he made. He really is the person who in many ways was responsible for the creation of Israel," Bard said.

But there's little doubt that even his supporters will cringe at some of the diary statements. "The Jews have no sense of proportion," Truman wrote after former Treasury Secretary Robert Morgenthau called to lobby him to intervene for 4,500 Jewish refugees aboard the Exodus ship, which had been seized by British soldiers as they were seeking entry into Palestine. "Nor do they have any judgment on world affairs."

Many Jews today might wish that Truman, known for his non-sense style, had held his tongue a little more.

"Wouldn't it have been great to remember Harry Truman as the man who helped" create the State of Israel and alleviate the plight of Jewish refugees, Dwork asked.

But the reality is different: Truman, a Missouri haberdasher before he entered politics, both imbibed and embodied the anti-Semitism of many Americans at the time.

"He was certainly anti-Semitic, he certainly had racist views of all kinds of people — and at the same time, had both personally friendly and commercial relationships with Jews," Dwork said.

As the diaries also show, Truman didn't single Jews out.

"Put an underdog on top it makes no difference whether his name is Russian, Jewish, Negro, Management, Labor, Mormon, Baptist he goes haywire. I've found very, very few who remember their past condition when prosperity comes," he wrote.

But the equal-opportunity criticism in such comments failed to mollify Foxman. "To compare us to those who were killing us makes it a bit worse," he said.

Truman is not the only former U.S. president whose reputation has suffered from anti-Semitism in recent years. President Nixon made disparaging comments about Jews while he was in office.

In 1996, declassified White House tapes indicated that Nixon urged his aides to go after Jewish Democrats and at least one Jewish Republican campaign official, according to a story in the Jewish Bulletin of Northern California.

After Watergate, however, Nixon was never held in the same public esteem as Truman — who now appears to have slipped a few steps off his pedestal.

"Here was another hero who crumbled," Foxman said. Truman is still a friend, "but a blemished friend." □

Jewish inmates lose vegan bid

NEW YORK (JTA) — Three Jewish prisoners were denied their request to receive a strictly vegan diet.

U.S. District Court Judge Shira Scheindlin in New York denied a request by the inmates, who demanded the state serve them vegan meals because consuming animal products violates their belief that Judaism prohibits cruelty to animals, The Associated Press reported.

The inmates, aged 17-24, said they had been living on peanut butter, crackers and potato chips and were suffering from weight loss and fatigue. But Scheindlin ruled that while the trio seemed sincere, they had not proven that they would suffer seriously without vegan fare. □