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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Explosion on Jerusalem bus

At least 18 people were killed in a bus bombing in Jerusalem. Dozens were wounded in the suicide bombing, which occurred Tuesday evening on a bus traveling from the Western Wall to a religious neighborhood of the capital. In light of the attack, Israel froze security talks and the withdrawal of Israeli troops from additional West Bank cities. [Page 1]

U.N. official mourned

Jewish groups mourned the death of the U.N. high commissioner for human rights, who died in a bombing Tuesday in Baghdad.

The death of Sergio Vieira de Mello, along with at least 16 others in the blast at the U.N. building, is a "huge loss to the international community," the Anti-Defamation League said in a statement.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center described the bombing as "another horrific reminder that terrorists are the enemies of peace and the very values that the United Nations was founded on."

The Canadian Jewish Congress' Keith Landy said: "That the U.N., which is there performing humanitarian aid, was attacked underscores that the war on terrorism is indivisible and there must be a total commitment to combating it everywhere."

Sentences in Moroccan terror

Morocco sentenced four men to death for their role in May suicide bombings that targeted several Jewish sites.

The men were convicted this week of plotting to be among the 12 suicide bombers who killed themselves in the attacks, which killed 32 bystanders.

No Jews died in the attacks, which targeted five sites, four of them connected to Jews.

Vandalism in German cemetery

A Jewish cemetery in central Germany suffered major vandalism. Workers arriving Monday found that 56 gravestones had been overturned in the cemetery at Kassel, which has stones dating back to the 16th century.

Police spokesperson Volker Pieper told JTA that the vandalism was the worst he had ever seen and must have been committed by several perpetrators. He said the incident likely took place over the weekend, when the cemetery usually is securely locked.

Massive Jerusalem bombing stokes fears and raises doubts

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA)—A massive bus bombing in Jerusalem has frozen steps that Israel was scheduled to take in transferring several West Bank cities to Palestinian Authority control.

Tuesday evening's suicide attack killed at least 18 people and wounded more than 100 on a street running between downtown Jerusalem and the fervently Orthodox Mea Shearim neighborhood. Several children were among the dead.

Islamic Jihad and Hamas both claimed responsibility.

The massive bombing comes as Israeli officials were arguing over the wisdom of transferring cities to P.A. control as long as the Palestinian Authority says it is not strong enough to crack down on terrorist groups.

The bombing also could throw into question the future of the "road map" peace plan.

The explosion took place shortly after 9 p.m. on an extended "accordion" bus traveling along Shmuel Hanavi Street.

The bus was on its way from the Western Wall to the Orthodox Har Nof neighborhood when it exploded.

About 40 children — many of them on their way home from a nearby Bar Mitzvah — were among the wounded, Israel's Army Radio reported.

Jerusalem Police Commander Mickey Levy said the explosive charge was particularly large and caused exceptional damage.

The bomber acted as P.A. Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas was meeting in Gaza with heads of Islamic organizations, trying to salvage the cease-fire that Palestinian terrorist groups declared in late June.

Moments later, Islamic Jihad took responsibility for the attack, saying the bomber was from Hebron. The group had threatened to avenge Israel's killing last week of its local leader in Hebron.

Later, however, Hamas also sought to claim responsibility for the blast.

"Every time Israel has made a gesture of peace to the Palestinians over the past 10 years the response has been the murder of our men, women and children. This has to stop," said Daniel Seaman, head of Israel's Government Press Office.

"It must be realized that this is not an Arab-Israeli issue but rather an international campaign of terror which is ongoing from New York and Baghdad to Moscow and Jerusalem."

The United States condemned the bombing and called on the Palestinian Authority to dismantle terrorist groups.

The Palestinian Authority also condemned the attack, and Information Minister Nabil Amer urged Israel to show restraint.

Amer said the Palestinian Authority would do its utmost to bring those responsible to trial.

In the wake of the attack, political sources said Israel was at a delicate stage as it tried to decide how to proceed.

Israeli officials said Tuesday that all understandings reached with the Palestinians on the transfer of security control in West Bank cities were void.

Israeli officials canceled talks scheduled for Tuesday night and Wednesday with Palestinian officials.

Before the bombing, the main sticking point in the transfer of West Bank cities was

MIDEAST FOCUS

Iran: Israel, don't attack

Iran is warning Israel not to attack its nuclear facilities.

"The Zionist regime proved to be adventurous in the past and doesn't abide by any principles," an Iranian spokesman told reporters in Tehran on Tuesday, an apparent reference to Israel's attack on an Iraqi nuclear facility in 1981.

Israel has increased its pressure on the European Union and the United States to stop Iran's nuclear weapons program after Iran recently tested a missile capable of hitting Israel.

Sharon: Put pressure on Syria

The United States is not pressing Syria enough to halt its support of terrorism, Ariel Sharon said.

Speaking Monday to a group of congressional representatives, Israel's prime minister said Syria is no longer feeling pressure to halt its support for Hezbollah in Lebanon and for Palestinian terrorist organizations in Damascus.

Earlier this year, Syrian President Bashar Assad reportedly pledged to close the Palestinian terrorist groups' offices in Damascus.

The groups appear to be operating as normal, however.

Barak criticizes Sharon

Ehud Barak sharply criticized Ariel Sharon for scandals linked to the Israeli prime minister.

"These are very embarrassing scandals," Barak, a former prime minister himself, told Israel's Army Radio on Tuesday.

"In Britain and Finland, such things would have already caused the collapse of the government," Barak added.

The former Labor Party leader said he would announce after the High Holidays whether he will return to politics.



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the issue of who would take responsibility for controlling fugitive terrorists there.

The Palestinian Authority says Israel has not made enough concessions to merit a crackdown on terrorist groups, which is the Palestinians' central obligation under the road map.

Yet the scheduled transfer of Jericho and Kalkilya was delayed on Monday because the Palestinian Authority failed to guarantee that it would stop terrorists operating from those towns, even if it were in control.

Maj. Gen. Giora Eiland, head of the Israel Defense Forces' planning division, had met Sunday night with Haj Ismayil, head of P.A. forces in the West Bank. However, the two failed to reach an agreement on how to handle fugitives in the cities to be transferred.

Israel demanded that the P.A.'s security minister, Mohammed Dahlan, commit himself to ensuring that the fugitives would not resume terrorist activity. For his part, Dahlan expressed confidence Monday that differences would be resolved "within the next few days."

Israel reportedly agreed that fugitives who are not considered senior terrorists could be absorbed into the P.A. security forces to prevent them from reverting back to terrorism.

Last week, Israel had said it planned to hand over Ramallah and Tulkarm as well, pending a Palestinian security plan for those areas.

Education Minister Limor Livnat wrote to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on Monday, demanding that the issue of Palestinian fugitives be brought before the government's security Cabinet.

As recently as Sunday, however, Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz had spoken favorably of P.A. efforts to prevent terrorism. Mofaz said the transfer of power in the cities in question would be done "gradually, very carefully and under control."

Tuesday night's explosion brought to an end almost two months of relative quiet in Jerusalem. Tourists gradually had returned to the city, filling hotels, restaurants and pubs.

The Western Wall plaza was filled with visitors on Tuesday evening, and the bus that was attacked was filled with families returning from the wall.

Justice Minister Yosef "Tommy" Lapid suggested that Tuesday's attack would be a turning point in the conflict.

Unless the Palestinian Authority takes immediate action against the terrorist organizations, he said, the entire political process will collapse.

Housing Minister Effi Eitam said there was no point in expecting the Palestinian Authority to crack down on terror.

"They were given the chance and they did nothing about it," he said.

Israel has no choice but to wage an all-out anti-terror campaign of its own, Eitam said after Tuesday's attack. □

Report: Palestinians leaving Hebron market

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Forty-three percent of Palestinian residents have left Hebron's marketplace since September 2000, a new report says.

At least 2,000 businesses in the West Bank city also have closed in that time, and three schools were taken over by the Israeli army and closed as well, according to the report released Tuesday by B'Tselem, an Israeli human rights group. □

Neo-Nazis arrested in Germany

BERLIN (JTA) — German police detained 71 neo-Nazis during a march Saturday to honor Hitler deputy Rudolf Hess.

The march drew 2,600 neo-Nazis to Wunsiedel, the Bavarian town where Hess was buried after his 1987 suicide, The Associated Press reported. Hess hanged himself at age 93 after spending nearly 41 years in the Spandau Prison in Berlin.

Police at the commemorative march arrested demonstrators for displaying outlawed Nazi symbols and carrying weapons such as knives, tear gas and baseball bats.

A counterdemonstration at the site drew about 400 people. □

JEWISH WORLD

Controversial think tank closed

Jewish groups are welcoming reports that an Arab think tank known for promulgating anti-Semitism has been closed.

Both the Anti-Defamation League and the Simon Wiesenthal Center are praising the United Arab Emirates for reportedly shutting down the Zayed Center, which has provided a platform for anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial.

Israeli, not Romanian

Israel's outgoing ambassador to Romania has withdrawn his request for Romanian citizenship. Sandu Mazor, whose term as ambassador was up on Sunday, was sharply criticized in Israel in the wake of his request for Romanian citizenship.

After leaving office, he is slated to manage an Israeli investment company in Romania and had asked Romanian authorities for citizenship, believing it would facilitate his business activities.

Kosher glaze?

A Dunkin' Donuts store near Detroit is being allowed to remain kosher. The parent company of the franchise in Oak Park, Mich., had rescinded the kosher status the store recently received in order to serve its Jewish patrons.

However, an e-mail appeal by local patrons convinced the company to reverse its decision.

Russian Jews get new head

A leading Moscow politician will be the new chairman of the board of trustees of the Russian Jewish Congress. Vladimir Resin, the first deputy mayor of Moscow, was elected to the post Aug. 14. The new appointment will help the organization raise more funds, an RJC spokesman told JTA.

Resin, considered one of Russia's top political lobbyists, is a longtime friend and associate of Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov.

Jewish soldiers: Phone home

A Maryland woman is collecting phone cards to help Jewish GIs call home for the High Holidays.

Amy Ackerson, the wife of Orthodox rabbi and military chaplain Mitchell Ackerman, told JTA she launched a drive to collect domestic or international phone cards. They are to be distributed to Jewish chaplains in the Iraqi war theater — where an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 Jewish soldiers are stationed — and elsewhere. Calls home often cost \$60 or more, she said, and many soldiers buy phone cards to cover the costs.

She got the idea after facing difficulties in reaching her husband, who is stationed in Kuwait and who travels to Iraq to meet with Jewish personnel.

New Zealand is latest locale in Mideast editorial cartoon battle

By Henry Benjamin

SYDNEY, Australia (JTA) — Editorial cartoons seen as anti-Semitic have ruffled feathers in the Jewish community in the United States and Australia.

Now a similar squabble has led to the firing of a prominent cartoonist in New Zealand.

New Zealand's major newspaper dropped award-winning cartoonist Malcolm Evans for the way he caricatured Jews in cartoons dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Evans' cartoons were featured five days a week in the New Zealand Herald, the country's only newspaper with national circulation.

Evans says he was fired because he refused to be told what he could and could not draw. But the paper's editor, Gavin Ellis, told JTA, "Although Evans was freelance, on legal advice I cannot discuss why his services have been terminated. His claim that he was sacked for refusing to stop drawing cartoons of Israel's government is incorrect and denied."

In June, the Herald published an Evans cartoon equating the situation in the West Bank with apartheid. Evans had drawn the word "apartheid" as graffiti on a wall, replacing the second "a" with a Star of David.

Following complaints from readers, Ellis wrote in an editorial, "Whereas the Israeli flag embodies that symbol, it is also representative of the Jewish religion. The Herald is at pains to separate the policies of an elected government from one of the world's great religions."

He added that the cartoon had not been "the preferred choice," and that Evans had been told to submit another. However, the cartoon still found its way into the paper.

Evans had drawn for the Herald for seven years and had won New Zealand's Cartoonist of the Year award. He said in an interview that he had no problem with the editor's right to refuse to publish a cartoon but that he would not allow others to dictate what he could or could not draw.

Acknowledging that his cartoons were one-sided, he said, "The world would be a much poorer place without the input of the Jewish people. I try to be fair, but there is no way I can accept the government of Ariel Sharon," Israel's prime minister.

The firing follows an apology last week from the editor of the Sydney Morning Herald in Australia, which had published a cartoon comparing the wall Israel is building to keep out terrorists to the wall surrounding the Warsaw Ghetto.

In recent months, the Philadelphia Inquirer and Chicago Tribune also published cartoons on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that many Jews found offensive.

A leader of Auckland's Jewish Council, Geoff Levy, said, "Many of Evans' cartoons have been totally offensive. We met with Mr. Evans in order to try to settle the problem, but he refused to answer when we asked him his views on Israel's right to exist."

Levy, who is also president of the Anti-Defamation League in New Zealand, said that a complaint had been lodged with the Human Rights Commission on the basis that Evans' work would incite racial hostility. He said the paper had told the council that it regretted the publication of the apartheid cartoon.

Israel's ambassador to New Zealand, Gabby Levy, said he discussed the issue with the newspaper's editor on an informal basis but never filed a formal complaint. □

Israeli court rejects Islamist's appeal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's Supreme Court turned down an appeal by the leader of the Islamic Movement in Israel against his continued detention.

Sheik Ra'ed Salah of Umm el-Fahm, accused of aiding Hamas terrorism, has been detained for the past three months.

Justice Dorit Beinisch ruled Monday that the nature of the alleged violations and the danger Salah allegedly presents justify his continued detention. □

Idi Amin and Israel: First love, then hate

By Blake Lambert

KAMPALA, Uganda (JTA) — African strongman Idi Amin, who died last week, was embraced and then reviled by Israel during his military career and his murderous eight-year reign at Uganda's helm.

Amin, the self-proclaimed "president for life" who ruled Uganda from 1971 to 1979, killed and tortured hundreds of thousands of his countrymen, became an international pariah and declared that Hitler had been right to kill 6 million Jews.

He also gave haven to the hijackers of a 1976 Air France flight bound for Tel Aviv, which prompted Israel's famous rescue operation at the airport in Entebbe, Uganda, humiliating Amin.

Suffering from poor health for the past month, Amin died Saturday of multiple organ failure in a hospital in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where he had spent more than two decades in exile. He was believed to be 78 years old.

Amin had a lust for power that prompted him first to align himself with Israel and then to abandon the Jewish state when it refused to provide the arms to satisfy his violent aspirations.

Instead, he turned to Arab states, who were alone in embracing the African dictator — with the exception of the Soviet Union, which courted Amin for a time.

Amin was once denounced by his Ugandan predecessor and former ally as "the greatest brute an African mother has ever brought to life."

Amin was born in northwestern Uganda, near the Sudanese border, and converted to Islam at age 15.

In 1946, in his early twenties, he joined the King's African Rifles, Britain's colonial army, as an assistant cook. But his huge frame — he was 6 feet 4 inches tall and weighed more than 225 pounds — soon landed him on the battlefield.

By the mid-1950s Amin was fighting alongside British soldiers in Kenya against the Mau Mau guerrillas, who opposed white rule.

He rose quickly through the ranks, impressing his British superiors. When Uganda, a British protectorate, became independent in 1962, Amin, the country's top-ranked African soldier, continued his upward climb.

Milton Obote, Uganda's first prime minister, was his ally and benefactor, promoting him to major a year later.

In 1963 he served as a special trainee of the Israel Defense Forces, earning his paratrooper wings. Back then, Amin had not yet begun the anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic salvos that later caught the attention of world Jewry.

By the end of the 1960s, Amin had taken the reins of the military and police, becoming the top Ugandan general. Together, he and Obote redesigned Uganda's governing and tribal politics through a lethal division of labor: The prime minister made the decisions; Amin enforced them.

In January 1971, Amin seized power from Obote. Initially, Ugandans celebrated the general's coup — along with Israel, Britain and others, according to historical accounts.

Israel sent technicians, military instructors and engineers to help Uganda, and other Israelis went to the country to do business. But bilateral relations soon soured.

Amin had military ambitions against Tanzania, where Obote had fled. He asked Israel for money and jet fighters to wage war, but the Jewish state turned down his request.

So Amin went to Libya, where Muammar Gadhafi promised financial aid. As a sign of his new ties, Amin expelled 500 Israelis from Uganda and severed diplomatic ties with Israel in 1972.

"Arab victory in the war with Israel is inevitable and Prime Minister of Israel Mrs. Golda Meir's only recourse is to tuck up her knickers and run away in the direction of New York and Washington," he once said.

Amin also praised Hitler for his "Final Solution" to the Jewish question.

Amin also turned violent against Jews in his own country.

Uganda's self-identified Jews — known as the Abayudaya — live in the country's east. They are descendants of a group of converts who were swayed by an Old Testament-loving British missionary who conducted mass circumcisions in 1917.

Amin shut down every synagogue in Uganda and beat and imprisoned observant Jews, demoralizing the community.

Amin "was against our grandfathers and fathers because of the Jewish religion," Samson Ben Sheva, 37, told JTA by phone from the city of Mbale. "People were scared. Most of them changed to different religions, to Christianity and Islam."

According to Seth Ben Jonadaz, a high-school teacher, the community's membership shrank during the Amin era from as many as 2,000 people to the current total of about 600.

Amin's regime murdered between 100,000 and 500,000 people, according to human rights organizations.

Political opponents who did not flee were executed.

Frustrated by Israel's strength after the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Amin began supporting a direct attack on its citizens. Seven terrorists who hijacked an Air France flight from Tel Aviv to Paris in 1976 diverted the plane to Uganda's Entebbe Airport, keeping the Israeli and Jewish passengers as hostages but freeing the rest.

That set the stage for a stunning 90-minute raid in which Israeli commandos landed at the airport, killed the hijackers, crushed Amin's troops, destroyed eight Ugandan MIG aircraft and rescued 102 hostages.

A humiliated Amin took revenge by ordering the killing of a 73-year-old Jewish woman named Dora Bloch, whom he found in a Kampala hospital. He also threatened to attack Israel if it failed to compensate him for the destruction of the aircraft and the money he spent on the hostages.

Amin's hubris, often perceived by the West as buffoonery, ultimately led to his downfall.

In the late 1970s he launched a war against Tanzania, but Tanzanian forces and Ugandan exiles defeated Amin's troops. He eventually was overthrown in 1979 and forced into exile.

He spent almost all of his remaining years in Saudi Arabia, the only country to offer him permanent haven.

In his absence, Uganda has become a relatively stable country; ties with Israel were renewed in 1994 and are now "very strong," according to Gilad Millo, an official at the Israeli Embassy in Kenya, which serves Uganda. Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni visited Israel several months ago, meeting with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and President Moshe Katsav.

Meanwhile, the Entebbe Airport has been turned into a military airfield. A now-rotting Air France jet remains at the site — an eerie reminder of Amin's courtship of the anti-Israel crowd. □