



# Daily News Bulletin

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86th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Israel kills Hamas man

An Israeli helicopter strike killed a senior member of Hamas' military wing in the Gaza Strip.

Thursday's attack on Hamdi Kabach, a member of Izz a-Din al-Kassam, also wounded three people.

The attack came after Hamas fired a Kassam rocket that landed in the Israeli city of Ashkelon, the first time that Kassam rockets landed as far as north as that city. Israel also leveled the grove of trees in Gaza from which the rocket was fired.

### P.A. freezing charities' assets?

The Palestinian Authority has reportedly frozen the assets of more than 30 charities linked to terrorist groups.

The charities operate in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The Palestinian Authority refused to comment on the report, which was filed by The Associated Press. But many Palestinians did not receive welfare checks Thursday that normally are supplied by these charities.

### Survivors weigh in on holidays

French Holocaust survivors have criticized government proposals that could eliminate the national holiday commemorating the end of World War II.

Following the recent heat wave in France, which reportedly killed 5,000, the government suggested scrapping one or more of the country's numerous national holidays in order to help fund additional social services.

The possibility that one of the holidays to be eliminated would be May 8, which commemorates the victory over Nazi Germany and is France's newest national holiday, was sharply criticized by Serge Klarsfeld, President of the Sons and Daughters of French Jewish Deportees. May 8 and Nov. 11, which marks the end of World War I, are "dates symbolizing the re-establishment of peace, liberty and the integration of French territory," Klarsfeld said.

Instead, he suggested, Ascension or Pentecost Days, two of six religious-based national holidays, could be excluded from the calendar.

REMINDER: The JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Monday, Sept. 1.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### More tourists are coming to Israel, but the numbers are still under par

By Loolwa Khazzoom

TEL AVIV (JTA) — A man lies on the ground in front of this no-frills guest house in Jerusalem as three young women rush toward him.

Reaching into her large red bag, one pulls out a brace and snaps it on the young man's neck. Another pulls out a strap and ties his feet together, while the third pulls out bandages and wraps them around the man's arms.

The young Magen David Adom volunteers have made it to graduation day.

These graduates of the Israeli EMT course are among the thousands of Diaspora Jews coming to Israel this summer on youth and tour programs.

Despite nearly three years of intermittent terrorism, the number of tourists coming to Israel is again on the rise.

"The world situation has become less safe," said Michael Freeman, director in Israel of the Federation of Zionist Youth, which, along with Young Judaea, sponsored the EMT course. "Why not come to Israel? It's no more or less dangerous than anywhere else in the world these days — New York, Bali, Russia."

The EMT program has more participants this summer than ever, Freeman says. He attributes the increase to the new perception of Israel as comparatively safer, and to the program's reputation for safety and security.

"Parents have come to trust our name," he said.

The number of visitors in Zionist youth tourist groups to Israel has almost rebounded to figures from the year 2000, according to Zvi Levrant, director of Jewish Experience of Israel.

But the number of other tourists is still down.

"Many organizations that appeal to unaffiliated or less affiliated populations — those not as committed to Israel — have not gotten back to their earlier numbers," Levrant said.

In general, however, the recent trend has been an increase in tourism to Israel.

"We're starting to see pent-up interest — Jews and Christians who have wanted to come to Israel but have not done so because of the situation," said Ari Marom, director of North American operations at Israel's Tourism Ministry.

Before the Aug. 19 Jerusalem bus bombing, the situation had become relatively stable and anxiety about the Gulf War had passed, he said.

"The Jerusalem bombing will begin to impact Israel tourism this fall," he predicted.

Meanwhile, countries around the world have sent a higher number of tourists to Israel this year than last. "There is a nice percentage of increase," Marom said. "But you have to keep it in proportion."

In 2000, 3.2 million tourists visited the Jewish state. In 2002, there were fewer than 900,000. This summer, Levrant said, "there was a 100 percent increase in Israel-experience programs."

That's both good news and bad news. The good news is the increase. The bad news is that the drop in tourism from 2000 to 2002 was so severe that even a 100 percent increase this year hasn't brought tourism back to its pre-intifada levels.

At its nadir since the start of the Palestinian intifada in September 2000, the number of youths visiting Israel was down 92 percent, meaning that only 800 youngsters came instead of 10,000. That figure of 800 "has been more than doubled this year," Levrant said, "but still it's only 2,000 in comparison to 10,000." A number of additional factors

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Record Y.U. group to Israel

Yeshiva University is sending a record number of students to Israel.

An all-time high of 675 undergraduates are heading to 40 affiliated yeshivas in Israel for their freshman year at Y.U., the New York-based flagship institution of modern Orthodoxy.

Since the freshman year-in-Israel program began in 1980, 9,000 students have participated in the academic program.

### Israeli minister probed

Austria agreed to cooperate with Israel on an investigation into the financing of Israel's Transportation Minister's election campaign.

Avigdor Lieberman reportedly is suspected of having used Austrian accounts as collateral to finance the campaign of his political party Israel Our Home.

Lieberman said Thursday the investigation was part "of an ongoing police campaign against me."

He said police are investigating him because of bias against Israelis of Russian origin. Lieberman is Russian-born.

### Israeli terror hotline in U.S.

American citizens now have a toll-free number to call to inquire about Israeli terrorist victims.

The number was established by ZAKA, the fervently Orthodox organization that collects victims' body parts after terrorist attacks in Israel. The number is 877-925-2911.

### Ehud Barak, wife separate

Ehud Barak and his wife, Nava, are separating. Lawyers for the former Israeli prime minister and his wife said this week that the two have agreed to a temporary split.

They have been married for 34 years and have three children, all daughters.

have kept tourists away, including the global economic recession, anti-Israel boycotts in Europe and fear of travel after Sept. 11.

Travel from East Asia and Latin America is way down from 2000, partly because of changed airline routing, according to Marom.

"From South America, you have to change flights in Europe or the USA, and that in itself is a main reason for not coming," Marom said.

Numerous European airlines either reduced or eliminated flights to Israel, making it more difficult for potential tourists to get here.

European Christian groups that came during the past three years often made their presence known publicly as a way of showing solidarity with the Jewish state.

In fact, when violence heats up, Christian tourists from the United States often are slower to cancel their plans than Jewish tourists, but afterward the Christians "are much harder to get back," Marom noted.

Typically, Jews make up less than 50 percent of tourists to Israel. In 2002, however, Jews well exceeded the 50 percent mark.

Those who came to Israel this summer included tourists on organized tours, people visiting family in Israel and those coming to explore on their own. Jews made up the majority of the latter two groups.

Some tour groups, like those that work in conjunction with the Jewish Agency for Israel, are veritable security experts, Levran and Freeman said.

At 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. each day, leaders of Jewish Agency-affiliated programs are in touch with a "situation room" that is connected to police and army surveillance units.

Groups are advised on where it's safe and unsafe to travel on any given day. All groups are accompanied by a guard on outings. With the use of global-positioning devices, parents can know where their children are at any given moment — something that's not possible "when kids are in their own city in the USA," Levran said.

Youths on the Magen David Adom volunteer program said they were not afraid, even as they prepared to accompany paramedics on calls that could take them into scenes of bloodshed.

"I feel that as a Jew, it's necessary to contribute to the country," said Adam Benjamin — who, with his friend Rafael Broch, arranged for 18 other youngsters from England to participate in the MDA program. "If that means facing things that Israelis have to face on a daily basis, why should I not?"

Non-Jewish friends back home, however, often have trouble understanding the reasons for visiting Israel these days.

"My non-Jewish friends in England think I'm mad coming here," Lisa Shama said. Just days ago, she watched her instructors on television as they attended to victims of a suicide bombing. Later that night she heard a firsthand account of what had happened.

"I think what English people don't understand is that despite the bombs, normal life still carries on," Tal Heymann said.

Broch agreed. "You can either get on with your life just as Israelis do, or sink back into the Galut," he said, referring to the Diaspora. "That's not the kind of Jew I want to be." □

### Mofaz bans meeting

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's defense minister banned a meeting a peace group was to have with Palestinian security chief Mohammed Dahlan.

The meeting between Dahlan and members of the Israeli Peace Coalition was to be held Thursday at the Erez Checkpoint in Gaza Strip. Mofaz explained that at this time "there was no point" to holding such a meeting at a military installation. □

### Harleys for Israel's environment

NEW YORK (JTA) — Motorcycle riders in the New York area are planning to ride for the Jewish National Fund's projects in Israel.

The first 60-mile "Harleys on the Hudson" ride, to be held Sept. 21, is open to anyone with \$25 and a motorcycle, and corporate sponsorships are available. □



## Daily News Bulletin

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## JEWISH WORLD

### Jewish data bank moving

The North American Jewish Data Bank is relocating from New York to Boston.

The electronic archive of American Jewish social science studies, which has resided at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York since it was founded in 1986, is being relocated to the Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University in Waltham, Mass.

The data bank, a project of the United Jewish Communities umbrella organization of local Jewish federations, houses the National Jewish Population Survey.

### Le Pen's mentor dies

The man who launched the political career of French far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen died in southern France on Wednesday.

Pierre Poujade led the French far right in the 1950s, presenting one of the principal opposition forces to the government of Prime Minister Pierre Mendes France, who was Jewish.

Running on a virulently nationalist and anti-Semitic platform, in which Poujade repeatedly attacked "the stateless who occupy our French home," the union obtained 52 seats in parliamentary elections in 1956. The youngest of the legislators elected to the National Assembly that year was Le Pen.

### But can you dance to it?

The first of 80 compact discs, spanning more than three centuries of Jewish music in America, will be released on Sept. 23.

The Milken Archive of American Jewish Music, by far the most comprehensive compilation of its kind, has been 13 years in the making, at a cost of \$17 million so far.

Fifty of the CDs will be released over the next two years by Naxos American Classics. They will feature 600 works, of which more than 500 have never been recorded or released commercially before.

The compositions range from Sephardic chants sung by the first Jews to settle in America in the 17th century to current jazz-inspired liturgical music. Included are operas, symphonies, klezmer, chamber music, ballets, hits of the Yiddish theater, and songs of Zionism and social action.

### Long Island hit by graffiti

Neo-Nazi graffiti was recently found in two places on Long Island. White-power slogans and anti-Semitic messages were scrawled on Kings Park High School and the Kings Park Jewish Center.

The Anti-Defamation League is working with local authorities to provide background information on local white-power groups.

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

### As Jewish art takes Europe, debate rages over what Jewish art is

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — Several years ago, the Hungarian sculptor Levente Thury spent months poring through disorderly stacks of paintings which had been locked, undisplayed since the Holocaust, in the storage area of the Jewish Museum in Budapest.

A secular Jew whose work is inspired by the Jewish legend of the Golem, Thury was putting together what was intended to be an exhibition of "Jewish art."

In the end, however, he found it impossible to determine just what made a work "Jewish."

He gave up the idea of showing "Jewish art" and instead chose a different criterion that to his mind, in Europe, still linked the exhibit together.

This was a sense of Diaspora.

The exhibition ended up being called "Diaspora (and) Art," and it included a varied mass of more than 500 paintings and sculptures by Jewish-born and non-Jewish Hungarian artists — including artists who both rejected and embraced Jewish identity.

The works displayed presented overtly Jewish themes such as portraits of Jews, biblical scenes, nostalgic set-pieces or interiors and specific Holocaust imagery, as well as non-Jewish or "neutral" themes, such as still lifes, landscapes and city scenes.

"We understood that Jews have a very strong experience as Diaspora beings — but a lot of other people who work in the arts also share the same mentality," he said.

Thury's choice was his own way of dealing with provocative questions that have long sparked debate — the issue of what is Jewish art and the related issue of what is Jewish culture. These debates have raged most fiercely within specifically Jewish communal, artistic or intellectual confines. But they also often spill over into the mainstream.

For the past several years they have, to a certain extent, gone public during the annual European Day of Jewish Culture, a continent-wide celebration of Jewish culture that this year is scheduled for Sept. 7.

An expansion of an "Open Doors to Jewish Heritage" program initiated in the French region of Alsace in 1996, the European Day of Jewish Culture became a Europe-wide event in 2000 and now takes place in nearly two dozen countries, from Spain to Scandinavia, from the United Kingdom to Ukraine.

The initiative is coordinated by France's Agency for the Development of Tourism of the Bas-Rhin, B'nai B'rith Europe, the European Council of Jewish Communities and the Red de Juderias de Espana, in Girona, Spain.

In past years, as many as 500 Culture Day activities in 250 towns and cities have taken place, drawing as many as 175,000 visitors for just one day of events.

This year, the theme of the Culture Day is "Judaism and the Arts," and the agenda includes a rich array of events ranging from guided tours to special exhibits, to lectures, food-tastings and book launches.

"Art, understood in all its diverse forms, is the protagonist, and there are meetings, exhibits and roundtables devoted to the subject," said a statement from the organizers in Italy, where events are scheduled in 46 sites up and down the peninsula.

These, it said, include presentations that underscore traditional forms of Jewish creativity that shun figurative representation and focus on ritual objects, as well as modern examples of secular artistic expression whose limits are much broader.

Italy's 35,000 Jews are a tiny minority in a country with a total population of about 60 million.

In this situation, attitudes toward Jews often draw on stereotype and preconception. One of the aims of the Culture Day is thus to introduce mainstream Italians to the little-known reality of Jewish life, history and heritage as well as specific cultural expressions. In recent years, Jewish leaders, intellectuals and artists have increasingly recognized the importance of Jewish art and culture as a means of promoting Jewish identity as well as engaging and educating mainstream society.

But like Thury, they have had to grapple with how to define Jewish art and culture in meaningful ways. □

## AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

**Each year, Turkish Jews return to islands to relax and reconnect***By Yigal Schleifer*

ISTANBUL (JTA) — The congregants at Turkey's Hesed L'Avraham synagogue never have to feel guilty about driving to the synagogue on Shabbat — they simply can't get there by car.

The yellow- and cream-colored synagogue is located on the island of Buyukada, part of a small chain of islands an hour's ferry ride from Istanbul, where all cars are banned.

Of course, if someone wants to take a horse carriage — the fastest mode of transportation on the island — to synagogue, that's a different matter.

Called the Princes' Islands, the isles have, over the last several decades, become an important and unique feature of Istanbul Jewish life — essentially the summer home of a large part of the city's Jewish community.

The islands are to Jewish Turks what the Catskills once were to Jewish New Yorkers.

Many Turkish Jewish families stay on the islands all summer long, with husbands commuting to work on the ferries that ply the waters between the islands and the city.

"This is one of the only places" near Istanbul "that is well preserved. It's safe and it's one of the few places where Jews and other minorities can stick together," says Yasar Bilbirici, an Istanbul businessman who is also president of Yildirim Spor, the Jewish beach club on Buyukadam.

"We know the horse carrier here, the butcher. It's like a little village. I have seen many places in the world, and frankly, I have to say this is one of the nicest."

Bilbirici's pride in the island is easy to understand. Buyukada — along with the other islands — is indeed an oasis of mostly unspoiled and undeveloped green at the edge of Istanbul's ever-growing urban sprawl.

Wooden Victorian-style houses line the islands' shady streets, while horses pulling colorful fringe-topped carriages compete with walkers and bicycle riders for road space.

Two other islands — Burgaz and Heybeli — also are summer homes to Jewish Turks, but the Jewish presence is particularly felt on Buyukada, the largest of the islands, which in summer becomes a concentrated, miniature version of the Istanbul Jewish community. Buyukada means "big island" in Turkish.

On Friday and Saturday nights, the town square is filled with Jewish Istanbulites chatting and catching up with each other.

Just off the square, a kebab restaurant certified kosher by Turkey's Chief Rabbinate competes with two other restaurants that serve kosher meat. On another street, two kosher butcher shops can be found within a stone's throw of each other.

There are three synagogues on the islands, with Buyukada's Hesed L'Avraham the largest.

Built some 90 years ago, the dome-topped synagogue stands in a shady courtyard behind a marble wall. A massive crystal chandelier lights the interior, which is dominated by a stunning carved wood ark. The synagogue, which seats 550, is usually full to overflowing on Shabbat.

Five years ago, the Jewish community opened up the beach club called Yildirim Spor, in an effort to create another Jewish institution on Buyukada, particularly a place that would appeal to

young people and would be accessible to the community at large.

Although there are predominantly Jewish beach clubs on Buyukada and Burgaz, their membership fees can be beyond the reach of many.

"This is one of the biggest success stories in the Turkish Jewish community," says the club's president, Bilbirici.

Set on the water with wooded hills as a backdrop, the club has basketball and soccer courts, as well as a large grassy area where on a recent Monday morning people of various ages were lounging on large, overstuffed pillows.

"It's nice to be together with the community," Nissim Eskinazi, 32, who is lying on the grass with a group of friends, says about the island. "My mother loves to be here, because all of her friends are here. This is the Jewish community life."

A friend of Eskinazi's, Ovadia Yohay, also 32, says with a laugh: "The No. 1 reason we come is matchmaking. We come here to meet other people."

Several years ago, coming to the islands started to become less popular with Jewish young adults, who preferred to stay in Istanbul for the weekend, but Altintas says that in the last two years more young adults are returning to the islands.

"I think they miss their childhood," she says.

The Princes' Islands became a fashionable retreat for Istanbul's Jews — as well as for its Greek and Armenian populations — in the early part of the 20th century.

By the 1930s, some of the islands had become so associated with a Jewish presence that political cartoons from that era, a time when Turkey's minorities were expected to shed any sort of external allegiance, jeeringly referred to the islands as "Palestine."

The history of the islands, though, goes back much further. During Byzantine times, the islands were a place where imperial family members who had fallen out of favor or were seen as threats were sent to languish in solitude.

Through Ottoman times, the islands remained predominantly Greek, with several now-defunct Greek Orthodox monasteries remaining from this era.

The hilly islands — which are easily seen from Istanbul, rising out of the Sea of Marmara — seem to have a way of captivating those who behold them.

In one of his books about Istanbul, historian John Freely relates this florid account by a 19th-century European traveler: "Nowhere does the delighted eye repose on coasts more lovely, on a bay more gracious, on mountainous distances more grandiose; that nowhere is the verdure fresher or more varied; that nowhere in short do bluer waters bathe more gently a thousand shady coves, a thousand poetic cliffs."

The waters around the islands today are still blue, though suffering from pollution, and the apartment buildings of expanding Istanbul can be seen from their shore, marring the view.

But there is something about the Princes' Islands that can still send their denizens into the most unexpected reveries.

Riding in a horse carriage on Buyukada, Erol Mesulam, an Istanbulite who owns a fragrance business and who has been coming to the island since he was a child, takes a visitor on a tour.

As the wind — and the pungent smell of horse manure — blows through his hair, Mesulam turns to his guest with a wide smile.

"You smell this horse smell?" he asks excitedly. "This is the typical Buyukada smell. Sometimes in the winter we are missing this smell. Really." □