



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 81, No. 172

Tuesday, September 16, 2003

86th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Arafat's demise downplayed

Israel played down the possibility it would kill Yasser Arafat but demanded he be isolated internationally. "We don't speak about killing. We didn't speak about it before, and we don't speak about it today," Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom told reporters on Monday. [Page 3]

Powell warns on Arafat moves

U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell warned Israel of the consequences of killing or exiling Yasser Arafat. "The United States government does not support the elimination of him or the exile of Mr. Arafat," Powell told Fox News on Sunday. "The consequences would not be good ones. I think you can anticipate that there would be rage throughout the Arab world, the Muslim world and in many other parts of the world."

Powell suggested that threats from Israel to exile or kill the Palestinian Authority president were little more than political posturing.

U.S. debates Israel resolution

Israel's ambassador to the United Nations accused the U.N. Security Council of hypocrisy. Dan Gillerman made the charge Monday as the council discussed a resolution that would demand that Israel refrain from killing Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

"The council's focus should be directed first and foremost at terrorism and at its facilitators, and not at the response to terrorism," Gillerman said. The Palestinian representative to the United Nations, Nasser al-Kidwa, left the chamber when Gillerman made his remarks.

Jordan's king meets with Jews

King Abdullah II of Jordan blames both Yasser Arafat and Israel for the current impasse in the U.S.-backed "road map" for peace.

In an interview Monday on NBC's "Today" show, Abdullah said he still sees hope for the road map, but said Israel and the Palestinian Authority president were responsible for the resignation of P.A. Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas.

Nonetheless, Abdullah opposes any plans to remove Arafat from power. Abdullah met Monday with leaders of U.S. Jewish organizations and will meet later this week with President Bush.

Groups work to combat food poverty indicated by new Israeli nutrition study

By Loolwa Khazzoom

TEL AVIV (JTA) — When, not so long ago, the director of an Israeli nonprofit organization noticed that an employee would appear at work every Sunday morning so fatigued that he could barely function, she issued him a stern warning to "stop partying so hard on Saturday nights."

The gaunt-looking employee burst into tears, explaining that he had not eaten since Thursday afternoon, when he received his last hot meal of the week at work.

That sad tale is one of the stories that got Laurie Heller, the Israel representative of the Baron De Hirsch Fund, to establish a new group to investigate and address the rising hunger and poverty in the Jewish state as the economy has fallen.

The Forum to Address Food Insecurity and Poverty in Israel brings together a number of groups to help match philanthropists with soup kitchens and other organizations that feed those in need.

The sponsoring groups include federations and foundations investing money in Israeli non-government organizations; the Brookdale Institute, which is the research arm of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee; and Israeli government organizations. The Forum is funded primarily by the Los Angeles Jewish Federation, the San Francisco Jewish Federation and the Rochlin Family Foundation.

The forum's mission is to "make funding opportunities for many philanthropists to find their place in the range of solutions for food insecurity," Heller, who is the group's co-chairwoman, says. Using available research, the forum will determine "which problems are not being addressed by existing programs, where we need to put our emphasis collectively, where people can channel funding," she says.

To that end, the Brookdale Institute began a national survey in March to ascertain nutrition habits among Israelis. The study focused on three factors: food consumption in the general population — quantity, variety and types of food consumed; the nutritional components consumed, including both calories and various nutrients; and household difficulty in accessing adequate and appropriate food due to economic constraints.

The Brookdale survey interviewed Israelis aged 22 and up in a national telephone survey of 1,490 households between March and May of this year.

The study examined the impact of hunger on focused groups of veteran Israeli families, immigrant families and Arab families, and within those groups, on children, the elderly, single-parent families and families with large numbers of children.

Although the results of the survey have not yet been released, some conclusions were leaked from the Ministry of Health, and the report has been discussed around the country.

Consequently, the director of the Brookdale Institute, Jack Habib, issued a three-page summary of the findings.

"With the worsening of the economic crisis during the past two years," the summary states, "food poverty has again become an issue." Food poverty is defined as severe food shortages that lead to malnutrition, requiring emergency medical treatment.

"There is enough food, but 22 percent of the population doesn't have enough money to purchase it on a regular basis," Heller says.

The Brookdale study found that while there are more than 125 organizations addressing the problem of food poverty through food distribution, such as canned food drives, and recycling food, such as leftovers from restaurants, there is virtually no

MIDEAST FOCUS

Palestinians rally for Arafat

Palestinians rallied in support of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

The largest demonstration in support of Arafat was in southern Lebanon, where an estimated 5,000 people rallied for him on Sunday. Other rallies have been held in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The rallies come days after the Israeli Cabinet decided in principle to expel the Palestinian leader.

Snow arrives in Israel

U.S. Treasury Secretary John Snow arrived in Israel on Monday, launching a 10-day Middle East tour.

Originally, his scheduled meetings with Israeli and Palestinian leaders had been expected to focus on economic projects that would draw Palestinian support for the U.S.-backed "road map" to peace; instead, Snow is now considered likely to discuss the burgeoning violence in the region and Israeli plans for Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

Palestinian boy killed

A Palestinian boy trying to break into Jerusalem's airport was shot dead by Israeli soldiers.

The death occurred Sunday night as a group of Palestinians broke through an outer fence near the Atarot Airport. Also, seven Palestinian teenagers throwing rocks at Israeli troops in the Gaza Strip were injured by Israeli gunfire.

Israelis kidnapped in Colombia

Four Israelis are among eight people being held hostage in Colombia.

The eight were kidnapped by leftist anti-government guerrillas while hiking over the weekend near ruins in the northern Colombian mountains. Two additional Israelis, who also were among the hostages, were released Sunday.



Daily News Bulletin

Norman H. Lipoff, *President*

Mark J. Joffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*

Lisa Hostein, *Editor*

Michael S. Arnold, *Managing Editor*

Lenore A. Silverstein, *Finance and Administration Director*

Paula Simmonds, *Marketing and Development Director*

JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.

coordination or shared information between the organizations dealing with the problem.

Heller's new organization seeks to coordinate the efforts of each organization and also sponsor new laws that will encourage organizations to help.

For example, the forum wants to introduce the equivalent of the United States' Good Samaritan Law, which protects institutions from lawsuits in the event that people get sick from donated food.

Cheri Fox, who is co-chairwoman of the forum, executive director of the Fox Family Foundation and co-chairwoman of the Jewish Funders Network, emphasizes that she, Habib and Heller are not trying to provide an alternative to the government's response to hunger, but working to enhance it.

"The study was done with a team of researchers from the Ministry of Health and in partnership with National Insurance and Social Welfare," Habib says. "We now have fairly intensive discussions with government ministries with the hope that they will move to develop more effective responses to the situation."

The effectiveness of these responses, say Heller and Fox, is an urgent matter.

"In school-age children," Heller explains, "malnutrition lowers IQ by 10 points."

"When malnourishment is found in the 0-5 age group," Fox adds, it "can create severe, irreversible problems in physical and intellectual development."

As such, she notes, Israel is beginning to see "enormous gaps between rich and poor."

Whereas the gap used to be 10 points out of 100 on standardized tests, it is now 20 points. "The impact of the economic crisis in this country is long-term," Heller argues. "We are losing another generation to poverty." □

New Jewish school in Croatia is first one in country since 1941

By Vlasta Kovac

ZAGREB, Croatia (JTA) — When the Jews of Zagreb celebrate Rosh Hashanah, they will have more than just the new year to celebrate.

They will also have a new Jewish elementary school.

"We shall have great reason for celebration," Zagreb rabbi Kotel Da-Don said this week as he hammered a mezuzah on the doorpost of the classroom of the city's new school.

Called the Lea Deutsch school after a Jewish girl who was killed during the Holocaust, the institution is the first Jewish school to open in the former Yugoslavia since World War II.

On the first day of school earlier this month, the first nine pupils — not all of them Jewish — sat in a semicircle in the middle of the classroom. The handful of first-graders came to the school with their teachers and several guests, who included former students of the prewar Jewish school.

The president of the community, Ognjen Kraus, expressed special thanks to the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation for its financial help in getting the school started.

The Zagreb Jewish community has given the school space in a building of the former Zagreb Chief Rabbinate, which was returned recently to the community by the Croatian government. The school is starting only with the first grade — which will have 11 students — but eventually it should have all eight grades.

Hebrew and Judaism will be obligatory parts of the curriculum, but parents may decide whether they want their children to receive religious instruction.

"I wish the school will have the reputation of a creative and innovative school, and that parents will inscribe their children in this school not only because it is a Jewish school, but because of the quality of education," Nadia Geras, a mother of one of the pupils, told JTA.

The Jewish Elementary School in Croatia operated from 1841 until 1941, when the Holocaust began in Croatia. It never reopened.

The Zagreb community has about 1,500 members. Many of the children are the products of mixed marriages, and most of the children in the new Jewish school have only one Jewish grandparent. □

JEWISH WORLD

Nuke agency to discuss Israel

The International Atomic Energy Agency is expected to discuss Israel's nuclear capability this week.

The discussion, which comes following a request from the agency's Arab member states, is slated to take place at the group's general conference in Vienna this week. The Jewish state would join Iran, Iraq and North Korea on the agency's agenda.

Jews oppose anti-Arab hate

Jewish groups lent their support to a new bill that would allow the family of a victim of an anti-Arab hate crime to remain in the United States.

The bill, introduced Monday by Rep. Rush Holt (D-N.J.), would give green cards to the wife and four daughters of Waqar Hasan, who was shot at a convenience store four days after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, as an act of retaliation.

A letter from religious and other community leaders to Rep. John Hostettler (R-Ind.), chairman of the Subcommittee on Immigration, called Hasan a victim of the 9/11 attacks. Without the legislation, the family stands to be deported.

Latvian Jewish graves desecrated

A Jewish cemetery in Latvia was vandalized. Hooligans overturned more than 20 gravestones in the Bikernieki Forest Cemetery in Riga and defaced others with Nazi slogans and swastikas over the weekend, according to Latvian media reports.

The attacks, Latvian Jewish leaders say, are linked to the visit to Latvia by the speaker of the Israeli Knesset, Reuven Rivlin, scheduled for Sept. 17-19, as well as to a referendum on Latvia's European Union membership, slated for Sept. 20.

Prague Jews seek info

Jewish leaders in Prague have appealed for information about a Czech Jewish community destroyed by the Nazis.

Jewish properties in the town of Svitavy — the birthplace of Oskar Schindler — were razed to the ground during the notorious Kristallnacht in November 1938, when Nazis torched the town's synagogue and smashed the Jewish cemetery beyond repair. Members of the community were later rounded up and sent to concentration camps, and none returned when the war ended.

Florida synagogue rebuilding

A ground-breaking ceremony was held for a synagogue in Florida being rebuilt after a 2001 arson.

Monday's ceremony at B'nai Zion Synagogue in Key West, Fla., comes two years after a deliberately set fire destroyed most of the building.

Israel downplays threat to Arafat as it faces international criticism

By Dan Baron

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Adding confusion to its controversial threat last week to "remove" Yasser Arafat, Israel is playing down the possibility it would have the Palestinian leader killed.

But Israel is still demanding that the Palestinian Authority president be isolated internationally.

"We don't speak about killing. We didn't speak about it before, and we don't speak about it today," Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom told reporters before his envoy, Dan Gillerman, defended the Security Cabinet decision at the U.N. Security Council on Monday. "There will be no immediate action. It's not official policy of the Israeli government," he said.

The remarks clashed with Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's statements a day before. Olmert said "killing is definitely one of the options" Israel reserves in dealing with Arafat, whom Israeli officials blame with supporting Palestinian terrorism and disrupting the peace process.

But this much was clear: Arafat, whose popularity at home had dipped with every diplomatic downturn while Hamas rivals garnered broad acclaim for their terrorist attacks and tough talk, was back on top.

Taken after two Hamas suicide bombers killed 15 people on Sept. 9, the vaguely worded decision by Israel on Sept. 11 sent Palestinians flocking to Arafat's crumbling headquarters in the West Bank city of Ramallah to demonstrate their support for the Palestinian leader.

The crowds at Arafat's so-called "Muqata" compound soon thinned and took on more of a carnival air, with turns by a marching band and folk dancers. Yet the show of support was beyond doubt.

"The Israelis are too afraid to go against Abu Amar," a local man said, using Arafat's nom de guerre. "But even if they tried something, the Muqata would be full again within minutes."

Israel is believed to have a commando team on standby to swoop in by helicopter and nab the 74-year-old P.A. president. Military sources do not rule out a ground offensive, which could easily be mounted from one of the army bases surrounding Ramallah. However, it was not clear how Arafat would be taken alive, given his vow last week to die before allowing himself to be exiled.

Saying the government was firm on removing Arafat, a senior Israeli government official said only that "how and when remains to be seen."

The official said the Palestinian leader could be "removed" from power while remaining blockaded in his compound.

At the U.N. Security Council on Monday, Gillerman, Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, defended Israel's decision in principle while rapping the international community for still regarding Arafat as a legitimate statesman who has the best interests of his people at heart.

Arafat "endangers lives of innocent Palestinian civilians," Gillerman said.

The Security Council was discussing a proposal that would demand that Israel refrain from killing Arafat. Gillerman also accused the Security Council of hypocrisy.

"The council's focus should be directed first and foremost at terrorism and at its facilitators, and not at the response to terrorism," Gillerman said.

The Palestinian representative to the United Nations, Nasser al-Kidwa, left the chamber when Gillerman made his remarks, according to an Israeli official there.

The U.S. government, meanwhile, continued to warn Israel against any action against Arafat.

"The United States government does not support the elimination of him or the exile of Mr. Arafat," U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell told Fox News on Sunday.

"The consequences would not be good ones. I think you can anticipate that there would be rage throughout the Arab world, the Muslim world, and in many other parts of the world." □

Lessons of Oslo are clear: Palestinians don't want peace

By Dore Gold

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Intelligence errors usually are associated with military disasters like Pearl Harbor or the 1973 Yom Kippur War, not with diplomacy.

Ten Years After Oslo Part of a Series

Yet the last decade of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process may involve such an error of assessment. Looking back now, 10 years after the signing of the 1993 Oslo Accords, it's clear that the failure to reach an Israeli-Palestinian agreement cannot be attributed to a lack of political will on the Israeli side or the failure of the United States to deal more forcibly with noncompliance.

Rather, it has to do with the more fundamental question of whether the leadership of the PLO really was prepared for reconciliation and peace with Israel.

The overwhelming evidence from statements by the PLO leadership was that it viewed the Oslo process as a tactical necessity to realize its ultimate strategic goal of recovering the entire territory of British Mandatory Palestine — including the area of Israel.

It would be a mistake to assign this intention to PLO leader Yasser Arafat alone. After all, it was the PLO's top official for Jerusalem, Faisal Husseini, who on two separate occasions in 2001 described Oslo as a "Trojan Horse" that served the realization of "the strategic goal — namely, Palestine from the river to the sea."

Similarly, the leader of the Fatah movement in the West Bank, Marwan Barghouti, told *The New Yorker* that even if Israel withdrew from 100 percent of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would not end. What was needed, he said, was "one state for all the peoples."

Arafat, who after Oslo became head of the Palestinian Authority, usually was more careful about concealing his true intentions, but they nonetheless could be discerned. Right from 1994, he disclosed his view of Oslo as a temporary Islamic truce. But he generally would speak so forthrightly only in closed-door meetings in places like South Africa or Sweden.

More recently, he frequently sent messengers to Palestinian cities to speak on his behalf.

Thus the official Palestinian daily *Al-Hayat al-Jadida* on Jan. 30, 2001, carried an address in Arafat's name by an ideologue affiliated with Arafat's Fatah movement, Sakher Habash, that asserted: "Experience proves that without the establishment of the democratic state on all the land, peace will not be realized . . . The Jews must get rid of Zionism . . . They must be citizens in the state of the future, the state of Democratic Palestine."

The big question raised by these recent quotations is: Why did the Israeli and U.S. governments invest so much in the Oslo process if it was so clear that the PLO had no intention of making peace? Didn't they consult with their intelligence establishments before investing presidential time at the failed Camp David summit of 2000? Where was the Central Intelligence Agency?

To its credit, Israeli military intelligence flatly warned about the security problems emanating from Oslo. The then-intelligence

chief, Maj. Gen. Moshe Ya'alon, told the Israeli daily *Ma'ariv* in 1998, "I cannot say at any point since it entered the territory in May 1994 that the Palestinian Authority acted decisively against the terrorist operational capability of Hamas, as well as the Islamic Jihad."

But there were no public warnings about the PLO's political intentions in the Oslo peace process. Henry Kissinger warned in his seminal work, "Diplomacy": "What political leaders decide, intelligence services tend to seek to justify."

Perhaps the U.S. and Israeli intelligence establishments were intimidated by their political echelons.

If there is a lesson from all this, it is that governments must allow their intelligence communities the freedom to express themselves and promote intellectual pluralism if disasters in the Middle East are to be avoided. For diplomatic errors can be even more costly than military blunders — even if they were originally undertaken with the best of intentions. □

Dore Gold is president of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, Israel's former ambassador to the United Nations and author of "Hatred's Kingdom: How Saudi Arabia Supports the New Global Terrorism."

King of Morocco reassures Jews after two Jews killed in kingdom

By Peter Ephross

NEW YORK (JTA) — Security is being beefed up at Jewish institutions in Morocco after two Jews were murdered in the kingdom in separate incidents.

Eli Affriat, 75, was stabbed to death in Meknes on Saturday. Two days earlier, Albert Rebibo, 55, was shot in Casablanca.

While police have not ruled out criminal motives in the killings, terrorism is seen as the most likely motive, especially in light of the multiple bombings in Casablanca on May 16, which targeted Jewish sites. Those attacks killed more than 40 people, none of them Jews.

The murders came less than two weeks after Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom visited Morocco amid reports that the two countries are considering re-establishing closer diplomatic ties.

The Rebibo shooting also came on the second anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks in New York and Washington — during the shooting his killers reportedly shouted "God is great" in Arabic.

Rebibo was a lumber merchant who was closing down the shutters of his store for lunch when two people arrived on motorcycles and shot him, sources in the community told U.S.-based Jewish groups.

Moroccan police set up roadblocks and dispatched helicopters in an attempt to find the killers, but they were unsuccessful.

After the shooting, Moroccan King Mohammed VI phoned Jewish community leaders, pledging to protect the community and take steps to find the killers.

The second deadly attack occurred after the king had already spoken to community leaders.

Affriat was walking to the synagogue from his home when he was attacked and stabbed.

Since Affriat was a fortune teller and a money lender, police are investigating the possibility that his murder was criminally, not politically, motivated. □