



Daily News Bulletin

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86th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

U.S. vetoes U.N. resolution

The United States vetoed a U.N. Security Council resolution that would have demanded Israel not "remove" Yasser Arafat.

The United States vetoed the resolution Tuesday at the 15-member council in New York because it does not explicitly condemn Palestinian terrorism.

U.S. reducing aid to Israel

The United States will deduct funds from the loan guarantees it has given Israel.

The White House announced Monday that funds used by Israel for settlement activities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip will be deducted from the \$9 billion in loan guarantees Israel will receive from the United States.

The Bush administration has chosen not to follow through on threats made this summer to deduct money used on a security fence in the West Bank from the loan guarantees, sources told JTA.

The loan guarantees officially were made available to Israel on Monday.

Birthright budget cut

Israel is reducing its allocation to the birthright israel program to a symbolic sum.

The cut in the state's 2004 draft budget would bring the figure down to \$500,000 for 2004 from its original commitment of \$14 million for five consecutive years.

However, Israel will restore its full financial commitment to birthright in 2005, said Israel's minister of Jerusalem and Diaspora affairs, Natan Sharansky, who was involved in 11th-hour negotiations on the matter with Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and American philanthropist Michael Steinhardt. [Page 3]

Iran ordered to pay victims

Iran was ordered to pay more than \$400 million to eight Americans injured in a 1997 terrorist attack in Jerusalem.

A U.S. judge ruled last week that the Iranian government bore the responsibility for the attack, perpetrated by members of Hamas, since Iran supports the terrorist group.

Five people were killed and nearly 200 wounded in the Sept. 4, 1997, attack.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Now that the raw NJPS data is out, how will population study be used?

By Joe Berkofsky

NEW YORK (JTA) — "Jewish Inter-marriage Still Rising" the Washington Post headline declared.

"Where have all the Jewish people gone?" one news release read.

A year after being pulled amid controversy over its methodology, the National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01 hit the Jewish community on Sept. 9, generating national headlines and fueling a flurry of proclamations from Jewish organizations offering dueling spin on the results.

Groups alternately decried the loss of Jews and bemoaned the steady rise of intermarriage while urging more outreach, or welcomed the popularity of Jewish education and the wide embrace of some Jewish rituals as proof that promoting Jewish identity works. Analysis of what NJPS means will endure, but now comes the real test facing the United Jewish Communities federation umbrella group, which sponsored the \$6 million study.

To what extent will the NJPS live up to its mission of giving the Jewish federation system and other Jewish organizations a planning tool unprecedented in depth and scope for years to come? Like so much in Jewish life, it depends on whom you ask.

Rabbi Hayim Herring, who chaired the NJPS data utilization committee, which plans how to disseminate the study, said the study's chief importance lies in its ability to unearth major Jewish trends.

"Where it can be useful is in helping lay out an agenda for the American Jewish community," he said.

Many local federation leaders say they consider the NJPS useful largely for providing a benchmark against which they measure their own community studies.

"For anyone who works in the vineyards, there's a keen interest in having a bird's eye view of the overall picture," said Jacob Solomon, executive vice president of the Greater Miami Jewish Federation.

However, Solomon added, local community studies are "much, much more applicable. We would always rather see data that's applied directly to our demographic" territory than more general statistics.

Miami last conducted its own study in 1994, and it will begin its next survey this February before making any major policy shifts, he said.

Many of these local studies reveal wide statistical gaps between the local and national scenes, says the figure behind the Miami study and 49 other local surveys.

Ira Sheskin, a University of Miami sociologist who was among several consultants to NJPS and who generally lauded it, found variations in such hot-button issues as intermarriage.

While the latest NJPS found a national intermarriage rate among all married couples involving a Jew at 31 percent, Sheskin said he found 39 communities showing rates lower than 26 percent. NJPS found that among marriages in the past five years, 47 percent were intermarriages.

Federation leaders in the West, meanwhile, say they do not rely heavily on NJPS because it does not contain enough data about a region in flux.

Heath Blumstein, a senior campaign associate at the Jewish Federation of Greater Phoenix, called the NJPS "somewhat helpful" for its "universal" data.

But Phoenix just finished its own survey, by another leading Jewish community

MIDEAST FOCUS

Rajoub wants truce

Yasser Arafat's new security adviser called for a cessation of Israeli-Palestinian violence to salvage peace talks.

"I'm talking about a mutual cease-fire, an end to all the attacks by all sides," Jibril Rajoub told Israel Radio on Tuesday. "We have no choice but to sit down and say enough killing and bloodshed."

Israel rejected the idea, saying the Palestinian Authority must crack down on the terrorists as required by the U.S.-backed "road map" peace plan.

U.S.: Syria a serious threat

Syria's nuclear capabilities are a threat to U.S. national security, a senior State Department official said.

John Bolton, undersecretary of state for arms control and international security, told the House of Representatives' International Relations Committee on Tuesday that Syria remains a threat because of moves to seek weapons of mass destruction, and because of the security and protection it offers to terrorist groups.

Rep. Gary Ackerman (D-N.Y.) gave Bolton a letter addressed to President Bush that seeks a downgrade in U.S.-Syrian relations until Syria breaks its ties with terrorism, including withdrawal of each country's ambassador.

IDF kills Islamic Jihad fugitive

Israeli commandos killed an Islamic Jihad leader after surrounding his hideout near Hebron early on Tuesday.

Ahmed Abu Duch, 24, was wanted for several terrorist attacks, among them the raid on Otniel in December 2002 in which four yeshiva students were killed.

Witnesses told Palestinian media that Duch was shot dead after emerging from a home in Dura village wearing combat clothes.



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social scientist, Jack Ukeles. That survey found dramatic Jewish growth in the Sun Belt city — up 138 percent in a decade.

While the NJPS is aimed primarily at federations, others, including religious leaders, are also paying close attention to the data — at least for parochial purposes.

"I don't think there was that much shocking" in NJPS, said Rabbi Jerome Epstein, executive vice president of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, the movement's congregational arm.

Of the 5.2 million Jews it counted overall, NJPS showed that 46 percent of 4.3 million more Jewishly connected Jews claimed to be synagogue members, and 33 percent of those said they were Conservative — down 8 percent from one decade ago.

Of all synagogue members, 39 percent identified as Reform, 4 percent more than 1990; 21 percent were Orthodox, up 5 percent from 1990, 3 percent Reconstructionist, up 2 percent from 1990; and 4 percent as "other," such as Sephardic.

But "it's not enough to talk about the numbers of those who affiliate. What about growth in terms of spirituality, in terms of depth?" Epstein said.

Nevertheless, a United Synagogue official in charge of long-range planning will more closely study NJPS for potentially useful information, Epstein said.

For Reform officials, NJPS "feels like an affirmation of what we've been doing," said Dru Greenwood, director of outreach and synagogue community for the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the movement's synagogue arm.

The Reform movement has been perhaps the most aggressive at recruiting marginal and intermarried Jews.

Greenwood said that NJPS findings such as 33 percent of interfaith couples raise their children as Jews provide a "a tremendous opportunity."

Ultimately, NJPS "will have an impact on the discourse" about American Jewry's future overall, she said.

UAHC will present the study to lay leaders trained in fields that interpret such data, she added, and will examine the analyses for impact on policy.

Also assembling a panel of experts to sift through NJPS will be the Orthodox Union, said the O.U.'s executive vice president, Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb.

While the O.U. has its own concerns about the Jewish people, such as a low birth rate, Weinreb said that no single group can address all of the concerns NJPS raises.

"This survey can serve as a shofar to wake us up," he said.

Jewish professionals in other areas say they are looking for very specific data that NJPS may not provide.

Jonathan Woocher, president of the Jewish Education Service of North America, said the raw data NJPS offers "gives us a valuable baseline portrait."

But the real issue, he said, "is not how many we count in different areas, but how do we impact those we do reach?"

For his part, Rabbi Rami Arian, executive director of the Foundation for Jewish Camping, said he would like to see a study that "looks in a serious way at the various kinds of Jewish education experiences" in camps and "tracks their impact" over time.

NJPS was never designed to assess the quality of specific services, its backers say, but was aimed at offering a "statistical snapshot" of American Jewry.

"This is a UJC report; therefore, what we highlighted were areas our constituents were looking for," said Lorraine Blass, NJPS project director.

Bruce Phillips, a sociologist at Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles, and author of a study on intermarriage and an NJPS consultant, added that NJPS avoids examining the implications of the data and presents an overview instead.

That said, he added, "you would be crazy to ignore it; it's a very solid study."

Meanwhile, Herring, who chairs the NJPS data utilization committee, said that the next six months will prove crucial in getting the facts out.

After the previous NJPS in 1990, Herring warned that local federations were not sufficiently schooled in how to actually use the data.

Now, given the past year's controversy over the study's methods, NJPS "will always be haunted with credibility issues," he said, "and that fact is something any utilization plan should take into account."

Others, such as Miami's Solomon, say that ultimately, a survey is just a survey.

"We can count Jews for a minyan, and that's about it," he said. "You can make predictions about what the Jewish future's going to look like? Gimme a break!" □

JEWISH WORLD

Budget woes in Israel cast doubt on the future of birthright program

By Dan Baron

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's government gave preliminary approval to a 2004 draft budget that includes \$2.2 billion in social service cuts — and threatens the future of the birthright israel program.

With the country in the midst of a deep recession and defense spending weighing heavily on the economy, the proposed cuts threaten to leave many in Israel underfinanced and overwhelmed.

Among the budget cuts' most vociferous opponents — and potentially its biggest losers — are the country's welfare recipients, who are lamenting what they perceive as Israel's growing distance from its socialist, welfare-oriented roots.

The 2004 budget, a major test of Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's influence on Israeli economic policy, must now pass three Knesset votes.

The birthright israel program, which its sponsors have billed as the country's largest source of Jewish tourism during the three-year intifada, stands to lose almost all its funding from the Israeli government.

The program, which provides free trips to Israel for Jewish youths aged 18 to 26 who have never before visited Israel on a peer tour, will see its government funding cut from \$14 million to less than \$500,000 if the proposed budget passes.

However, Israel's government pledged to restore its full financial participation in birthright in 2005, Natan Sharansky, the minister for Jerusalem and Diaspora affairs and a member of birthright's board of directors' steering committee, told JTA on Tuesday.

The government of Israel is one of three equal partners in birthright israel. The others are the United Jewish Communities, the umbrella federation group, and private philanthropists, including some Jewish groups. That restoration came on the heels of an 11th-hour conference call between Sharansky, Michael Steinhardt, one of birthright's founders and primary sponsors, and Netanyahu.

"The refusal of one side" to carry out its funding commitment to birthright "immediately influences the other side," Sharansky said in a telephone interview from Boston, where he is on a speaking tour of college campuses.

Sharansky, a Cabinet minister, said he postponed his vote on Netanyahu's budget until birthright was discussed.

"It was a very delicate situation," he said. "The finance minister said we can't keep giving money to American kids to come to Israel when we cannot keep money for the most needy in Israel. But in these critical times, it is the only successful program working as a bridge between the Diaspora and Israel."

In the wee hours of Tuesday morning, 14 Cabinet ministers OK'd the draft while nine ministers, among them members of Shinui and Likud Party, voted against it.

Mindful of the ongoing Palestinian intifada, Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz fought off proposed defense cuts of approximately \$700 million. Instead, already-gutted social benefits were further reduced across the board by \$250 million. It was not immediately clear how the remaining \$450 million shortfall would be covered.

"If this budget passes, it will create a social state of emergency and will hurt the State of Israel's character to the core," the head of the national labor federation Histadrut, Amir Peretz, told Israel Army Radio. "We intend to fight with every means available and deploy on every street corner to fight the plan."

The Histadrut said it was mulling a nationwide protest strike.

Underscoring economic woes in the country — which now has an unemployment rate of 10.6 percent — police this week said a Beersheba man with large debts shot and wounded a repo officer who came to impound his property before turning the gun on himself.

Those saved from budget cuts include retirees, the severely disabled and Holocaust survivors. Among those taking the brunt of the budget axe are teachers, 7,000 of whom may have to be laid off due to a \$240 million cut in the state's education allocation.

The proposed budget is expected to have a rough ride when it reaches the Knesset, probably in late October. □

Lawmakers want embassy moved

Several U.S. lawmakers are asking the Bush administration to move the U.S. Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem.

Reps. Gary Ackerman (D-N.Y.) and Steve Israel (D-N.Y.) are asking colleagues to join in a letter to President Bush on the matter. Presidents have consistently cited national security reasons for waiving compliance with a 1995 law that requires moving the embassy from Tel Aviv to the Israeli capital.

U.S. sued for Jerusalem policy

A New Yorker living in Israel is suing the United States over its failure to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Ari Zivotofsky says the U.S. State Department broke the law when it refused to list Israel as the place of birth on his baby's new passport, despite the baby's being born in Jerusalem.

A law passed last year required the State Department to acknowledge Jerusalem as the capital of Israel but the White House said at the time that the provision would be viewed as advisory.

NPR: We're not biased

National Public Radio insists it is not biased against Israel.

NPR's president and chief executive officer, Kevin Klose, told JTA that the latest of a series of internal reviews NPR conducted of its reporting on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict revealed that of 147 interviews aired between April 1 and June 30, 53 percent were with Israelis and 47 percent with Palestinians. NPR is trying to address criticism that it is anti-Israel. It has hired a public relations firm, posted its Middle East stories online and offered an Op-Ed by Klose to Jewish media.

Jewish protesters nationwide marched against local NPR affiliates earlier this year.

UJC wants you

The Jewish federation umbrella is recruiting new employees.

The United Jewish Communities, which represents 156 federations and 400 independent communities, launched the National Recruitment Corps in Chicago last week in an effort to woo and train entry-level Jewish professionals.

Sharansky goes to college

Natan Sharansky is speaking on North American college campuses. The Israeli minister for Jerusalem and Diaspora affairs will speak at 12 college campuses during a weeklong tour, which began Tuesday. The Israel on Campus Coalition, along with Hillel, is helping to coordinate the trip by the former Soviet refusenik.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Sharon leaves world guessing on what's next for Yasser Arafat

By Ron Kampeas

WASHINGTON (JTA) — In September 1982, an Israeli sniper in Beirut had Yasser Arafat's head in his sights, and he waited for an order from Ariel Sharon, who in turn was awaiting word from Jerusalem: Kill him or set him free?

Sharon, then defense minister, soon got the order from Prime Minister Menachem Begin: Let Arafat board the boat evacuating the PLO leadership from Beirut.

More than 20 years later, Arafat is once again in Israeli sights, only this time Sharon is in Jerusalem calling the shots.

Now, after a new wave of Palestinian terrorism and Israeli retaliation, a series of contradictory statements has left the Israeli political establishment, U.S. Jews, the Bush administration and the world is guessing about Sharon: Will he or won't he?

"Killing is definitely one of the options," Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said Sunday, a few days after the Israeli Security Cabinet decided in principle to "remove" Arafat, calling him an obstacle to peace.

On Monday, Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom insisted that killing was not an option under discussion. "We don't speak about killing. We didn't speak about it before, and we don't speak about it today," he said.

The mixed signals have set friends of Israel here on edge, including those in the government and in the Jewish community, said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

"People aren't easy about it, they're questioning a bit about it, and they're waiting and seeing," said Hoenlein.

He stressed that there was no sense of alarm.

Instead, he said, the feeling among Jews is: "That's something the Israelis have to resolve there."

Repercussions have been limited in the administration and in Congress, he said. "There's no sympathy for Arafat," Hoenlein observed.

Abraham Foxman, the national director for the Anti-Defamation League, said Bush administration officials were not taking the Israeli talk too seriously. "They understand Israelis are smart. They're not about to do something that would so upset a friend and ally like the U.S.," Foxman said.

Foxman suggested the debate was a sophisticated political ploy intended to soften the blow of Israel's real plans for Arafat.

Israel might be setting the stage for Arafat's total isolation within his compound in the West Bank town of Ramallah, he said.

"If Israel made this decision, announced it, the world would go nuts," Foxman said. "Now, if Israel says we will hermetically isolate him, the world is likelier to say OK."

Many analysts believe that the fact that Israel is talking so much about it means it's unlikely they are going to kill him.

"You don't talk about something like that if you're going to do it," said Steven Spiegel, a professor at UCLA who is associated with the Israel Policy Forum. "You just do it."

Still, Hoenlein acknowledged that Olmert's comments had led to expressions of concern from U.S. Jewish leaders.

"People who speak to Olmert might communicate their concern about how it's received," he said.

Widespread repercussions make U.S. Jews nervous, Foxman said, even though there is an understanding of Israel's position.

"Some wish Israel wouldn't do this, they see the bad press, but there's also tremendous compassion for the anger and frustration of the Israeli public," Foxman said.

Talk of killing Arafat followed last week's decision by Israel's Security Cabinet to reserve the right to exile the Palestinian Authority president in the wake of two suicide attacks that claimed 15 lives. "Israel will work to remove this obstacle in a manner, and at a time, of its choosing," the Cabinet statement said.

The United States has steadfastly opposed exile, repeatedly saying it would only give Arafat a "broader stage."

Indeed, the prospect of Arafat gaining world sympathy and directing terrorist attacks from abroad led to discussions of whether to kill him.

When Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz, who has said that refraining from exiling Arafat was a historic error, recently raised the prospect of killing the Palestinian leader in a Cabinet meeting, Sharon silenced him. At the last minute, Mofaz canceled a U.S. visit scheduled for this week in which he was expected to seek a green light from the Bush administration for Arafat's exile.

Domestic political posturing also explains much of the chest-thumping over removing Arafat from power, whether through exile or execution. Israelis are overwhelmingly frustrated at the recent tide of terror, and polls show a majority favor Arafat's exile.

"It's a classic example of domestic needs clashing with international political demands," said Spiegel, whose U.S.-based group supports peace initiatives in the Middle East. "They thought talking about it would assuage domestic anger, but all it has done is rally support for Arafat."

U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell blamed political pandering for the talk. "There are many people in Israeli political life who make statements," he said on Fox News on Sunday.

Still, he was rattled. "I don't think it was helpful," Powell said. "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."

The international community was already unsettled over the unraveling of the "road map" peace plan, and the U.N. Security Council convened this week to discuss a Syrian-proposed resolution that would oppose any action against Arafat.

The United States vetoed the resolution on Tuesday.

Whatever the seriousness of the threats against Arafat, Sharon is keeping friends and foes off guard — a strategy not new to the former warrior. □

(JTA correspondents Gil Sedan and Dan Baron in Israel contributed to this report.)

Poll: Israelis back attacks

JERUSALEM (JTA) — More than 60 percent of Israelis support their country's attacks on Hamas political leaders, according to a new poll.

Fifty-eight percent of the respondents to the poll conducted last week for the Ma'ariv newspaper back the expulsion of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat from the West Bank.

Thirty-one percent of respondents to the poll, taken on the 10th anniversary of the Oslo accords, said Israel was right to have signed the agreement.

Fifty-four percent disagreed with this statement. □