



Daily News Bulletin

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86th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Reform want Patriot Act repealed

The Reform movement is joining civil rights group seeking a repeal of the Patriot Act.

The Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism said it supports new legislation would revoke many of the tools Congress gave law enforcement authorities after the Sept. 11 attacks.

Israeli, 4 terrorists killed

Israeli troops killed four Palestinian terrorists in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and one Israeli was killed. Israeli soldier Sgt. Avihu Keinan, 22, was killed during the raid Thursday into the Bureij refugee camp in central Gaza in a battle that also left dead an Islamic Jihad leader and Hamas man.

Outside the West Bank city of Hebron, Israeli troops killed the local Jihad leader and another Jihad gunman in a clash at their hideout. Hamas on Wednesday rejected a cease-fire call by Yasser Arafat.

Israeli refusenik pilots grounded

Members of a group of 27 Israeli pilots refusing to fly missions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are being grounded. At least nine of the active-duty pilots, called Israel's attack orders "illegal and immoral," were suspended. [Page 3]

Edward Said dies

Edward Said, a leading advocate for the Palestinian cause and a Columbia University professor, has died. Said, 67, who died Wednesday in New York of leukemia, was also an outspoken critic of Israel.

Born in Jerusalem, raised in Cairo and educated in the United States, Said had been a professor of English and comparative literature at Columbia since 1963.

The publication of his memoir several years ago caused a stir when it turned out that Said had fabricated a significant part of his family history in an attempt to paint Israel in a bad light.

More recently, Said was photographed throwing rocks at Israeli soldiers along the Lebanon border.

The JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Monday, Sept. 29. We wish all of our readers a sweet and healthy new year!

This year, a new holiday pledge card: Become a tourist to the Jewish state

By Ron Kampeas

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A pledge card slated to land on hundreds of thousands of pews this Rosh Hashanah represents an epiphany for Israel's tourism ministry: The best hope for one of Israel's core industries lies in Jewish solidarity.

The grass-roots campaign, asking for pledges from Reform, Conservative, Orthodox and Reconstructionist congregants to visit Israel in 5764, turns years of conventional wisdom on its head.

Not long ago, Israeli tourism campaigns were aimed at sun seekers and Christian evangelists, while Jewish tourism was thought to have reached capacity levels.

A dramatic rise in Jewish tourism this year is behind a bounce back from the severe drop after the Palestinian intifada was launched in September 2000.

"Those Jews saved the tourism industry of Israel, its hotels, from bankruptcy," Israeli Tourism Minister Benny Elon told JTA in a telephone interview.

The figure of 2.6 million tourists who once visited Israel annually dropped by 80 percent immediately after the intifada began in 2000, according to Geoffrey Weill, a New York travel industry marketer whom the Tourism Ministry hired to design the campaign.

This year, the number of tourists to Israel likely will reach 1.3 million — 50 percent of the old number — thanks mostly to the rise in Jewish tourism, particularly from the United States, Weill said.

Before the intifada, 60 percent of tourists to Israel were non-Jewish and just 40 percent were Jews; today the percentages are reversed, according to market research at airports.

"The one market it became clear was going to keep going and could be persuaded to send even more was Jewish tourism," Weill said. "It used to be, 10 years ago, Jews would cancel first when things were bad."

The pledge card campaign, run in coordination with the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and all the major Jewish denominational streams, aims to consolidate the trend through direct marketing.

Congregants can fold down one of four flaps, pledging a visit within three, six, nine or 12 months.

Respondents then will receive material promoting various tours and assuaging fears about travel to Israel. A few synagogues affiliated with the Orthodox Union handed out the cards at Slichot penitential services Saturday night to get an early start on the campaign.

Already, there has been some response to an advertisement featuring an airplane seat with the words, "This Rosh Hashana, your synagogue seat will look something like this."

Pledge forms are available at the campaign's Web site, www.ibelieveinIsrael.com. Organizers are hopeful — they say hundreds of pledges have been received — but admit the program is untried and unconventional.

"This is not the classical marketing system where you create a system through ads and the hard sell," Elon said.

Some marketing experts predict success, saying that self-selected direct marketing is a proven strategy.

The Tourism Ministry is "getting a beautiful list. This kind of a list is worth its weight in gold," said Betty Parker, a professor of marketing at Western Michigan

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel to U.N.: Stand vs. terror

Israel urged the United Nations to stand against terrorism and for peace.

In his address to the U.N. General Assembly, Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom universalized Israel's plight.

"Terrorism has declared war on us all," he said, but "Israel has often stood alone in this battle." He called for the United Nations to cease its annual "litany of resolutions designed to discredit Israel," and said "members of this institution that sponsor terrorists and give them shelter are accomplices in the acts of terror themselves."

Sharon: A year to go on fence

Ariel Sharon says the West Bank security fence will be complete within a year. Asked about the timetable in an Israeli television interview Thursday, the Israeli prime minister said, "I hope you will interview toward next Rosh Hashanah and this matter will have been taken care of."

Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom is in the United States this week addressing U.S. concerns about the fence's route, which Palestinians claim impairs their livelihood.

New Arad bargaining chips?

Israel may trade terrorists held in Europe for missing air force navigator Ron Arad, Israel's prime minister said.

Arad's family fears that the airman, who disappeared after being shot down over Lebanon in 1986, could be left out of a deal currently under discussion with Hezbollah.

Seeking to mollify the concerns, Ariel Sharon said in a television interview, "We have additional bargaining chips...not here but in a country in Europe. The Iranians and Hezbollah are very keen to get them back." The prime minister did not elaborate.

University. "They know the people are alive, they know they have the correct address — I would give the Tourism Ministry an A-plus."

But others who have marketed tourism for Israel in the past wonder if it will work.

Leo Kramer, a Washington businessman who has cultivated tourism markets for Israel as well as major European, Asian and African destinations, said the campaign emphasizes just what makes Israel a troubling destination: violence and instability.

"There is very little to be gained in spending time and money on reassurance campaigns, which only draw attention to the problems keeping people away," Kramer said.

Elon counters that there is no longer any point ignoring the violence, and that addressing it — through reassurances about security and appeals for solidarity — is now the best strategy.

"You can't misguide anyone, they open the TV, they see the problems," Elon said. "Once upon a time, you could ignore the reality, if it happened now and then, but not for three years."

Appeals to hedonism and escapism largely have failed, and the surge in Jewish tourism in recent years shows that the pledge appeal is the right path, said Rami Levi, the top Israeli tourism official in North America. "Sun and fun is great; we can't forget it, but it's not the main motivation," Levi said.

Israel has come to appreciate that its tourist reservoir among Diaspora Jews is unique, said Levi, who consulted with a dozen other Western nations running tourism bureaus in the United States.

"No other country has the support of communities as we do," Levi said. "We've found our strong point."

Another factor that makes the pledge campaign appealing is its low cost: \$120,000 out of the ministry's \$1 million U.S. budget, according to Levi.

Unusually, the organizers have no concrete plans to track whether those who make the pledge actually follow up, a traditional element of any marketing campaign.

"It's not an exact science," Weill said. "If tourism rises 25 percent, it's clear the pledge has something to do with it."

Hard numbers were less the issue than raising Jewish consciousness about Israel, according to representatives of the various denominations. The surge in Jewish concern for an Israel under siege presents an opportunity to perpetuate a sense of solidarity with the Jewish state, a sense once thought to be declining.

"It's not a pledge that someone can take to the bank," said Rabbi Jerome Epstein, executive vice president of the Conservative movement's United Synagogue. "But it may be more important in that once someone makes that emotional tie, we can work on that."

For the Reform movement, participation helps reverse bad publicity from the cancellation of Israel tours at the outset of the intifada.

"We felt strongly enough about this effort to encourage people to think about going to Israel," said Rabbi Amiel Hirsch, who heads ARZA, the Reform Zionist movement, and whose name appears on pledge cards appearing in synagogues affiliated with the movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations. "Congregants will think about the future of their relationship to Israel."

Getting American Jews to think a little harder about Israel will make the program a success, predicted Malcolm Hoenlein, the Conference of Presidents' executive vice chairman.

"Everybody finds excuses not to travel, to put it off," he said. "We hope this will have some suasion." □

Got Spanish?

RIO DE JANEIRO (JTA) — Israel's Ministry of Absorption launched a new Spanish-language Web site. The site includes information for Spanish-speaking immigrants about their rights as new citizens, housing, professional courses, government addresses, financial assistance and the like.

To date, such information has been available on the Internet only in Hebrew, English and Russian. The site's address is www.moia.gov.il/spanish/index_sp.asp. □



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JEWISH WORLD

Survivors suing commission

Two survivors sued the commission charged with resolving Holocaust-era insurance claims for allegedly making it harder to receive payments.

The lawsuit, filed Thursday in Los Angeles, alleges that the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims, has sided with insurers and made it more difficult for survivors to receive fair payment on decades-old insurance policies.

In a news conference Thursday, survivors called on ICHEIC's chairman, former Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, to resign, and complained about his salary. "This is blood money stolen from survivors," said Si Frumkin, chair of the Southern California Council for Soviet Jewry.

Earlier this month, Eagleburger testified to Congress that the commission racked up 60 percent more bills than claims. Calls to ICHEIC seeking comment were not returned.

Anti-Semitism priority for French

France's prime minister told a group of Jews that fighting anti-Semitism is an "absolute priority" for his government.

At a ceremony Wednesday marking the 60th anniversary of the founding of the CRIF umbrella organization of French Jews, held at the prime minister's official residence in Paris, Jean-Pierre Raffarin said, "Even if the number of anti-Semitic acts has fallen, it is not enough. Because even if one anti-Semitic act were to be committed in France, we would still be facing an unacceptable situation."

Raffarin described the CRIF Jewish group, which represents France's estimated 600,000 Jews, as "often demanding but always indispensable."

Neo-Nazis in Chilean elections

The Chilean neo-Nazi movement will be running candidates in city council elections in Chile in 2004.

The neo-Nazi group, Patria Nueva Sociedad, said Wednesday it would field 16 candidates in the 2004 elections in an attempt to develop a political organization. "We want at least five seats," a spokesman, Alexis Lopez, said. The drive to win recognition as a political party came after Chilean president Ricardo Lagos barred an international neo-Nazi conference in the country in April 2001.

'La Juive' opera revived

An opera banned by Hitler about a heroic Jewish woman will get a second life in New York.

The 19th-century opera, "The Jewess," by French composer Jacques Halevy, is about a Jewish woman boiled in oil for refusing to convert to Christianity.

It will debut Nov. 6 at the Metropolitan Opera, 70 years after Hitler banned it, the New York Post said.

Israeli pilots just say no and join conscientious objectors

By Dan Baron

TEL AVIV (JTA) — "The best to the IAF" is a time-honored slogan of the vaunted Israel Air Force. "Hell no, we won't go" is not.

So when 27 Israeli combat pilots sent a letter to the IAF's chief saying they would refuse to carry out air strikes against terrorists in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the news was a bombshell for national morale. "Pilot Mutiny" roared a front-page headline Thursday in the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot.

Only nine of the letter's signatories are on active duty, and they quickly were suspended by the IAF's chief, Maj. Gen. Dan Halutz, pending an investigation. They will not be reinstated unless they recant in public, Halutz said.

Halutz also ordered the grounding of those pilots who signed the letter and who serve as flight instructors. "These are not the people who should educate the next generation of pilots," Halutz said, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon told an Israeli television station that he takes a grave view of the pilots' actions. "I hope all the necessary steps are taken, and quickly," Sharon told Channel Two. "I am not ignoring their statements, but they should have been aired in the proper forums."

He added, "I think that there is no military in the world like" Israel's, which "acts like this in terms of investing thought in preventing harm coming to innocents."

Many commentators said that regardless of the validity of the pilots' complaints, their decision to make the letter public — and the fact that two-thirds of the signatories are not even on active duty — showed that the move was primarily political.

Regardless of whether or not court-martial proceedings are initiated, the incident underscores an ongoing debate in Israel on the ethics — and efficacy — of Israel's anti-terrorism policies.

In a letter sent to Halutz on Wednesday, the pilots said they were "opposed to executing attack orders that are illegal and immoral, of the kind the State of Israel carries out in the territories," a reference to targeted strikes against leading terrorists in Palestinian-populated areas of the West Bank and Gaza.

In media photos, several of the pilots insisted on being photographed with their faces obscured, in accordance with military protocol.

"We, who were raised to love the State of Israel and contribute to the Zionist enterprise, refuse to take part in air force assaults on civilian population centers" and "refuse to continue harming innocent civilians," the letter said.

Israel began occasionally using air force planes and helicopters in anti-terror missions in the West Bank and Gaza after Palestinians launched their deadly uprising against Israel in September 2000. The operations include missile strikes against leaders of terrorist groups such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Al-Aksa Brigades.

The use of infantry forces generally is preferred in the West Bank, but in fenced-off Gaza, where ground forces cannot easily enter, the job often goes to the IAF.

For all their precision, the guided missiles fired by Apache and Cobra helicopters and F-15 fighter jets have caused dozens of bystander casualties in the densely populated streets of the coastal strip.

"The norm that we were taught was that we do not go to places where civilians are known to be present," Ze'ev Rotem, a retired IAF navigator who was not part of the petition, told Israel Radio. "That norm has changed. Today, attacks take place on targets where there are civilians, including women and children, knowing there is a good chance they will die."

An Israeli military spokesman responded, "Our forces strike when absolutely necessary and to protect innocent life. All efforts are made to avoid causing non-combatant casualties. The terrorists endanger fellow Palestinians by operating in populated areas."

The IAF's chief said Israel's is the most moral and humane fighting corps and that the refusal to serve is an inappropriate form of protest. Halutz noted that the group of refusenik pilots constitutes only a tiny fraction of Israel's thousands of pilots. □

NEWS ANALYSIS

Labor sees a political opening with absence of peace, security

By Leslie Susser

JERUSALEM (JTA) — After almost a year of bumbling incompetence, the Israeli left seems to be getting its groove back.

Several signs point to a new sense of political vitality in the opposition Labor Party:

- There's a sharp new tone in the left's criticism of the government's peace and economic policies.
- Labor is discussing a political merger with the One Nation Party of Histadrut labor leader Amir Peretz, creating a stronger oppositionist front.
- Newly confident Labor leaders insist that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon eventually will have to get back to the Oslo peace process they initiated, or make way for someone who will.

• Last weekend, for the first time in years, Labor leaders participated in an anti-government Peace Now demonstration.

In addition, the fact that Sharon is under fire in his own Likud Party gives new hope and energy to his opponents on the left.

The developments come in sharp contrast to the year of confused lethargy that beset Labor after it lost successive elections in 2001 and 2003 by landslides, and to the Palestinian intifada, which made a mockery of Labor's peace ideology.

Indeed, as part of a Likud-led national unity government for 20 months starting in March 2001, Labor seemed to forfeit what was left of its separate political identity.

The Sharon government's difficulties with coming to grips with the key issues on Israel's agenda now are paving the way for Labor's revival. After more than two and half years in office, Sharon has not been able to turn the economy around or bring the peace and security he promised in his election campaigns. He also has yet to finish the long-awaited security fence.

Analysts speak of a dark mood in the country because of the government's inability to point to any significant light at the end of the tunnel. Without a peace agreement in sight and with emergency budget cuts threatening to impoverish more Israelis, the opposition is starting to make its presence felt.

To give itself a more compassionate image, Labor is angling for a merger with Peretz's worker-oriented One Nation. With the charismatic, socially-concerned Peretz back in the fold, Labor leaders hope to make a stronger case against the government's economic policy — which they depict as enriching the rich and impoverishing the poor — and appeal to a wider electorate.

In a large demonstration on Saturday night, Labor, Meretz and Peace Now leaders focused on the government's failure to bring peace or security, drawing a direct link between the security situation and the beleaguered economy.

Labor leaders contend that the jury is still out on Oslo, but they say the right-wing thesis of force against the Palestinians hasn't proved itself either. Labor's alternative — separation from the Palestinians with or without an agreement, and as soon as possible — seems to be striking a more receptive public chord.

Perhaps, more than anything else, this week's ceremonies for Labor Party Chairman Shimon Peres' 80th birthday underline the left's newfound energy. Sunday's celebration of Peres' achievements was skillfully used to promote Labor's agenda and challenge

what the party sees as Sharon's intransigence and delaying tactics.

At the gala evening in Tel Aviv's Mamm Auditorium, former President Clinton drew rapturous applause when he declared that the Oslo peace process had not failed and could still be brought to a successful conclusion.

Indeed, the cheers for Clinton seemed to indicate the abiding strength of the left's yearning for a revival of the peace process. The birthday party became a powerful celebration of what might have been had Oslo succeeded — and what many on the left think could still be, if only Labor is given another a shot in power.

Turning to Sharon, Peres said, "Peace is closer than you think, and closer than I believe."

At a seminar at Tel Aviv University on Monday, Peres again used a high-profile occasion to juxtapose the left's panacea of separation against what it sees as the right's ineffectual delaying tactics.

Playing for time, Peres said, could prove catastrophic. Instead, he suggested that the government pull out of Gaza unconditionally, as soon as possible.

The test "will be whether you are capable of making a quick decision," Peres said in remarks addressed to Sharon, who was sitting in the audience. "If you do, we will support you, the nation will support you. We don't have to be in the government for that."

On Sunday, Sharon had seemed to suggest casually the possibility of a new national unity government.

"Perhaps we can still work together for peace and security," he told Peres. But Labor's Avraham Shochat and Binyamin Ben Eliezer quickly shot down the idea.

Only if Sharon takes the peace process with the Palestinians forward will Labor be interested, they said; the party will not allow itself to be used again as a fig leaf for what they characterize as Sharon's do-nothing policy.

In making the perceived offer, Sharon was signaling to his present coalition partners — who are threatening to rock the boat over the budget — that he has other options.

Sharon's real problem, though, is in his own Likud Party, where his position has eroded somewhat in the wake of financial scandals that implicated him and his sons. Already, possible successors — Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz and Trade and Industry Minister Ehud Olmert — are starting to circle, and their sniping as they jockey for position is not helping the government.

All this is starting to hurt Sharon: For the first time in months, there are signs that his popularity is waning.

A mid-September poll in the Ma'ariv newspaper shows satisfaction with Sharon's performance at 43 percent, down from well over 60 percent a few months ago. Fully 49 percent said they were dissatisfied with Sharon's performance.

Such results are energizing the opposition, which for the first time in years sees cracks in the right's once impregnable position.

Many in Labor believe the scandals may soon force Sharon's resignation and that any successor will fail, lacking Sharon's political dexterity in pursuing an ideology that Labor feels is out of sync with reality.

Then, they say, Labor's leader after Peres — whoever that may be — will have a real chance of becoming prime minister.

If there's no light yet at the end of Israel's tunnel, there may at least be for the Labor Party. □

(Leslie Susser is the diplomatic correspondent for the Jerusalem Report.)