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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel bombs Jihad in Syria

Israel bombed an Islamic Jihad base near Damascus in retaliation for Saturday's Haifa suicide bombing.

The strike was Israel's deepest inside Syria in 30 years.

The air force raid in the Ain Saheb region on Sunday was meant to "send a message" following the Islamic Jihad suicide bombing that killed 19 people in a Haifa restaurant, Israeli government spokesman Ra'anan Gissin said.

An Israeli military official said the camp was also used by Al-Qaida terrorists.

It was not immediately clear if there were casualties in the camp, which Palestinian sources were quoted as calling "abandoned."

The last such Israeli strike in Syria took place in 1974.

The Bush administration has regularly criticized Syrian President Bashar Assad for not curbing terrorist groups based in Damascus. [Pages 1,3]

Victims' names released

The names of the 19 people who were killed in Saturday's suicide bombing at a restaurant in Haifa were released.

Among the dead were five members of the Almog family: reserve Maj. Gen. Ze'ev Almog, 71; his wife Ruth, 70, their son Moshe, 43, and their grandsons Tomer, 9; and Assaf Staier, 11 all of Haifa. Five members of the Zer-Aviv family from Kibbutz Yagur also died in the blast: Bruria, 59; her son Bezalel, 30, and his wife Keren, 29, and their children Liran, 4, and Noya, 1.

Also killed in the bombing at the Maxim restaurant were; Zvi Bahat, 35; Mark Bianco, 29, and his wife Naomi Bianco, 25; Osama Najjar, 28; and Mutanus Karkabi, 31, all of Haifa; Hana Francis, 39; and Sharbal Matar, 23, of Fassouta; Nir Regev, 25, of Nahariya; and Irena Sofrin, 38, of Kiryat Bialik.

Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the blast, which prompted an Israeli retaliation against an Islamic Jihad base inside Syria. [Pages 1,3]

REMINDER: The JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Tuesday, Oct. 7.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Israel redefines bounds of terror war as planes strike Syria after bombing

By Dan Baron

TEL AVIV (JTA) — This week's Israeli airstrike on an Islamic Jihad training camp near Damascus, which followed the group's deadly suicide bombing in Haifa on Saturday, was a sign to the Arab world that Israel will not be constrained by borders when it comes to the war on terrorism.

The attack came hours before the 30th anniversary of the Yom Kippur War, when Israel was blindsided by Syria and Egypt.

Combined with Israel's anti-terror operations in the West Bank and Gaza and the construction of the security fence, the strike against terrorist camps in Syria appears to show that Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is not willing to restrict its military operations to reap the benefits of diplomatic restraint.

Sunday's strike was also a message to Syria, which has offered support to Palestinian terrorist groups and is on the U.S. State Department's list of terrorist-sponsoring nations.

The strike, Sharon spokesman Ra'anan Gissin said, "was a very clear, focused message" to Syria to "start dismantling the terror organizations that operate from its territory," Reuters reported.

The bombing that prompted the strike killed at least 19 people in Haifa, including several children, and wounded 45.

In an echo of President Bush's warning to state supporters of terrorists following the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in the United States, Israeli government spokesman Avi Pazner said, "Any country who harbors terrorism, who trains, supports and encourages them, will be responsible to answer for their actions," Ha'aretz reported.

Syria's response to the first Israeli attack deep inside its territory in almost three decades was somewhat muted, though it called the strike a "grave escalation."

The country's foreign minister, Farouk al-Sharaa, said Syria would not respond militarily to the attack but that Syria would press the U.N. Security Council to convene and discuss the attack.

In an apparent effort to minimize the affront to Syrian President Bashar Assad, Israeli government spokespeople emphasized that the target inside Syrian territory was Palestinian and came strictly to "send a message" following Islamic Jihad's suicide bombing a Haifa restaurant.

Jerusalem probably will not suffer too much diplomatic fallout as a result of its strike in Syria.

In recent months, the U.S. State Department has stepped up pressure on Assad to curtail the activities of terrorist groups operating inside Syria and headquartered in Damascus, but to no avail. Washington also is unlikely to be impressed with Islamic Jihad's denial that Israel's target was one of its training camps.

Also, early reports said the Israeli strike resulted in very few casualties, a fact likely to temper any negative diplomatic consequences.

Some analysts said the Israeli action could result in some serious soul-searching in Damascus.

While Assad could avenge the attack near Damascus using his Lebanese proxy, Hezbollah, he has not done so in the past when faced with an Israeli strike on a Syrian target. After Sharon ordered the bombing of a Syrian radar installation in Lebanon in 2001 in response to Hezbollah shelling of Har Dov in northern Israel, tensions in

MIDEAST FOCUS

Syria to go to U.N.

Syria said it will complain to the United Nations about Israel's attack on a suspected Palestinian terrorist training base near Damascus. But a Syrian legislator said Sunday that Syria would not respond militarily.

Israeli warplanes bombed the camp, believed to be a training ground for Islamic Jihad terrorists, after the group took responsibility for Saturday's suicide bombing in Haifa that killed 19 victims.

Palestinian terrorist killed

An Israeli unit killed a Palestinian responsible for a terrorist attack last year that killed five people.

The police unit killed the man, Sirhan Sirhan, on Saturday near the West Bank city of Tulkarm. Sirhan, who carried out his attack at Kibbutz Metzger, was believed to be planning new attacks.

Israelis protect Arafat

Some 30 Israeli members of Gush Shalom arrived in Ramallah to act as "human shields" to protect Yasser Arafat.

One of the leaders of Gush Shalom, Uri Avnery, told reporters Saturday that their goal was "to protect Israel from the catastrophe that would occur if Arafat were to be exiled, or killed."

Jewish group feeds poor Arabs

One of the oldest food distribution networks in Israel is donating food to needy Israeli Arabs.

Food for Peace delivered dairy products, among other things, to 12 poor families in eastern Jerusalem last week. The effort will operate under the auspices of Hazon Yeshaya, which currently distributes 100,000 hot daily meals each month to Israeli Jews. Sensitive to criticism it might receive for aiding Arabs, the organization plans to fund the effort through private donations earmarked specifically for this purpose.



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southern Lebanon grew quieter. Sunday's strike also takes some heat off of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

While some Israeli lawmakers renewed their calls for Arafat's expulsion following the Haifa bombing, Israel's decision to focus on Syrian training camps rather than punish the Palestinian leader for his inaction against terrorists means Arafat is probably safe from Israeli action — for now.

Minutes after the Haifa bombing, Arafat's elite militia, Force 17, set up gun encampments around Arafat's Ramallah compound, intent on mounting a defense against Israeli commandos. But despite Israel's Cabinet decision last month to, in principle, "remove" the Palestinian leader from power, no such action was forthcoming.

Instead, Israeli helicopter gunships rocketed terrorist arsenals in Gaza Strip.

However, what Arafat gained in security he lost in dignity, some analysts noted. Sounding the false alarms of a call to his defense, and issuing a quick denunciation of the Haifa bombing, Arafat's moves had a ring of desperation in many Palestinian ears.

The move against Syria, and the relative inattention to Arafat in the wake of Saturday's terrorist attack, has shifted the spotlight onto Islamic Jihad, the other major Palestinian Islamic terrorist group after Hamas.

While kindred in ideology to Hamas, Islamic Jihad lacks Hamas' public profile and popularity, in part because it does not have Hamas' extensive network of social services.

Damascus was one of the few places where Islamic Jihad enjoyed full official status. But with Israel's airstrike — and the deadly bombing in Haifa on the eve of Judaism's holiest day — the group could face new pressure to curtail its activities.

"We will not tolerate the continuation of this axis of terror between Tehran, Damascus and Gaza to continue to operate and kill innocent men, women and children," the Israeli prime minister's spokesman, Gissin, said, according to media reports. □

After complex renovation work, famous Prague shul is reopened

By Magnus Bennett

PRAGUE (JTA) — Prague's world famous Pinkas Synagogue reopened last week following one of the most arduous and complex renovation projects ever undertaken by the city's Jewish community.

The synagogue, which is one of the best-preserved sites in Prague's former Jewish town, was seriously damaged in August 2002 when water surged through underground channels from the nearby Vltava River during extensive flooding in the Czech Republic.

Local Jewish officials found the entranceway of the shul flooded with contaminated ground water and mud, with water levels reaching more than 4 feet above the ground floor. The water also destroyed electric underfloor heating and thermal insulation and damaged artificial marble around the shul's bimah and ark.

The Jewish Museum, which administers the shul, was particularly worried about the structural integrity of the building and the fate of nearly 80,000 names of Czech Holocaust victims hand-painted on the building's walls.

Museum officials decided to form a team of specialists to examine and restore the building.

"It was complicated work because of the geology of the area around the synagogue," Jewish museum historian Arno Parik said, adding that underground springs had damaged the building's structure over time.

Museum staff carried out initial restoration work immediately after the flood waters drained away, cleaning the building with special chemical solutions to prevent mold.

The team of experts then strengthened the shul's structure with prestressed steel rods, treating individual structural cracks while gradually reducing dampness in the synagogue through artificial condensation. The team also had to maintain constant air circulation and a stable temperature to limit further deterioration.

The \$285,000 bill for all the renovation work was covered largely by insurance and donations from a number of Czech and foreign institutions, and from international Jewish and non-Jewish organizations. □

JEWISH WORLD

Russian Communists assailed

A Russian Jewish group has called on voters not to support the Communist Party in upcoming elections.

The Russian Jewish Congress said it is disturbed because the Communists picked a politician known for his outspoken anti-Semitism to top their list for the Dec. 7 parliamentary elections.

Nikolai Kondratenko, the former governor of a region in southern Russia, was approved recently as the No. 2 man on the list after party leader Gennady Zyuganov.

The Communist Party is riddled with "the worst form of nationalism," the RJC said in an appeal published Tuesday.

Synagogue burns in Zimbabwe

The 104-year-old synagogue in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, was razed by fire two days before Yom Kippur.

But leaders within the African Jewish community say they do not suspect foul play in the burning of the wood synagogue.

Police believe young people loitering in an alleyway behind the shul may have started a fire, perhaps to keep warm, which spread to the synagogue.

Yom Kippur services are being moved to another communal facility, the Sinai Hall.

Because of high inflation in Zimbabwe, the synagogue was not insured.

Australian museum returns Torah

A Perth museum has recently returned to Australia's Jewish community a Torah given to Australian troops in World War I.

The Sephardic-style Torah was presented to a Jewish chaplain in Australia's army in 1916 by the president of Cairo's Jewish community.

After the war, the chaplain returned to Perth and the Torah was stored in the Museum of Western Australia.

When the chaplain died on the eve of World War II, the Torah was forgotten — until an enterprising Melbourne lawyer saw a photograph earlier this year and endeavored to find the Torah.

Rabbi Ephraim Oshry dies

Rabbi Ephraim Oshry, who helped Jews live religiously during the Holocaust, died in New York on Sept. 28 at 89.

Oshry held secret services and was a rabbinical scholar who answered Jews' theological questions during World War II while living in the Kovno Ghetto.

After the war, Oshry published notes taken during that period, winning two National Jewish Book Awards.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

They lived together, died together: Arabs, Jews among 19 dead in blast

By Dan Baron

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Had the restaurant not been turned into a charred husk of twisted metal and broken glass, Maxim's staff would have spent Sunday quietly packing up for Yom Kippur — Jews and Arabs together readying for a day of rest, for some, and reflection, for others.

But on Saturday a Palestinian suicide bomber from a group sworn to Israel's destruction ended almost four decades of political tranquility at the Haifa beachfront restaurant, which was as famous for its Arab and Jewish owners and clientele as it was for its mixed grill, a tasty meat dish.

"We always assumed Maxim's would be immune from this sort of tragedy," said architect Naomi Herzog, a restaurant regular. "The only question remaining is where the bombing was deliberate or opportunistic, though neither option is a comfort."

The bombing, on an otherwise quiet Shabbat afternoon in this largely secular city, killed at least 19 people and wounded 45. Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the attack.

The bomber, a Palestinian woman named Hanadi Tayseer Jaradat, reportedly was a law student from the West Bank city of Jenin. She reached Haifa by circumventing the as-yet-uncompleted security fence that separates Israel from the densely populated Palestinian areas of the West Bank, the Ha'aretz newspaper reported.

The blast came as Maxim's, at the southern entrance to the city, was packed with a Saturday-afternoon crowd. Both Jews and Arabs were among the dead in the attack, including three children.

Among the four Israeli Arabs killed was the doorman who failed to spot the lawyer-turned-terrorist in time. The security guard likely thought Jaradat was just another customer seeking to enjoy the sea breeze and Maxim's ambience of ethnic coexistence.

Authorities suggested Jaradat and Islamic Jihad probably chose the target based on the relative ease with which an Arab-looking woman could enter the restaurant. The location also could have afforded Jaradat's handlers a quick getaway via the nearby coastal highway. They came, too, from the West Bank, where Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat issued his routine tepid statement of criticism, which he typically expresses following terrorist bombings in Israel.

Spokespersons for Arafat — who is mindful of Israel's threat to remove him as an "obstacle" to peace — denounced the attack as playing into the hands of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's government. The official Palestinian news agency said Arafat considers the attack "a serious attempt to compromise the national consensus in a critical situation."

With a death toll that included Christian Arabs, other Palestinian officials went further, telephoning village elders at Fassouta, the Christian Arab town outside Haifa where two of the dead lived, to offer condolences.

A family restaurant, Maxim's was founded 40 years ago by Shabtai Tayar — a Jew — and his Christian Arab partners, Salim Matar and Abu Sharval. The fears and tensions stoked by four Middle East wars and two Palestinian intifadas failed to shake the amity at the restaurant.

"The Christian families who run the restaurant are the salt of the earth," Tayar's daughter, Orly, told Ha'aretz. "We are more than partners, we are family. My brother, Muli, was killed in the War of Attrition and it never affection our relations," she said, referring to the attacks by Egypt on Israel following the 1967 Six-Day War.

Saturday's attack was the fourth in Haifa since Palestinians launched the intifada three years ago. The city is 30 percent Arab and one of the few Israeli cities considered a haven of ethnic coexistence.

"It is irrelevant that this restaurant was under Arab ownership," said Issam Mahoul, an Israeli Arab Knesset member from Haifa. "Terrorist attacks are wretched and criminal in all cases, but all the more so in Haifa. I have faith in this city, that it can go through all this and not lose its sanity." □

HIGH HOLIDAYS FEATURE

Festival of the Water Drawers draws large crowds in Brooklyn

By Uriel Heilman

NEW YORK (JTA) — “Whoever did not see the joy at the Simchat Beit Hashoeva celebrations has not seen true joy in his days.”

Thus wrote the talmudist of the nightly Simchat Beit Hashoeva celebrations that used to take place in Jerusalem and elsewhere during the intermediary days of Sukkot.

Literally the Celebration of the Water Drawing, Simchat Beit Hashoeva festivities originally marked a ceremony that involved anointing with water and that took place in the Temple in Jerusalem on the second night of the holiday.

The Talmud writes that righteous men used to dance for assembled crowds that juggled flaming torches, sang, made merry and praised God all night long.

The nights of Sukkot are still filled with the sounds of Simchat Beit Hashoeva festivities in Jewish neighborhoods around the world. In Brooklyn, one can hardly pass through the borough’s Chasidic neighborhoods without hearing the nightly parties.

In Borough Park, on 14th Avenue and 47th Street, there is so much pushing to get into the sukkah of the charismatic Munkatcher rebbe, Moshe Yehuda Leib Rabinowitz, that young children risk getting crushed in the crowd.

Thousands of Chasidic Jews with long black coats, dark mink hats, long beards and sidecurls fill the bleachers in what is one of the biggest sukkahs in the world.

Makeshift bleachers rock with young Chasidim swaying back and forth, singing paeans to God and to their rebbe, to whom they look with fervid intensity and unabashed affection.

Several tables line the floor in front of the rebbe’s. When the rebbe takes a bite of fish or kugel, food from his plate is then passed around the sukkah for tasting by devoted Chasidim who believe that it’s good luck to eat off the rebbe’s plate.

A few dip their pinky fingers in mashed sweet potato pie, passing it around so hundreds of others can get a taste and a share of good luck.

Behind the rebbe and out of sight, a young man plays the keyboard while two others sing Chasidic melodies into microphones, electrifying the crowd. Somewhere behind a dark one-way mirror at the rear of the sukkah, Chasidic women crane their necks to watch the festivities and catch a glimpse of the rebbe, dressed in a special white robe for the occasion.

All over the neighborhood, sukkahs of Chasidic rebbes are filled to capacity with merrymakers singing, eating and dancing so feverishly that the floors shake. Multipiece bands play live music, and at one location a conga-style line of thousands of Chasidic men snakes around a yeshiva study hall.

A few blocks away, the sukkah of the Bobover rebbe, Naphtali Halberstam, is decorated with dioramas depicting biblical scenes, the Jewish holidays and the story of the rebbe’s life in pre-World War II Europe and his arrival in America.

Three years ago, U.S. Senate candidate Rick Lazio showed up here to campaign for the Senate seat being vacated by the late Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Lazio’s holiday appearance befuddled young Chasidic men in the crowd who were trying to figure out if

the youngish-looking man up front — who was wearing a big, black velvet yarmulke and taking a swig of vodka from a shot-glass — was Jewish or not.

After a brief introduction in which a Chasid compared the four-term congressman to Moses, Lazio took to the podium to urge the assembled to vote.

Lazio asked for the rebbe’s blessing. It was not given, and Lazio went on to lose that election to Hillary Clinton.

In Brooklyn at midnight, the crowds in the sukkahs show no signs of thinning.

Outdoors, enterprising young men sell fresh aravot — willow branches — for \$3 a pair. Willows are one of the four species used for ritual purposes during Sukkot, along with the lemon-like etrog, the lulav palm stalk and myrtle-tree branches, called hadasim.

Nearby, a take-out place does swift business selling fresh and prepared meats, chicken dishes, kugels of every kind and sweet rugeloch pastries. The line stretches out the door and onto the sidewalk. Young men toting volumes of Talmud and soft drinks lean against cars and trees, dragging on their cigarettes in the cool night air.

At the study hall of Karlin-Stolin Chasidim, dancers heat up the crowded room, stomping in tune while chanting over and over again a biblical verse set to upbeat music. Young men laugh as they rush back and forth across the floor hand in hand, snaking through constantly growing circles of men moving through the room.

At the sukkah of the Skolye rebbe, the celebration is somewhat more subdued.

A single table with about 60 Chasidic men sitting around it takes up most of the sukkah, and the men pause between songs to listen to words of Torah and stories of devotion from the rebbe, who narrates his tales in Yiddish, the lingua franca of Borough Park.

The night’s festivities end in the wee hours of the morning. Some revelers sleep in their own sukkahs, built in backyards, on porches and in driveways around the neighborhood.

The party goes on all week, until Sukkot turns into Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah. Then the sukkah huts come down, the willow and palm branches find their way onto garbage heaps, and Borough Park goes back to being, well, Borough Park. □

Yom Kippur War account to wait

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A more complete history of the Yom Kippur War will not be released until 2023, Israel’s army chief of staff said.

The Ha’aretz newspaper said recently that Lt. Gen. Moshe Ya’alon was not satisfied with the official history he had ordered on the traumatic 1973 conflict. “For the sake of history, several chapters should be fleshed out — and that is what is being done now,” Ha’aretz quoted Ya’alon as saying. “The rule is to publish only after 50 years. What’s the hurry?” □

From your phone to God’s ears

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A new service allows Israelis to use cell phones to send text messages with prayers to the Western Wall. The messages are received on a computer and then faxed to a rabbi who places them in the wall. So far, 30,000 messages have been sent to the wall this way, according to Reuters. □