



Daily News Bulletin

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86th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

U.S. plays both sides

The State Department asked Israel to consider the consequences of its airstrikes in the Gaza Strip.

Department spokesman Adam Erel said Tuesday that Israel should "take appropriate precautions to prevent the death or injury of innocent civilians and damage to civilian and humanitarian infrastructure."

But he also reiterated Israel's right to defend itself against terrorist attacks.

Erel also stressed that the Palestinian Authority "must move against those launching Kassam 2 rockets that have a 20-kilometer range and are an improvised missile system, launching these rockets from the Gaza Strip into Israel."

Israeli soldiers surround mosque

Israeli soldiers surrounded a mosque Tuesday in the West Bank city of Ramallah where the army says Hamas terrorists are hiding.

As part of its operation around the Abd Al Nasser Mosque, Israel imposed a curfew on Ramallah. Clashes were reported throughout the city.

Mahathir's at it again

Malaysia's prime minister again insisted that Jews rule the world.

Mahathir Mohammad told the Bangkok Post that the media ignored the rest of a speech he delivered to an Islamic conference last week, in which he said he condemned suicide bombings and violence, focusing instead on comments about Jews that were widely considered anti-Semitic.

"The reaction of the world shows they do control the world," Mohammad reiterated Monday.

Iran to open nuclear facilities

The White House praised Iran's announcement that it will stop enriching uranium and will open its nuclear facilities to inspectors.

White House spokesman Scott McClellan praised the European Community on Tuesday for securing a commitment from Iran to comply with the U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency.

"What is essential now is that Iran needs to fully comply by signing and implementing additional protocol, cooperating fully with the IAEA and taking steps to end its uranium enrichment and reprocessing activities," McClellan said in Singapore.

Transparency is a concern as millions go to Middle East

By Edwin Black

WASHINGTON (JTA) — With hundreds of millions of dollars being pumped into Palestinian non-governmental organizations by numerous private foundations here and in Europe, government and Jewish communal officials are raising significant questions about transparency.

How is the money being used? And do major Palestinian activist funders such as the

Funding Hate

Part 3 of a Series

Ford Foundation — which granted \$35 million to Arab and pro-Palestinian organizations in 2000 and 2001 alone — exercise proper controls?

What's more, federal agencies concerned with fighting terrorism are increasingly asking: When money goes into one

NGO's pocket, where does it wind up?

Earlier this year, Washington's fears over the loosely controlled millions streaming into Palestinian organizations from foundations turned into action. The State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development began applying President Bush's Executive Order 13224 to American organizations working in Palestinian areas.

Executive Order 13224 recognizes "the pervasiveness and expansiveness of the financial foundation of foreign terrorists" and regulates financial transactions that may end up in the hands of those that either commit or even "advocate" terrorism.

In May and June of this year, USAID informed American tax-exempt charities it funds that if they partnered with any Palestinian NGOs, those NGOs would be required to sign a Certification Regarding Terrorist Financing. The certification pledges that no funds have made or will make their way into organizations to "advocate or support terrorist activities."

The Palestine NGO Network, or PNGO, an umbrella group of 90 Palestinian organizations that is funded in part by the Ford Foundation, was outraged.

On July 12, PNGO published a statement declaring: "Some donor agencies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are setting unacceptable conditions for providing financial support to Palestinian NGOs. Such conditions include a pledge titled 'Certification Regarding Terrorist Financing' . . . stipulating that Palestinian NGOs pledge not to 'provide material support or resources to any individual or entity that advocates, plans, sponsors, engages in, or has engaged in terrorist activity . . . ' based on the U.S. Executive Order 13224."

PNGO program coordinator Renad Qubaj complained, "Who defines what is terror? All funds received by the NGOs should be unconditioned — no political conditions."

Another Palestinian NGO railing against the terrorist certification was the Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, which has received three Ford Foundation grants totaling \$350,000, according to foundation records.

In late August, Al Mezan's director was quoted in the Arabic press saying, "There is no legal basis for this document. This document should be boycotted, including the local authorities, political parties and universities. These institutions should reject this document completely, as it puts them in great danger. We should publicize a list of any

This is the third of a four-part series on the Ford Foundation's funding of Palestinian groups that engage in anti-Israel activity. The report is the result of a two-month investigation involving dozens of interviews in seven countries and a review of more than 9,000 pages of documents.

MIDEAST FOCUS

Gaza deaths stir Israeli protest

The killing of Palestinian bystanders in Israeli airstrikes Monday in Gaza spurred remorse and calls for reparations in Jerusalem.

Israel targeted buildings where Palestinian terrorists were suspected of producing and storing weapons. The 12 dead included some civilians.

Israeli President Moshe Katsav extended condolences to the victims' families Tuesday, telling Israeli and Palestinian peace activists that such deaths sometimes are unavoidable when fighting terrorism. Cabinet minister Yosef Paritzky of the Shinui Party proposed that the bereaved families receive Israeli government stipends of the kind granted to Israeli terror victims.

Travel advisory on Israel

The U.S. State Department issued an advisory for U.S. citizens against travel to Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The warning noted terrorist attacks that have killed or wounded U.S. citizens, including three Americans killed in northern Gaza by a roadside bomb while traveling in a diplomatic convoy last week.

Israeli station shuts down

A pirate radio station linked with the Israeli settlement movement was shut down. Arutz-7 stopped transmissions Monday after 10 employees were found guilty of transmitting programs illegally and maintaining studios and transmitters in a West Bank settlement between 1995 and 1998.

Middle East 'Sesame Street'

A new string of "Sesame Street" episodes is airing in Israel, the Palestinian areas and Jordan.

The 26 episodes, which teach tolerance, are being produced with money from the European Union, the Ford Foundation and other sources. The new episodes were broadcast in Israel in September.



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institutions that agree to the conditions in the document."

A spokesman for the State Department's Near East Affairs bureau, Greg Sullivan, said he sharply disagreed with the Palestinian groups' position.

"This should come as no surprise to the NGOs," he said. "We want to see accountability and results. The money going into the Palestine area is a problem. That is why the Executive Order exists." He said, "We know terror acts when we see them, and we call them terrorism consistently."

PNGO steering committee member Allam Jarrar said that though many of the group's member organizations depend on USAID for funds, PNGO itself gets much of its money from Ford, and "Ford does not make us sign this agreement."

He added, "For us, Ford is a very credible organization."

Palestinian sources said they would pressure the American government to waive Executive Order 13224.

But Sullivan of the State Department insists the order is necessary and said, "I can't see us budging on this requirement."

Interestingly, at the same time the State Department started tightening control on NGO funding, it began shifting monies directly to the Palestinian Authority. In May, the U.S. government granted \$50 million in aid to Palestinian areas, channeling the first \$30 million through traditional Palestinian NGOs.

However, on July 12, the State Department suddenly announced the last \$20 million of that original sum would be granted directly to the Palestinian Authority.

Asked if there was an "unspoken linkage" in shifting financial transactions away from NGOs to genuine government structures, a State Department spokesman asserted, "Not unspoken at all — but loudly spoken."

"The bottom line," the spokesman said, is that "we here in Washington — this department, as well as Treasury and the FBI — are deeply concerned about the fungibility of money to NGOs that can go in one door and out the back door, and then finance terrorist activities." As for the latest \$20 million, the spokesman said, "it is strictly controlled." He said the State Department is holding the Palestinian Authority and its finance minister "strictly accountable."

The spokesman added, "We want to be confident that our monies do not finance anti-Semitic Palestinian textbooks and other anti-Semitic materials." The accounting firm of Deloitte & Touche had been engaged "to monitor those funds," he said.

Just as the State Department was tightening up policy on NGOs earlier this year, the IRS began demanding far greater accountability and transparency from American foundations engaged in Palestinian areas.

The Treasury Department recently published voluntary "Anti-Terrorist Financing Guidelines" to tighten the lax funding procedures employed by some foundations.

Among the recommendations: Charities should "determine whether the foreign recipient organization is or has been implicated in any questionable activities."

Adding to the pressure, the multinational Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering spotlighted "non-profit organizations [that] collect hundreds of billions of dollars annually from donors and distribute these monies" to a gamut of beneficiaries.

The Council of Foundations, a representative association of philanthropies, recoiled from the Treasury Department's suggestion that it obtain Certification Regarding Terrorist Financing. In a June letter to Treasury, Council President Dorothy Ridings, a former Ford trustee, challenged the guidelines as inappropriate and unnecessary.

A formal statement by Interaction, the largest American alliance of international humanitarian organizations, asked Treasury to withdraw the guidelines altogether, saying West Bank grantees would regard certification requests as "unduly intrusive."

Sources at Treasury indicate they want more than accountability; they want transparency — that is, the ability to review activity reports and monitoring, all of which are currently secret at organizations such as Ford.

"The days of opaque financial transactions are over," a State Department official said when asked about the millions of foundation dollars pouring into Palestinian NGOs. "Yes, we would like to see transparency, accountability and internationally acceptable standards on all their monies."

The question of transparency is facing the government and foundations engaged in Palestinian areas. At Ford, only one-sentence descriptions of grants are published in its annual reports, Web databases and IRS filings. Documents relating to the original grant,

JEWISH WORLD

Abortion law passes Congress

Jewish groups are ready to go to court over a bill banning an abortion procedure that Congress passed on Tuesday.

The U.S. Senate passed the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act by a 64-34 vote, three weeks after the House of Representatives passed it.

President Bush is expected to sign the bill soon. Many Jewish groups oppose the bill banning the procedure, in which a fetus is partially delivered and a doctor punctures the fetus' skull, because it is vague and does not exempt abortions needed to protect the mother's health.

Agudath Israel of America supports the ban, saying the procedure brings a fetus inches away from being born; therefore, the fetus is entitled to rights.

U.S.: 9/11, Pearl death linked

The alleged mastermind of the Sept. 11 attacks is believed to be the murderer of Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl.

Khalid Sheik Mohammed, who American authorities now believe is behind both incidents, is in U.S. custody. Pearl, the Journal's South Asia bureau chief, was kidnapped last year in Pakistan. His captors forced him to admit on videotape that he was Jewish before slitting his throat and decapitating him.

Revised Iran bill proposed

A bill to address loopholes in sanctions against Iran and Libya was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives. The Iran-Libya Sanctions Enhancement and Compliance Act was proposed Monday by Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.), chair of the House Middle East subcommittee.

The new bill would revise legislation that Congress passed in 1996, placing sanctions on foreign companies that invest in Iran's and Libya's oil sectors.

French Jews, Muslims fight hate

French Jewish and Muslim organizations are set to form a group to monitor racially motivated attacks.

The International League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism, an organization close to major French Jewish organizations, announced Monday that it would support the formation of a joint body to monitor acts of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

The league's move follows a similar appeal last week by Abderrahmane Dahmane, president of the newly formed Council of Democratic Muslims.

Penn to dedicate new Hillel

A new Hillel is slated to be dedicated at the University of Pennsylvania. The \$12 million, 35,000-square-foot Steinhardt Hall, named after philanthropist Michael Steinhardt, will be dedicated Thursday.

activity reports and audits are all held secret for 10 years after the grant concludes.

For example, in the case of the Palestinian Committee for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment, the files will not be available to the public until 2015.

The group was instrumental in organizing the anti-Israel debacle at the September 2001 U.N. World Conference Against Racism in Durban.

When asked about its policy of keeping documents secret, Ford issued a statement, saying: "We protect grants and documents within the last 10 years to guard the confidentiality of ongoing relationships with grantees."

Officials of Jewish organizations found that policy troubling.

"It is not only a sad comment on philanthropy running amok, but outrageous and irresponsible," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League.

"The Ford Foundation, in its efforts to address evil, has — because of the lack of oversight and monitoring, and establishing serious criteria as to the recipient — wound up aiding and abetting extremists and political movements that border on anti-Semitism and anti-Americanism," he said. "It is incumbent on the trustees of the Ford Foundation to provide transparency about their funding, including the audits."

Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, called for a congressional investigation of Ford Foundation grants to Palestinian NGOs.

"At a time when government and society are demanding transparencies on the part of corporations and charities," Hoenlein said, "it is hard to justify the apparent exemption of the Ford Foundation, which uses tax-free dollars to fund what is at best questionable organizations and causes — and at worst organizations undermining the interest of the United States and its allies. It is now incumbent on Congress and federal agencies to conduct their own examination."

Yehudit Barsky, director of the American Jewish Committee's division on Middle East and international terrorism, said, "We need two kinds of accountability from Ford — not just where did the money go, but how was it spent. Ford owes the public not only a financial accounting, but also a moral accounting."

A written statement issued by Ford in response to questions said, "The Ford Foundation takes the threat of possible misuse of grant funds for terrorism very seriously. We share the concern of the U.S. government to minimize the risk that grant funds might be diverted for terrorist purposes. We comply fully with all legal requirements established by U.S. law and regulation."

The statement added, "We have no reason to believe that Ford Foundation grant funds have been used to benefit terrorist organizations."

This investigation didn't identify any instances of Ford money going to terrorism. However, despite more than two dozen attempts over a multiweek period, Ford officials refused to answer any questions regarding specific Palestinian NGOs, or past or present investigations regarding the misuse of specific funds.

David Harris, executive director of AJCommittee, said it is "unfortunate" that Ford "is unwilling to go on the record, to explain or clarify its policy" about specific grantees.

In a recent speech, the foundation's president, Susan Berresford, acknowledged, "Addressing root causes [of injustice] often means making new kinds of arrangements in public policies, community and power relationships . . . It is different from traditional charity — feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless."

"Social justice philanthropy requires risk-taking, experimentation, managerial oversight, patience, long-term commitment and a thick skin. Being a social justice philanthropist or activist isn't always comfortable or easy," she said.

The Ford Foundation has spent billions to fight for transparency in government and create a better world.

But Harris of AJCommittee makes this point: "Transparency begins at home." □

Edwin Black is the author of the newly released "War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race." In May 2003, he won the American Society of Journalists and Authors' award for best book of the year for "IBM and the Holocaust."

The entire JTA series on Ford Foundation funding is also at www.jta.org/ford.asp.

Ford-funded groups are outraged that the U.S. government wants them to promise not to sponsor terrorism.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Fewer in number but more vibrant, Conservative Jewry looks to future

By Joe Berkofsky

NEW YORK (JTA) — It's a Shabbat morning, and Rabbi David Wolpe looks out over the main sanctuary of Sinai Temple in downtown Los Angeles at a sea of faces.

Normally, Wolpe sees 1,000 intrepid Shabbat synagogue-goers, he says, not bad for a synagogue with 1,600 families.

Of the Shabbat faithful, typically "980 drive to synagogue," Wolpe says. "Many don't drive home afterwards; they go out."

And therein lies the central paradox of today's Conservative movement. The movement "generates tremendous activity and commitment," Wolpe says. Yet, "in my experience, most Conservative Jews have a traditional feel, but not a very halachic approach," he says, using the term for Jewish law.

Historically, that tension has animated the movement, which grew as an alternative to Reform Judaism and officially adheres to halachah while synthesizing modern interpretations of tradition.

But Conservative Jewry is facing a critical crossroads.

Once the dominant postwar stream of American Judaism, movement membership appears to be falling while the more liberal Reform and Reconstructionist movements, and the more traditional Orthodox movement, are gaining ground.

In 1990, for instance, 38 percent of Jews identified themselves as Conservative for the National Jewish Population Survey, but only 33 percent did so a decade later.

"The Conservative movement has been in demographic decline for nearly two generations," says Jack Wertheimer, provost of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. JTS serves as the movement's established academic heart along with the newer and, some say, more liberal, University of Judaism in Los Angeles.

Most of the nearly 770 synagogues affiliated with the movement's United Synagogue congregational arm have yet to feel that population drop because of a mini-baby boom filling congregational religious schools, Solomon Schechter Day Schools and Camp Ramahs — but the crunch will hit as those children grow, experts say. "The movement has got to figure out how to adjust to that reality," Wertheimer says.

As movement leaders grapple with that dilemma, several hundred congregational leaders will be gathering for the 2003 biennial of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism in Dallas on Oct. 26-30.

The conference, titled "Preserving the Jewish Past, Living the Jewish Present, Building the Jewish Future," comes as prominent figures in the movement debate just why they are losing members.

Some even question the notion that the movement is shrinking.

"The issue for me is, we're not growing," says Rabbi Jerome Epstein, United Synagogue's executive vice president.

But he says that in the past 10 to 15 years, United Synagogue has seen its membership rolls remain steady.

Indeed, Epstein and others contend that the focus on numbers misses the point. Some even maintain that fewer members translates into a leaner, meaner movement, spiritually and religiously.

"The numbers may drop, but you have a more passionate core that in turn generates greater numbers," Wolpe says.

Others, like Rela Mintz Geffen, president of Baltimore's

Hebrew University, says it is difficult to interpret the meaning of the latest population survey data showing fewer self-identified Conservatives.

"In 1990, more people called themselves Reform than Conservative, but when you looked at Conservative synagogue membership, it was higher" than in the Reform ranks, she says.

Steven Bayme, national director of contemporary Jewish life at the American Jewish Committee and a visiting JTS history professor, says the prognosis of the movement's health also depends on how it is approached.

From "the top down," Bayme says, the movement is seen as being based on a critical mass of Jews living their lives according to halachah and receptive to modern Jewish scholarship. But, he asks, "how many individuals in congregations keep Shabbat, kashrut and family purity" by visiting the mikvah, or ritual bath.

Yet the movement has provided a "middle road," Bayme adds, a path for non-halachically religious Jews who want Jewish "enrichment" and Jewish families.

"Behind the numbers, I don't see decadence; I see a tremendous amount of vitality," Bayme says.

Much of that vitality centers around synagogue life.

Conservative synagogues have largely taken root in middle-class suburbia. Yet they also have sprung from 1960s-era spiritual-renewal drives, such as the chavurah movement, Bayme and others say. At its genesis, that movement sought to establish intimate prayer by transforming largely passive congregations centered around a rabbinic leader to active hubs for family life.

Leading that spiritual-renewal trend is a new nondenominational initiative of a group called Synagogues: Transformation and Renewal, funded by some large Jewish donors. The group, known by the acronym STAR, is promoting a project called Synaplex that seeks to produce innovative Shabbat activities in congregations, like a spiritual version of a multiplex.

The pilot program operates at 12 congregations nationwide spanning the religious spectrum. Five are at Conservative shuls.

Conservative rabbis who premiered Synaplex this fall will discuss some early signs of success — including big crowds — at the movement's biennial conference. "I don't think the future of the movement will lie on halachic observation and scholarship, but on intensive Jewish environments," Wertheimer says.

While some believe demographics present a challenge, Wertheimer says there are "structural" issues facing the movement. Power rests on the local, congregational level, he says, but "the flip side is the movement is not a well-coordinated movement."

Unlike the Reform movement, for example, the Conservative movement's congregational arm, its rabbinic assembly and other organizations do not coordinate closely.

The result has been that synagogues are left to rely on local resources in their planning, rather than on national or even global trends, Wertheimer says. "The question is whether the Conservative movement will continue to be a loose coalition or whether it will strive to actually be a movement," he says.

Epstein disagrees. The real problem, he says, is that the movement remains so diverse that the difficulty lies in deciding where to put the most resources. In other words, does the movement spend money on less active, less observant Jews or on the more active, learned core?

"Do I spend my time trying to move people from the 10-yard line to the 50-yard line, or from the 50-yard line?" he says. □