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86th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel defends fence

Israel dismissed a U.N. General Assembly resolution demanding it halt construction of its security fence.

"The fence will go up and we will keep taking care of Israel's security," Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert told Israel Radio on Wednesday, hours after the resolution, which is not legally binding, passed.

The General Assembly voted 144-4, with 12 abstentions, in favor of a text drafted by the Palestinians that said the barrier was "in contradiction to international law."

Kidnap story revealed

Israeli businessman Elhanan Tannenbaum was making an unauthorized trip to Abu Dhabi when he was kidnapped. The news about Tannenbaum, who is being held captive in Lebanon, came after the Israeli Supreme Court lifted a gag order on the case.

According to security sources, Tannenbaum was lured to Abu Dhabi in autumn 2000 by an Israeli Arab who offered him a business proposition, but who actually was a Hezbollah operative. Once there, Tannenbaum was drugged and taken to Lebanon.

Three West Bank terrorists killed

Israeli troops killed three Palestinian terrorists in separate West Bank incidents. In Hebron, a gunman who wounded two Israeli city residents in an ambush on the Tel Rumeideh neighborhood was shot dead.

Hours earlier, soldiers killed a leader of the Al-Aksa Brigade who had been on Israel's wanted list for three years. In Kalkilya, troops killed a leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

Fatah against terror crackdown

Dismantling terrorist organizations is a "completely empty concept," leaders of the Fatah movement said in Washington this week.

Speaking at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy on Wednesday, Ahmed Ghneim said the Palestinian Authority security services would not be able to dismantle terrorist groups.

Ghneim and other Fatah leaders, who met with lawmakers and State Department officials this week, complained about the lack of a relationship with either Israel or the United States. Israel has insisted that the Palestinians dismantle their terrorist infrastructure before real negotiations can resume.

AMERICA DECIDES 2004

Arab Americans, once pro-Bush, are now looking to the Democrats

By Ron Kampeas

DEARBORN, Mich. (JTA) — The top Republican Party official praises President Bush's "unique and special relationship with the Arab American community" and gets polite applause. His Democratic counterpart says, "We're going to beat George Bush next Nov. 2" and gets a standing ovation.

What a difference four years — and a transforming national crisis — have made. Bush, whose substantial Arab American support in 2000 helped him win swing states, has plummeted in Arab American polls.

"The community has changed. It was almost the other way around in 2000," said pollster John Zogby, himself an Arab American.

Democrats have taken note of the change, and eight of the nine Democratic candidates for president gave speeches last weekend at an Arab American Institute conference in Dearborn, Mich., which boasts a heavy concentration of Arab Americans.

It helped that some of the states with the heaviest Arab concentrations — including Michigan, Wisconsin, Florida and Pennsylvania — are considered up for grabs for Democrats or Republicans in 2004.

Candidates pitched their appeals to issues dear to the hearts of Arab Americans — including opposition to what Bush is doing in Iraq after the war and the perceived dangers to civil liberties of the USA Patriot Act — but artfully avoided one issue.

Most candidates tried to bypass saying anything substantive about the Israeli-Palestinian issue. But they were pressed to do so at times, and some of the most tense moments at the conference came when candidates were asked to comment on the security fence Israel is building in the West Bank.

Howard Dean's appearance was most telling. The former Vermont governor earned loud cheers for his condemnation of the war in Iraq and his endorsement of civil liberties, and got a standing ovation at the end of his speech. Dean had time for one question. It was about the barrier.

His noncommittal answer — "I'm concerned about the course of the wall; I need to know more about it" — was met with silence. By the time Dean left the stage, audience cheers had subsided, and there was only polite applause.

James Zogby, president of the institute, told disappointed delegates that it was unrealistic to expect candidates not to take into account the concerns of Jewish voters. Instead, he said, Arab Americans should see a victory in the willingness to take at least some Arab American views into account.

"They have to think about what both sides think now, and that's the beginning of making a huge difference in the political discourse," said Zogby, the pollster's brother.

It was just such an attempt to appeal to Arab and Muslim concerns that won Bush the attention of this community in 2000.

In his second debate with Vice President Al Gore, Bush explicitly pledged support for a Palestinian state, a step beyond the implicit support of the Clinton-Gore administration. He also said he opposed the use in courts of evidence kept secret from the defense, a tactic that had been used against alleged Muslim supporters of terror.

Gore was not clear enough on those issues, Arabs and Muslims said, and he was perceived as more pro-Israel and aloof than Bush. "Bush made a public gesture to Arab Americans, and that was enough to create a buzz," said John Zogby.

So Arab Americans who were evenly split among the candidates before the debate

MIDEAST FOCUS

Media watchdog mixed on Israel

A media freedom group criticized Israel for its behavior toward journalists in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Israel received two different rankings from Reporters Without Borders, 44th at home and 146th for its behavior in the Palestinian-populated territories. The Palestinian Authority was ranked 130th. More information is available at www.rsf.org.

Jerusalem population down

Jerusalem's population fell by nearly 10 percent during the past decade.

Some 164,400 people have left Jerusalem during the past 10 years and 97,300 have moved in, according to the upcoming volume of the Statistical Yearbook of Jerusalem.

The city is now home to 680,400 people, 67 percent Jews and 33 percent Arabs.

The Arab population is younger than the Jewish population and has a higher growth rate, and its percentage of the overall population is growing.

Poll: Palestinians back terror

Most Palestinians see terrorism as a legitimate alternative to negotiations and distrust U.S. mediation in the Middle East, a new poll says.

A poll of 1,318 West Bank and Gaza Strip residents, published Sunday by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, found that 75 percent supported the Oct. 4 suicide bombing in Haifa, which killed 21, and 59 percent said such "armed confrontations so far have helped achieve Palestinian rights in a way that negotiations could not."

Nearly 90 percent backed attacks on Israeli soldiers and settlers. Asked about U.S. mediation, at least 95 percent of respondents said Washington is "not sincere" in its efforts to work for Palestinian statehood and is biased in favor of Israel.

tipped heavily toward Bush. At that point, Bush won the endorsement of at least one major Muslim group.

Zogby's post-election polling showed Bush winning 45 percent of the Arab American vote, compared to 29 percent for Gore and 16 percent for Green Party candidate Ralph Nader, an Arab American.

Bush's immediate actions after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks appeared to bolster the confidence that Arab Americans had shown him. He quickly condemned attacks on Muslim Americans and appeared in mosques.

But such reassuring symbols quickly gave way to policy changes that alarmed the Arab American constituency.

Attorney General John Ashcroft, who had taken steps to stop the use of secret evidence before Sept. 11, halted those efforts. In addition, his deputies endorsed profiling and tough new immigration restrictions that singled out nationals from Arab and Muslim nations.

On the Israel-Palestinian front, Bush made it clear that Israel was his likeliest regional ally in the war on terrorism.

Arab Americans said they were especially shocked when Bush called Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon a "man of peace," especially after Bush's ire with those who obstruct peace led him to marginalize Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

Now, Zogby the pollster said, Bush's approval among Arab Americans is at 34 percent. And in surveys pitting Bush against an unnamed Democrat, the Democrat wins the support of 45 percent of respondents — a virtual flip-flop from the 2000 numbers.

Even with Democrats hewing to their traditional support for Israel, there are enough differences to keep Arabs in the Democratic camp, he said, especially because of opposition among Democrats to the Patriot Act.

"Something like the Patriot Act threatens their sense of security," Zogby said of Arab Americans.

Muqtedar Khan, a political scientist at Michigan's Adrian College who tracks the U.S. Muslim and Arab communities, said an older generation that basked in symbolic attention was giving way to a younger generation that understood policy.

"The older generation thought it was a big deal to be invited to the White House for Ramadan, but it was nothing," Khan said. "It's a Third World way of thinking. America is about policy."

Bush's failure to send a senior representative to the conference in Dearborn — Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham, an Arab American, was the only Cabinet member present — did not go unnoticed.

The effort by Republican Party boss Marc Racicot to explain Bush's recent distance from the community was not likely to make a positive impression.

"He is more than capable of denying himself the universal affection of everyone to do what he believes is right," Racicot said of Bush.

Racicot, a seasoned politician, seemed aware of the hostile territory, delivering his speech in hesitant, at times choked, tones.

Democratic Party boss Terry McAuliffe, by contrast, led what looked like a revival meeting.

"The Democrats will never rest until every Arab American in this country feels at home in this country," he said to a standing ovation. "We need you to come out of this conference with a passion for politics."

George Salem, a Washington lawyer who served Bush's father and President Reagan, said Arab American Republicans like himself were aware of the administration's credibility gap in the community, and were reaching out to the president and his senior aides.

"The jury remains out," Salem said, referring to issues such as the Patriot Act, Israel and the perceived failure to consult Arab allies on U.S. goals in the region.

"Assuming these issues can be addressed successfully in the coming year, Bush will carry the Arab American community," Salem said.

Not likely, said Khan, the political scientist, citing recent polls showing that older white conservative males are the likeliest to express bigotry towards Arabs and Muslims. "We know now, the guys who hate us the most are the guys we voted for," Khan said. □



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JEWISH WORLD

Jewish group considers legal action following revelations about Ford funding

By Edwin Black

New resolution blasts Iran

A new resolution being discussed in Congress blasts Iran for developing nuclear weapons.

The resolution, introduced in both the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate on Tuesday, "deplores the development by Iran of a nuclear weapons program and the failure of the government of Iran to report material, facilities, and activities to the International Atomic Energy Commission."

The resolution asks President Bush to stop Iran from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. Iran has said it will stop enriching uranium and open its nuclear facilities to inspectors.

Santorum lobbies for Jews

Sen. Rick Santorum will press Congress to pay reparations to Jewish refugees from Arab countries.

After meeting last Friday with Santorum's staff and other Jewish groups in Washington, Justice for Jews From Arab Countries announced Monday that the Pennsylvania Republican will lead congressional efforts for its cause.

Santorum is expected to push for congressional hearings and legislation to bring attention to the plight of Jewish refugees and will distribute in Congress a report that documents how Jews were expelled from Arab countries around the creation of the State of Israel in 1948.

Canada to mark Holocaust day

Jewish officials are applauding the Canadian government for establishing a national Holocaust Remembrance Day.

"At a time when anti-Semitic incidents seem to be on the rise worldwide, Canada's action today stands as a symbol of leadership against that darkness," Bernie Farber, a Canadian Jewish Congress official, said this week.

French minister visits shul

France's interior minister visited a synagogue near Paris on Tuesday whose rabbi was injured in an anti-Semitic attack.

Addressing congregants and local political leaders at the synagogue in Ris Orangis, Nicolas Sarkozy said, "When a Jew is attacked, it is not a Jewish community problem but a national community one."

Ris Orangis Rabbi Michel Serfaty, who also heads the Commission for Inter-Religious Dialogue for the Paris Consistoire, which deals with the religious needs of the community, was attacked near his synagogue last Friday.

Two men of North African origin were arrested shortly after the attack. One of them has been released.

WASHINGTON (JTA) — In the wake of revelations that the Ford Foundation is spending millions to fund organizations engaged in anti-Israel agitation, the American Jewish Congress is considering legal action against the Ford Foundation or relevant government agencies to enforce charitable financing laws.

"Congress should examine the tax-exempt status of organizations such as Ford Foundation," AJCongress' executive director, Neil Goldstein, said in a news release.

The AJCongress statement cited the JTA series "Funding Hate," which documents the Ford Foundation's funding of Palestinian non-governmental organizations.

"The purpose of the tax-exemption cannot be to finance terrorists and terror-related activities," Goldstein said.

No evidence has emerged linking Ford's grant making to terrorists, although one of several Ford-funded Palestinian Web sites, www.palestinereport.org, linked directly to the Web sites of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and other terrorist groups.

Within hours of the publication of JTA's four-part series, www.palestinereport.org removed both the links to terrorist groups and its section "From Revolution to Revolution," both of which were cited in the JTA investigation.

"We have only begun to look at the implications raised by this series," said AJCongress' general counsel, Marc Stern.

Stern said he was studying the possibility of filing a lawsuit. "Was this funding in compliance with the government anti-terrorism regulations?"

"A more important set of issues," Stern said, is that the Ford board "represents a fairly small sliver of American society. Yet they control huge monies, huge prestige and engage in protected action which does not represent the American consensus. They refuse to answer questions, they are not accountable to anyone but themselves — and all this raises important issues of public policy. Those issues are raised in spades."

Stern said his group was "examining the possibility of filing a lawsuit against Ford or the government to enforce relevant laws. We are examining that right now."

AJCongress specifically cited a presidential executive order that requires Palestinian NGOs that get U.S. funding to certify that none of their funds have made or will make their way to organizations that "advocate or support terrorist activities."

Ford's press relations office — normally manned by media staffers — was being answered by an answering machine for days after the series was published last week, and officials there could not be reached for comment. One senior Ford official who was contacted by telephone said he would not comment for the record and hung up.

Meanwhile, the New Israel Fund, the recipient of a recently announced \$20 million, 5-year grant from the foundation, said it would function independently as it finances social-action activities in Israel.

The Ford-NIF partnership calls for the newly created "donor-advised" peace and social justice fund to be overseen by Aaron Back, Ford's program officer for Israel, who just left the foundation to become a consultant to the NIF-Ford partnership.

Asked if NIF would be a conduit for Ford's designated recipients that have engaged in anti-Israel activity, NIF board president Peter Edelman said, "No, because the grants will be made under our supervision and we will only approve grants to organizations that are not opposed to the State of Israel as a democratic Jewish state."

Edelman also said that the money from Ford "comes to us in a chunk; they can't take it back. There is a Ford Foundation representative on the advisory group. But that advisory group has no legal power. They can't make a grant, only our board can."

Ford's \$20 million is scheduled to be transferred in a single payment sometime in November, NIF sources said. Edelman said the NIF-Ford funds would "absolutely not" be directed to Ford-funded Palestinian NGOs that have agitated virulently against Israel.

"We are a fervently pro-Israel organization," Edelman said. "We will be giving money to groups who are Israeli and which are seeking a Jewish democratic Israel."

Edelman declined to comment on Ford's funding of anti-Israel groups.

"We have received Ford Foundation grants for 15 years," he said. "That is all I can comment on." □

NEWS ANALYSIS

Details of 'Geneva accord' emerge, renewing partisan battle in Israel*By Leslie Susser*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — After three years in the political wilderness, the Israeli left has something to cheer about: The so-called "Geneva accord," negotiated by a group of Israeli doves and Palestinian moderates, has revived dormant hopes of a peace agreement with the Palestinians and given the left a shot in the arm.

Right-wing and centrist critics insist that the Geneva negotiators have done more harm than good. At the least, what the group of doves led by former Cabinet minister Yossi Beilin has done is to set the parameters of debate in Israel on the terms of a final peace agreement with the Palestinians.

With the U.S.-backed "road map" peace plan in tatters and Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Ahmed Karia locked in a power struggle with P.A. President Yasser Arafat, Beilin led a team that met with Palestinians to work out a prospective deal that entails far deeper Israeli concessions than any previous plan.

The Palestinian negotiators are close to Arafat and reportedly have his backing. None of the Israelis involved in the talks holds public office or has authority to negotiate in Israel's name.

But that hasn't stopped the plan from garnering major attention in Israel and in Europe, where the accord is to be signed in early November.

Opening the Knesset's winter session on Monday, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon rejected the agreement as an "illusion" that would encourage the Palestinians to go back on their commitment under the road map to fight terrorism.

The Geneva initiative differs from the road map by making a giant leap to a final peace deal while terrorism continues unabated. In contrast, the road map insists on step-by-step fulfillment of numerous obligations — especially an end to terrorism — before permanent status issues are discussed.

Still, there is a potential meeting point between the two plans. If the road map's two interim phases are implemented and a mini-Palestinian state has been established, the Geneva initiative could then provide a model for a final deal.

However, even if the Sharon government does get past phase two of the road map, it's unlikely to endorse the far-reaching concessions called for in the Geneva accord.

The Palestinians might have other ideas, though, and critics say that's the most invidious aspect of the proposal: In any future official negotiations, they argue, the unauthorized Geneva "concessions" will serve as a starting point for new Palestinian demands.

Among the fiercest critics has been Barak, who derided the proposal as "delusional" and said it lacks key elements upon which Israel must insist: There is no explicit Palestinian waiver of the demand that refugees be granted a "right of return" to homes they fled during Israel's 1948 War of Independence, nor is there explicit recognition of Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state.

Critics also suggest that Beilin's group has gone much further than Barak did on the key issues of territory, Jerusalem and refugees at the Camp David summit in July 2000 or at follow-up negotiations held in Taba, Egypt, in January 2001.

On territory, the Palestinians would get the Gaza Strip and 98 percent of the West Bank — including the city of Ariel, which they did not get at Taba — plus Israeli land near Gaza as compensation.

On Jerusalem, the agreement would give Palestinians administrative control of the Temple Mount, with a multinational force guaranteeing movement and security. Israel would get sovereignty at the Western Wall and Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives.

As at Taba, Jewish neighborhoods of Jerusalem would constitute Israel's capital, while Arab and other non-Jewish neighborhoods of the city would become the capital of Palestine.

The biggest stumbling block in previous negotiations was the refugee issue. Israel fears that a right of return would delegitimize the Jewish state and — if it leads to a flood of refugees into Israel — effectively spell its end.

The Geneva text refers to U.N. General Assembly Resolution 194, U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 and the 2001 Saudi peace initiative — which, some say, is bringing in the right of return through the back door. The agreement would allow each refugee to choose between five options, including settling in Israel.

Critics say the Israeli negotiators were so intent on clinching a deal to boost their political fortunes that they gave away far too much. They also accuse Beilin's group of subverting democratic processes by arrogating a role reserved for the elected government.

The doves counter that the agreement fills a political vacuum caused by the government's failure to initiate far-reaching peace moves. Moreover, they say, it shows that there indeed is someone to talk to on the Palestinian side.

The issues raised by the accord are sure to become central in Israel's domestic debate in the weeks ahead. But the key to its fate depends on whether the international community adopts the accord and tries to impose it on the parties — and that remains unlikely.

For now, Washington remains committed to the road map, and without U.S. support, the initiative is unlikely to be significant.

The Geneva accord is not the only grass-roots initiative to try to break the current deadlock. A one-page plan finalized several months ago by Ami Ayalon, former head of Israel's Shin Bet security service, and Sari Nusseibeh, formerly the P.A.'s top Jerusalem official, has similar parameters. Nusseibeh and Ayalon are making presentations this week in Washington to top officials.

"Our hope is to take this single page and put it inside the road map," Nusseibeh said in Washington.

The Ayalon-Nusseibeh formula differs from the Geneva accord in two fundamental ways: It is only a set of principles, not a full-fledged peace text, and, more importantly, it would allow refugees to return only to a future Palestinian state, not to Israel.

Beilin, too, says he intends to seek international support for the Geneva accord — and, simultaneously, launch a campaign to build support among the Israeli public.

But he will have his work cut out for him. An Oct. 15 poll in the Israeli daily *Yediot Achronot* showed 39 percent supporting the accord and 59 percent against it. An Oct. 17 Ma'ariv poll showed 23 percent support, 57 percent against and 20 percent undecided.

Ultimately, its backers argue, the Geneva initiative provides something invaluable: a Palestinian pledge that an accord based on these principles would be the "end of the conflict." In other words, once the terms of the deal are implemented, the Palestinians will have no further territorial, refugee or other claims of Israel.

What Israelis will be asking themselves over the next few months is whether, assuming there is a real partner on the Palestinian side, that's a price worth paying. □

(Leslie Susser is the diplomatic correspondent of the Jerusalem Report. Washington bureau chief Ron Kampeas contributed to this story.)