



Daily News Bulletin

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86th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

24th bomb victim found

Israeli forensic volunteers located the body of a Jewish woman Monday in the rubble of one of the bombed Istanbul synagogues.

Anita Rubinstein, 85, had been missing since Saturday's attack on the Beth Israel synagogue, which killed her eight-year-old granddaughter.

The discovery brought to 24 the number of people, including six Jews, killed in the bombings at Beth Israel and the nearby Neve Shalom synagogue. More than 300 people were injured.

A group linked to Al-Qaida, the Abu Haf al-Masri Brigades, claimed responsibility. The claim couldn't be confirmed, but Turkish and Israeli officials believe that Al-Qaida had a role in the attacks.

France promises protection

French Jewish leaders welcomed new government proposals to get tough on anti-Semitism.

Speaking after Jewish leaders met President Jacques Chirac on Monday, Haim Muzicant, executive director of the CRIF umbrella organization of French Jews, said the president "sent a strong message to all those who would wish to commit attacks against Jews. This is the kind of talk we have been waiting for."

Earlier Monday, Chirac convened a special meeting of government ministers and announced that Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin would head a new Cabinet committee to combat anti-Semitism.

The committee is to meet on a monthly basis, examining reported anti-Semitic acts and deciding on methods of punishment, Raffarin said. Raffarin said security would be beefed up outside synagogues and Jewish community institutions.

The proposals follow a suspected arson attack Saturday that gutted part of a Jewish school near Paris. Another arson attempt the same night failed.

Holocaust database eyed

Yad Vashem has launched the largest Internet database of Holocaust victims in the world.

The Israeli Holocaust museum on Monday unveiled the database which, when completed in June 2004, will include biographical data on victims including name, birth date, place of birth and occupation, The Associated Press said.

Any Internet user will be able to access the information and add new data.

THE G.A.: THIS YEAR IN ISRAEL

With flags and hugs, delegates at UJC assembly show solidarity

By Dina Kraft and Rachel Pomerance

JERUSALEM (JTA)— Waving Israeli, American and Canadian flags and hoisting signs naming their hometowns, thousands of delegates at the Jewish federation system's General Assembly wound their way through the back alleys, markets and main streets of Jerusalem, vowing to stand by Israel.

Some 4,300 North Americans and 2,000 Israelis have gathered in Jerusalem this week for the annual assembly of the United Jewish Communities, the umbrella organization of North American Jewish federations.

Under the theme "With Israel, In Israel: Shaping Our Common Future," the 2003 assembly featured a welcome by Israel's president and prime minister.

Delegates were scheduled to tour the country, visiting a range of sites from immigration and absorption programs and high-tech companies to programs to aid needy Israelis.

On Monday's solidarity march through Jerusalem, soldiers and delegates linked hands and danced the hora, vendors at the Mahane Yehuda market cheered, Israeli folk music and shofars blared, and blue and white balloons bobbed overhead.

Security was tight. Police and soldiers manned street corners along the march route, which had been blocked to traffic.

Pedestrians were searched before being allowed to enter parts of downtown Jerusalem.

Delegates said coming to Israel was a matter of principle.

"Israel needs American Jews to come at this time to show it's a perfectly safe country to enjoy yourself in," said Robert Michael, part of a seven-person delegation representing the 800 Jews of Peoria, Ill. "It's our home. We need to show our solidarity."

As the four-day gathering opened Sunday, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon told delegates that the Jewish people would not be deterred by terrorism.

"Our enemies have got to understand that the Jewish people cannot be broken," Sharon said.

For many General Assembly participants, Monday's march epitomized the conference's feel-good spirit.

At most General Assemblies — typically held in North America — the customary question is, "When was the last time you were in Israel?" said Fred Zimmerman of Nashville, Tenn. Here in Israel, "it just feels right, and it's something that defies words," he said.

Judy Rosen of New York also was glad the event was being held in Israel. It "shows the centrality of Israel and how important it is for the spirituality of the Jewish people," Rosen said.

David Ben-Porat agreed. Porat, a 29-year old Israeli, has helped clean up after terrorist attacks in downtown Jerusalem as a volunteer for the Hatzolah emergency response service.

Monday night was his first time patrolling the streets on a happy occasion, he said.

It gives a "good feeling for every person here," said Ben-Porat, marching on behalf of his in-laws from Minnesota.

David Cohen, 59, closed his photo shop along the march route so he could watch "our brothers coming together" in support of Israel. "This is the Jewish home of all the

MIDEAST FOCUS

Iran called greatest threat

The threat of Iranian nuclear weapons is the greatest challenge Israel ever has faced, the chief of the Mossad said. Speaking Monday before an Israeli Knesset committee, Meir Dagan said Iran is close to developing nuclear weapons.

Cairo seeks cease-fire

An Egyptian mediator reportedly has Washington's backing for a cease-fire between Israel and Palestinian terrorist groups.

Omar Suleiman, Cairo's intelligence chief and a seasoned Middle East peace broker, began talks with Palestinian officials Monday on a deal to consolidate the current lull in fighting into a truce.

Sources in Jerusalem said Washington is lending its support to the Egyptian initiative, having realized that a Palestinian crackdown on terrorism, as required by the "road map" peace plan, is unlikely.

Israel lifts BBC ban

Israel said it would resume ties with the British Broadcasting Corp., which recently named an ombudsman to oversee its Middle East coverage.

Israeli officials long have charged pro-Palestinian bias in the BBC's coverage. Israel stopped cooperating with the BBC last summer after it repeatedly aired a TV show about Israel's nuclear program that implied Israel was a rogue state.

Israel to meet E.U. envoy

Israel will lift the boycott it imposed on the European Union's Middle East envoy for meeting with Yasser Arafat. Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom told reporters in Brussels on Monday that Israel would no longer boycott E.U. emissary Marc Otte.

The move had been part of Israel's policy of discouraging contact with Arafat because of his links to terrorism.



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world," he said. "We know that the Jewish people of the world are with us."

Along the march route, delegates paused to embrace Israelis standing by the side of the road, exchanging greetings in a mixture of Hebrew and English.

Delegates thanked soldiers and policemen for protecting the country, flashed wide smiles and posed for pictures. Soldiers and police clapped in return.

Such support "warms the heart," said Ami Mizrahi, a policeman who helps oversee security at Mahane Yehuda.

"We roll out the red carpet to them," Mizrahi said. "If only more would come."

Mahane Yehuda, Jerusalem's main open-air food market, has been a frequent terrorist target, and many people now fear to shop there.

Ahead of the march, police swept the market area, banned cars and motorcycles from parking and did security checks on shoppers.

"I'm not at all nervous," said Dov Altman of Toronto, marching with a Canadian flag draped around his shoulders. Being here "shows they are never going to shut us down. We are going to continue to live and grow," he said.

At spice shops and stands of figs, mangos and oranges, marchers stopped to buy food and exchange greetings with vendors, who waved flags and shouted boisterous welcomes.

"They should come every day," fruit vendor Yossi Chai said.

Israel's tourist industry has been devastated by the three years of violence since the Palestinian intifada began.

Conference organizers said the visiting delegates would pour some \$15 million into the Israeli economy.

Ina Silverman, an English teacher from New Haven, Conn., who has been to Israel some 25 times, said she was appalled that more North American Jews do not visit the Jewish state.

"In our time we have had people who crossed the desert to get here. Some have been sent to jail," Silverman said. "And all we need to do is spend \$1,000 and get on a plane."

Caught up in the spirit of the parade, Marian Frankston and David Weisberg of Harrisburg, Pa., burst into the "mummers strut," a typical dance from their home state.

"If someone asked how long" the parade was, "I wouldn't be able to tell you in time or distance," Weisberg said, explaining that the event's power had made it feel like a "single moment."

"When you're here, you live in a moment, but you're also living with such history," Frankston added.

Among those marching were several dozen Ethiopian Jews. They carried framed photographs of relatives still in Ethiopia and posters that read, "Our Brothers in Ethiopia Love Israel Too: Bring Them Home."

At the conference, Stephen Hoffman, the UJC's CEO, urged Israel to bring descendants of Ethiopian Jews known as Falash Mura to Israel. Hoffman has said the federation system might provide financial aid to Israel to help absorb some 20,000 Falash Mura still in Ethiopia who want to immigrate.

The Israeli Cabinet voted in February to expedite their immigration, but critics accuse the government of foot-dragging.

"The General Assembly has been a tremendous success because of the energy and commitment to care for every Jew, wherever they may be, in the spirit of one community united," said Rabbi Eric Lankin, director of UJC's religious and educational activities.

The march ended in downtown Jerusalem's Zion Square, at the bottom of the Ben-Yehuda pedestrian mall.

That area also has been a target of suicide bombings in recent years, and stores and restaurants in the area have struggled to stay open.

Delegates were urged to spend the rest of the evening shopping and dining in the city center.

Dorit Hoja, a secretary from Jerusalem, was among the Israeli delegates in the march. She said the sight of so many Diaspora Jews in the streets gave her hope.

"We are so happy they are in Israel," she said. "They make me feel like they are our people, that we are not alone." □

JEWISH WORLD

Post publisher stepping down

Conrad Black, who heads the company that publishes the Jerusalem Post, reportedly is retiring following reports of accounting irregularities.

Black, CEO of Hollinger International, which also publishes the Chicago Sun-Times and Britain's Daily Telegraph, among other papers, will resign Nov. 21 but will stay on as non-executive chairman, Ha'aretz reported.

Also resigning are Hollinger's president, David Radler, and corporate counsel Mark Kipnis.

Accused rabbi dropped

A rabbi shadowed by charges of child sex abuse was dropped from a speaking engagement.

Beth El Jacob Synagogue in Des Moines canceled a talk last week by Rabbi Ephraim Bryks of Richmond Hill, N.Y., after members of the Iowa Jewish community received e-mails detailing the allegations.

Bryks first said in an interview that he couldn't care less about the reversal, but he later wrote to JTA maintaining his innocence.

In the 1980s, several former students of the now-defunct Winnipeg Torah Academy accused Bryks of fondling them, but none lodged formal charges.

UJC: campaign up

The North American Jewish federation system reported an upswing in its annual fund-raising campaign.

The United Jewish Communities has raised \$230 million in its 2004 campaign, a 7 to 10 percent increase over the previous year, said Steve Selig, UJC's national campaign chair.

Thumbs-down for 'Passion'

The New York Post gave largely scathing reviews to Mel Gibson's new movie about Jesus.

The tabloid acquired a rough-cut of Gibson's controversial "The Passion of Christ," which is due to be released in February.

The paper screened the film for a handful of viewers including a rabbi, a priest and another theologian.

Rabbi Robert Levine, of New York's Congregation Rodef Shalom, said the movie offered "the most appalling depiction of Jews" he can recall in film.

JDC turns 90, parties with Katsav

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee kicked off its 90th anniversary celebration at the home of Israel's president.

Moshe Katsav praised the JDC's work, saying the organization "shows how Jewish values are upheld" and "brings honor to the State of Israel."

AMERICA DECIDES 2004

Candidates invoke Clinton model for U.S. role in Mideast peace efforts

By Ron Kampeas

DES MOINES, Iowa (JTA) — Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts need the level of U.S. engagement employed by former President Clinton, Democratic presidential candidates told an audience of Iowa Jews this week.

Former Vermont Gov. Howard Dean, Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry and Ohio Congressman Dennis Kucinich each said President Bush shares the blame for the collapse of the peace talks, charging him with neglect early in his administration.

"If the United States had real leadership and was prepared to engage, it could have in fact advanced the cause of the peace," Kerry said. Instead, he said, "we left it in a vacuum, spiraling downwards, and we are where we are."

Dean was applauded when he said that his first act as president would be to appoint Clinton as an envoy to the Middle East to pick up where he had left off in 2001.

"There will not be peace between the Palestinians and Israel until there is heavy intervention every day by the American president," Dean said.

The candidates' appearance Sunday at Tifereth Israel synagogue here came a day after six of the Democratic candidates for president addressed the Jefferson-Jackson dinner, a showpiece in the lead up to the first test of the presidential election season, the Jan. 19 Iowa caucuses.

A local rabbi, Ari Sytner, delivered the invocation at the dinner.

The invocation and the appearance of three candidates at the synagogue talk was a testament to the influence of Iowa's few Jews. It also demonstrated the need for Democrats to draw support away from a president seen as very friendly to Israel.

About 250 people out of Des Moines 3,500-strong Jewish community attended the synagogue talk. The candidates peppered their speeches with Yiddish and Hebrew expressions.

Dean said Bush had promised much, but delivered "bupkes," or nothing. Kucinich said he embraced "tikkun olam," the injunction to heal the world. Kerry recalled standing atop Masada and shouting "Am Yisrael Chai," "The people of Israel live."

More substantively, the candidates said that the outlines of a Middle East peace plan would closely adhere to the Camp David-Taba talks that Clinton helped negotiate, envisioning two states along pre-1967 lines and a shared Jerusalem.

"Most thoughtful people who follow this for a long time know what the framework for that peace looks like. That framework was very nearly arrived at in full in Taba in January of 2001," Kerry said.

Some Bush administration officials have recently suggested they might embrace some aspects of the Camp David-Taba outlines.

The Democratic candidates intimated that advancing Middle East peace would involve using U.S. influence to prod Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's hawkish government forward.

The U.S. role means at times "nudging our friend, leveraging when we need to," Kerry said.

Dean said the United States must "be seen as an honest broker at the bargaining table."

Kucinich said he would ask Israel "to stop the building of walls, to stop the building of new settlements."

That willingness to pressure Israel presents a weakness for Democrats in appeals to the Jewish community, where Bush is seen as exceptionally close to the Sharon government. For example, the Bush administration supported Israeli air strikes last month against suspected terrorist bases inside Syria.

Kerry and Dean both said they would continue the isolation of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

Kucinich recalled meeting Arafat during the Oslo peace process in the 1990s, and asking him whether he had truly given up his dream of destroying Israel. Arafat insisted he did, but Kucinich said he did not believe him because he saw "fear in his eyes." □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

After bombings, Turkish Jews say community's openness will remain

By Yigal Schleifer

ISTANBUL, Turkey (JTA) — The recent bombings of two Istanbul synagogues won't end the tradition of openness in Turkey's Jewish community — and it could even make the community more cohesive, leaders say.

At the same time, the attacks are unlikely to force Turkey to retreat from its alliances with Israel and the United States, according to analysts. It could even push the secular state away from the Muslim world and further toward the West.

Standing Sunday near the entrance to the rubble-strewn street that leads to Istanbul's bombed Neve Shalom synagogue, a leader of Turkey's Jewish community looked out on the scene of destruction illuminated by the glow of police investigators' emergency lights and television spotlights.

Only a few months before, the community had opened synagogue doors in Istanbul's Galata district as part of an annual Europe-wide day celebrating Jewish culture. There were musical performances in Ladino and photo exhibits inside the different synagogues. Overflow crowds — mostly non-Jews — turned out for the events.

Despite the security concerns brought on by Saturday's nearly simultaneous bombings of Neve Shalom and of the Beit Israel synagogue, located several miles away, the community will put on the same program next year, the leader said.

"We patch our wounds and go on," said Lina Filiba, the community's executive vice president. "We want life to continue like before. The synagogues have to stay open. Life has to go on."

A group linked to Al-Qaida has claimed responsibility for Saturday's attacks. Given the sophistication of the bombings, Turkish and Israeli officials are inclined to believe the claim.

The bombings killed 24 and injured more than 300 people. At least six Jews were killed and some 60 Jews injured.

If Al-Qaida indeed is involved, it may be difficult for local Jews — and Turkey itself — to return to life as it was before.

"The big question mark is, who did it and who were their local collaborators?" said Rifat Bali, a Jewish historian and expert on Turkey's Jews. "For sure there were local collaborators, and that makes it much worse. That means you have a nucleus of local terrorists who are targeting you and who are here permanently."

In recent years, the normally insular community has started reaching out to the general public and making itself more accessible. But the synagogue bombings may put a halt to the Jewish community's openness, Bali said.

"Now the community's worst fears have been realized, so there may be people who will ask why the community is opening up," he said. "This will mean that on a community and individual level, people will close upon themselves."

Some members also fear that the attacks will force the community to temporarily curtail its own internal activities.

Now "we will always worry about getting together, about having meetings, and community life will be much harder," said Viktor Kuzu, 25, who works in an advertising agency and volunteers as an editor at Salom, the Turkish Jewish newspaper.

"We were expecting something like this, we just didn't know

when it would happen," he said. "Now it happened, and we're wondering what will happen next."

While people are afraid, Kuzu said he doesn't feel the attacks will cause Jews to pull away from the community.

"Maybe there's an opposite effect," he said. "Maybe it will make people understand what it is to be Jewish; they will understand what it is to be a community. I can tell you that this event will bring the Jewish youth much closer together."

In the aftermath of the bombings, Turkey's Jews are facing immediate questions about rehabilitating the injured and rebuilding the damaged synagogues.

Community psychologists are visiting hospitals and the homes of those who lost relatives in the attack.

Meanwhile, Jewish groups from around the globe have come to Turkey to help. A team from the Jewish Agency for Israel came with psychologists, and the American Joint Jewish Distribution Committee, which has set up a fund to help rebuild the damaged synagogues, is meeting with community leaders to assess needs.

"In my opinion, the community has the ability to get over this. They have a strong leadership," said Amir Bergman, the JDC official responsible for Turkey. "At this point, we need to sit with the community and find out what they need and then come to their help, not to pile up on them with help they don't need," he said.

As the community contemplates the road ahead, the government is confronting what could be a stark new reality for Turkey.

Sami Kohen, a political analyst and columnist with the Turkish daily Milliyet, said the attacks could push Turkey toward closer cooperation with the United States and Israel in the fight on terror.

"Turkey is now included in the war-on-terror front," Kohen said. If the bombers wanted "to force Turkey to change course, to take a cooler attitude toward Israel or the West, that's not going to happen."

Israeli intelligence and explosives experts joined Turkish officials in investigating the bombings. Also, Israel's foreign minister, Silvan Shalom, paid a visit Sunday to the two devastated synagogues, laying wreaths of chrysanthemums in the rubble.

Shalom later met with his Turkish counterpart, Abdullah Gul.

The attacks show that "terror is at work everywhere, and not necessarily in one specific country or another," Shalom said. "I think that the operation here shows both Turkey and other countries in the world that no place is immune to terrorism."

While the probe continues, Turkish officials have begun to release more details about the attacks. Turkey's interior minister, Abdulkadir Aksu, told The Associated Press that he is "more than 95 percent" sure that the attacks were the work of suicide bombers.

According to Turkish police officials, the attacks were carried out by an identical pair of Isuzu delivery trucks, each packed with some 880 pounds of explosives, a mix of ammonium sulfate, nitrate and compressed fuel. The explosives were put into containers wrapped in sacks and hidden among containers of detergent.

Though directed at the synagogues, the attacks killed and injured mostly Muslims who were working near the buildings or passing by. Funerals were held Sunday for many of them. The Jewish community will hold funerals for its members on Tuesday.

As investigators continue to sift through the rubble, Turkish analysts said the two bombings could have significant domestic implications for Turkey.

Milliyet's Kohen said that if Turkey finds out that foreign terrorist groups had made inroads in the country and found local recruits, the reaction would be swift. □