



# Daily News Bulletin

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86th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Israel withdraws U.N. bill

Israel withdrew its first-ever resolution at the United Nations.

Israel said it withdrew the resolution, which expressed concern for Israeli children living under the threat of Palestinian terrorism, because Arab countries rewrote it in committee, making it anti-Israel.

It was a "hostile takeover," said a senior Israeli official.

The resolution, which was scheduled for a vote in the General Assembly's committee on human rights Wednesday, followed the passage of an Egyptian-sponsored resolution expressing concern over Palestinian children living under the threat of occupation.

"We put the U.N. to the test, to test the morality of the U.N., and the U.N. failed," said Dan Gillerman, Israel's U.N. ambassador.

### U.S. cuts partly for fence

The United States says the \$289.5 million it deducted from loan guarantees includes spending on the security barrier.

Israeli officials said the amount was compensation for settlement building alone when they announced the figure Tuesday.

On Wednesday, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher insisted that "not a small amount" of the cuts were for barrier building inside the West Bank. [Page 3]

### Nuke agency censures Iran

A United Nations agency censured Iran for covering up its nuclear weapons development program.

The 35 nations of the International Atomic Energy Agency adopted the censure by consensus Wednesday, warning Iran that its program would be monitored more closely.

The United States wanted the U.N. Security Council to threaten sanctions against the Islamic republic, but that statement was not part of the final agreement.

REMINDER: The JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Friday, Nov. 28.

## Israelis and Jewish groups talk numbers and dollars on Falash Mura

By Rachel Pomerance

NEW YORK (JTA) — As Israel takes steps to bring some 20,000 Falash Mura to Israel from Ethiopia, the Jewish state is looking to American Jewry to help pay the tab.

The latest moves in the saga of the Falash Mura — Ethiopians whose Jewish ancestors converted to Christianity but who since have resumed practicing Judaism — comes in the wake of increased lobbying by officials from U.S. Jewish federations, Jewish humanitarian groups and Ethiopian Jewry advocates.

Last week, the Israeli government official responsible for bringing the Falash Mura to Israel outlined a plan to implement a February Cabinet decision to bring them, but concerned parties are viewing it cautiously.

Advocates for the Ethiopians want Israel to accelerate the aliyah process, especially in light of the ongoing famine in Ethiopia.

Israel has been bringing Falash Mura to the Jewish state at a rate of about 2,500 per year.

Earlier this month, Israel's Supreme Court called on the government — and the Interior Ministry in particular — to explain its delay in implementing the February decision.

The government also is under pressure from Falash Mura in Israel, who stage frequent protests demanding that the government bring family members left in Ethiopia to Israel.

Recently, some American Jews have taken up their cry.

Before the General Assembly of the North American federation system earlier this month, some federation leaders traveled to Ethiopia to assess the situation on the ground.

As General Assembly delegates met last week in Jerusalem, Knesset members convened to discuss the Falash Mura.

The Knesset discussion came amid talks between Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and the president of the United Jewish Communities federation umbrella group, Stephen Hoffman, on how the federation system could aid in their absorption.

In the Knesset discussion, Interior Minister Avraham Poraz said Israel would provide entry by the end of 2004 to Falash Mura who qualify as immigrants under the Law of Return, which grants Israeli citizenship to anyone with at least one Jewish grandparent.

Poraz also said that by June 30, 2005, Israel would allow immigration of any Falash Mura with immediate family living in Israel.

The cost of immigration and absorption, and the number of Falash Mura eligible for aliyah, are at the heart of the government's delay in implementing the February Cabinet decision, observers say.

Worried that Israel faces an influx of an unknown number of Ethiopians seeking to flee a famine-stricken country, Poraz at the Knesset discussion capped the list of Falash Mura slated for emigration at 22,000, the amount counted by a census taken five years ago.

Many of those 22,000 already have emigrated to Israel.

Poraz also demanded that the North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry, or NACOEJ, which along with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee provides services to Falash Mura relief compounds in Ethiopia, shut down its operations by March 31, 2004. At that time, administration of the compounds in Addis Ababa and

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Italy to host forum

Italy will host an international donors conference for the Palestinian Authority next month. The conference was originally slated for earlier this month, but was postponed because of the delays in the formation of the P.A. government.

Israel is expected to send a delegation to the conference.

### Peres meets Palestinians

Shimon Peres met with representatives of Yasser Arafat's Fatah organization, Israel Radio reported.

Peres, the leader of Israel's Labor Party, met with representatives of both Fatah and the Tanzim militia in Jerusalem. The groups, which have been implicated in terrorist attacks against Israelis, reportedly asked Peres to present a plan for peace to the Israeli people as an alternative to the policies of the Sharon government.

### Israeli hospital treating Iraqi baby

A week-old Iraqi baby girl was brought to Israel for a heart operation. The girl was brought to the country for an operation doctors hope will correct a congenital heart defect.

The Israeli organization Save a Child's Heart brought Bayan Jassem and her parents to Wolfson Medical Center in Holon. An Israeli doctor instructed a counterpart in Baghdad over the phone how to perform a minor operation on the baby to stabilize her before she was brought to Israel.

### Stuffed animals might be better?

Israeli customs officials seized a shipment of Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein dolls.

An Israeli Arab businessman apparently had ordered the dolls from China to sell as joke gifts.

But officials said the dolls could incite violence.

Ababa and Gondar would come under control of the Jewish Agency for Israel.

Additionally, Poraz asked American Jews to help pay for the Falash Mura's immigration and absorption, which he estimated at a lifetime cost of \$100,000 per person.

"The government will turn to Jewish organizations internationally, and primarily in the United States, including those that preach to us day and night about why we're not bringing the Jews of Ethiopia to Israel, to raise funds and to assist in the absorption of the Ethiopian Jews," Poraz said.

Some Ethiopia advocates object to Poraz's proposal.

They say it would not bring all the Falash Mura to Israel, as required by the February resolution.

It also does not provide a timetable for immigration, or for checking the Ethiopians' Jewish ancestry, they say.

Israel's Chief Rabbinate, along with all three major religious denominations in the United States, have affirmed that the Falash Mura are Jews.

But the Jewish identification of those who have come to the compounds still needs to be verified.

Barbara Ribakove Gordon, executive director of NACOEJ, said it is "distressing" for NACOEJ to be asked to shut down its Ethiopia operations. She said the issue merits further discussion.

The recent Knesset discussion follows a meeting last month between Hoffman, Poraz, Ethiopia advocates and others.

The parties that met agreed to consider a deal in which the number of Falash Mura eligible for immigration would be capped and U.S. Jewish groups would help pay for their absorption.

It is not clear how the project would be funded on the federation end of things.

A UJC project several years ago to raise money for Ethiopian absorption gained little traction.

The issue is not on the agenda of the Dec. 8 UJC committee meeting on overseas allocations, according to Steven Klinghoffer, chair of UJC's Overseas Needs Assessment and Distribution Committee.

"No one has assumed the financial responsibility for this operation," said Yechiel Eckstein, the Jewish Agency's representative to the discussions. "Everyone is passing the buck."

What's more, the issue of the Falash Mura arouses ambivalence and controversy among Jews around the world.

Some consider the claims to Jewish heritage by these Falash Mura specious.

They point out that in 1998 announcements were made that Israel was bringing the last 4,000 Falash Mura to the Jewish state, but then thousands more Ethiopians turned out at the compounds claiming Jewish heritage.

According to Eckstein, Poraz is preparing a recommendation on the Falash Mura to present to a Cabinet committee in the next month or two, once he has secured funding sources and determined the number of Falash Mura eligible for aliyah.

Some critics say Israel's foot-dragging on the issue is a sign of racism or class-based prejudice, since the Jewish state readily welcomes massive numbers of Jews from the former Soviet Union.

Regardless of whether or not the Falash Mura left in Ethiopia are Jewish, the fact that many of their immediate family members now live in Israel makes their emigration to the Jewish state a humanitarian issue, some say.

Feakdu Takle, 22, immigrated to Israel from Ethiopia three years ago, and he has not seen his parents since.

Takle, who just finished his army duty, said he is deeply frustrated that "the state that I am defending" will not bring his parents to Israel.

"This is our place. This is the home for all Jews and my parents are Jews," he says, his voice breaking into tears. "I will continue to struggle until all my family come home."

Returning to Ethiopia is not an option for Takle. Dressed in a tight T-shirt and low-slung jeans, he looks like a typical Israeli. And recently he give his baby daughter an Israeli name, Ora. □



## Daily News Bulletin

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## JEWISH WORLD

### Anti-Sharon cartoon wins prize

A British cartoon that outraged Israel supporters was honored by Britain's Political Cartoon Society.

On Tuesday, the cartoon, which showed Ariel Sharon eating a baby and which critics said was reminiscent of blood libels used against Jews throughout history, was declared the top political cartoon of the year.

"I can see why it caused a great deal of controversy," the society's Tim Benson told JTA. Benson, who is Jewish, said the image was "very much a criticism of the premier and his party," but not an anti-Semitic sketch.

Britain's Press Complaints Commission rejected complaints against the cartoon, which was published in the Independent in January.

### Graffiti in Marseille again

Swastikas were daubed on Jewish shops in southern France.

The swastikas were found Wednesday morning painted on the outside of a Jewish photography studio and bookshop in Marseille, as well as on a number of walls close to the city's main synagogue.

On Monday night, seven tombs in a Jewish cemetery in the city were also desecrated with swastikas and numerous far-right slogans and insignia.

On Tuesday, swastikas were also painted on a mosque in northern France and an attempt was made to set the building alight.

Around 70,000 Jews live in Marseille, the second largest Jewish community in France.

### Czechs legislate Holocaust day

The Czech Republic's lower house of Parliament voted to approve a national Holocaust memorial day.

Tuesday's move to make Jan. 27 the memorial day was welcomed by Czech Jewish groups and Holocaust survivor organizations, which began lobbying for the commemorative day three years ago.

### Youngsters give grants

A group of young Jewish philanthropists announced \$400,000 in grants.

Natan, a philanthropic network made up of Jews younger than 50 that supports "innovative, creative and socially meaningful Jewish projects," announced 15 winners from more than 225 submissions.

Details about the grants, for work promoting Jewish identity, Israel on campus activities and Israel-based groups, is available at [www.natan.org](http://www.natan.org).

The fund, named after the late J.J. Greenberg, son of Rabbi Irving Greenberg, is supported by members of the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies, the Nathan Cummings Foundation, the Samberg Family Foundation and an anonymous foundation.

## As punishment for settlements, U.S. chops \$290 million from loans

By Ron Kampeas and Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The Bush administration is trying to make clear to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon that settlement building comes with a price tag — \$289.5 million, to be exact.

After months of speculation, the administration announced Tuesday that it will deduct that amount from the \$3 billion in promised loan guarantees to Israel this year because of settlement building.

Israeli and U.S. officials differed over whether the amount accounted for spending on the controversial security barrier Israel is building in the West Bank. Israelis insisted it did not; State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said "not a small amount" was compensation for the barrier.

Still, some Jewish and Israeli officials depicted the move as a victory because the deduction is substantially less than the \$500 to \$600 million that some had expected.

The long-awaited announcement came after Dov Weisglass, a top Sharon adviser, met in Washington with Bush's national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice. Israel suggested the amount, U.S. and Israeli officials said.

"The calculation to get to that total was based on Israeli budget figures," Boucher said Wednesday.

A statement from Israel's embassy in Washington said Israel appreciated U.S. sensitivities about building in the West Bank.

"Israel understands that the U.S. should not finance directly, or indirectly, activities with which it does not agree and, therefore, suggested that the U.S. deduct the agreed sum of \$289.5 million dollars from the \$3 billion in loan guarantees currently available," the statement said.

Israel already issued a note in August for \$1.6 billion in loans, with U.S. guarantees. The \$289.5 million will come out of the next installment of guarantees, for \$1.4 billion, which will run through December.

The United States had pledged \$9 billion over three years to help Israel's strapped economy, hit hard by three years of Palestinian terrorism. U.S. loan guarantees allow Israel to take out loans at a reduced interest rate.

The deductions do not affect direct aid to Israel.

Some analysts had projected a cut of up to \$600 million, based on an investigation by Israel's daily Ha'aretz earlier this year that found that Israel spent \$556 million on settlements in 2002.

Other analyses were lower, estimating about \$200 million in spending on settlement expansion in the West Bank.

Americans for Peace Now called the deduction figure "low-ball."

"It's an important gesture, but it doesn't appear that the amount matches the reality on the ground," said Lewis Roth, the group's assistant executive director.

Israeli officials said the deduction does not address U.S. concerns about the route of Israel's security barrier, as it deals only with activity "to date," while the most controversial parts of the planned fence have yet to be built.

Boucher insisted the fence was accounted for.

"The deduction reflects issues of concern to the United States, including settlement activities and the route of the security fence," Boucher said. "So it's an assessment that's based on the amounts spent on those activities that should be deducted."

Boucher said the United States would never deduct the cost of those parts of the barrier that straddled the "Green Line," the boundary that divides Israel proper from the West Bank, captured from Jordan in 1967.

The amount helped assuage recent concerns that the United States was going to use the loan guarantees to punish the Sharon government for allegedly not offering enough gestures to bolster Palestinian moderates.

"This was anticipated," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. "The fact that it applies to the construction of settlements is consistent with past practices." □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**In United States and Germany, Jews, Turks mark Istanbul bombs***By Ron Kampeas*

WASHINGTON (JTA)— Turkish-American leader Ercument Kilic strode to the podium in a Washington synagogue, holding aloft a photo of Anet Rubinstein Talu.

"Whether Turkish or Jewish, it doesn't matter," Kilic said of the grinning 8-year-old girl, who was killed in the recent synagogue bombings in Istanbul. "She's our child."

Two Istanbul synagogues were bombed Nov. 15, killing 24 people, mostly non-Jews. Another 27 people were killed Nov. 20 when two more bombs targeting a pair of British institutions were detonated.

Jewish communities in Washington, New York and Philadelphia seeking Turkish participants for memorials were overwhelmed by the eagerness to join in the mourning.

"It was a very heartwarming response," said Ron Halber, the Jewish Community Council executive director who organized the memorial service at Washington's Adas Israel synagogue.

The closeness is born partly of the circumstance of Turkey's ambitions for acceptance in the West, and the perceived power of the U.S. Jewish community to enable access to power.

"The American Jewish community played a significant role in U.S. foreign policy, in their mind, and that helped create an affinity for Israel," said Tom Neumann, executive director of the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs.

JINSA helped bring Turks and U.S. Jews closer together in the early 1990s by lobbying to overcome Greek American opposition to Turkey's purchase of frigates.

Since then, relations have grown closer. Turkey was the first Muslim nation to send an ambassador to Israel, and it now conducts war exercises with the Israeli and U.S. militaries.

The United States has pressed hard to bring Turkey into the European Union, a goal long sought by Turks seeking economic stability.

But access isn't the whole story, Neumann and others say.

The Turkish affinity for Jews extends a tradition of tolerance dating back to the sultan's embrace of Jews fleeing the Spanish inquisition five centuries ago, and a mutual modern distrust for militant Islam.

"It was a sense not only of solidarity, of sharing the pain," said Rabbi Arthur Schneier, a New York rabbi with longstanding ties to the Turkish government who visited Istanbul after the blasts. "It was also a sense of we're facing the barbarians."

The hostility to militant Islam has its roots in Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey after World War I.

Ataturk borrowed from French and American notions of nationhood as a conscious choice, rather than something inherent in a bloodline.

In that vision, Turkishness was as attainable by Jews and Christians as by Muslims.

"All of those who lost their lives in the synagogue attacks, Jewish or Muslim, were Turkish nationals," said Naci Saribas, deputy chief of mission at the Turkish Embassy, who also addressed the Adas Israel memorial.

Turkey always has taken seriously notions of nationhood before religion.

Schneier recalled a peace and tolerance conference the Turks convened in 1994, inviting the leaders of nascent post-Soviet states in the Balkans and throughout the Caucasus.

"The objective was to make sure the new central Asian republics do not use Iran but Turkey as their role model," recalled Schneier, whose Appeal of Conscience Foundation helped organize the conference.

JINSA's Neumann said that ethos has carried over even with an Islamist government, contrary to Jewish fears that Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who comes from an Islamist party, would tilt Turkey toward radical Islam.

In fact, Neumann said, Erdogan's standing as an Islamist gives new credibility to the fight against terror.

"Erdogan said they will be punished in both worlds," Neumann said, referring to the bombers. "Al-Qaida promised rewards in the hereafter, but now there's a new point of view in the Muslim world: You're going to get it in both worlds."

It was a message underscored by the presence of Turkish imams at memorials at New York and Philadelphia synagogues.

"When you have a national tragedy, naturally people come together more," said Birtan Collier of the Turkish American Friendship Society.

She was among those attending the event at the Mikveh Israel synagogue in Philadelphia.

Notions of likeness were reinforced as well.

"We have a lot in common, don't we?" Kilic, president of the Assembly of Turkish American Associations, said at the Washington memorial. "Jews don't really have a lot of friends, do they? But when they find one, they embrace them."

An embrace of Turkey certainly was the message from U.S. Jewish leaders, who have recoiled at the resurgence of anti-Semitism in Europe and who recall the nativist, anti-Jewish sentiments in the wake of similar attacks in France in the early 1980s and Argentina in the 1990s.

"What has been most disturbing is the reaction — or should I say, the lack of it — from many of the democratic nations of the world," Washington JCC president Sophie Hoffman said at the memorial service. "An oasis of hope has been the country of Turkey."

Meanwhile, a similar interfaith ceremony was held in Berlin on Nov. 21 at the initiative of Jewish and Turkish groups.

Billed as an ecumenical memorial, the event quickly became a political platform against terrorism and in favor of democracy.

Representatives of the Israeli, American, British and Turkish embassies, as well as leaders of Germany's Jewish and Turkish communities, called for courage and resolve against terrorism, and greater interfaith cooperation.

There also were calls for Turkey's swift inclusion in the European Union and an end to the politics of appeasement with countries known to sponsor terrorism.

"We cannot allow inhuman acts to rob us of our humanity," said Deidre Berger, head of the Berlin office of the American Jewish Committee, one of the event's co-organizers.

The ceremony originally was planned to memorialize the victims of the synagogue bombings, but the ceremony took on a broader international stage after the subsequent bombings of the British diplomatic and business centers. □

(JTA correspondent Toby Axelrod contributed to this story from Berlin.)