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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

'Geneva accord' launched

Proponents of the "Geneva accord" gathered in Switzerland to launch the unofficial Israeli-Palestinian peace proposal. Speaking at Monday's launch, hosted by actor Richard Dreyfuss, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter said the Geneva accord is the best chance for peace. [Page 1]

Israel raids Hamas

Four Palestinians were killed during an Israeli raid against Hamas in the West Bank.

The raid began early Monday and targeted Hamas infrastructure in Ramallah. Three of those killed were armed, and one was a 9-year-old boy. Dozens of Palestinians were arrested in the sweep, which officials said had been planned for months. Military officials told Ha'aretz they were seeking militants who have been planning or carrying out anti-Israel attacks.

Accused collaborator dies

An accused Nazi collaborator died Sunday night in Costa Rica, just nine days after Poland asked for his extradition. Bohdan Koziy was 81.

News of his death was received with somber disappointment by top Nazi hunters and local Jewish leaders, who had been cheered by the prospect of seeing Koziy finally face trial after more than two decades trying to bring him to justice. Koziy was indicted last month by a court in Katowice, Poland, on charges that he killed 15 people as a Nazi collaborator. [Page 3]

Assad: Time for talks

The United States should press for renewed Israeli-Syrian negotiations, Syria's president said. Speaking to the New York Times, Bashar Assad said such a policy should be part of President Bush's vision for a new Middle East. Assad also said pro-Israel forces are the major stumbling block in U.S.-Syrian relations.

"Whenever the Syrian relations deteriorated with the United States, invariably it was the Israeli factor that caused that deterioration," Assad said. "It could be Israeli influence or effect in the United States through the lobby," he said. Israeli officials said they would study Assad's comments but believed he was trying to strike a more moderate tone to avoid U.S. sanctions because of Syria's support of terrorism.

NEWS ANALYSIS

With its launch, 'Geneva accord' sets off flurry of new peace efforts

By Leslie Susser

JERUSALEM (JTA) — After its gala launch in Switzerland this week, the unofficial Israeli-Palestinian peace proposal known as the "Geneva accord" is rapidly picking up international support.

Indeed, Monday's festive launch was designed to generate international and grass-roots pressure on leaders on both sides to take bold peace steps.

But can the Geneva accord, reached by people who hold no office, become the basis for a real peace deal and break the Israeli-Palestinian deadlock? Or, alternatively, will leaders not ready to go the Geneva route, but unwilling to be seen as obstructionist, be pressured into making different peace moves of their own?

Popular support for the Geneva proposal seems to be growing in Israel, but the government remains adamantly opposed. On the Palestinian side, the agreement's main advocates have run into strong and sometimes violent opposition.

And while major peace brokers like the United States and European countries are showing growing interest, none has yet adopted the Geneva draft as an official program or as a basis for negotiation.

The document, which can be found at http://www.heskem.org.il/heskem_en.asp, deals with such controversial issues as borders, Jerusalem and refugees.

It has sparked fiery debates in Israel and among the Palestinians on the nature of a final peace deal.

It also has led to a flurry of parallel diplomatic action. Last Thursday, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon dispatched his son Omri, along with other Knesset members and government officials, for talks with Palestinians near London.

Other Likud Party legislators took part in a weekend seminar with Palestinians in Madrid, and U.S. Middle East envoy William Burns returned to the region in an effort to restart the official peace process based on the "road map" peace plan.

Most significantly, Sharon himself made new overtures to the Palestinians.

The longer that other plans like the road map remain stalled, the more the Geneva alternative will beckon. That could generate a new dynamic leading to increased international pressure on both sides to cut a deal along the lines of the Geneva accord.

In Israel, sentiment on the Geneva proposal are mixed. A poll published Monday in Ha'aretz showed 31 percent of Israelis support it and 37 percent oppose it. Despite the opposition of the Likud-led government, 13 percent of Likud voters surveyed supported the agreement.

The architects of the deal were delighted.

Haim Oron of the Meretz Party declared that the negotiators never dreamed the deal would win so much support so quickly. Yossi Beilin, the main Israeli architect of the plan, highlighted the multi-partisan nature of the support.

The Israeli sponsors of the plan acknowledge that it is not a done deal, and they say their main purpose in making it public is to create a mind-set for peace. They say the understandings show there potentially is a Palestinian partner, and they set forth in the proposal the kinds of concessions that will be needed for peace.

Sharon's ministers counter that the Israeli concessions in the document are excessive, and that the Geneva exercise — and the international support given to it — put the elected government in an invidious position.

They maintain that the Palestinians are using the Israeli left to lay down new starting

MIDEAST FOCUS

Annan: Israel hurts, too

Kofi Annan noted Israeli suffering in a speech on the United Nations' day of solidarity with the Palestinians. "In expressing solidarity with them, I do not ignore the suffering of the people of Israel. They remain insecure and terrorized," the U.N. secretary-general told the General Assembly's Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on Monday.

Annan said Israeli policy has "enhanced misery and feelings of helplessness among Palestinians," while Palestinian suicide bombing has "no justification," and "pushed back the day when Palestinians will live in peace and security."

Israel braces for U.N. bill

Israel expects a U.N. bill blasting Israel's security fence this week. In the wake of a U.N. report issued last Friday that said the fence could damage prospects for peace, Israel expects Arab countries to call for a special emergency session of the General Assembly this week. The assembly would vote on a resolution asking the International Court of Justice to assess the legality of the fence.

The move came as the United Nations celebrates its annual day of solidarity with the Palestinian people Monday.

Israeli outposts out

Israel's defense minister said 10 illegal settlement outposts will be dismantled soon, Army Radio reported. Shaul Mofaz was to present the plan Monday in Jerusalem to William Burns, U.S. assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs. According to the report, the outposts could be dismantled in the next few days.

Israel is under pressure from the United States to dismantle illegal outposts, which the White House sees as a stumbling block to peace efforts.



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points for future negotiations and to embarrass Sharon by portraying him as too hard-line to cut a deal that others could.

For his part, Sharon has responded by hinting at a readiness to dismantle some Israeli settlements, coupled with the threat of unilateral action if the Palestinians spurn his overtures.

The subtext is clear: Sharon is no uncompromising hard-liner, but he's not going to wait around for someone to try get negotiations going for a Geneva-type deal.

So far, none of the parallel initiatives has borne fruit, at least in public. No agreement was reached in the London and Madrid exchanges even on basic issues like ending terrorism, and both forums degenerated into arguments.

The key to immediate progress lies now with Burns, the U.S. envoy, who is trying to set up a meeting between Sharon and the new Palestinian Authority prime minister.

On the Palestinian side, neither Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei nor P.A. President Yasser Arafat has fully endorsed the Geneva deal, although Arafat did send a letter of qualified support to the Geneva ceremony.

Israeli analysts believe Arafat is playing a game: He doesn't offer outright support for Geneva, so as not to be bound by it and to be able to push for more. Yet he also doesn't reject it outright, casting Sharon — who opposes the deal — as the rejectionist.

The Geneva ceremony highlighted growing international support for the accord. Nobel Peace Prize-winners and Arab dignitaries attended, while former U.S. President Bill Clinton and British Prime Minister Tony Blair sent greetings.

It is not inconceivable that at some point down the road international players will seek to call a peace conference with the Geneva accord as the basis for discussion.

Already, the launch in Geneva is having reverberations in Washington.

Rep. Lois Capps (D-Calif.) flew to Geneva for the signing and is expected to introduce legislation next week supporting the plan. A similar resolution will be introduced in the Senate by Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.).

The Washington chapter of the left-wing group Brit Tzedek v'Shalom delivered copies of the resolution to each lawmaker's office on Capitol Hill on Monday.

Beilin and Abed Rabbo will be in Washington later this week to meet with lawmakers and to talk up their resolution to the American media.

The Bush administration said Monday that it "welcomed" the Geneva plan, but officials expressed continued support for the road map. Official American policy is not to allow other plans to deflect attention from the road map.

The road map "is the only plan on the table," U.S. Ambassador to Israel Daniel Kurtzer said Monday.

Part of the Geneva proposal's charm is that, unlike the slow, step-by-step road map, it envisions a one-step end to the conflict. But that could prove illusory, because the Israeli and Palestinian powers that be reject some of the accord's main provisions and because closing the remaining gaps could be problematic or even impossible.

For their part, the Israeli sponsors of the Geneva document intend to step up efforts to build domestic and international support.

The agreement is sure to become the main political message of a new left-wing party called Ya'ad, to be formed soon by a merger between Meretz and Beilin's Shachar group. United around such a clear peace message, the group soon could be challenging Israel's ailing Labor Party for primacy on the left. □

(Leslie Susser is the diplomatic correspondent for the Jerusalem Report. JTA Staff Writer Matthew E. Berger in Washington contributed to this story.)

Cultural Jews offer \$10 million

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Center for Cultural Judaism is matching philanthropist Michael Steinhardt's \$10 million pledge for Jewish education. Backed by billionaire British Jewish philanthropist Felix Posen, the center became the first party to meet Steinhardt's call to help launch a \$100 million "Fund for Our Jewish Future."

But Posen said he would give the money only if about half was spent on the 49 percent of U.S. Jews who call themselves secular to some degree and the 48 percent who do not affiliate with any denomination, according to figures from recent population surveys. Posen told JTA he hoped to "create credible Jewish institutions of learning that are secular and non-religious, not anti-religious." □

JEWISH WORLD

New allocations for survivors

The Claims Conference is allocating another \$74 million to help Holocaust survivors around the world.

In its meeting Monday in New York, the allocations committee approved grants to welfare programs and institutions benefitting Holocaust survivors around the world. The allocations still need to be approved by the Claims Conference's board of directors.

The largest allocation went to the Foundation for the Benefit of Holocaust Survivors in Israel, which is to receive \$21 million for home-care needs in Israel. Jewish welfare organizations in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova are to receive grants totaling \$22 million, and about 60 groups in New America are to receive \$12 million, according to the Claims Conference's executive vice president, Gideon Taylor.

Jews join peace campaign

Reform, Reconstructionist and Conservative Jewish leaders are pressing President Bush to re-engage in the Middle East.

Rabbi Janet Marder, president of the Reform movement's Central Conference of American Rabbis; Rabbi Amy Small, president of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association; and Rabbi Jerome Epstein, executive vice president of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, have joined 28 other Jewish, Muslim and Christian clerics in the initiative to urge Bush to resume peace-making efforts.

The "Walk the Road to Peace" campaign, to be launched in Washington on Tuesday, wants the Bush administration to return a high-level emissary to the region, set a timetable for peace and examine several "freelance" peace plans proposed recently.

Center presses pope on bombings

The Simon Wiesenthal Center wants Pope John Paul II to declare suicide bombing a crime against humanity. A senior delegation from the center, which is launching an international campaign aimed at a declaration against bombings, made its appeal during a private Vatican audience with the pope on Monday. The pope did not respond publicly.

The delegation also bestowed the center's 2003 humanitarian award on the pope, in recognition and gratitude for his friendship with the Jewish people.

Bush, Let my people in!

U.S. Jewish groups are pressing President Bush to allow all 70,000 refugee slots to be filled this year.

The 22 groups from across the political spectrum said that fewer than 30,000 of the 70,000 slots have been filled during the past two years. "Our concern over the current status of the U.S. Refugee Program is based on our core values as Americans and Jews," said a letter from the groups dated Monday.

About to be extradited for WWII acts, Bohdan Koziy dies in Costa Rica at 81

By Brian Harris

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica (JTA) — Accused Nazi collaborator Bohdan Koziy died Sunday night of a stroke in Costa Rica, just nine days after Poland requested his extradition. He was 81.

News of Koziy's death was received with disappointment by top Nazi hunters and Costa Rican Jewish leaders, who had been cheered by the prospect of seeing Koziy finally face trial after more than two decades of frustrated efforts to bring him to justice.

"This is an unfortunate turn of circumstances," said Efraim Zuroff, director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Israel office and Koziy's main pursuer since the early 1980s. "At the precise moment in which he was going to face charges, he died. He didn't deserve to die without being prosecuted for his crimes."

A spokeswoman at the public hospital in Alajuela, Costa Rica's second largest city, said Koziy died shortly before midnight and was under police custody at the time of his death. He had been in and out of hospitals for most of the year.

"This leaves a really, really bitter taste," said Mioses Flachler, of the local B'nai B'rith chapter and one of a team of local lawyers who have long followed the case. "We could not extradite him, he died here and we couldn't even question him. Justice was not done."

The Polish Embassy here had no initial comment. Koziy's case was the first-ever extradition request Poland had presented to Costa Rica.

Koziy was accused of having participated in a police force set up by Nazi occupiers in territory that belonged to prewar Poland and now is in Ukraine. He was indicted last month by a court in Poland at the request of prosecutor Ewa Koj, of Warsaw's Institute of National Memory, on charges that he killed 15 people as a Nazi collaborator.

Koziy's presence had long been an irritant to the local Jewish community of about 2,500, composed mostly of prewar migrants from Poland and their descendants. Though Costa Rica maintains its embassy in Israel in Jerusalem and declared war on Nazi Germany a day before the United States did, Koziy had long lived here with the knowledge of Costa Rican officials.

After the war, using a pseudonym and hiding his alleged wartime activities, Koziy had made his way to Florida. He came to Costa Rica after the United States stripped him of his citizenship in 1982 and began deportation hearings against him in 1984.

After being stripped of his citizenship, Koziy disappeared from view until 1987, when he was discovered living in Costa Rica, where his wife had gotten legal residency.

He returned to the public spotlight in 1987 when the Soviet Union asked Costa Rica to extradite him. Claiming that he had been an anti-Communist partisan during the war who fought against the Nazi occupation, Koziy enlisted the aid of the local Catholic Church, which went to bat for him in opposing his extradition to Moscow.

In 1989, then-Costa Rican President Oscar Arias, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, allowed Koziy to remain in the country because he did not believe Soviet promises that Koziy would not receive the death penalty.

The case was revisited in 1994, when the World Jewish Congress and other Jewish organizations pressed Costa Rica to rid itself of its only known resident war criminal.

It was not until 2000 that the minister of public security, Rogelio Ramos, issued an order that Koziy be expelled. That heightened the campaign to find a country to try Koziy, leading to last month's extradition request from Poland.

In court documents over the past 20 years, Koziy had denied the charges against him, though he had refused to speak to foreign reporters since moving here. He spoke to local media only during the trial for his possible extradition to the Soviet Union to make denunciations of communism and vow to kill himself before going to Moscow.

Koziy's death was seen as more frustrating because most observers believed he would have been extradited to Poland by mid-January.

The case against Koziy, given the large volumes of documentation from the denaturalization hearing in the United States, was considered one of the strongest against a living Nazi collaborator. □

NEWS ANALYSIS

Arafat's games mask intensity of Palestinian debate on Geneva*By Gil Sedan*

JERUSALEM (JTA)—It was like the bride threatening to pull out of the wedding at the last minute.

Twenty-four hours before the official launching of the "Geneva accord" peace proposal with a gala ceremony in Switzerland on Monday, Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat advised the Palestinian delegation to stay home.

That set off a mad scramble among the Israeli opposition figures who negotiated the proposal and Egyptian officials eager to get the peace process moving again, as they sought to convince the Palestinians to follow through on their end of things.

In the end, Arafat gave his backing to the delegation, and the Palestinian delegates departed — even carrying a letter from Arafat that was read at the signing ceremony. The letter praised the possibility for peace and blasted Israel.

The episode was one of Arafat's usual tricks: He created a crisis, then resolved it just in time to reap the benefits.

Yet analysts note that Arafat's muscle-flexing dovetailed with another factor: a genuine internal debate over potential Palestinian concessions.

After allowing figures close to him to meet Israeli opposition figures for negotiations under Swiss auspices, Arafat last month suggested that the time was not right for such an agreement given the strong criticism for it in the Palestinian political community.

But Arafat would not oppose the proposal openly.

After all, Arafat insists he's a man of peace, and Palestinian participants boasted throughout the negotiations that Arafat had endorsed the initiative. In fact, the main point the Palestinian side was trying to sell was that if Israel would just offer even deeper concessions than before, it would find a credible and influential Palestinian partner.

As delegates to the Geneva signing ceremony were packing their suitcases, however, Arafat unleashed the opponents. First, he mustered hundreds of demonstrators to protest the proposal because it doesn't explicitly include a "right of return" for millions of Palestinian refugees, and because of what were described as Palestinian concessions regarding Jerusalem.

The organizers of the protests were old-guard Fatah activists, members of the central committee of Arafat's movement.

Speaking of the Geneva negotiators, Hussein a-Sheikh, a senior Fatah leader in the West Bank, said, "Those people represent only themselves. None of them represents Fatah, which does not endorse the Geneva document."

The comments reflected genuine concern within the Palestinian community that the model proposed in the Geneva accord might some day become reality, forcing the Palestinians to settle for something less than their maximalist demands.

According to a survey published Tuesday by Ha'aretz, 31 percent of Israelis support the initiative and 38 percent oppose it.

Though the Geneva accord contains unprecedented Israeli concessions, Palestinian opposition to the proposal is significant. Gunmen fired shots over the weekend toward the Ramallah residence of Yasser Abed Rabbo, one of the proposal's initiators. No one was hurt.

Gaza demonstrators beat up two people who were to travel to

Geneva for the launch ceremony. Armed men marched against the proposal in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Until early this week, only Hamas and Islamic Jihad had spoken out clearly against the proposal. Before the debate within Fatah, Hamas on Saturday denounced parallel talks between Palestinian and Israeli representatives in London and Madrid to discuss implementation of the "road map," the official peace plan backed by the international community, the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government.

Senior Hamas official Abdel Aziz Rantissi described the Geneva accord as "the most dangerous document to the Palestinian people."

Though the agreement is ambiguous on the "right of return" for Arab refugees — the text does not bear out the Israeli negotiators' claim, with which they tried to sell the accord to the Israeli public, that the Palestinians had renounced the right of return — the demand is so deeply rooted in the Palestinian credo that anything less than its explicit acceptance is considered a loss.

Most Israelis view a right of return as tantamount to the destruction of the Jewish state.

Palestinians also were upset by what they considered concessions in Jerusalem, where Palestinians would recognize Israeli control of over Jewish neighborhoods built since the 1967 Six-Day War. In return, Arab neighborhoods would become the capital of a new State of Palestine and the Palestinians would be given three-fourths of the historic Old City.

They also would gain control over the Temple Mount, which is holy to Muslims and is the holiest site in the world to Jews.

Rantissi spoke on the eve of talks scheduled in Cairo among various Palestinian terrorist groups and the Palestinian Authority about renewing a cease-fire against Israelis.

Indeed, early Monday it seemed that two years of negotiations on the plan were on the verge of collapse as key members of the Palestinian delegation announced they would not go to Geneva.

"We enjoyed the full support and encouragement of the president until this morning," said Palestinian negotiator Fares Kadoura, "but our attention has been drawn to reservations inside the Fatah movement."

Kadoura explained that, in the wake of criticism in the Palestinian community, "we wanted to make sure that whatever we were doing would not be outside the framework of our organization and our policy."

Hatem Abdul Kader, another influential Palestinian, said, "At the end of the day, what is more important is our unity inside the Fatah movement. It is more important than everything else, more important than all the initiatives."

At the last minute, Arafat lifted the veto on the Geneva ceremony. Some 170 Palestinians attended, including Jibril Rajoub, Arafat's national security adviser.

For the time being, however, there is no change in the basic Palestinian position that the only game in town is the road map, which was presented last spring with international backing and which calls for a Palestinian state within three years.

P.A. Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei, who has said unofficially that he supports the Geneva accord, said he won't meet Sharon until Israel dismantles the security fence it is building to keep out Palestinian terrorists.

The fence and the demand to freeze Israeli settlement building dominate the current Palestinian agenda so much that discussion of a permanent peace agreement seems like a distant dream. □