

IN THE NEWS

Kerry: Israel lacks partner

John Kerry says that Israel does not have a negotiating partner right now. The Massachusetts senator and front-runner in the race for the Democratic nomination for president said Monday that Hamas predominates on the Palestinian street, depriving Israel of a credible partner.

"It's very difficult for Israel to negotiate because in Israel there is nobody to negotiate with — to actually deliver," Kerry said.

In an article widely circulated in the Jewish community, Ha'aretz misquoted Kerry as saying that it is Israel's government that "lacks the goods" to negotiate.

Journalist sorry for 'Jew' gaffe

A CNN anchorman apologized to Sen. Joseph Lieberman for asking him to answer a question "as a Jew."

"Senator, as a Jew, do you believe the construction of the security wall in Israel is the right path to peace?" Bill Hemmer asked Lieberman last Friday.

The Connecticut Democrat and presidential candidate told Hemmer the question was "inappropriate" and said he would answer the question "as an American who happens to be Jewish."

Hemmer later called Lieberman's campaign to apologize, the Jerusalem Post reported.

UJC ousts the Virginia federation

The North American federation system ousted the United Jewish Federation of Tidewater, Va., due to delinquency in dues payments.

The move marks the first time a federation has been kicked out of the United Jewish Communities, said UJC CEO Stephen Hoffman.

The decision came in a unanimous vote by UJC officers Sunday night.

The Tidewater federation could not be reached for comment.

WORLD REPORT

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Long hours, low pay, but lots of excitement for Jewish campaigners

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

GOFFSTOWN, N.H. (JTA) — Jake Honigman says it's easier than raising money for Jewish causes. Emily Silver says its addictive qualities postpone the nice Jewish husband scenario for which her mother hankers.

Plumping for candidates along New Hampshire's frozen byways and among its famously irascible voters is, for some young Jewish activists, the best life there is this political season.

With U.S. Jews split among the seven Democratic candidates, almost every campaign has Jewish staffers working at jobs from the very top to the very bottom. Their enthusiasm — and little else — carries through hundreds of monotonous campaign tasks.

Honigman, 21, would have been content campaigning for Howard Dean for nothing, but his skills as an organizer means he gets paid, albeit not much.

"At this point, these jobs are great, because they're not permanent, but you get some responsibility," he said. "They're intense. It's a lot of work, but it's a good time."

The "good time" Honigman enjoys as an area coordinator presumably takes into account the frequent hang-ups he gets when he calls his new neighbors — and the answering machines that warn campaigners not to leave a message.

It's par for the course, says Honigman, who once raised money in New York for the United Jewish Appeal in phone campaigns.

"This is nothing compared to that," he says. "That was a lot worse."

This is exactly how Honigman wanted to

spend his winter break from Cornell University. The Brooklyn native came here in mid-December, and will drive back to school the day after the primary Tuesday.

Honigman fell in love with the former Vermont governor's campaign long distance, while he was studying in Australia for a semester last year.

He got a jolt, though, when he told his Jewish friends about his choice — Honigman says they were poisoned by an anonymous e-mail campaign distorting Dean's Middle East positions.

"Walking into my synagogue and saying I was working for Howard Dean was like stabbing myself," Honigman said. "It was extra painful because I know where he actually stands on issues is where a lot of those people are."

The reaction may have helped prepare him for New Hampshire's tough campaign. Honigman has only been in the state for a month, but the history major knows the names on his outreach list well, having spent countless hours on the telephone and knocking on doors in the neighborhood — although getting to each address still takes a few U-turns.

Now, just three days before New Hampshire goes to the polls, Honigman and a volunteer, Emily Koh, are reaching out to people who they think will vote for Dean, making sure they have a ride to a polling place and suggesting they vote early, ahead of an expected snow storm.

Evidence of Honigman's hard month on the road surrounds him. Sleep is precious, he says, even since he was upgraded from a

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AMERICA
DECIDES
2004

■ Jewish campaigners earn long hours, low pay and the time of their lives

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buddy's sofa to a basement bedroom at the house of a Dean supporter.

His blue cap — stitched with the words "Bill Bradley," a relic of campaigns past — bears sweat marks.

There is only one screw keeping his front passenger door attached to the car, a screw Honigman installed. It's not fooling the car, which registers an incessant ding that Honigman has learned to tune out. Back seat passengers must navigate a sea of campaign literature, "Dean for America" balloons and empty soda bottles.

Honigman is aware he might be a little raunchy for outreach. He sends Koh, a high school volunteer, out from the car's toasty interior into single-digit degree weather to bring around possible Howard Dean voters.

"If I were living in this town, I'd much rather her show up at my doorstep than me," he says. "I'm not too pleasant."

Besides, he says, even "area organizers" have perks. "I'm the strategist," he says.

Across town, Silver plots strategy from the relative comfort of a minivan while her candidate, Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), campaigns door to door.

She is handling the logistics of a last-minute decision that Lieberman would fly, not drive, Sunday night to a debate upstate. Silver determines which reporters and campaign staffers take the bus upstate and who stays with the candidate as he visits a T.G.I. Friday's before heading to

the airport.

Plus, there is the problem of whether the plane is at the airport yet.

"That was surprisingly seamless," she says, heading back to the campaign headquarters after checking the bus' passenger list — twice. Her cell phone's chime rings throughout the quick trip.

Silver, 24, is Lieberman's deputy director in New Hampshire. When she arrives back at her desk — in the back corner of the campaign's second floor office — the phone is ringing off the hook.

There are campaign flyers for her to OK, media requests to be sorted out, and the schedules of four members of the Lieberman family to coordinate for the next day. Silver wants Lieberman to tape some auto-calls for New Hampshire voters, and she is trying to find time for him to do it.

She used to travel with the candidate, but now she mostly runs the show from her desk, sometimes juggling calls on her office and cellular phones at the same time.

"There's so much going on, I can't be away from home." She means the office, and corrects herself, laughing.

Silver, a Brandeis University graduate who first came to New Hampshire in 2002 for a congressional campaign, has been with Lieberman's operation for more than a year. She has seen it swell from two people to the more than 30 who are working inside now.

"What we did in a week then we do in a couple of hours now," she said.

It is hard for Silver to explain to people outside the "bubble" of campaign life why she loves long hours, with no weekends or vacations, and constant stress.

"It's addictive because you feel you're doing something useful and you're making a difference," she said.

Plus, there are the intangibles, like when the candidate invites you over for dinner. Or having the candidate's mother suggest you get haircuts together.

"The lifestyle is so crazy," Silver says. "My mom would like to see me marry a good Jewish boy and settle down."

In a few days, it will all be over.

Both volunteers are planning quick escapes — Silver to another primary state for Lieberman, Honigman back to Cornell.

"It's gonna be so relaxing compared to this," Honigman said of his last semester. "I'll be waking up at 10 or 11 o'clock." ■

'It's addictive because you feel you're doing something useful and you're making a difference.'

Emily Silver
Campaigner for Joseph Lieberman

Nazi-experiment victims get money

NEW YORK (JTA) — Justice has been a long time in coming for Elizabeth Fried, 88.

A survivor of the Auschwitz concentration camp, Fried was one of an unknown number of Jews used as human guinea pigs by Nazi scientists and doctors.

For eight months beginning in May 1944, Fried was given injections by the notorious Dr. Josef Mengele in experiments that left her forever unable to have children.

Now, 60 years later, Fried is one of 1,778 living Jewish victims of Nazi medical experiments set to receive one-time compensation payments from Germany this week.

The Claims Conference identified the

victims who, under an agreement with the German government, will receive payments of about \$5,400 each.

Under Nazi rule, German doctors and scientists conducted experiments on Jews including sterilization, amputation of limbs, organ removal, infusion of infectious diseases, immersion in ice water and the infamous experiments on twins.

Most experiments tested how much pain, torture or disease human beings could endure before dying, so the vast majority of experiment subjects were killed.

"For survivors, it is a day of muted triumph," said Roman Kent, chairman of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, at the news conference in New York announcing the awards. ■

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Short on cash, birthright cuts summer slots

By RACHEL POMERANCE

NEW YORK (JTA) — Birthright Israel is slashing the number of participants on its summer trips this year because of funding problems.

Some 3,500 participants, all but 500 of whom will come from North America, is all “we can manage in light of all the uncertainties,” Michael Steinhardt, a key birthright Israel benefactor, told JTA.

This winter, birthright Israel took more than 10,000 youths to Israel, including 8,000 from North America.

Now in the last of its five pilot years, the free trip to Israel for 18-to 26-year olds has taken about 60,000 Diaspora youths to the Jewish state.

The future of the program — hailed as a revolutionary way to strengthen Jewish identity among Diaspora youths, giving many of its participants Zionist ideals and Jewish values — is uncertain.

“We hold out as a serious option closing down the program,” Steinhardt said.

When the program began, Jewish communities worldwide — largely the North American Jewish federation system — the Israeli government and a group of 14 philanthropists had agreed to divide evenly the funding for the \$210 million, five-year program.

But some of those sponsors have fallen short on their funding responsibilities.

Nevertheless, there still is optimism about birthright’s future.

“There is a sufficient number of influential people on all sides of this project,” said Sandy Cardin, executive director of the Schusterman Family Foundation, which helps fund the program. Those include the government of Israel, the federation system and philanthropists who “recognize the importance of this program and the tremendous impact it’s having on Jewish life and are committed to finding a way to make sure this is continued.”

Ironically, the program’s move to limit participation comes as increasing numbers of youth, including those in North America, are expressing interest in visiting Israel.

In addition to the 10,000 that traveled to Israel on birthright this winter, the program turned away several thousand more who were eligible, according to birthright officials.

Israel programs in general have seen

increasing enrollment from abroad as people have grown accustomed to the intifada, which has sparked new interest in the region.

The decision to limit participation came in the last two weeks in response to limited funds, said Marlene Post, chairwoman of birthright Israel USA.

“If it was a question of just a few million dollars,” birthright Israel would “borrow the money,” she said. But at \$2,400 per participant, “unless we have backing from all three members, we just don’t have that money.”

While each party originally was slated to contribute \$70 million for the first five years, the Israeli government severely cut its funding this year.

And the federation system now plans to pay only \$35 million, of which it is currently short \$4 to \$5 million, according to Robert Aronson, CEO of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit and the liaison between birthright and the federations. As a result, UJC’s overseas partner, the Jewish Agency for Israel, has increased its contribution.

The philanthropists, have “carried the deficit,” according to Post.

According to those close to the process, the federation system’s share has fallen short in part because the system disburses allocations after the campaigns are concluded at the end of the year, presenting a challenge of cash flow.

And the consensus-driven nature of the federation system leads to lengthy decision making, they say.

However, Aronson said federations planned to be “full partners” in birthright for the next five to 10 years.

Indeed, the Schusterman Family Foundation is trying to encourage the federations’ long-term partnership.

“We’re exploring ways through a possible challenge grant to create an incentive for broader and greater participation” by federations and their donors, Cardin said.

According to Aronson, “the wild card in all this is the government of Israel.”

For many of birthright’s advocates, Israel’s stance on the program is frustrating.

While they recognize the hardship endured by Israel’s economy, stymying birthright is like biting the hand that feeds it, they say.

Apart from immediately helping to fuel Israel’s tourism industry, “these are people who could come back their whole lives,” said Wayne Firestone, director of Hillel’s Center for Israel Affairs.

Furthermore, he said, “I think Israelis really appreciate in this difficult, difficult period of challenges — both on

the security front but also financially — that their family and extended family from the Diaspora is with them physically.”

Referring to Israel, he said, “It’s a little bit short-sighted to take actions that may endanger that for the future.”

A spokeswoman for Benjamin Netanyahu,

whose finance ministry constructs the budget, explained that “due to the cut-backs in the government budget, they had to cut back also in this project.”

But despite “budget distress,” Israel donated a symbolic level of funding — about \$450,000 — to express its appreciation for the program, she said.

Israel also committed to restore full funding in 2005.

The fact that Israel currently has phased out its funding “doesn’t mean that they don’t recognize the importance of the project,” and “it doesn’t mean that next year they will cut the budget also,” she said.

Jeffrey Solomon, president of the Andrea and Charles Bronfman philanthropies, another birthright Israel funder, takes the Israeli government at its word.

“All the stars are lining up for birthright to continue,” he said.

Still, the birthright program could be on shaky ground.

Steinhardt sums up the scenario like this: some progress in shoring up funds from the federations, a commitment by a “fair number of the philanthropists” to continue funding the program, but no assurances from Israel.

“We are going to look at the program in the spring of this year and decide where we go,” he said.

Ironically, the move to limit participants comes as increasing numbers of youth are expressing interest in visiting Israel.

NEWS IN BRIEF

WORLD

Poll: Europe struggles with anti-Semitism

Europeans maintain anti-Semitic stereotypes and anti-Israel attitudes, according to a new poll. The survey, published Monday on the eve of Tuesday's Holocaust Remembrance Day in Europe, indicated that about 40 percent of respondents believe Jews "have a special relationship with money" and more than one-third believe Jews "should stop playing the victims because of the Holocaust and the persecutions of 50 years ago." Fewer than 60 percent found Israel "sympathetic." The poll was carried out in nine Western European countries on behalf of the Corriere della Sera newspaper in Italy.

Israel: Violent anti-Semitism down

Violent anti-Semitic attacks were down worldwide in 2003 except in France, according to the Israeli government.

There were 235 violent anti-Semitic attacks last year, compared with 319 the year before, the survey found. But the number in France rose sharply, from 69 in 2002 to 85 in 2003. In the United States, the number dropped from 12 to seven.

Terror victims speak out

Israeli victims of terror joined other terror victims at an international conference in Madrid. Several hundred victims from Algeria, Ireland, Colombia and Israel spoke at the International Congress on Victims of Terrorism, being held Monday and Tuesday.

MIDDLE EAST

Terrorists exhumed

Israel unearthed the remains of dead terrorists to be repatriated under a prisoner swap with Hezbollah.

Military rabbis labored in the rain at the cemetery for enemy dead in the Galilee on Monday, bagging 59 bodies of Lebanese and Palestinian terrorists.

The transfer of the remains to next-of-kin is to take place on Friday, a day after Hezbollah is slated to return an Israeli businessman and the bodies of three soldiers it has held since 2000. As part of Thursday's exchange, Israel will release 435 Arab security prisoners and a German spy recruited by the Lebanese terror group.

Gadhafi hits Israel on nukes

Muammar Gadhafi accused the world of turning a blind eye to Israel's "weapons of mass destruction."

The Libyan leader said in comments published Monday that the world has been "deaf and blind" to Israel's nuclear arsenal. It is widely acknowledged Israel has nuclear weapons, but Israel has never admitted it.

Gadhafi recently invited weapons inspectors to visit Libya, signaling a thaw in relations with the United States. He is also allowing Libyan Jews who moved to Israel to return to Libya for a school reunion this year.

Barghouti to stay in solitary

An Israeli court ruled that a jailed Palestinian militia leader be held in solitary confinement for six more months.

The court agreed with a request from the Israeli Prisons Service that Marwan Barghouti should remain in solitary in order to limit his ability to direct terror attacks behind bars. Barghouti, a leader of the Tanzim militia, is on trial on charges he orchestrated terrorist attacks that claimed 26 lives. He denies the charges and accuses Israel of conducting a show trial against him.

Computer bomb intercepted

Israel discovered a bomb hidden inside a computer bound for Tel Aviv.

Israeli security retrieved a bag with explosives rigged behind a computer screen, near the Gaza Strip settlement of Elkana, the Jerusalem Post reported.

The attack was planned by a member of the Tanzim militia, an offshoot of Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, who was arrested as he headed to Tel Aviv.

Free at last — and a terrorist again?

A German jailed in Israel as a Hezbollah terrorist reportedly plans to rejoin the Lebanese militia upon his release.

Steven Josef Smyrek, a German native who converted to Islam and was jailed after coming to Israel on a Hezbollah suicide mission in 1997, is among 436 terrorists to be released Thursday under a prisoner swap.

Gunther Latsch, an editor at Der Spiegel newspaper who interviewed Smyrek in jail, said the prisoner has no regrets. "He has asked to be expelled to Lebanon, where I think he will take contact with Hezbollah, his political friends, again. And I think he remains a dangerous person," Latsch told Israeli television Monday.

NORTH AMERICA

Cheney: Terrorism hinders Palestinians

Vice President Dick Cheney said Palestinians will achieve statehood only after they renounce terrorism.

"We support a viable, independent Palestinian state," Cheney told the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, on Saturday. "But peace will not be achieved by Palestinian rulers who intimidate opposition, tolerate and profit from corruption and maintain ties to terrorist groups."

Cheney also rejected a proposal by Israeli Labor Party leader Shimon Peres that the United States guarantee future Israel-Palestinian borders.

Israel travel profile changed

A travel guide changed an Israel feature following complaints that it misrepresented the Jewish state.

The article, featured on an AOL travel site but written by a Lonely Planet travel guide writer, warned visitors of a "smelly" and "tacky" country. Previously, an AOL spokeswoman said the company is not responsible for third-party content, including the Israel feature.

Following media inquiries, Lonely Planet said the Israel profile has been changed.

The URL for the site is http://aolsvc.travel.aol.com/travel/lonely_planet/middle_east/israel_and_the_palestinian_territories/index.html.

Canadian tzedakah for Israeli group

The Canadian government has contributed \$110,000 to an Israeli organization devoted to peace and coexistence.

Canada's Human Security program donated \$110,000 to the Women's Center at Givat Haviva, a 55-year-old peace education initiative that holds workshops, seminars and lectures in Israel and abroad.

"It is a Canadian tradition to invest in efforts that promote peace," said Donald Sinclair, the Canadian ambassador to Israel. More than 12,000 children and adults take part in Givat Haviva's seminars and workshops annually. The group received the UNESCO Prize for Peace Education in 2001.