

News From

**MERKAZ BNOS
HIGH SCHOOL
OF GREATER NEW YORK**



Rabbi Chaim A. Waldman
Founder and Director

For Immediate Release

Contact:

Rabbi Chaim A. Waldman
(718) 259-5600

**Students Reach Out
To Better Their Community**

**City Comptroller Thompson Reaches Out
To Honor Student Outreach Efforts**

BENSONHURST, Brooklyn, Feb. 24 — Merkaz Bnos High School students who mentor and tutor pupils in Brooklyn and Queens schools will be honored at 10:30 a.m. on Thursday morning, February 26, by New York City Comptroller William C. Thompson, Jr., for reaching out and sharing their time and talents with community residents who need a helping hand.

The ceremony will take place in the Comptroller's Office Board Room, 1 Center Street, 5th floor, in Manhattan.

City Comptroller William Thompson, a former President of the New York City Board of Education, will recognize Merkaz students for combining excellence in academic achievement with community service.

Participating in the ceremony will be Rabbi Mordechai Katz, who will present the Jewish Education Program Award to the students and their school. Rabbi Katz, a world-renowned scholar, teacher and leader, is the director of the Jewish Education Program and

MORE -

MERKAZ BNOS High School - Greater New York
140 West 67th Street, Brooklyn, New York 11204
Tel: 718 259 5600 Fax: 718 259 8024

IN THE NEWS

**Rallies at
The Hague**

Some 2,500 pro-Israel demonstrators protested an international hearing on Israel's West Bank security barrier.

Some of the protesters waved Israeli flags and carried photos of bombing victims as they rallied at The Hague on Monday against the International Court of Justice's hearing, which began earlier in the day.

The protesters brought a bombed-out bus from Jerusalem that was destroyed in a Jan. 29 terrorist attack. A Palestinian counterdemonstration of about 2,000 people took place later Monday afternoon.

**Israel destroys
bomber's home**

Israeli forces demolished the home of Sunday's Jerusalem bus bomber.

Relatives of Muhammad Za'ul, 23, vacated the two-story structure in which he lived in Hussan village, outside of Bethlehem, hours before the predawn operation Monday.

The bombing aboard the No. 14 bus killed eight passengers.

Israeli forces also arrested 21 terrorist suspects in the West Bank overnight, most of them from the Bethlehem area, the army said.

**Looted-art case
hits U.S. high court**

A case involving Nazi-looted art is slated to be heard this week at the U.S. Supreme Court.

On Wednesday, justices will hear arguments in the case of Maria Altmann, who wants the court to help her recover six paintings seized from her family by the Nazis and currently held by Austria's National Gallery.

The works are valued at \$110 million.

The government-owned gallery says it acquired the works in 1948 in a gift from Altmann's brother and that U.S. law does not permit Altmann to sue a sovereign nation for historic deeds.



WORLD REPORT

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Demonstrators at Hague hearing mirror opposing sides in Mideast

By TOBY AXELROD

THE HAGUE (JTA) — Holland turned into a staging ground for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict this week, but the streets here were far safer than in the Middle East — and far less volatile than some had feared.

Monday was a day of anger and tears as the International Court of Justice began its hearings on Israel's security barrier. For some Israel supporters, it also was a day of dancing in the streets, as demonstrators from across Europe, Israel and the United States joined hands and danced at their rally for Israel.

Later, the same square used by 2,500 pro-Israel demonstrators became the site of a pro-Palestinian demonstration of slightly smaller size. For the most part, Dutch police managed to keep the two groups apart, but the police's efforts did not temper demonstrators' vehemence toward each other — and for their cause.

While inside The Hague's Peace Palace representatives of the Palestinians were testifying against Israel's security fence before a 15-judge panel, outside the pro-Israeli demonstrators spoke of Israel's need for a security barrier in the face of Palestinian terrorism.

To make their argument more poignant, the demonstrators brought with them an Israeli bus mangled in the Jan. 29 Jerusalem suicide bombing, in which 11 people were killed just around the corner from the Israeli prime minister's official residence.

Demonstrators said a hush fell over the crowd when the flatbed truck bearing the shattered bus rolled in.

In a disturbingly familiar image, 10 mem-

bers of Zaka, the fervently Orthodox rescue and recovery service that collects victims' body parts after terrorist attacks in Israel, stood around the bus in their yellow work suits.

Iris Boker, director of Zaka in Europe, said the bus had such a strong effect that it would probably be sent to other demonstrations rather than be returned to Israel. She said there were several requests from U.S. groups to use the bus.

On Monday, unlike on Sunday — when Zaka volunteers in Jerusalem had to clean up after another suicide bombing in the Israeli capital killed eight — the Zaka volunteers at The Hague served a purely cosmetic purpose: They came to Europe to help convey

a graphic understanding of the impact of terrorism in Israel.

Eli Pachter, 24, who has worked with Zaka for three years, talked about how he arrived at a recent bombing site in Tel Aviv with a friend from Magen David Adom, Israel's emergency ambulance service.

"We started evacuating bodies in the most honorable way," he said. "On the scene you become like a robot. Seeing a killed baby — you never get used to it."

Yaron Hyrowski, 30, a paramedic, was one of 12 Magen David Adom workers who came to The Hague. "It is not our place to talk about politics," he told JTA. "We are here to be with the families" of Israeli terrorism victims.

Miri Avitan came to the demonstration at The Hague with a photo of her son Assaf, who was killed at his 15th birthday party in a suicide bombing in December 2001.

Continued on page 2

**FIGHTING
ON THE
FENCE**

■ Demonstrators outside The Hague mirror opposing sides in Middle East

Continued from page 1

"He was celebrating his birthday with his friends and all his friends died," Avitan said.

Bridgit Kessler's daughter, Gila, was killed in a suicide bombing on June 19, 2002.

"That was the day I died," said her mother, who has three other children. "I don't want to have to wake up one day and they should tell me one of my kids has died."

■
Around noon, hundreds of pro-Palestinian protesters began assembling, many bearing Palestinian flags, signs calling for the "end of occupation" and pictures of Palestinians killed during the current intifada. Aside from pro-Palestinian citizens of nations from around the world, the Palestinians were joined by a few Jews affiliated with Neturei Karta, a Chasidic fringe sect opposed to modern-day Israel.

Ahmed Tibi, an Arab member of the Israeli Knesset who is close to Yasser Arafat, spoke at the Palestinian demonstration.

"People who are here are putting the occupation into the important international scene," he said. "If you are against the wall, you are pro-life."

Marie-Jose Van Overveld-Roosendaal, a Dutch woman who came to the pro-Palestinian demonstration, said her mother had rescued a Jewish woman during the Holocaust and was honored with a tree at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Israel. Nevertheless, Overveld-Roosendaal said she is so angry at Israel that she

wants to uproot the tree and replant it in "Palestine."

One of the Dutch demonstrators, who wore a kaffiyeh, said he "had hesitated all day whether to participate in the pro-Israel or in the pro-Palestinian demonstration."

"I have a double loyalty towards both the Palestinians and the Israelis," said the man, who refused to give his name. "I have lived in Israel for two years as a volunteer, and I love both of them."

Ultimately, he said, he chose the Palestinian side. He then walked off shouting, "Sharon is a terrorist."

The Palestinian demonstration was dispersed prematurely by Dutch police. An Israeli television reporter said he saw some Palestinian participants trying to physically attack nearby pro-Israel demonstrators. According to Ronny Naftaniel, director of the Center for Information and Documentation on Israel, a pro-Israel Dutch group, Dutch police reported that several demonstrators were carrying signs comparing the Star of David to the swastika, which is illegal in Holland.

■
Shelley Klein, director of advocacy at Hadassah, the women's Zionist organization of America, said the demonstrators outside the Peace Palace were not as bad as during the U.N. conference against racism in Durban, South Africa, in the summer of 2001, which turned into an occasion for unrestrained Israel-bashing.

The United States and Israel boycotted that event in protest. They did not attend today's hearing either. The United States said the international court was not the right forum to decide a political issue, and Israel said it would not attend because it does not recognize the court's jurisdiction in the matter of the fence.

Klein said she felt Monday's hearings were so one-sided that she found herself hoping the demonstrators outside would make up for Israel's absence inside.

Testimony against the fence came from the Palestinian representative to the United Nations, Nasser Al-Kidwa, and several other Palestinian lawyers who spoke, uninterrupted, for some three hours; South Africa's deputy foreign minister; and representatives from Algeria, Saudi

Arabia and Bangladesh, among others.

Outside, some pro-Israel demonstrators said that while they did not support construction of Israel's security barrier, they wanted to draw attention to the reason for it: terrorism.

"It is not an Israeli fence; it is a Hamas fence, it is an Islamic Jihad fence," said Joel Kaplan, president of B'nai B'rith International and representative of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

U.S. Rep. Robert Wexler (D-Fla.), said, "The issue

is not whether or not you support the route of the fence; the issue is the court of justice is not the proper place to determine the peace process."

Alan Sermonetta, 37, came to The Hague with a group of about 100 Jews from Rome. "I want the wall not to separate two states, but just for security," Sermonetta said.

A contingent of students from Yeshiva University in New York carried a large banner and danced the hora in two groups, men and women.

Jacek Dulinski, 30, came with a group of about 40 Jews from Posnan, Poland.

Derya Yalimcan, 30, a Turkish student from Germany, said he came to protest the hearings because Israel is one of Turkey's few allies in the Middle East.

"I came because of the suicide bombings," he said. "You can't do anything about it and you feel helpless. What else can we do besides come to this demonstration?"

On Tuesday, another demonstration was scheduled in which pro-Israel forces would hold "alternative hearings" with members of the E.U. Parliament and relatives of Israeli terrorism victims, including Arabs and Druse.

Alongside the Jewish supporters of Israel, Christians for Israel held their own pro-Israel march. More than 1,000 participants carried photographs of Israeli terrorism victims.

Thys Bovernkamp, an attendee from Holland, held up a card for someone who was killed in Sunday's suicide bombing in Jerusalem. "I don't know the name, only the number — 928," he said.

(JTA correspondent Rachel Levy at The Hague contributed to this report.)

What else can we do besides come to this demonstration?

Derya Yalimcan
Turkish student

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Teens, grocer and soldier among bomb victims

By DAN BARON

JERUSALEM (JTA) — For Shoshi Yosef, the political became much too personal.

As secretary to the Israeli consul general at The Hague, Yosef had prepared for around-the-clock advocacy work this week against the International Court of Justice's hearings on the West Bank security fence.

Instead, she found herself back in Israel on Monday to bury her brother, Yehuda Haim, who was one of eight people killed in Sunday's suicide bombing in Jerusalem.

"Today, people will come into your courtroom to speak, to accuse (Israel)," Haim's widow, Fanny, wrote in an open letter to The Hague's 15 justices published on the front page of the leading Yediot Achronot daily. "Today I bury my husband. Do not bury justice."

As is often the case with such terrorist attacks, the victims of Sunday's bombing, which wounded more than 60, were ordinary citizens from a cross-section of Israeli society — and they were remembered for the ways they brought good cheer into the daily routines of their family and friends.

Foreign journalists busy with the bustle of covering rallies for and against the fence hearings took a moment to remember Haim, 48, who for years ran a grocery store next to the offices of a major news-wire service in Jerusalem.

Haim was a disabled veteran who had undergone four operations since being wounded in Lebanon. He suffered from constant back pain, noted his brother-in-law, Baruch Almog, "but was an industrious man who got up early every morning to open the grocery."

Not a regular bus passenger, he had dropped off his wife's car at a garage and was riding to work when he was murdered.

Haim's grocery store bore an obituary notice on its front grill, with several wreathes laid near the doorway.

In the leafy Jerusalem suburb of Rehavia, students at Hebrew Gymnasium High School held their own vigil for a friend who was also among those slain in Sunday's attack.

Lior Azulai got on the doomed No. 14 after missing an earlier bus.

A keen soccer player known for his

trademark spiked haircut, Azulai, 18, had recently been persuaded by the school principal to dedicate himself more to his studies, friends said.

"He was always the type that made everyone crack up, that would not let a boring class pass by without a laugh," classmate Keren Adiaka said.

Azulai wasn't the only teenager killed in the blast.

Benayahu Yehonatan Zuckerman, a student at the Experimental High School in Jerusalem, turned 18 last week. He was a natural athlete who looked forward to trying to join the Israel Defense Forces' elite Sayeret Matkal reconnaissance unit after graduation.

"The self-confidence you displayed, your easygoing joie de vivre, all showed us that there was something worth living for," Zuckerman's father Moshe said in a eulogy at his funeral.

Just two years older than Zuckerman and Azulai was Natanel Havshush, a combat soldier on his way back to base at Netzarim, one of the most dangerous flashpoints in the Gaza Strip.

Havshush was killed by shrapnel from the Palestinian terrorist's hidden bomb.

But a friend traveling with him survived with minor injuries, and delivered the grim news to the soldier's relatives when they rushed to the scene of the attack.

Yaffa Ben-Shimol, 57, a mother of five, was her family's sole breadwinner due to her husband's physical disability.

She was on her way to work as a caregiver for an elderly woman when she was killed. Ben-Shimol's children described her as a devoted mother and grandmother, who showered her grandchildren with love. She was anticipating the birth of a 10th grandchild in another two months.

"She was so eager about it," said her husband, Sami. "She would not stop talking about how another grandchild was about to join the family."

Family was also paramount for Rahamim Duga, 38, of Mevasseret Zion.

He was returning from the Talpiot neighborhood of Jerusalem, where he had gone to obtain medicine when he was

murdered.

"He had a good heart," related his younger brother, Yigal. "He would help our mother all the time; he would look after her."

Ilan Avisidris, 41, was still putting his life back together after family troubles when he was killed in the attack.

Avisidris was born and raised in Beersheba, but lived in Jerusalem ever since his divorce 12 years ago. "Ilan was searching for himself after going through many crises," a cousin related.

Avisidris divorced after three years of marriage and the birth of a son. His parents had divorced when he was a child and his father moved to France. Following the death of his mother six years ago, Avisidris underwent an ongoing crisis, according to the cousin.

"He traveled around the country, he had no fixed address," said the cousin. "He worked here and there. There was no close contact. The poor guy was searching for himself and sort of got lost. He was a good person, delicate. He always helped others and always got left with nothing."

Fate was similarly cruel to the family of Yuval Ozana, 32, who had just ended a night shift in the industrial neighborhood of Talpiot and was taking the bus to help his elderly parents with their business in Mea Shearim.

Ozana, his wife, Katy, and their two small children had been living with his parents to save money, but planned to return to their apartment in the Pisgat Ze'ev neighborhood.

"He was crazy about his children," said his brother-in-law, Bambi Peretz. "He was full of warmth and devotion, and loved to help everyone."

His loss followed the killing of a brother-in-law in a roadside shooting in the West Bank and the near-fatal wounding of a cousin in a triple bombing on Jerusalem's Ben Yehuda pedestrian mall.

"I am handicapped; I overcame everything, but I will not be able to overcome this," said Ozana's father, David. "Everything is upside-down with us, parents burying children. How long can this go on?"

'Parents burying children — how long can this go on?'

David Ozana

Father of Yuval, 32, killed Sunday

NEWS IN BRIEF

WORLD

The other side of the fence

A pro-Israel lobbying group in the Netherlands is planning to hold "alternative hearings" to protest this week's hearings on Israel's security barrier.

Tuesday's hearings at The Hague will feature members of the European Parliament and relatives of Israeli terror victims, including Jews, Arabs and Druse. The program is being organized by the Center for Information and Documentation on Israel.

Group: Israel's barrier bad idea

Israel's security barrier violates Palestinians' human rights, Human Rights Watch said. The group released its statement Monday, when the International Court of Justice began hearings on the fence.

The West Bank barrier impedes Palestinian access to essential work, education and medical care, the organization said. "Israel has a right and duty to protect its civilians from attack, but it must not use means that entail indiscriminate punishment of entire communities," said Joe Stork, acting executive director of the Middle East and North Africa division of Human Rights Watch.

The construction route and operation of Israel's fence violates the Jewish state's obligation as an occupying power under the Geneva Convention to ensure the welfare of Palestinians, the organization said in its briefing paper.

Swiss Jewish leader blasts gov't

The leader of the Swiss Jewish community criticized his government's policy toward Israel. Alfred Donath, the president of the Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities, made his rare critical comments after Switzerland sent a note to the International Court of Justice supporting this week's hearing on Israel's West Bank security barrier.

Donath said he isn't surprised that the Swiss government had asked the court to rule on the legality of the fence, even though both the European Union and the United States say the ICJ has no jurisdiction to decide the matter.

British Jews want Hezbollah TV blocked

The umbrella organization for British Jews urged Britain's government to block reception of Hezbollah's satellite television station.

British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw told the director-general of the Board of Deputies, Neville Nagler, that he "shares your disgust" at the anti-Semitism expressed in the Al-Manar series "The Diaspora," a board statement said.

It's final: Le Pen can't run

Jean-Marie Le Pen lost his final chance to run for the presidency of southern France.

On Sunday, a court in Marseille rejected Le Pen's final appeal against a decision that he did not possess the necessary residency qualifications enabling him to run as a candidate in the Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur region, which includes large Jewish populations in Marseille and Nice. He will also not be a candidate in any other region, a party spokesman said.

NORTH AMERICA

Rabbis cuffed in protest

Rabbis were arrested in New York for protesting the International Court of Justice's hearing on Israel's security barrier.

Rabbi Shmuel Herzfeld of Amcha-The Coalition for Jewish Concerns, Rabbi Eliot Pearlson of Miami Beach and Amcha press adviser Glenn Richter were arrested after blocking the street in front of the

United Nations with a coffin. "We were carrying the coffin to the steps of the United Nations to tell them that this is 'exhibit A' in their trial," Herzfeld told JTA. "The coffin symbolizes the many hundreds of people who have been killed by this terrorism that has affected the world like a plague."

The action came after more than 600 people rallied against The Hague hearing in a nearby protest coordinated by Amcha.

Kerry condemns Jerusalem bombing

The Democratic front-runner for president, Sen. John Kerry, condemned Sunday's suicide bombing aboard a Jerusalem bus.

As the International Court of Justice at The Hague considers the legality of the barrier Israel is building in the West Bank, the Massachusetts senator said the court has no jurisdiction in the case.

"Israel's security fence is a legitimate act of self-defense," Kerry said. He also criticized the Palestinians for not cracking down on terror.

Reform opposes appointment

The Reform movement said it is disappointed by President Bush's latest judicial appointment.

Bush appointed William Pryor during a congressional recess after Pryor's opposition to abortion rights and support for religious expression in government-owned properties kept him from garnering the 60 votes in the Senate necessary to pass confirmation.

The National Council of Jewish Women also has expressed its opposition to Pryor's appointment.

JCPA honors Sweeney

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney told Jewish leaders to support immigration reform. Sweeney was honored Sunday by the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, which is holding its annual plenum in Boston. Hannah Rosenthal, the group's executive director, called on Jews not to ignore domestic priorities as they advocate for Israel.

Leftist magazine marks 50

A magazine launched by prominent intellectuals, including Irving Howe, is celebrating its 50th birthday. Dissent, which was founded by leftists fed up with what they saw as complacency in American thought, will mark its anniversary in New York.

While the magazine has moved to the right over time, it still maintains its leftist roots. "If you want to know why Dissent is 'left-wing,' look at what the most right-wing administration has called 'compassionate conservatism,'" Dissent's co-editor, Mitchell Cohen, wrote in the magazine's 50th-anniversary issue.

MIDDLE EAST

Tinker, tailor, Jordanian, spy?

A Jordanian was charged with spying for Israel. Khaled Mohammed Salim Al-Hayajneh has allegedly confessed to the charges that he provided details on airports, military camps and Palestinian refugee camps in the Hashemite Kingdom.

The trial against him is slated to begin Thursday. He was arrested in October, but details of the case were only made available to The Associated Press on Monday.

Bus security system tested

Israel's Egged bus company field-tested a system meant to spot suicide bombers before they board.

Five buses equipped with the driver-controlled entry turnstile were deployed in Jerusalem on Monday, to a mixed reception. One Egged staffer noted that a terrorist successfully locked out by the turnstile could still detonate his bomb and kill the driver.