

## IN THE NEWS

## Ganging up at The Hague?

Israel dismissed as biased nations testifying against Israel's security barrier.

"We think the cards at these proceedings are so stacked that we don't want to give" the hearing at the International Court of Justice "the legitimacy it doesn't deserve," Israeli Foreign Ministry legal adviser Daniel Taub told Reuters on Tuesday.

Cuba, Saudi Arabia and Malaysia were due to testify at the court Tuesday; neither of the latter two countries even recognize Israel, Taub pointed out.

## Hague activists hold 'alternative hearing'

Pro-Israel activists held an "alternative hearing" at The Hague to protest the hearings on Israel's security barrier.

On Tuesday, 19 people who lost relatives and friends in suicide attacks in Israel during the current intifada spoke of their anguish at a news conference at The Hague's former City Hall.

The International Court of Justice is meeting on the barrier this week in the city.

Zehava Vider, who lost her husband Ze'ev and daughter Sivan at the Passover bombing in Netanya in March 2002, said that after the death of her husband, his organs were donated to four people.

## A Jesus whodunnit

Seventy-five percent of Americans believe Jews were not responsible for Jesus' death, according to a new poll.

The Anti-Defamation League released the poll this week on the eve of the opening of Mel Gibson's controversial new movie on Jesus, "The Passion of the Christ."

In the poll of 1,200 Americans, conducted last December, 25 percent of respondents said the statement "Do you think that Jews were responsible for the death of Christ?" was probably true.

# WORLD REPORT

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## Two bombings in three weeks: Will the Jerusalem fence help?

By LESLIE SUSSER

**J**ERUSALEM (JTA) — The burnt-out hulk of an Israeli bus destroyed by a Palestinian suicide bomber had just arrived at The Hague on Sunday when a second bus blew up at a busy intersection in Jerusalem.

The first bus — the remains of a Palestinian bomber's work in Jerusalem on Jan. 29 — was meant to protest this week's International Court of Justice hearings on the legality of the security barrier Israel is building to stop the bombers.

The images of the two mangled buses made Israel's case against terrorism better than words ever could.

But they also raised serious issues for Israel.

The two bombings, which killed 19 Israelis and injured more than 100, occurred in densely populated residential sections of the city within three weeks of each other.

Their proximity raised two key questions: How effective is Israel's barrier likely to be against would-be Palestinian bombers? And if it is effective everywhere else, will Jerusalem — with its patchwork of Arab and Jewish neighborhoods — become the soft underbelly of the system and the main target of Palestinian terrorism?

The barrier, for most of its planned 450-mile route, is a sophisticated network of wire mesh fences built with electronic sensors, patrol roads, ditches, cameras and watchtowers. In some short spans, the barrier is a concrete wall.

In both bombing cases, the attackers came from the Bethlehem area.

According to Israel's Shin Bet security services, the bombers infiltrated Jerusalem through gaps in the fence south of the city. Work on the fence there has been held up for weeks in Israeli courts.

Had that southern portion of the barrier been complete, Israeli advocates of the fence system say, the bombings probably would have been prevented. Indeed, they say, the fact that the bombings occurred is a strong argument for speedy completion of the barrier separating Israelis from Palestinians — in Jerusalem and everywhere else.

The problem with that argument is that the fence in Jerusalem is unlike the fence anywhere else.

Between Israel proper and the West Bank, the fence separates Israelis from Palestinians and serves as a security barrier between would-be

suicide bombers and their targets in Israel, even if it does not offer protection for Jewish settlers on the Palestinian side of the fence.

In Jerusalem, however, the fence runs along the city's outer perimeter, separating it from the West Bank but leaving on the Israeli side most of the city's 200,000 Palestinians. There is no barrier between them and the city's buses. They could provide a huge fount of Arab terror against Israel.

Danny Seidemann, an U.S.-born lawyer who has studied the Jerusalem fence and knows virtually every inch of its convoluted route, is convinced that that is precisely what will happen.

Seidemann argues that besides leaving nearly 200,000 Palestinians in the capital city, the fence cuts arbitrarily through Palestinian suburbs, cuts off Palestinians from their

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ANALYSIS

## ■ *Whether the fence will help prevent bombings remains an open question*

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natural hinterland in the West Bank and cuts off others from Jerusalem itself.

Given the mixture of Jewish and Arab neighborhoods, he maintains that a rational division of Jews and Arabs simply is not possible.

"In Jerusalem," Seidemann told JTA, "Israelis should defend themselves against terror by other, more sophisticated means."

■

Seidemann contends that the fence in Jerusalem is counterproductive. He argues that the main reason Jerusalem Arabs have not taken any significant part in terrorist activities until now is because of their relatively high standard of living.

Per capita income for Jerusalem Arabs, Seidemann says, is about \$3,500 per year, more than four times as much as in the rest of the West Bank. Until now, Jerusalem Arabs have been unwilling to risk their standard of living by provoking Israeli reprisals and defensive measures that could strangle economic life, Seidemann says.

But the fence threatens to put an end to all that.

Cut off from the West Bank, prices in Arab neighborhoods of eastern Jerusalem will rise and standards of living will decrease.

The humanitarian and economic problems created by the fence, Seidemann argues, will increase terror, not reduce it.

Moreover, Palestinians in Jerusalem who decide to turn to terror won't be impeded by a barrier, since the fence runs

mainly outside the city, not inside it. Jerusalem could become the prime focus of the terrorists because of its symbolic resonance in both Israeli and Palestinian narratives, and because of the relative ease with which its targets can be reached.

That would create a new security problem for Israel's army and police, possibly entailing a stronger presence in the eastern part of the city.

Already, there have been 25 suicide bombings in Jerusalem during the three years of intifada, nearly all by bombers from outside the city. These attacks have claimed more than 180 lives, nearly 20 percent of all Israeli casualties of the intifada.

■

Jerusalem Arabs joining the ranks of the terrorists could have horrific consequences for both sides, Seidemann says.

Blowing up the second bus in Jerusalem seemed to play into Israel's hands in the public-relations campaign against the proceedings at The Hague, which Israel officially is boycotting on the grounds that the court lacks jurisdiction in the matter.

On the day the proceedings began this week, Israel's daily Yediot Achronot led its front-page preview of the court's hearings with a letter to the 15-judge panel from a woman who was made a widow by Sunday's bombing.

"You are sitting in judgment," wrote

Fanny Haim, "and I am burying my husband."

Though the Palestinian Authority condemned the latest bombing, Palestinian spokesmen seemed more concerned about the bad timing of the attack than the bombing itself.

A branch of the Al-Aksa Brigade affiliated with P.A. President Yasser Arafat's Fatah organization claimed responsibility for the attack. Some Israeli analysts saw this as evidence of chaos on the Palestinian side, since the bombing does not

seem to serve the Palestinian Authority's interests.

Meanwhile, P.A. leaders reportedly have sent messages to terrorist commanders urging them to exercise restraint for the time being.

But whether controlled from above or the result of grass-roots efforts, the attacks against Israeli civilians show few signs of abating soon.

And if the judges at The Hague rule against Israel's fence — ignoring the terrorism that prompted its construction — their ruling could encourage terrorists further.

The bottom line is that whatever happens at The Hague, Israel will go on building its security fence. In Jerusalem, however, that may not be enough. ■

*(Leslie Susser is the diplomatic correspondent for the Jerusalem Report.)*

**'Israelis should defend themselves against terror by other means.'**

**Danny Seidemann**

U.S.-born lawyer

## Actor seeks serenity now in Mideast

TEL AVIV (JTA) — For Jason Alexander, best known as Jerry Seinfeld's hapless sidekick George Costanza, a grass-roots initiative for Israeli-Palestinian peace is more than just "yadda yadda yadda."

Alexander visited Israel this week to help launch One Voice, a project that hopes to empower people on both sides of the conflict through a public electronic referendum.

As of Tuesday, Israelis and Palestinians were able to cast ballots that allow them to present their positions on the key issues of the conflict. A synthesized peace proposal will be crafted from their answers and then presented to leaders on both sides. In an interview with JTA, Alexander said

the idea spoke to him because it held the promise of tapping into the majority on both sides who do want peace.

"The vision was so specific, so well worked out about how to reconnect the sort of silent majority who have been silenced by the violence and get them reinvigorated and reinvested," he said.

Speaking Tuesday at a news conference in Petach Tikva, Alexander predicted he would be able to bring his children to Jerusalem and the West Bank city of Ramallah without fear within a year.

Alexander first heard about One Voice during a meeting last year at the home of fellow actors Danny Devito and Rhea Perlman. ■

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# Orthodox not relishing fight on gay ammendment

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

BOSTON (JTA) — If President Bush hoped to galvanize American conservatives with his proposed constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage, it has had the reverse effect among Jews.

Jewish liberals are raring for a fight, while the more traditional streams are less than enthusiastic.

David Luchins, a longtime vice president of the Orthodox Union, said he believed his organization would support the amendment but would not be among its most vocal backers.

"This is not a battle, this is not a fight we're looking forward to or we're enjoying," Luchins said at the Jewish Council for Public Affairs plenum in Boston, where organizational officials coincidentally were debating the issue Tuesday at the very hour of Bush's announcement.

"If we are to prevent the meaning of marriage from being changed forever, our nation must enact a constitutional amendment to protect marriage in America," Bush said Tuesday, throwing down the gauntlet to Congress and the states to push the issue forward.

Liberal groups were outraged at what they say is an encroachment on a document many consider sacrosanct — the U.S. Constitution.

"It raises the issue of tampering with the Constitution, and that is of significant concern to this community," said David

Saperstein, the executive director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

Luchins faced tough questions from the crowd in the conference room at the gathering of the umbrella group for local community relations councils and national organizations. In the audience were gay-rights supporters.

Luchins said he believed the Orthodox community should do its best not to be "dragged into the pits of gay bashing and demoralization" in a national debate on the marriage amendment.

"I will do everything in my power to make it crystal clear that the Torah teaches that every human being is important," Luchins said.

■

The Orthodox Union and Agudath Israel of America are not expected to formally join the Alliance for Marriage, a broad coalition of groups supporting the amendment, because some members of the board of advisers are linked to anti-Israel and anti-Semitic organizations.

Abba Cohen, Washington director and counsel of Agudath Israel of America, which represents fervently Orthodox Jews, said his organization has supported the amendment for several years. He applauded Bush's announcement.

The Orthodox Union is expected to formally decide to back the amendment within the next few weeks.

Nathan Diament, director of the O.U.'s Institute for Public Affairs, said he turned

down an invitation to attend the White House announcement in order to attend the Boston plenum.

"We feel this has been forced upon us by the gay-rights activists, and they are the ones bringing litigation and forcing this issue upon the American people," Diament said.

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston has come out in support of the Massachusetts court ruling supporting gay marriage, and the organization, along with the local chapter of the Anti-Defamation League, has actively backed gay marriage.

"We need to be proactive and need to be setting this forward as the pre-eminent civil rights issue for the next century," said Nancy Kaufman, the Boston JCRC director.

JCPA did not formally debate gay marriage at its resolution session Monday evening, but the issue of rights for gays did intrude into a resolution supporting hate-crimes legislation and citing sexual orientation.

The resolution's final language said: "The inclusion of any group in hate-crime laws need not be viewed as an expression of support for that group, but rather as a recognition of the reality that certain segments of our society are subject to significantly greater incidences of hate crimes."

The qualification was needed to achieve consensus. ■

## Rabbis block N.Y. traffic to protest fence hearing overseas

By RACHEL POMERANCE

NEW YORK (JTA) — Two rabbis and a coffin blocked traffic across from the United Nations to protest the International Court of Justice's hearings in The Hague.

It may sound like the opening to a joke, but the activists involved were deadly serious.

"We were carrying the coffin to the steps of the United Nations to tell them that this is Exhibit A in their trial," said Rabbi Shmuel Herzfeld, the vice president of Amcha-The Coalition for Jewish Concerns, which earlier Monday staged a rally that drew hundreds to lambaste the hearings, which also began that day.

"The coffin symbolizes the many hundreds of people who have been killed by this terrorism that has affected the world like a plague," he said.

Herzfeld, along with Rabbi Eliot Pearlson of Miami Beach and Amcha's media adviser, Glenn Richter, were arrested for obstructing traffic on Manhattan's busy First Avenue, but soon

released with a summons to appear in court April 2.

At that time, Herzfeld says he will continue to make his case — defending Israel's security fence in the face of Palestinian terrorism and claiming anti-Israel bias at the United Nations.

In December, the U.N. General Assembly recommended that the international court take up the fence.

Amcha underscored its views about Israel and the United Nations in a rally that drew some 600 New York-area high schoolers and several members of New York's Jewish community to the United Nations.

Perched on a dais in Dag Hammarskjold plaza across from the United Nations, Herzfeld and others wore old-fashioned judges' regalia — long black robes and ruffled scarves — to mock the court's proceedings across the ocean.

Aiming to put Palestinian terrorism on trial, activists held placards with anti-terror slogans and paraded pictures of terror victims. Attorney Neil Rothfeld said, "We as Jews have to stand strong in support of Israel." ■

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### NORTH AMERICA

#### JCPA endorses end to tax cuts

The Jewish Council for Public Affairs called on the Bush administration not to make tax cuts permanent.

At the organization's plenum in Boston on Monday, delegates passed a resolution calling on the federal government to "meet its responsibilities to its citizens and to reject efforts to make permanent the 2003 tax cuts."

On the Middle East, delegates rejected part of a resolution that would have encouraged Israelis and Palestinians to avoid provocative acts and removed a section calling for continued aid to Iraq; a resolution without the language passed without opposition.

The group also called for the USA Patriot Act to be amended but not repealed, and expressed support for hate crimes legislation.

#### Birthright baby born

A couple that met on the birthright Israel trip had a baby. On Nov. 17, Shoshana and Stephen Kronfeld had a son, Ezra.

The two met on a 1999 trip sponsored by birthright, which provides free trips to Israel for Jews ages 18 to 26 who have never been on a peer trip to the Jewish state.

#### Mmm, mmm good

A woman from New York won a chicken soup contest for cooks across the United States. Rosely Himmelstein won Tuesday's contest, sponsored by the National Jewish Outreach Program.

Himmelstein made a traditional soup but added in sweet potatoes and rutabaga.

"The secret is balance," Himmelstein said. "It's what my grandmother did." The group sponsored the contest, held at a Manhattan restaurant, to draw attention to its Shabbat Across America program. The next Shabbat Across America will be held March 12.

#### Rabbi cuts deal

A New York rabbi will not be prosecuted for allegedly diverting federal money.

Federal prosecutors said they would not prosecute Milton Balkany, who has admitted that some \$700,000 in grant money was misdirected to pay for administrative and operating expenses at the Children's Center of Brooklyn and at Bais Yaakov, a Jewish school in Brooklyn.

The funds from money administered through the Department of Housing and Urban Development were supposed to be used for direct services at the Children's Center.

Balkany must make restitution to HUD and engage in "good behavior" for six months.

### WORLD

#### Jewish school plaque destroyed

A plaque on a Paris school building honoring the memory of Jews deported to Auschwitz was destroyed.

Former members of the French Resistance arriving for a ceremony at the Japy Gymnasium in the capital's 11th District on Monday discovered the plaque broken on the ground outside the school building.

The plaque marked the deportation of the district's Jews to Auschwitz in 1941 and 1942. Paris Mayor Bertrand Delanoë described the desecration as "disgusting and revolting."

He said a new plaque would be placed at the school as soon as possible. The Paris municipality and the mayor of the 11th District have filed a police complaint.

#### Students protest neo-Nazi violence

Five hundred students from Asia and Africa who are studying in Russia went on strike to protest neo-Nazi violence.

The students are studying in the city of Voronezh, which is 250 miles south of Moscow.

The strike, aimed at generating more police protection from neo-Nazis, came after a 24-year-old medical student from the African country of Guinea Bissau was killed in Voronezh last Saturday in what was believed to be a hate crime.

Voronezh has gained notoriety in recent years for its ultranationalist groups, including a local branch of the far-right Russian National Unity Party and a number of neo-Nazi gangs.

#### Relief for Moroccan quake victims

The North American Jewish community is collecting relief funds for the victims of Tuesday's earthquake in Morocco.

Money can be sent to JDC: Morocco Earthquake Relief, Box 321, 847A Second Ave., New York, N.Y., 10017. Some 300 people are feared to have died in the earthquake. Steven Schwager, JDC's executive vice president, said Morocco is an example of centuries-old coexistence between the now-small Jewish community and an Arab majority.

"We will work with the Moroccan Jewish leadership to determine the best way to render assistance," he said.

#### You want to marry a Jewish doctor?

Doctor still tops the list of prized Jewish professions, according to an Israeli survey.

The poll of 500 men and women published in Israel's daily Ma'ariv on Tuesday found that 22.6 percent of respondents named medicine as the most valuable profession, with pilot or teacher a distant second, at 12 percent each. Politician came in at 12th place in the popularity list, at 1.8 percent.

### MIDDLE EAST

#### Proof positive?

Terrorist infiltration has ceased in areas where the West Bank security barrier has been built, Israel's Shin Bet chief said.

In a briefing to Israel's Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on Tuesday, Avi Dichter said areas of Israel still vulnerable to Palestinian suicide bombings were Kafr Kasim, where the West Bank boundary is still open, and Jerusalem.

#### Poll: Arabs want to stay in Israel

Ninety percent of Israeli Arabs in northern Israel do not want the Jewish state to trade their land to a Palestinian state.

A new poll conducted earlier this month by the Arab Center for Applied Social Studies showed that the vast majority of respondents in Israel's "Triangle" area oppose a proposal to trade their land to the Palestinians in exchange for Israel keeping parts of the West Bank.

They said they didn't want to leave their homeland or that living conditions are better in Israel.

The poll surveyed 418 people.

#### Book: Israel's got 82 nukes

Israel has 82 nuclear weapons, a new book says. "Rumsfeld's War," by Washington Times reporter Rowan Scarborough, includes a CIA report on Israel's nuclear arsenal.

Israel never has admitted that it has nuclear weapons, but most observers long have believed it has.