

IN THE NEWS

Democrats endorse West Bank land claim

The Democratic Party formally endorsed Israel's claim to parts of the West Bank and rejected a Palestinian "right of return."

Rep. Shelley Berkley (D-Nev.) said the party added language she proposed.

"The creation of a Palestinian state should resolve the issue of Palestinian refugees by allowing them to settle there, rather than in Israel," the platform says. "Furthermore, all understand that it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949."

Fence fray begins at U.N.

A U.N. draft resolution calls on Israel to tear down its West Bank security barrier.

A Palestinian-crafted resolution circulated Monday reiterates the International Court of Justice's July 9 opinion that Israel must tear down its fence and pay reparations to Palestinians affected by it. The resolution is expected to be introduced in the U.N. General Assembly at the end of the week. Israel called the court opinion one-sided and politically motivated and said it would not abide by it.

Sharon, Peres in unity talks

Ariel Sharon opened coalition talks with Israeli Labor Party leader Shimon Peres.

No deals were reached at Monday's breakfast tete-a-tete between the two veteran politicians, but sources said Peres agreed to put Labor firmly behind the prime minister's plan to withdraw Israeli settlers and soldiers from the Gaza Strip in 2005.

Even if Peres proves agreeable to the idea of a national unity government, it could take weeks for him to win broad support from the center-left Labor Party for joining forces with Sharon's center-right Likud.

WORLD REPORT

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Argentine Jews struggle with money problems, security fears

By LARRY LUXNER

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — Things weren't always this desperate for Deborah Fischer and her husband Hector.

Until a few years ago, the young Jewish couple sold notebooks, pencils and school supplies from their own kiosk and lived in a decent two-bedroom rental apartment in the middle-class Buenos Aires neighborhood of Paternal.

Then the bottom fell out of Argentina's economy, and the Fischers' lives were turned upside down.

Today, the entire family lives crammed into a one-room storefront.

Their shop long gone, Hector now peddles off-brand sneakers in the street, while Deborah — who is 34 but looks 10 years older — takes care of their 7-month-old daughter and hyperactive 5-year-old son.

Not all of Argentina's 250,000 Jews are in such dire straits, and some are doing much better since the country's economic situation began to improve in 2002.

But this month, as the Jewish community marks the 10th anniversary of the bombing of the AMIA Jewish community center, which killed 85 people and wounded 300 on July 18, 1994, the community as a whole remains deeply scarred psychologically and economically.

The Fischers' apartment, which rents for about \$78 a month, is barely big enough for two beds, a crib, a TV set and a kitchen table. The tiny Kelvinator fridge in the corner is practically empty, and the bathroom has no running water. If not for handouts from

Jewish organizations, the Fischers probably would be out on the street.

"We cannot shower. We can't move around," said Deborah, who once spent two years in Israel and still speaks some Hebrew. "I'd return to Israel, but when I lived there I was a different person. Now I have two kids, and it's not so easy."

Compounding the economic challenges among Jews here are fears of a third large-scale terrorist attack on the community, according to Abraham Kaul, president of AMIA since May 2002.

The AMIA bombing came only two years after a bomb destroyed the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires, killing 29 people and injuring 300.

"I recently received an urgent call on my cell phone, and the first thing I thought was that a synagogue had been bombed," Kaul said. "But

it wasn't that. Someone I knew had died in an auto accident. The point is, we have incorporated this idea in our heads that there can be another attack at any time, at any place. This is now a part of being Jewish in Argentina."

Jews here are deeply frustrated that 10 years after the attack — the deadliest terrorist strike in the history of Latin America — no one formally has been charged with the crime, adding to the sense of paranoia among Argentine Jews.

Even inside the community, there is distrust between AMIA officials and the community's Jewish umbrella group, DAIA, following reports that DAIA's former president, businessman Ruben Beraja, was linked to former Argentine President Carlos Menem.

Beraja reportedly did not want to pressure

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**ARGENTINA:
10 YEARS
OF TRAUMA
Part I**

■ Argentine Jews struggle with economic hardship and security concerns

Continued from page 1

Menem to investigate the 1994 bombing because Beraja was afraid of endangering his extensive business ties with the Menem government.

Menem is suspected of hindering the probe into the bombing because of his ties to Iran, believed to have sponsored the attack.

"After the attack, many people stopped going to Jewish institutions out of fear," said Alejandro Kladniew, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's executive director for Latin America. "People are afraid."

The good news, say community officials, is that Argentina's once-virulent anti-Semitism seems to have subsided.

"I think the AMIA attack triggered a big feeling of solidarity by Argentines toward the Jews, and an acceptance that the Jews are a part of Argentine society," Kaul said.

"The economic crisis showed that the Jews are suffering the same as everyone else," he said.

■
An estimated 60,000 to 70,000 Jews, about one-fourth of the country's total Jewish population, live below the poverty line. Some 35,000 Jews receive daily food and housing assistance.

Much of that help comes from Jews in the United States. The JDC runs a \$10 million operation in Argentina.

Despite the country's 8.8 percent economic growth last year, the gap between rich and poor is widening. In 2003, according to government statistics,

the richest 10 percent of Argentina's 36 million people controlled 38.6 percent of the country's wealth and made 31 times as much as the poorest 10 percent. In 1974, when the government began recording such figures, the wealthiest sector was only 12 times better off than the poorest sector.

"There's been an improvement, with only 48 percent of Argentines living below the poverty line compared to 58 percent at the end of 2002," said Bernardo Kliksberg, an Argentine Jewish economist at the Inter-American Development Bank, in Washington.

"But one of every two Argentines is still poor, earning less than \$250 a month, and there are at least 2,000 homeless Jewish people and increasing numbers of Jewish street children. This is unprecedented in modern Jewish history," he said.

Kliksberg said it is important that Argentine Jews not be forgotten by Jews around the world.

"Help from American Jews has been very important, but we're hearing from community leaders that Argentina is no longer on their priority list. This is a very dangerous impression. If this help to Argentine Jews is reduced, it'll be a tragedy."

Street vendor Oscar Rodriguez, who isn't Jewish, receives assistance from Chabad-Lubavitch thanks to his young son, who attends the Morasha religious school in Buenos Aires.

His late wife, Monica, who was Jewish, died in a fire in their apartment two years ago. The apartment still bears signs of that fire.

"Their help has been like a shock absorber," Rodriguez said of Chabad. "Sometimes they invite me to meetings. I know a lot of people from the Jewish community."

■
While few Jews are among Argentina's 40,000 "cartoneros," who eke out a living by picking through the garbage at night, many Jewish people live in slums known as "villas de miseria."

More than 45 percent of AMIA's \$8 million budget now goes to social assistance,

especially to people older than 45 who have little hope of finding work. AMIA runs soup kitchens, religious schools and other charitable institutions throughout metropolitan Buenos Aires.

"For people living below the poverty line, life continues as before," Kladniew said. "Some people have found jobs, but unskilled jobs at very low salaries — jobs that don't even pay 500 pesos," around \$170 a month. "You can't buy anything with that."

Chabad, which has 22 sites in Argentina, also is working to help al-

leviate Jewish poverty.

Things have gotten better since Argentina's economic nadir, said Rabbi Zvi Grunblatt, director of Chabad's Argentine operations, but "we really have a long way to go."

■
The crisis has hit Argentina's Jews especially hard. Many were middle-class professionals who fell into penury when they lost their jobs and the Argentine peso lost two-thirds of its value, wiping out their savings. Many now accept handouts.

"My father used to have a pharmacy," said Viviana, a 54-year-old social worker who asked that her last name not be used. "We always had maids, and he used to take us to Europe on holidays. Every year, my parents went to Club Med in Brazil."

When Argentina's economic crisis hit, the pharmacy went into debt and her father was forced to sell the business. He died of cancer not long ago, humiliated and psychologically devastated.

"My father never spoke about his suffering," said Viviana, whose \$100,000 in life savings disappeared when the Uruguayan bank in which her money was deposited went out of business. "But we are fortunate, because we have work and we're healthy. Many Jews are much worse off than us."

Deborah Fischer, trying to make ends meet in her tiny Buenos Aires storefront apartment, now has more modest dreams that she once had.

"To get out of here," she says quietly, then adds: "To have enough water to be able to take a nice shower." ■

There are at least 2,000 homeless Jewish people and increasing numbers of Jewish street children.

Bernardo Kliksberg
Argentine Jewish economist

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U.S. Jewish voters shun Ralph Nader

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Jewish communal officials are trying to ensure that Ralph Nader does not play the same role in the 2004 presidential election as he did four years earlier.

Nader, the 2000 Green Party candidate who some say took key votes away from Democratic candidate Al Gore in a razor-tight election, again is seeking the White House, this time as an independent.

An outspoken opponent of aid to Israel and a constant critic of U.S. policy in the Middle East, Nader for years has been a thorn in the side of many liberal and conservative Jews. While his domestic policy views, which traditionally have focused on consumer rights, align closely with those of most Jewish voters, Jews largely have avoided Nader because of other differences with him and his style.

As the Democratic and Republican candidates vie to prove their pro-Israel credentials — long a staple of American presidential races — Nader has chosen to voice views harshly critical of Israel.

Some recent comments are giving Jewish communal officials an excuse to criticize Nader. But while there is genuine fury at what Nader is saying, some liberal Jews may also want to discredit Nader to minimize the Jewish vote for him in key states, aiding the presumptive Democratic candidate for president, Sen. John Kerry of

Massachusetts, against President Bush.

In an interview last month, Nader told American Conservative magazine that he believed Congress and successive U.S. administrations, beginning with Ronald Reagan's, have been "puppets to Israeli military policy."

In the interview with Pat Buchanan, Nader said the United States was ignoring the Israeli and Palestinian peace movements and that Democrats and Republicans defer to the pro-Israel lobby in Washington because of political considerations.

Nader often has used the issue of Israel to demonstrate his belief that both major political parties are too similar. Nader has some Jewish backers, with Jews among some of his most loyal activists.

Calls to Nader's campaign seeking comment, and information about Jewish support for his candidacy, were not returned. But his recent comments on Israel prompted rebukes from several Jewish figures.

"Nader's diatribes send the wrong message, because there are too many in the Arab world who use any sign of weakness in the U.S.-Israel relationship as a justification for hardening their opposition to the Jewish state," Rep. Steve Israel (D-N.Y.) said.

The Anti-Defamation League wrote Nader a letter calling his comments "offensive hyperbole."

"One may disagree with America's

Middle East approach, but to assert that U.S. policy in such a complex and volatile region is the product of wholesale manipulation by a foreign government fails to take into account important U.S. interests that are involved," the letter read. "Moreover, the image of the Jewish state as a 'puppeteer,' controlling the powerful U.S. Congress, feeds into many age-old stereotypes which have no place in legitimate public discourse."

As a non-profit organization, the ADL does not endorse political candidates, and officials say the group's stance on Nader is not political.

Rep. Israel, who is backing Kerry, also said he was not motivated by partisan politics. "For me, this isn't about pro-Kerry or anti-Kerry," he said. "It's anti-Nader because of Nader's castigation of U.S.-Israeli relations. I'll let the chips fall where they may."

But Nader's comments allowed one group, the National Jewish Democratic Council, to merge politics with support for Israel. The group, which is backing Kerry, is working to highlight Nader's Middle East rhetoric in a bid to keep Democrats from defecting to Nader's camp.

"The NJDC will be committed to making sure that the American Jewish community knows where he stands on Israel and other issues," David Harris, the group's deputy executive director, said of Nader. ■

Vatican leaders condemn anti-Zionism

By FLORENCIA ARBISER

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — In an unprecedented step, Catholic religious leaders have signed on to a statement rejecting anti-Zionism as a form of anti-Semitism.

A statement expressing "total rejection of anti-Semitism in all its forms, including anti-Zionism as a more recent manifestation of anti-Semitism," was released July 8 at the end of the 18th International Liaison Committee meeting between Jewish and Catholic intellectuals and religious leaders in Buenos Aires.

The religious leaders also committed to work together for justice and charity.

"We came to Latin America and brought about a profound change," Elan Steinberg, executive vice president of the World Jewish Congress, said. "The government and the Catholic church, the two most relevant institutions of the region, are supporting us."

Leaders of the WJC, which helped organize the forum, also met with Argentine President Nestor Kirchner. Kirchner agreed to press other Latin American presidents to sign a petition

against anti-Semitism, they said.

The Jewish leaders were gratified that the concluding document also condemned terrorism, calling it "a sin against man and God."

The delegates also proposed holding a shared celebration next year for the 40th anniversary of Nostra Aetate, a landmark Vatican document declaring that Jews historically are not liable for Jesus' death and establishing a joint annual memorial for Holocaust victims.

The forum was the first international meeting of Vatican officials and Jews in Latin America, a region of 550 million people that includes 475 million Catholics and 525,000 Jews.

The theme of the meeting was justice and charity because of the work done by the Jewish community and the Catholic Church to help the poor after Argentina's economic collapse.

No venue was set for the next meeting, but the religious leaders discussed holding it in Israel.

Shear Yashuv Cohen, chief rabbi of Haifa, told JTA the meeting was important because it represented a gathering of religious believers, not politicians or human rights organizations. ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

No-confidence motion ends in tie

A no-confidence motion against Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's government ended in a 55-55 tie. The motion was put forth by Shas and United Torah Judaism, both parties Sharon reportedly is considering inviting into his shaky coalition.

Sharon is in talks with a variety of parties to ensure majority support in the Knesset for his coalition and his plans to withdraw Israeli troops and settlers from Gaza. A no-confidence motion needs 61 votes to bring down the government.

Palestinian man crushed in rubble

An elderly Palestinian man died during an Israeli raid in the Gaza Strip. Witnesses said the 70-year-old was crushed to death when Israeli bulldozers demolished his home in Khan Younis on Monday.

Military sources said troops, who were targeting buildings used by Palestinian gunmen, had searched the area and ordered residents out. The dead man was paralyzed and could not flee in time, Khan Younis residents said.

Experts to examine fence ruling

Israel's attorney general will set up a team of experts to examine the International Court of Justice opinion on the West Bank security barrier. The team will be headed by Shavit Matias, an expert on international law, and will look into the court's decision, Ha'aretz reported. Conclusions and recommendations will be presented to Attorney General Menachem Mazuz and other Israeli officials.

Meanwhile, European Union foreign ministers meeting Monday were to discuss the ruling after Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei appealed for E.U. backing in securing U.N. enforcement of the non-binding opinion.

Foreign students returning to Israel

Two Israeli universities reported sharp rises in the number of foreign students in summer programs.

The University of Haifa announced a 76 percent increase over last year in enrollment for its two summer Hebrew-language programs, to 330 students this year, up from 187 last year.

At Jerusalem's Hebrew University, 384 students have registered at the Rothberg International School, compared to 265 last year, an increase of 45 percent. The figures, reported in the Jerusalem Post, are the highest since travel to Israel dropped dramatically after the start of the Palestinian intifada in the fall of 2000.

Police probe Paritzky

Israeli police launched a probe into a Cabinet minister who admitted trying to frame a party colleague.

Attorney General Menachem Mazuz on Monday instructed police to investigate Infrastructure Minister Yosef Paritzky on suspicion of criminal conspiracy. Paritzky last week admitted trying to get a private investigator to entrap Avraham Poraz, a Shinui Party rival, in a 2002 bribery case.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on Sunday fired Paritzky from the Cabinet, a decision that takes two days to go into effect.

Shrieking over 'Shrek 2'

Israeli cinemas were ordered to yank "Shrek 2" after a singer said it defamed him. The original Hebrew dub of the animated film had one character threaten to castrate another by saying, "Let's do a David Daor on him," a reference to an Israeli singer with a high-pitched voice.

Tel Aviv District Court on Monday found in favor of a claim by Daor that the line defamed him. "This film intends to perpetuate an

image of me as a eunuch, a man with no testicles, and turn me into a laughingstock," he told Israel's daily Yediot Achronot.

The court ordered the Hebrew film withdrawn from 20 cinemas and redubbed. It wasn't clear what new translation the Israeli distributors of "Shrek 2" would use for the original English line — "Let's Bobbitt him" — a reference to an American who was emasculated by his wife in 1993.

Abrams, Hadley in Israel

Two senior Bush administration officials are in Israel to discuss the planned pullout from the Gaza Strip.

Elliott Abrams and Stephen Hadley, both top officials on President Bush's National Security Council, arrived Monday to meet with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, the first such meeting since Sharon's Cabinet approved the withdrawal.

The Americans also will raise Israel's failure to evacuate all unapproved settlement outposts in the West Bank.

They also will meet with the Palestinian Authority prime minister, Ahmed Qurei, to discuss Palestinian readiness to assume control in Gaza once Israel withdraws.

NORTH AMERICA

U.S. senator: Saddam threatened Israel

U.S. intelligence exaggerated Saddam Hussein's weapons capability but not his threat to Israel, a U.S. senator said.

"Don't forget, he did represent a threat to regional stability," Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.) told NBC's "Meet the Press" on Sunday. "Don't forget that he did have missiles that went over 150 kilometers, so he's threatening Israel. Don't forget that he did work with the Palestinian terrorists" and was "paying a reward to all these terrorists." Roberts is co-chairman of a panel that faulted the intelligence community for exaggerating Saddam's mass-destruction capability.

Heal the world

Americans are attending a new medical school in Israel.

Twenty-six American students will leave for Israel next week to attend a new medical school at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev that teaches global health care for needy populations. It is part of a collaborative program with Columbia University Medical Center.

Hadassah funds expansion

Hadassah authorized \$180 million for a new patient center at one of its hospitals in Israel.

The decision came last Friday at national board meetings preceding the group's 90th annual convention in Phoenix.

In the next 12 to 18 months, Hadassah will launch a major fundraising campaign to raise the money for the new 14-story building at Hadassah Medical Center in Jerusalem's Ein Karem neighborhood, designed to relieve overcrowding. The move marks the group's single largest commitment to capital improvement, Hadassah said.

WORLD

AJCommittee to remember AMIA

An American Jewish Committee delegation will participate in the 10th anniversary commemoration of the AMIA bombing in Argentina.

Led by its president, Robert Goodkind, the AJCommittee delegation will present a letter to Argentine President Nestor Kirchner stressing that thousands of people around the world are awaiting answers about the attack.

The community center was bombed on July 18, 1994, killing 85 people and wounding some 300.