

IN THE NEWS

Security bill clears Senate panel

A bill to provide homeland security funds for U.S. Jewish sites was challenged by some lawmakers concerned about church-state separation issues.

The High-Risk Non-Profit Security Enhancement Act passed the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee on Wednesday after an amendment to deny aid to houses of worship was defeated.

Opponents of the aid argued that providing funds for the security of buildings used for sectarian purposes crossed a line.

The bill would provide \$100 million from the U.S. Homeland Security Department for the security of high-risk nonprofit sites, including Jewish community centers and synagogues.

McKinney wins House primary

Former Rep. Cynthia McKinney won enough votes to avoid a runoff in her quest to return to Congress.

McKinney was targeted by Jewish donors two years ago because she is seen as anti-Israel, and was voted out of office.

This week, she won 51 percent of the vote in the Democratic primary Tuesday in Georgia's 4th District. [Story, Pg. 3]

AMIA evidence not forthcoming

Evidence believed to have surfaced in the deadly 1994 bombing of an Argentine Jewish center has not appeared.

Argentine President Nestor Kirchner told Jewish leaders in a meeting Monday that tapes of telephone calls by one of the suspects just after the bombing had been found, Jewish leader Abraham Kaul said.

But Kirchner later said he told the Jewish leaders that only receipts for the tapes had been found.

Earlier this week, Argentines marked the 10th anniversary of the July 18 bombing of the AMIA center, in which 85 people died.

WORLD REPORT

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Europeans held key to Palestinian success bringing fence case to U.N.

By RACHEL POMERANCE

NEW YORK (JTA)—When it comes to action at the United Nations, Europe — considered by many observers to be the organization's moral bellwether — often decides the course.

That was the case again this week as the U.N. General Assembly overwhelmingly passed a resolution demanding that Israel comply with the International Court of Justice ruling that it must tear down its West Bank security barrier and compensate Palestinians affected by its construction.

The next question is whether the U.N. Security Council, whose resolutions are binding, will take up the issue.

The United States has indicated it will veto a Security Council resolution, but the Palestinians have said they'll push it anyway.

The Israelis say they're not worried about the Security Council because they know they can depend on a U.S. veto.

"The Security Council is the least of our worries," said Arye Mekeel, Israel's deputy permanent representative at the United Nations, noting that a U.S. veto likely would obviate the threat of sanctions there.

For Israeli officials, the whole process points to the weakness of the Europeans.

In meetings with European diplomats this week, Israeli officials said they'll make that point.

"If this is the position of the Europeans and the U.N., we will not be able to give them a role in carrying out the 'road map,' so they are creating a situation which is unacceptable to us," Mekeel said Wednesday.

The European Union and the United Nations are official partners, along with the United States and Russia, in the so-called "Quartet," which is sponsoring the "road map" plan to get the dormant Israeli-Palestinian peace process back on track.

Arguing that it might politicize the international court and divert the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, European countries abstained from the General Assembly resolution last December asking the court to judge the legal consequences of Israel's fence.

On July 9, the court ruled that the fence was illegal and ordered Israel to dismantle it.

Israel dismissed the court — which said international legal guarantees of self-defense were not relevant to Israel's struggle against Palestinian terrorism — and said it would disregard the advisory opinion.

Again on Tuesday, Israel slammed the U.N. resolution. After that evening's vote, Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, Dan Gillerman, told delegates, "Thank God the fate of Israel and the Jewish people is not decided in this hall."

The vote was 150 in favor of the resolution and 6 against, with 10 abstentions. Joining Israel and the United States in voting against were Australia, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia and Paulau.

Abstaining were Cameroon, Canada, El Salvador, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Uganda, Uruguay and Vanuatu.

While the vote was widely expected, it was postponed twice as the Europeans sought to inject a modicum of balance into

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BEHIND THE HEADLINES

■ *With Europe on board, the Palestinians put the fence issue to a U.N. vote*

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the Palestinian-led resolution.

In the end, the Europeans unanimously supported the resolution after certain modifications.

The Palestinians began circulating the draft resolution early last week. Exploratory discussions between the Palestinians and Holland, which holds the rotating E.U. presidency, began Monday afternoon.

By Tuesday, intense discussions were under way, as the Europeans appeared split in their view.

After a two-hour break Tuesday evening, additions were made to the latest version that apparently appeased European concerns.

The first called on the Palestinian Authority to take action against those "conducting and planning violent attacks" and on Israel "to take no action undermining trust," including attacks on civilians and assassinations of terrorist leaders.

But Mekel criticized the resolution for not making significant reference to Palestinian terrorism, for not specifically noting Israel's right to self-defense and for making the ICJ opinion, not the road map, the main signpost in the peace process.

He said the resolution would allow the Palestinians to condition progress on the road map on Israel's dismantling of the security barrier.

In analyzing the Europeans' role in the vote, one Israeli diplomat reserved his harshest judgment for the French.

"Pardon my French, but we're talking here about the French connection," he

said. "They did everything they could this week to guarantee European support for the resolution." French officials could not be reached for comment.

Meanwhile, in discussions July 16 surrounding the resolution, the Palestinian U.N. representative, Nasser Al-Kidwa, called on countries to impose sanctions on companies involved in the fence's construction.

"Israel will have to choose what to declare itself — officially, morally and legally as an outlaw state, or to reconcile itself with a new reality and comply," Al-Kidwa said.

Even as it resigned itself to the resolution's passage, Israel hoped the debate would shed light on the situation.

Blasting the debate as hypocritical, Israeli officials noted the events of last weekend, in which the Palestinian Authority police chief was kidnapped by militants from P.A. President Yasser Arafat's own Fatah faction. That set off a round of musical chairs during which Arafat tried to install his cousin in a top security position.

"These are the guys that want to tell the international community what is the rule of law?" Mekel said.

Jewish organizations swiftly blasted the U.N. move.

"Today the General Assembly has built a barrier — a barrier to progress in the peace process," the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations said in a statement.

The Palestinians will use the resolution to "avoid their responsibility" under the road map to dismantle terrorist organizations, the group said.

"The war on terror cannot be won by closing one's eyes and wishing terrorism away, as the ICJ and the General Assembly have," the statement said. "If the ICJ opinion applies to all states, then terrorists have won the battle. If only to Israel, then

anti-Semites have."

The Simon Wiesenthal Center, for its part, denounced the ruling.

Noting that Israeli officials cite a tremendous decline in terrorist attacks because of the fence, the group demanded that the General Assembly seek a ruling from the World Court to designate suicide bombings a "crime against humanity."

Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Presidents Conference, said the group would meet with U.N. diplomats this week in an effort to prevent even nine affirmative votes necessary to pass a binding resolution at the Security Council. ■

'These are the guys that want to tell the international community what is the rule of law?'

Arye Mekel

Israel's deputy permanent representative to the U.N.

Chaos grows in Palestinian areas

By DAN BARON

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The shooting of a Palestinian official has compounded the crisis in the Palestinian Authority.

The Palestinian Parliament promised Wednesday to probe the shooting of a P.A. official who had criticized Yasser Arafat.

Nabil Amr, a former P.A. information minister who has become a vocal critic of the P.A. president, was shot in the leg late Tuesday night by unknown gunmen in Ramallah.

The incident comes amid growing chaos in the West Bank and Gaza resulting from calls for reform and power struggles

in the Palestinian Authority.

The Palestinian Parliament called for Arafat to accept Ahmed Qurei's resignation. In a resolution passed Wednesday, the Palestinian Legislative Council called on the Palestinian Authority president to accept the resignation of his prime minister, The Associated Press reported.

"Every one of us is responsible," said Kadura Fares, a Cabinet minister. "Arafat is the most responsible for failure."

Qurei had submitted his resignation over the weekend to protest his lack of power, but Arafat rejected the move. Qurei has since agreed to keep his post for the time being. ■

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McKinney, critic of Israel, wins in Georgia race

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Cynthia McKinney is one step closer to returning to Congress.

The former Georgia lawmaker, who has been targeted by Jewish donors in the past because she is perceived as anti-Israel, surprised many by avoiding a runoff and winning outright Tuesday's six-person Democratic primary for her old seat in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Jewish donors, concerned about McKinney's re-emergence, had anticipated backing McKinney's opponent in a runoff next month, but now are faced with the likelihood that McKinney will return to Washington after winning in November in a heavily Democratic district.

McKinney, who represented the 4th congressional district for 10 years before losing to Denise Majette in the primary two years ago, received 51 percent of the vote Tuesday.

Liane Levetan, a Jewish state senator, received 21 percent, and Cathy Woolard, a former Atlanta City Council president, garnered 19 percent.

McKinney, Georgia's first black congresswoman, will face Republican Catherine Davis, who also is black, in November.

The resurrection of McKinney's career comes as a surprise to many Jewish donors, who spent time and money to defeat her two years ago after a controversial tenure in Congress.

McKinney had consistently angered many Jews because of her anti-Israel comments and vocal opposition to votes supporting Israel's right to self-defense.

Though much was made of the Jewish community's role in McKinney's primary defeat in 2002, Jews had not been particularly active so far this year in trying to prevent her return to Congress.

Jewish donors were caught off guard in March when Majette announced she would seek the state's open Senate seat rather than run for re-election in the House.

The announcement came just days after McKinney made clear she would try to reclaim her old seat, and Majette was seen as having the best chance to keep McKinney from returning to Congress.

Majette's 2002 victory over McKinney was credited in large part to out-of-state Jewish support, though there was appar-

ently discontent from local voters over her performance as well.

But Jewish donors were not watching this primary race very closely or donating to McKinney's opponents in great numbers.

Analysts said this year's race was a conundrum for Jewish donors.

There was some fear that aiding Levetan would be seen as a blatant attempt to force a race between a Jew and a black woman. Yet aiding another challenger wasn't a viable option because Levetan is popular in the local Jewish community.

Fund raisers also said the Jewish community largely has turned its attention to the presidential race, relegating congressional battles to a back seat.

It's unclear how much money will go from Jewish coffers to Davis now that she is taking on McKinney.

Morris Amitay, a Washington pro-Israel lobbyist, suggested that support for Israel in Congress was now at levels that made containing McKinney less urgent than it was previously.

"I don't think anyone is wearing sack cloth and ashes, the last test of support was 427-9," he said, referring to a recent House vote supporting Israel's plan to disengage from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank.

Supporting her Republican opponent, he said, would be a "waste of money" in such a strongly Democratic seat.

In addition, analysts say McKinney worked hard in this primary to avoid hot

topics that have gotten her in trouble in the past with both Jewish and non-Jewish voters. In addition, her anti-Bush rhetoric played much better this time around.

Shortly after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, McKinney asked a Saudi

prince for a \$10 million donation he had pledged for disaster relief. New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani had rejected the money because the prince suggested that U.S. support for Israel provoked the

attacks.

McKinney also suggested that President Bush knew of the terrorist plot to attack the World Trade Center, but didn't prevent it because he wanted a pretext for war.

Some voters said recent information about faulty intelligence validated McKinney's views.

McKinney has enjoyed strong support from the Arab and Muslim community, which views her as a prime backer of a Palestinian state.

A review of her Federal Election Commission filings shows a slew of Arab surnames, and she received \$1,000 from the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee.

Levetan received \$5,000 from the pro-Israel Hudson Valley Political Action Committee.

Some Jewish leaders hope McKinney's changed demeanor on the campaign trail will carry through to Washington if she wins in November.

If not, analysts said, there's always the chance to target her again — in 2006. ■

McKinney suggested that President Bush knew of the plot to attack the World Trade Center.

Bush talks Israel in Malaysia

WASHINGTON (JTA) — President Bush discussed Israeli-Palestinian issues with the prime minister of Malaysia.

Bush met Monday with Abdullah Badawi, who suggested that Israeli-Palestinian tensions and the Iraq war were high among the Muslim nation's priorities, but not the only issue of common concern to the two countries.

"I am certainly grateful you have been

able to explain to me so many aspects of the issues pertaining to Palestine and Israel," Badawi told Bush after their meeting. "There's nothing better than to get from the president of the United States himself on all these issues."

Badawi's predecessor, Mahathir Mohammed, said last year that Jews control the world and called on Muslims to unite to defeat them. ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

No sister city, no cry

A Wisconsin city failed to approve a measure that would have twinned it with a city in the Gaza Strip.

A measure to make Madison, Wis., and Rafah sister cities failed to garner sufficient support for passage on Wednesday morning in the Madison City Council.

Although the tally was 9-8 in favor, with two abstentions, the measure went down because it did not get the 11 votes needed to pass in the 20-member council. The city's mayor said he would have vetoed the measure had it passed.

Some local Jewish groups opposed the measure, arguing that Rafah is a center of Palestinian terrorism.

U.S. to help Palestinian local elections

The United States will help the Palestinians hold municipal elections this year.

The elections would take place in phases, David Satterfield, the second-in-charge at the State Department's Near East desk, told the Senate on Tuesday. "We're ready to assist the Palestinian Authority in preparations necessary to hold these free and fair elections," Satterfield said. Until now, U.S. and Israeli officials have resisted new Palestinian elections, fearing they would validate the radical leadership behind the intifada.

However, an Israeli official said the government approved the new proposal.

B'nai B'rith: Cut off Presbyterians

B'nai B'rith called for an end to interfaith dialogue with the U.S. Presbyterian church.

B'nai B'rith cited three decisions by the Presbyterians at their recent general assembly: to fund conversion missions targeting Jews; to divest holdings in Israel and call on others to follow suit; and to label Israel an apartheid state.

"For a dialogue to take place between two parties — interfaith or political — both sides must accept the right of the other to exist," B'nai B'rith said in a statement Tuesday.

Reform group denounces marriage bill

The Reform movement said a bill to restrict courts from defining marriage could threaten U.S. religious liberties.

The Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism urged lawmakers Wednesday to reject the Marriage Protection Act of 2004, which it said would set a precedent of denying federal courts authority to hear cases on controversial issues, such as religious liberty.

MIDDLE EAST

Pro-Palestinian activist allowed in Israel

An Israeli court overturned an earlier decision and will allow a pro-Palestinian activist from the United States into Israel. A judge ruled that Anne Robinson-Peter, a member of the International Solidarity Movement, should be allowed into the country, but be barred from approaching Israel's West Bank security barrier or participating in any demonstrations regarding the fence.

Iran nukes loom

Israeli intelligence believes Iran will have nuclear weapons by 2007.

The projection was made by intelligence chiefs in a report Wednesday to Cabinet ministers, Israel Radio said. Recent U.S. assessments have predicted Iran's atomic program will produce nuclear

arms by the end of the decade. The intelligence chiefs also warned that missiles held by Syria and Hezbollah posed a serious threat to Israel.

Close call with rocket

A rocket launched from the Gaza Strip hit an Israeli home but failed to explode.

The Kassam rocket, fired by Hamas terrorists, reached a kibbutz in the western Negev Desert on Wednesday morning, landing in a family's bedroom.

The homeowner and three of her children were in the room but escaped unscathed as the homemade rocket's warhead apparently was damaged while penetrating the roof.

Senator offers hope to Knesset

Sen. Sam Brownback (R-Kan.) addressed the Knesset's Christian Allies Caucus to pledge solidarity with Israel in defending against terrorism.

Brownback urged the relocation of the U.S. Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem and warned about U.S. military aid to Egypt.

WORLD

Group: Boot U.N. diplomat

U.N. Watch called for the removal of a U.N. official the group said has mistreated Israel.

The group, affiliated with the American Jewish Committee, submitted evidence to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights arguing that Jean Ziegler, U.N. special rapporteur on the right to food, has singled out Israel for condemnation on matters beyond his mandate.

Austria pressed on restitution payments

The Claims Conference called on Austria to release \$210 million in payments pledged to Holocaust survivors.

The call came at Wednesday's annual meeting in New York of the Claims Conference's board. In a 2001 agreement, Austria promised the funds to Jewish victims of Nazism, but the payout has been withheld pending the resolution of two outstanding class-action lawsuits against Austria by Holocaust survivors.

The money is intended to compensate former Austrian Jews for lost assets, including real estate, businesses, insurance policies and jobs.

Israelis in New Zealand appeal

Two Israelis convicted of passport fraud in New Zealand appealed their sentences.

Elisha Cara and Uriel Kelman, sentenced by a New Zealand court last week to six months in prison and monetary fines, appealed their sentences Wednesday. New Zealand has alleged that the two are spies for the Mossad, but has offered no evidence to buttress the claim.

Circumcision support cuts across cultures

South African Jews joined Muslims and African tribes in opposing a campaign to outlaw circumcision.

The campaign follows the forced circumcision of a 22-year-old man of Xhosa origin in what is regarded as a traditional rite of passage in his culture. A spokesperson for the campaign, Dean Ferris, described the procedure, in the absence of consent, as "unacceptable and illegal," according to the Weekend Argus newspaper.

Rabbi Ruben Suiza, registrar of the Jewish Ecclesiastical Court, told the paper that "to stop circumcision would be to prevent Jews from practicing their religion."