

IN THE NEWS

Israeli airstrike kills Hamas man in Gaza

Israel killed a Hamas member, but only wounded its real target in an airstrike in the Gaza Strip.

The apparent target of Monday's strike was Mohammed Abu Nsair, a leading activist of the Popular Resistance Committees.

The attack killed 26-year-old Hamas member Ali Al-Shaer.

The missile was fired by an Israeli helicopter into a vehicle in the town of Khan Younis. Earlier, Israeli forces killed two Palestinian terrorists in the Gaza Strip.

American Jews meet Iraqi leader

American Jewish officials met Iraq's defense minister.

Malcolm Hoenlein and James Tisch, executive vice chairman and chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, respectively, met Hazem Shaalan last week, marking what appears to be the first meeting between American Jewish officials and Iraqi leaders, Hoenlein said.

Hoenlein said he and Tisch discussed with Shaalan "the dangers posed by Iran" and were briefed on the state of Iraq.

The meeting came amid the flurry of diplomatic meetings surrounding the opening of the annual U.N. General Assembly.

Egypt miffed over Syria hit?

Egypt's intelligence chief canceled a trip to Israel following the assassination of a senior Hamas terrorist in Syria.

Omar Suleiman was expected in Jerusalem soon for the latest round of consultations on Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank, but canceled the visit Monday without giving an explanation.

Because of Sukkot, the JTA World Report will not be published on Friday, Oct. 1.

WORLD REPORT

PUBLISHED WEEKDAYS BY JTA—THE GLOBAL NEWS SERVICE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE · WWW.JTA.ORG

'Silent revolution' changes life for some Bedouin women in Israel

By DINA KRAFT

KASR ALSSR, Israel (JTA) — A recent day brings welcome news for the small group of young Bedouin women who come to this tin shed in a corner of their windswept desert village every week to study.

"Funding has come through so you will now be able to study for your high school matriculation exams," Hanan Al Sanah announces to the group, made up of women in their early 20s, cloaked in long dark dresses and head coverings and sitting in a circle of chairs on a bare concrete floor.

Their serious faces instantly break into wide smiles.

Most of the women never studied beyond the fifth or sixth grade. Traditional Bedouin society kept women and girls at home and more than half of Israel's female Bedouin are illiterate; this group of women is among the first generation in their society with the potential to move beyond the confines of their villages to study, to work and to find a new sense of self.

"Our confidence has grown. I feel I can now help my son with his studies," said Amneh El-hwashleh, 23, her baby son sitting on her lap. "I have stronger presence now."

Israel's Bedouin population numbers more than 150,000, most of whom live in the Negev.

Becoming more educated helps Bedouin women in many aspects of their daily lives. Not only can they read Arabic and Hebrew newspapers and do math equations, these women can also read the expiration dates on food packages, no longer buying out-of-date products for their families.

A "silent revolution" is rippling through the women of Bedouin society in the Negev Desert. Some are taking a stand against abusive husbands, others are attending colleges and university and many more are bringing home a paycheck for the first time.

"We believe in the women. They have the tools, and are the ones who will be able to help their tribes," said Al Sanah, 24, a model of a new breed of young Bedouin women: university educated, confident and giving back to the community. "One of our students wants to run a nursery school and another wants to head a health project for the village. We see them as those who will bring progress to the villages."

Al Sanah is the community and education project manager for a Bedouin women's empowerment organization called Sidreh. The name was taken from the name of a desert tree believed by the Bedouin to have medicinal powers for women.

The organization is one of several in the Negev Desert supported in part by the New Israel Fund, which supports social justice programs in Israel. Sidreh's goal is to strengthen

the status of Bedouin women through literacy projects, raising women's awareness of their civil rights and issues such as domestic violence and women's health.

Education is the cornerstone to efforts in uplifting Bedouin women, field workers say.

Souad Abo Ajaj, 38, with piercing black eyes and a rust-colored head scarf, remembers weeping when she saw girls setting out for school in the mornings after her father, a school principal, deemed her 10th-grade education more than enough for a girl.

"I was very angry. I had been the top of the

Continued on page 2

**FOCUS
ON
ISSUES**

■ In Israel, some Bedouin women are finding their voices

Continued from page 1

class and I felt like all my efforts were for nothing," said Abo Ajaj, adding, "I felt like my potential had not been fulfilled."

At age 18, two years after dropping out of school, she was married and went on to have 10 children. She says her life changed direction when she started taking women's empowerment courses sponsored by Shatil, a project of the New Israel Fund.

She took every course they offered — starting with a class on first aid followed by courses in women's health and hygiene, financial independence, and domestic violence.

Her husband, who initially approved of her taking courses, later changed his mind.

Once, while several months pregnant, she told him she was going to the doctor for an ultrasound.

In fact, she says, giggling as she retells the story, she was going to a class.

"Before this we did not know our rights. In our culture when a husband beats his wife, she stays quiet and tells no one," said Abo Ajaj, who speaks in a raspy, confident voice.

After taking the domestic violence course, she confronted her husband — who did occasionally beat her, she said — and told him he had to stop.

She now has found work and an income teaching public health to other Bedouin women.

She said she was devastated when her husband recently took on a second wife — a common practice among Bedouin men — and decided she would support herself financially with the knowledge she had

gained from the Shatil courses.

Abo Ajaj's story notwithstanding, Safa Abu Rabia, the director of Bedouin Women's Empowerment courses for Shatil, says the changes they try to make are gradual and are coordinated with Bedouin men.

Importing a Western style of feminism would only backfire, she says. Instead, the goal is to work within the cultural milieu to make changes, not collisions.

She said the effect the courses have on the women is striking.

"They often say, 'Finally someone is listening to me, asking me what I think,'" she said. Abu Rabia, herself the product of a home with a Bedouin father and an Israeli Arab mother who supported her efforts to get an education, said she is moved by the results of the courses.

"I did not think it would move so quickly, it's like a snowball," she says. "I can't keep up with the number of success stories."

Rulla Elathuna, director of the Association of the Promotion of Bedouin Women's Education in the Negev, also a grantee of the New Israel Fund, said that today, more than 150 Bedouin women are enrolled in university, about five times the number in 1995. Many more are studying in colleges in the Negev, she said.

Today, she said, there is more awareness among parents of the importance of educating their daughters, in part because there are numerous organizations laying the groundwork, doing outreach to communities and helping make education for women more socially acceptable.

There is also more organized trans-

portation from Bedouin villages to places of higher education, important for traditional families that do not approve of their daughters traveling alone. Further, there are more government-funded stipends and scholarships for Bedouin women.

"But Bedouin women are still having a difficult time despite the advances. There are many problems," said Elathuna. "For example, women still need to ask for permission to keep studying."

When women are kept at home and forced to drop out of school, marriage and children quickly follow, limiting their immediate opportunities.

Bedouin women have the highest fertility rate in Israel, giving

birth to an average of 5.8 children.

Their status in traditional society is very much connected to how many children they bear and the pressure to have a large number of offspring is even greater for women who are part of polygamous marriages — because these women feel more pressure to prove themselves by having more children, according to Julie Cwikel, founder and director of the Center for Women's Health Studies and Promotion at Ben-Gurion University.

Despite this obstacle, it is often mothers who pave the way for their daughters.

Sana Heger, 51, who takes part in a weaving project for Bedouin women called Lakiya, has worked her way up from weaving to being the woman in charge of dying the wool that is used in making carpets by the women.

She tells a visitor how she spends her salary: on university tuition for her daughters.

Some Bedouin women are attending university and standing up to abusive husbands.

JTA
WORLD
REPORT

Howard E. Friedman
President

Mark J. Joffe
Executive Editor and Publisher

Lisa Hostein
Editor

Michael S. Arnold
Managing Editor

Lenore A. Silverstein
Finance and Administration Director

Paula Simmonds
Marketing and Development Director

JTA WORLD REPORT is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For more information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.
© JTA. Reproduction only with permission.

Syria slams Israel at U.N.

Syria condemned Israel's handling of the Palestinians but did not mention an assassination in Damascus believed to be Israel's doing.

"The Israeli army has become a band of murderers working to wipe out Palestinian civilians," Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa said in a United Nations address Monday.

But the Syrian fell short of mentioning Izzadin Sheik Khalil, a Hamas military

chief killed by a car bomb in Damascus on Sunday.

In a tersely worded statement, the Syrian government had accused Israel of responsibility for the killing but made no threat of retaliation.

The Syrian reticence has led some Palestinians to believe it may have had a hand in Khalil's killing as Damascus tries to duck U.S. scrutiny for its support of terrorist groups

Prayer returns to historic Sarajevo synagogue

By RUTH ELLEN GRUBER

SARAJEVO, Bosnia and Herzegovina (JTA) — Nine years after the Dayton Agreement put an end to the brutal war in Bosnia, burned-out buildings, plaques commemorating the dead and other scars from the devastating, nearly four-year siege still mar Sarajevo's graceful urban landscape.

But there is ample evidence of reconstruction as the city and its people struggle to rebuild and recover. And Sarajevo is still the only major city in Europe where you can find a synagogue, a mosque, and Catholic and Orthodox churches virtually on the same street.

This year on the High Holidays, Sarajevo's 700-member Jewish community marked a milestone in the reconstruction process.

On erev Rosh Hashanah, the 16th-century Old Synagogue, turned into a Jewish museum after World War II, was reconsecrated as a house of worship.

A mezuzah was nailed to the door of the austere stone building, from whose windows the slim minarets of neighboring mosques in Sarajevo's Old Town are clearly visible.

Services were held and the traditional melodies of the Sephardi Jewish liturgy were sung there for the first time in more than 60 years.

"To be honest, all my life I've lived in Sarajevo, and this was the first occasion to have a service in the Sephardic synagogue," said Jakob Finci, the head of the Bosnian Jewish Community.

"This was the first time to have it on the right place on the right way. That means really a lot. Let's hope that it becomes a tradition and not only for the High Holidays but also for some regular Shabbats."

Originally built in 1581, the Old Synagogue was one of 15 that functioned in the city before the Holocaust, when Sarajevo was a major Balkan center of Sephardi culture and the city's 12,000 Jews made up nearly 20 percent of the local population.

Eighty-five percent of Sarajevo's Jews were killed in the Holocaust. In 1965, during ceremonies marking 400 years of Jewish presence in Bosnia, the Old Synagogue, though still owned by the remnant Jewish community, was converted into a city-run Jewish museum.

Jewish communal activities were shift-

ed to an Ashkenazi synagogue, a grand, Moorish-style temple built a century ago, which was converted to include offices and function rooms as well as a sanctuary.

When the Bosnian war broke out in 1992, the Jewish Museum was closed and became a storage place for collections from other museums in the city. It remained closed until this summer, when it was reopened as a museum, under new management that includes Jewish-community as well as city representatives.

Finci said the community now has plans to update and convert it into a facility that will serve as a cultural and educational center for the Jewish and non-Jewish public.

The ground floor will remain a consecrated synagogue where services will be held on special occasions, he said. There will also be an exhibition of ritual objects and Jewish religious traditions.

The two upper floors, consisting of arched stone balconies surrounding the sanctuary area, will house historical exhibits.

Part of the museum will show the richness of pre-Holocaust Jewish life. But Finci said it was especially important that for the first time, there will be a "huge" section on the Holocaust — as well as a section detailing the operation of the Jewish community during the Bosnian war.

During that war, the community's social welfare organization, La Benevolencija, won international renown as a key conduit for nonsectarian humanitarian aid for the entire city.

Working closely with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and other international support groups, it ran a medical service, a soup kitchen, a communications center and other aid operations and also organized convoys to bring refugees out of the besieged city.

Finci said that given the scope and brutality of the ethnic conflict in Bosnia, the Holocaust section of the revamped museum will be particularly important.

More than 250,000 people were killed in the Bosnian war. More than 2 million people were displaced. Mosques, churches and entire urban areas were

destroyed, and massacres included the Serbian slaughter of at least 7,000 Muslims in Srebrenica.

"In Bosnia after Srebrenica, after this genocide, it's not easy to understand — and some people are not willing to understand — that this has happened to other people also," Finci told JTA. The Holocaust took place "a long time ago, and it was even worse than Srebrenica, but naturally, Srebrenica is the peak of their world."

What the community would like to do, he said, "is to draw the line and to put the Holocaust in the right place, to be able to compare the genocide in Bosnia, this in the last war, with some of the effects of the Holocaust."

Besides helping people understand history, he said, it could also help in the slow process of healing wounds that are still very raw.

"In some Jewish institutions they are working now even with the third and fourth generation" after the Holocaust, he said. "In Bosnia and Sarajevo we have still the survivors who really suffered a lot and are not aware of this trauma, this war trauma, this post-war trauma."

There is no resident rabbi now in Sarajevo. But Eliezer Papo, who directs a center for Sephardi studies at Ben-Gurion University in Israel, came back home, as he does at least twice a year, to officiate at the High Holidays.

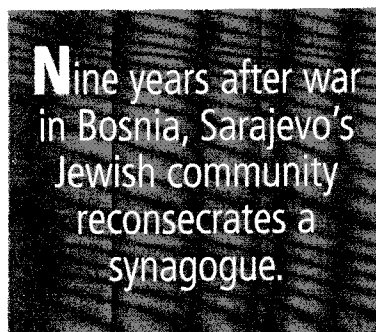
Sephardi Jews, he told JTA, are intensely attached to the liturgical melodies of their native communities.

Papo began learning the local Sarajevo religious melodies as a teenager from elderly members of the Jewish community. He then studied with a rabbi in Belgrade before eventually moving to Israel.

During the service in the Old Synagogue, he chanted liturgical poems, or piyuttim, using the "hypnotic and hypnotizing" melodies particular to the Sarajevo Jewish tradition.

It was, he said, an extraordinary moment, charged with emotion and significance.

"Instead of converting a living Jewish community into a museum, we are converting a museum into a living and functioning synagogue," he said.



NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Settler probed for shooting

An Israeli settler killed a Palestinian taxi driver in the West Bank. The 33-year-old man said he opened fire on the Palestinian's van Monday after it tried to force his car off a highway outside Nablus.

But according to the taxi's occupants, the driver was killed in cold blood, after he pulled over at the sight of the settler's gun.

The settler will likely be charged with manslaughter Tuesday, police said.

CNN producer abducted

A CNN producer who is an Israeli citizen was abducted in the Gaza Strip.

Riad Ali, an Israeli Arab, was kidnapped Monday in Gaza City by four armed men who approached the car in which Ali was traveling.

The Palestinian Authority was reported to be trying to work for Ali's release.

Commandos cry foul

Four Israeli commando officers protested against the policy of demolishing the family homes of Palestinian terrorists.

"Home demolitions harm innocents," read a letter sent by the officers of the elite airborne unit Shaldag to Israel's top brass, which was reported by the Ma'ariv newspaper on Monday.

The move recalled similar protests against Israel's handling of Palestinian terror by other military personnel, except that the Shaldag officers did not suggest that they could become conscientious objectors.

"It is legitimate for people to raise objections as long as they do not threaten to refuse to serve in the military," said Yuval Steinitz, chairman of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.

NORTH AMERICA

House panel to hear anti-Semitism bill

A U.S. House of Representatives' panel is expected to vote on a bill to enhance federal monitoring of international anti-Semitism.

The House International Relations Committee will debate the issue Wednesday, a spokeswoman for Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.) said, and the Global Anti-Semitism Awareness Act is expected to pass the panel and be voted on in the House this fall.

The bill would mandate an annual State Department report on anti-Semitic incidents worldwide, and would create a monitoring office within the department.

Rep. Chris Smith (R-N.J.) who had authored similar legislation, signed on to Lantos' stronger bill last week, and Sen. George Voinovich (R-Ohio), who authored similar legislation that passed the Senate earlier this year, gave vocal support for the stronger provisions as well, Lantos' spokeswoman said.

The State Department opposes the legislation, arguing it already monitors anti-Semitism in other annual reports.

A holiday home run

A Jewish baseball player hit a home run on Yom Kippur eve, then sat out the next day in observance of the holiday.

The Los Angeles Dodgers' Shawn Green hit his blast in his team's victory last Friday night over the San Francisco Giants.

He then sat out the Saturday afternoon game against the Giants, who are fighting the Dodgers for first place in the National League West. Meanwhile, a Jewish player for the Boston Red Sox decided not to sit out his team's games against the New York

Yankees on Yom Kippur.

"I'm not an observant Jew," Gabe Kapler was quoted as saying. "To choose arguably three of the most important days of the season for us to observe when I'm not observant" the rest of the year "just doesn't make sense for me.

But I want to make it clear that I'm proud of who I am."

Tangled up in Jews

Bob Dylan attended Yom Kippur services at a Chabad synagogue in Minnesota. The services were led by Rabbi Moshe Feller, the head of Lubavitch of Minnesota and a longtime acquaintance of Dylan.

The music icon had an aliyah and was engrossed in the prayers, according to a participant who asked not to be identified.

"He was a Jew who came to daven like everyone else," the participant said.

WORLD

Arabs said to want Arafat out

Arab officials spoke about their hope for a successor to Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat in meetings held on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly in New York last week, American Jewish Committee executive director David Harris said.

They also talked about democracy and the status of women, he said.

Arab officials approved of the U.S.-led occupation in Iraq, saying a premature withdrawal would be devastating for the region, he added.

Court denies Belzec petition

A federal court denied a petition aimed at halting construction of a memorial at the Belzec death camp in Poland.

The motion was filed by Rabbi Avi Weiss, president of the New York-based Amcha-The Coalition for Jewish Concerns, to stop the American Jewish Committee from funding construction of a trench that runs through the camp.

Weiss said the trench disturbed Jewish remains at the site. The decision by the U.S. District Court denying Weiss' motion comes a bit late since the memorial already has been built and was opened in June.

It commemorates the estimated 600,000 Jews who were murdered there between 1942 and 1943 in the most brutal Nazi killing camp outside of Auschwitz.

Online course teaches Israel

The Jewish Agency for Israel and the Israeli government are teaming up for an online course to teach Israel's side of the story.

"Stating the Case" will focus on Israel's actions to defend its citizens, and strategies to prevent terrorism and violence in the Middle East and around the world.

The course will begin Nov. 4.

More information is available at <http://www.jacontact.org/courses/is-sc/index.phtml>.

Jewish life focus of Ukraine parley

The ongoing revival of Jewish life in the former Soviet Union is the focus of a Jewish meeting in Kiev, Ukraine.

More than 3,500 people are meeting for this week's conference of the Forum of Jewish Communities of Ukraine.

The forum was organized by the Federation of Jewish Communities of Ukraine, which is the largest Jewish organization in the country, incorporating 160 communities and about 40 rabbis.