

IN THE NEWS

No let-up in crackdown

Israeli forces killed at least six Palestinian gunmen in the Gaza Strip.

Among Monday's dead was the Hamas chief in northern Gaza, which Israeli tanks and troops stormed last week in retaliation for a rocket attack by the Islamic terrorist group.

Operation Days of Repentance has focused on Jabalya, a refugee camp where Israeli forces are cracking down on rocket manufacturers and crews.

U.N. addresses Israeli strike in Gaza

The U.N. Security Council was holding an emergency meeting Monday to discuss Israel's strike in Gaza.

"The Security Council is again going to condemn the one who fights terror and not the terrorists," said a spokeswoman for the Israeli mission to the United Nations.

At the meeting, Israel will explain that the strike is an act of defense against Kassam missile attacks, which killed two children in a Negev town last week. A vote on the matter is expected Tuesday.

Parties reach out to Florida voters

The Democratic Party ran a major outreach effort to Jewish voters in South Florida.

Sens. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.), Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) and a number of congressional representatives joined Harvard law school professor Alan Dershowitz on Sunday in a get-out-the-vote effort among South Florida's Jewish communities.

Two weeks ago in Boca Raton, Fla., Republicans hosted an event with former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and Florida's Republican candidate for Senate, Mel Martinez.

**Because of Simchat Torah,
the JTA World Report
will not be published
on Friday, Oct. 8.**

WORLD REPORT

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

Israelis debate long-term impact of action in Gaza

By LESLIE SUSSER

JERUSALEM (JTA) — As Israeli troops moved deeper into northern Gaza to put a stop to Palestinian rocket fire on the small Negev town of Sderot, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was confident the huge military operation would radically change the situation on the ground.

But his critics on the right and on the left, as well as some independent analysts, say it will prove yet another futile exercise.

Sharon's plan to withdraw from Gaza and the northern West Bank was at the center of the argument.

The prime minister hopes the operation, code-named "Days of Repentance," will set back Kassam rocket production by the radical Hamas terrorist organization, put Sderot out of range by creating a nearly 5-mile-wide "rocket-free zone," and convince Palestinian society as a whole that firing Kassams at Israeli civilians will cost them dearly and is not in their interest.

But his opponents on the left maintain that the large-scale operation will only exacerbate feelings of vengeance on the Palestinian side, and, ultimately, lead to more violence.

The answer to the Kassams, says legislator Zehava Galon of Yahad-Meretz, should be to advance the timetable for withdrawal, and, by leaving Gaza, reduce Palestinian motivation to carry out terror.

The prime minister's right-wing critics, however, argue that the operation will have only a fleeting impact precisely because of Israel's planned pullback.

Says National Religious Party leader Effie Eitam: "The prime minister has already told

the Palestinians they have won.

"You can't fight a war when you say in advance that next year you intend to flee."

Once the IDF withdraws, he asserts, there will be nothing to stop the Palestinians from producing bigger and better rockets and firing them at Israeli civilians even further afield.

Operation Days of Repentance was launched on Sept. 30, after months of almost daily rocket attacks on Sderot. For Sharon, the killing of two young Ethiopian children in rocket fire the day before was the final straw.

He convened the military and told them to do whatever was necessary to stop the shelling. The result was a large, coordinated land and air operation inside northern Gaza, with the IDF overrunning the Beit Hanun area from which most of the Kassams had been launched and entering the northern outskirts of the sprawling Jabalya refugee camp.

Sharon insists that by launching a huge military operation, he is not being sucked into Gaza by the terrorists in a way that might subvert his withdrawal plan.

On the contrary, he says the IDF has gone in to create conditions for an orderly withdrawal of settlers and soldiers, when the time comes. According to military intelligence, the aim of Hamas rocket fire is to create the impression that the militants forced Israel to withdraw, and that when the withdrawal takes place, it will be seen to be occurring under fire. Sharon is determined to prevent them from plausibly making any such claim.

A week after launching the offensive, Sharon spoke of "important achievements." And, to some extent, the results on the battlefield

Continued on page 2

NEWS
ANALYSIS

■ *Discord over how Gaza incursion will play out*

Continued from page 1

seemed to bear him out. The IDF plan was to locate and destroy Kassam launching teams, engage other Hamas militants and drive home to Hamas and the civilian population that there was a price to be paid for targeting Israeli civilians.

Sharon also wanted to send another message: Something on the scale of this operation would be the minimal Israeli response the Palestinians should expect if they continue firing Kassams after the withdrawal.

Within the first week of the operation, some of those goals had been achieved. At least seven Kassam launching teams had been spotted by Israeli helicopters or unmanned drones and destroyed. Over 75 Palestinians, most of them militants, had been killed. And it was clear the civilian population was suffering, too.

But the plan was not a total success. It did not lead to any significant Palestinian civilian pressure on Hamas to stop firing Kassams, as the IDF had hoped it would. On the contrary, as the operation wore on, support for Hamas on the Palestinian street seemed to grow.

Indeed, the more Israel weakened Hamas's military capabilities, Israeli analysts argued, the stronger it seemed to grow as a political organization. That was one of two major dilemmas Israel faced.

The other was how to maintain a rocket-free "security zone," while supposedly limiting its military presence in Gaza, not increasing it. On this issue, Deputy Defense Minister Ze'ev Boim explained that

the idea was to keep the Kassam launchers out of range, but that did not necessarily require a permanent Israeli presence in a security zone. The concept was more dynamic, with troops moving in and out of the 5-mile swath as needed.

However, some analysts argue that the growing political strength of Hamas, precisely because of the blows it is taking, shows just how counterproductive the Israeli operation is.

They say Hamas will do all it can to continue to fire Kassams even as Operation Days of Repentance continues, in the hope that Israel will eventually be forced to withdraw by international or domestic pressure. Then Hamas will claim victory, in a forerunner to the claims it will make when Israel withdraws from all of Gaza next year.

Military analysts like Ha'aretz's Ze'ev Schiff are not convinced that the military operation is reducing Hamas's military capacity in any significant way.

Schiff maintains that Hamas has many rocket-producing workshops in other parts of Gaza, well outside the limits of the pres-

ent operation.

"If the entire infrastructure isn't destroyed," he writes, "it's only a matter of time before Hamas increases the range of the Kassam rockets and is able to fire them from deeper inside the Gaza Strip."

Sharon's deeper strategic response is that once Israel withdraws from Gaza altogether, it will be able to create a deterrent balance, similar to the one that exists today between Israel and the Hezbollah militia in Lebanon.

By withdrawing from Gaza and ending the occupation there, Israel will regain the moral high ground. If Hamas still continues to fire rockets at Israeli civilians, Israel will be able to respond even more powerfully than it has, with the support of most of the international community.

In Sharon's view, Israel's withdrawing might enable Hamas to increase its military capabilities, but it should reduce its motivation to attack. And if it doesn't, Israel's hands won't be tied.

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

Some say hitting Hamas only strengthens the group politically.

Anti-Semitism charges in Czech choir

By DINAH A. SPRITZER

PRAGUE (JTA) — Charges that the leader of Prague's philharmonic choir pursued a vendetta against a tenor with Jewish roots who objected to singing in a Mass are rocking the city's musical world.

According to minutes from an audio recording of a choir meeting held earlier this year, Petr Danek, the choir's leader, complained in front of other choir members that Michal Forst "addresses individual Jewish villages and conductors during concerts. He acts sociopathic."

At another point during the gathering, according to the minutes, Danek expressed concern about possible legal repercussions should Forst assert he was being punished for refusing to sing a Mass.

"One of my lawyers has warned me that the laws will favor crazy minorities against majorities," Danek said. "We should be aware of this."

In August, the recently formed Czech

Anti-Defamation Association sent a petition to Culture Minister Pavel Dostal requesting that he look into Danek's statements, which the group said created "an unfriendly atmosphere towards the employee of the Jewish religion."

The petition was released to the media last month and signed by Karol Sidon, chief rabbi of the Czech Republic.

Forst further alleges that fellow choir member Zdenek Kazdy assaulted him in August, kicking him in the back and saying, "You Jewish swine, you bastard, we are going to get you out of here."

The Anti-Defamation Association complained that the attack went unpunished by Danek. For his part, Kazdy has denied the incident.

A spokeswoman for the Culture Ministry said Dostal told the association in August that if it believes a criminal act was committed by any member of the choir it should contact the police, as the ministry does not have authority to investigate the charges. ■

JTA WORLD REPORT

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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.
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Jewish students fight Palestinian forum

By RACHEL POMERANCE

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Israeli-Palestinian issue is intensifying the fall-semester buzz at Duke University this year.

In advance of the Fourth Annual Conference of the Palestine Solidarity Movement, chatter on the limits of free speech and the contours of the Israel-Palestinian conflict have filled the pages of the campus newspaper.

Divisions over the Oct. 15-17 conference represent the latest battle between pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian campus activists to take place during the four years of the Palestinian intifada.

The conference, sponsored by the local pro-Palestinian group at the North Carolina-based university, also has some Jewish students and alumni wondering if Duke will lose the momentum it has gained in recent years as a hospitable place for Jewish students.

Conference organizers are calling on universities to drop their investments in Israeli companies, work to “end the Israeli occupation” and accelerate the “right of return” for Palestinian refugees.

As it has in previous years, the conference has prompted outrage — an online petition asking Duke’s president to ban the event has garnered more than 66,000 signatures — and less confrontational responses from mainstream Jewish groups.

Like other universities that have hosted the conference, which in the past has drawn some 150 activists across North America, Duke is permitting the event on the grounds of free speech but reiterating its policy against divesting from Israel.

“We believe the best antidote to speech that others find disagreeable is more speech, not less,” stated Duke’s senior vice president, John Burness. “We are encouraged, therefore, that the Freeman Center for Jewish Life at Duke is proposing to provide opportunities for others to express differing viewpoints on the Israeli-Palestinian question.”

Indeed, Duke’s Hillel affiliate, the Freeman Center, hasn’t tried to prevent the conference; instead, Jewish students have crafted a response centered on what they believe is a broad-based consensus: condemning terrorism.

From Shabbat teach-ins and lectures to a major rally/rock concert benefitting terror victims, the effort to counter the conference

marks a jumping-off point for increased dialogue on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that is anchored in opposing terrorism.

“We may not know all the issues, and we may have complex political ideas or not, but we understand terrorism is not good,” said Jonathan Gerstl, executive director of the Freeman Center. “I think we’re really looking at this as a uniting” campaign for the campus.

Indeed, in an open letter published in the campus newspaper last month, the Joint Israel Initiative, a coalition of student groups formed to combat the conference, asked conference organizers to condemn the murder of innocent civilians, support a two-state solution and engage in respectful dialogue.

But the Palestine Solidarity Movement and Hiwar, the campus pro-Palestinian group hosting the conference, refused to do so.

Rann Bar-on, a local spokesman for the solidarity movement and a Duke graduate student, said the group only supports non-violent action, but “would not sign the statement because it violates the philosophy of the organization, which will not condemn any Palestinian action,” Duke’s campus newspaper, *The Chronicle*, reported.

“The Jewish people have the right to exist in some state,” but the movement cannot dictate its borders or creation, Bar-on told the Duke newspaper.

Bar-on did not reply to a JTA e-mail seeking comment about the group’s agenda.

The group’s Web site, however, indicates there will be workshops on building a Palestinian presence on campus, promoting divestment and discussing the “anatomy of the organized Zionist community in the United States.”

Meanwhile, the anti-terrorism card pushed by pro-Israel students has won the support of key groups on campus.

Duke’s council of residential halls, the student government and the student union have agreed to sponsor the Oct. 14 “Students Against Terror” concert, featuring the band Sister Hazel, with donations aiding terror victims in the United States, Israel, Sudan and Russia, said Mollie Lury,

who heads the Joint Israel Initiative.

The anti-conference effort, which includes the weekend teach-in, featuring former Knesset speaker Avraham Burg, along with yearlong educational programming, will cost up to \$125,000, he said.

Funding has come from Duke alumni and student groups along with local federations and foundations. To date, Hillel has raised \$65,000 for the program, with the biggest donation — a \$10,000 check — coming from Hadassah: The Women’s Zionist Organization of America.

According to Lury, of the Joint Israel Initiative, previously unaffiliated Jews have now become involved in supporting Israel.

Still, she says, Jewish students are feeling anxious about potential rhetoric at the upcoming conference.

Meanwhile, some worry whether Duke’s hosting of the pro-Palestinian conference will tarnish the university’s reputation in Jewish eyes.

“Jewish Duke alumni are very, very, very concerned that all the advances that have been made at Duke in the past couple of decades will end up being for naught,” said Duke alumnus Steven Goodman, a Washington-based educational consultant for prospective college students.

In recent years, Duke has stepped up efforts to recruit Jewish students, who make up between 15 percent and 25 percent of the student body, Goodman said. But the school’s relationship with the Jewish community is “much more precarious” than schools like Tufts or the University of Pennsylvania, whose deep, generational ties to the Jewish community could withstand a blip on their record.

Duke could be perceived as “indifferent or hostile to the Jewish community,” which could drive away prospective Jewish students, said Goodman, who penned editorials in Jewish newspapers urging Duke not to host the conference.

Gerstl disagrees. “I think the university has worked very well with the Jewish students” by meeting with students and local Jewish federation leaders.

“The university knows it makes decisions that aren’t always popular,” he said. ■

At Duke, campus heats up in advance of the Palestine Solidarity Movement conference.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Libya eyes Israel ties

Muammar Gadhafi's son met Israeli diplomats as part of efforts to normalize relations between Libya and the Jewish state.

Saif Al-Islam Gadhafi held private talks with the Israeli delegation at an interparliamentary convention in Geneva last week, the Yediot Achronot newspaper first reported Monday.

According to the daily, this was the latest round of contacts the Libyan leader's heir apparent has initiated with Israel in hope of paving the way to normalization.

Libya has already won some diplomatic admiration by offering Jewish emigres who resettled in Israel the opportunity to return for visits.

Iraqi who visited Israel in trouble

An Iraqi court issued an arrest warrant for a politician who visited Israel. Mithal Al-Alusi had already been thrown out of the Iraqi National Congress after he visited Israel for a conference on terrorism last month.

"What madness is this?" Al-Alusi was quoted as telling The Associated Press on Monday. "They want to put me in prison with terrorists."

Tehran-Galilee axis?

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon accused Israel's Islamic Movement of serving as a front for Iran.

"Iran is a terrorist-sponsor state that operates among Israeli Arabs through the Islamic Movement," Sharon told soldiers gathered at his sukkah on Monday.

"Most Israeli Arabs want to live a life of peace and be an integral part of Israeli society, but there is a small minority that is growing, and its primary handler is Iran."

The Islamic Movement, the leading spiritual representative of around 1.2 million Israeli Arabs, rejected the charge and demanded a retraction from the prime minister.

WORLD

UNRWA riles Israel

The UNRWA chief said Hamas members are on the aid agency's payroll.

"Oh, I am sure that there are Hamas members on the UNRWA payroll and I don't see that as a crime. Hamas as a political organization does not mean that every member is a militant and we do not do political vetting and exclude people from one persuasion as against another," Peter Hansen, the commissioner general of UNRWA, the U.N. agency dealing with refugees, told CBC television in an interview broadcast Monday.

Israel has long accused Palestinian terrorists of using UNRWA facilities and vehicles for their operations, most recently during fighting in the northern Gaza Strip last week.

Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, Dan Gillerman, told Army Radio on Sunday he would lodge a complaint against Hansen.

Serbia to protect Holocaust sites

Serbia agreed to protect its Holocaust memorials.

The agreement came last week in an accord signed between the Balkan nation and the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad.

The accord includes agreement by both countries to preserve the cultural heritage of ethnic and religious groups in both countries and to prevent discrimination.

Fifteen such agreements have been concluded by the commission since 2001.

Christians march for Jews

Thousands of Christians marched in Jerusalem. Waving banners with signs such as "We love Israel" and singing Hebrew songs, 4,000 pilgrims took part in the 25th Feast of the Tabernacles parade in the capital of the Jewish state Monday.

Another 6,000 Israelis, including representatives of El Al, the Postal Service and even the national arms manufacturer Rafael, also took part in the march that snaked through western Jerusalem, shutting down traffic for several hours.

The annual event is organized by the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem.

Argentine legislator gets no punishment

A city legislator in Buenos Aires received no punishment for an anti-Semitic comment she made about a staff member.

Last Friday, city legislators voted not to punish Mirta Onega, who in May called a staff member a "shitty Jew."

The comments were taped by a hidden video camera. A special internal commission investigated and proposed to suspend her for 180 days, but the lawmakers rejected the recommendation.

NORTH AMERICA

African-Americans to meet African-Israelis

An American Jewish philanthropist wants to bring Israeli law students of Ethiopian descent on a goodwill mission to the United States.

"We want to show the Americans what opportunities Israel gives to Ethiopians who want to be lawyers," Joey Low told Ha'aretz this week.

Low called on Ethiopian students with good English skills and a commitment to Israel to apply for the two-week visits to U.S. campuses that he plans to fund in January.

Montrealers rally for free speech

Demonstrators in Montreal will protest a college's decision not to allow Ehud Barak to speak.

The community is holding a free-speech rally Tuesday to protest the decision by officials at Concordia University, who said security could not be assured for a speech by the former Israeli prime minister.

In 2002, pro-Palestinian students rioted at Concordia, leading to the cancellation of a speech by another former Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu.

Bone marrow drives in the sukkah

Hillels at 10 college campuses are holding bone marrow drives this month.

The drives are part of a partnership between Hillel and the Gift of Life Bone Marrow Registry to increase the number of potential donors and raise awareness about bone-marrow transplants.

The drives at Purchase College in upstate New York and at two campuses of Florida Atlantic University will be held in sukkahs.

You're fired — twice

A contestant on TV's "The Apprentice" lost her real job for comments seen as anti-Semitic. In her final episode the show last week, Jennifer Crisafulli got into an argument with two customers at a restaurant she was managing for the show, which puts contestants into real-life business situations as they vie for a job with Donald Trump. Crisafulli later referred to the customers as "those two old Jewish fat ladies."

She was later fired from her job at Douglas Elliman, the Manhattan real estate firm.

Crisafulli noted after the show that she has Jewish relatives and said these comments were edited out.