

IN THE NEWS

U.S. vetoes Gaza Strip resolution

The United States vetoed a U.N. Security Council resolution calling on Israel to halt its military operation in the Gaza Strip.

Eleven countries backed the resolution Tuesday in the Security Council, with Germany, Britain and Romania abstaining.

In explaining the U.S. veto, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, John Danforth, said the resolution "does not mention even one of the 450 Kassam rocket attacks launched against Israel over the past two years" nor does it acknowledge two Israeli children killed by one of those attacks last week.

Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, Dan Gillerman, said he was satisfied with the U.S. veto, but added that the resolution should never have been presented.

Israel kills 2 terrorists in Gaza

An Israeli airstrike killed two Islamic Jihad fugitives.

The terrorists were killed in their car as it drove through Gaza City on Tuesday night.

Israeli security sources said one of the dead was Islamic Jihad's chief military planner in the Gaza Strip.

Army backtracks on U.N. rocket claim

The Israeli army removed videos from its Web sites that it had said showed a U.N. ambulance being used to transport a Palestinian rocket.

Army officials said its initial claims are inconclusive and therefore it was decided to restudy the videotape, yet it stressed that UNRWA ambulances have been used in the past by Palestinian terrorists, the Jerusalem Post reported.

On Monday, the U.N.'s secretary-general, Kofi Annan, agreed to investigate the Israeli allegations.

The video is still available on the Web site of Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

WORLD REPORT

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Charges against U.N. agency highlight complex relationship

By MICHAEL J. JORDAN

NEW YORK (JTA) — The battle between Israel and the United Nations agency that aids Palestinians intensified on several fronts this week.

First, Israel charged that Palestinians in Gaza used a U.N. ambulance to transport a rocket.

Then the U.N.'s top refugee official admitted that some of his staff are Hamas members.

A day later, the Israel Defense Forces chief of operations, Yisrael Ziv, said that Israel had arrested 13 Palestinians employed by the United Nations on suspicion of terrorism links.

Together, the developments provided more fodder to those who accuse UNRWA, the U.N. Relief and Works Agency, of turning a blind eye to terrorism in its midst.

And they highlighted the complicated — and contentious — relationship that exists between Israel and the U.N. agency.

Even as Israel climbed down a bit Tuesday, saying it needed to further investigate whether the video image on which the latest charge was based actually depicted a rocket, critics of the United Nations asserted that the developments show the agency's tolerance of terrorist activity within its refugee camps is tantamount to complicity.

UNRWA — which provides humanitarian assistance, education services and health care to 4.1 million Palestinians, 1.3 million of whom live in 59 UNRWA refugee camps in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan — has long rejected the charge.

The agency's defenders respond that some of Israel's supporters are campaigning to discredit an institution that promotes the rights

of Palestinian refugees.

Where Israel accuses, and sometimes arrests, UNRWA staffers for terrorist activities or abuse of U.N. facilities, the agency says that at most, such instances represent the work of a few bad apples.

To some U.N. watchers, the problem is systemic.

"There may be individuals who do things, but it happens within a context that is not un-supportive of terrorist activities," says Harris O. Schoenberg, a longtime nongovernmental activist at the United Nations and the author of "Combating Terrorism: The Role of the U.N."

"The U.N. is basically tilted to the Arab side, and within that context, UNRWA is one of the worst examples."

On Monday, Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, Dan Gillerman, delivered to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan aerial footage purported to show a Palestinian loading a Kassam rocket into the back of a van clearly marked "U.N."

Gillerman called for a full U.N. investigation and the firing of UNRWA's commissioner-general, Peter Hansen.

After viewing the footage, the Gaza based Hansen — a native of Denmark — said the long, thin item carried by a man in the video was not a weapon but a folded up, portable stretcher.

Nevertheless, he authorized a four-member U.N. team that was already headed to the region Tuesday to investigate the ambulance incident as well.

Annan also agreed to investigate. But in a news conference Monday, his spokesman said the U.N. chief "has no reason whatever to doubt Hansen's conclusions," adding that "Hansen has warned that such serious al-

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**BEHIND
THE
HEADLINES**

■ Israel's complicated relationship with the U.N. agency aiding Palestinians

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legations can endanger the safety of U.N. humanitarian workers in the region.”

The IDF on Tuesday pulled the video from its Web site for further evaluation and released a one-line statement: “The IDF is reviewing the analysis of the footage in which UNRWA vehicles are seen involved in suspicious activity in the combat zone in Gaza.”

On Monday afternoon, though, an Israeli U.N. official insisted to JTA, “The army checked it. We checked it. We didn’t just show it without checking it. It shows them loading a weapon. We’re calling for a serious investigation.”

An UNRWA official described the incident to JTA as the latest in a series of “baseless” charges against the agency.

Earlier this year, Israel accused UNRWA of transporting injured terrorists in a U.N. ambulance; UNRWA responded that its driver was forced to do it at gunpoint.

“We’ve had good working relations with the government of Israel throughout the years, though there have been times when the relationship is strained, as it is now,” says Maher Nasser, UNRWA’s representative in New York.

“There is a level of frustration, where we expect the Israeli government to come to us if they have a video allegedly showing misuse of UNRWA vehicles, instead of going to the media and misinterpreting it in a way that’s harmful to our operation and our reputation.”

Meanwhile, in an interview Sunday with the Canadian broadcaster CBC, Hansen said: “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.”

The United States, European Union and Canada have branded Hamas, an organization bent on Israel’s destruction, a terrorist group.

Canada — which contributes \$10 million a year to UNRWA — said it wanted “clarification” of Hansen’s comments.

Washington also reacted strongly, but it was unclear what action, if any, it might take.

The United States is UNRWA’s largest donor, contributing 30 percent of its \$350 million annual budget.

According to Section 301(c) of the 1961 Foreign Assistance Act, UNRWA must “take all possible measures to assure that no part of the United States contribution shall be used to furnish assistance to any refugee who is receiving military training as a member of the so-called Palestine Liberation Army or any other guerrilla type organization or who has engaged in any act of terrorism.”

In an e-mail to JTA, UNRWA’s Nasser sought to clarify his boss’ position.

“The interview that Mr. Hansen gave to CBC was one of many he had given that day and the reference in the interview to Hamas members being on UNRWA’s payroll refers to Hamas sympathizers not ‘members,’” Nasser wrote.

“The statement should not be taken out of context, and in the follow-up paragraphs Mr. Hansen stressed that while one cannot know what is in the heart and mind of staff, we do care about their behavior and actions, which we expect to be of the highest standards expected of U.N. staff members.”

Hansen has often drawn Israeli ire for perceived one-sided denunciations of Israeli actions, with no mention of terrorist activities.

Most famously, he suggested that hundreds of Palestinians were killed in Israel’s April 2002 assault on the Jenin refugee camp. A U.N. probe later concluded that several dozen Palestinians, mostly militants, were killed.

His latest comments about Hamas are

“typical of Hansen, but I’ve heard worse,” says a Toronto researcher and longtime analyst of Canadian U.N. policy who asked not to be identified.

UNRWA’s failure to do “political vetting” is one of many structural and procedural flaws that some observers say has stacked the deck against Israel.

The agency began its work in 1950, shortly after Israel’s creation.

According to the UNRWA Web site, “Palestine refugees are persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine between June 1946 and May 1948, who

lost both their homes and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict.

“UNRWA’s definition of a refugee also covers the descendants of persons who became refugees in 1948.”

The number of UNRWA registered refugees has soared from 914,000 in 1950 to 4.1 million in 2002, rising yearly at a “natural population growth” of 3.5 percent.

Palestinian refugees are unique within the U.N. system in that they have their own U.N. agency, while the rest of the world’s refugees are tended to by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees.

Pro-Israel critics charge that while the high commissioner focuses on resettlement of refugees, UNRWA awaits a political resolution to the Middle East conflict.

Thus, they charge, it nurtures the dream of a full “right of return,” which in turn helps perpetuate the conflict further.

And while some voices in Israel and within North American Jewry have long called for UNRWA’s ouster from the territories, or for Washington to cut off funding, Israeli leadership has consistently expressed support for the agency’s work, most recently in a U.N. General Assembly resolution last December.

The reasons are simple, observers say: First, Israel would then have to take over responsibility for welfare of the refugees; and second, it doesn’t want its conflict with Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian Authority and assorted terrorist groups to be seen as a war on all Palestinians. Denying them international assistance would lead to a major public-relations hit.

So Israel pushes to reform the agency, not abolish it.

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Evangelical Christians rally in Israel

By DINA KRAFT

JERUSALEM (JTA) — “I Stand by Israel” reads Christel Diekmann’s T-shirt as Star of David earrings dangle above her shoulders.

On her 34th pilgrimage to Israel, she is one of more than 4,000 evangelical Christians from across the globe who have gathered here to pledge their unconditional support for the Jewish state.

“If I believe in the Bible I have to help Israel,” said Diekmann, 51, who runs a Jewish-Christian outreach organization in Oberursel, Germany.

Dismissing any skepticism about the unflinching support for Israel offered by the evangelists, American television evangelist Pat Robertson, the highest profile of the pilgrims, who has spoken out vehemently against Palestinian statehood and militant Islam, said, “I’m one of the best friends you’ve ever had.”

As other Christian groups consider divestment campaigns against Israel and anti-Israel sentiment across the world grows, many here welcomed the visiting Christians.

The Christians have gathered in Israel this week to celebrate the Sukkot holiday in what they call their annual Feast of the Tabernacles, a festival they say was tradi-

tionally a time for non-Jews to celebrate along with Jews during the period of the ancient Temples. The festival is organized by the International Christian Embassy, whose officials dub the event the largest solidarity mission to Israel this year.

“We found that Israel has not run out of adversaries and she needs friends,” said David Parsons, spokesman for the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem.

“When we read our Bibles, we see it has wonderful things to say about Judaism and Israel,” he said.

“It’s a biblical basis of support and we find that from many different backgrounds” the thing the pilgrims have in common “is the Bible and a God-given love for Israel.”

The Christian Embassy was founded 25 years ago, Parsons said, “to minister comfort to the Jewish people” and to show Jews that there are those who are dismayed by the history of Christian anti-Semitism and wanted to stand with Israel and its right to exist.

According to Parsons, with its representatives in 80 countries, the International Christian Embassy is probably the world’s largest Christian Zionist organization.

The organization said it did not believe in the End of Days scenario that Jews are to be gathered back to Israel for their eventual destruction after Armageddon.

“We don’t think they are being gathered back to be annihilated. We believe God will protect this nation no matter what comes,” Parsons said.

At a news conference, Robertson evaded the question of whether in the long run Jews and Christians were at odds theologically.

“I don’t know,” he told reporters. “It’s in God’s hands.” Part of God’s plan, he said, is for the ingathering of Jews back to Israel. He and other evangelists see God’s hand in the creation of Israel. And he said he sees Arabs’ attempts to foil the state part of “Satan’s plan.”

Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein is probably the Jewish figure most intensely linked with Christian evangelists. As the founder of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, he has been working with them for almost 30 years.

He said in that time he has seen more Christian support for Israel and increasingly positive Jewish attitudes toward such Christians.

“I’ve seen a change in Jewish attitudes, people are much more positive and open and saying, ‘Thank you.’”

“They are aware that these people are our friends,” he said, adding that having Christian friends is a critical asset for Israel and the fight against world anti-Semitism. ■

Native Americans visit Jewish state

By DINA KRAFT

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Native Americans in the Israeli president’s sukkah were in full regalia — eagle feathers, turquoise and red beads, leather moccasins. Beating on drums, they chanted honor songs blessing the people of the Jewish state.

By coming to Israel this week after a brief trip to Poland that included a visit to Auschwitz, a group from the First Nations Peoples, as they call themselves, sought to connect with the Jewish people, whom they see as sharing a similar history to their own.

“We feel like we have a connection with them in terms of what we have lost,” said Natalie Proctor, of Maryland’s Conoy people, whose Conoy name is “Standing on the Rock.”

“We have a similar history.”

Only about 2,000 members of the Conoy remain, said Proctor, 45. In the past they have wandered between Pennsylvania, New York and Maryland and were known historically as “A People Looking for a Home.”

Many of the Conoy were wiped out by an outbreak of smallpox that coincided with the arrival of European settlers in America.

Proctor, who works educating the public about the First Na-

tions People, garnered the attention of Israelis young and old during Sukkot festivities at President Moshe Katsav’s official residence.

Her dark hair woven into two braids and long, beaded earrings dangling, she laughed when 16-year-old Doron Paris asked her, “How can I become an Indian? It looks cool.”

Proctor recently played the role of Pocahontas’ mother in a movie starring popular Irish actor Colin Farrell.

Lynda Price, grand chief of the Carrier-Sekani Nations of British Columbia, Canada, is the driving force behind this visit by 16 representatives of First Nations Peoples, who came from as far afield as Hawaii, Arizona and Costa Rica.

Price began bringing delegations here in 1998.

“I identified with the” Jewish “people because of the Holocaust, because of their suffering,” she said. She spoke of the painful assimilation policy of the Canadian government, which forced First Nations children to attend boarding schools where, she said, the government worked to stamp out their culture.

She said that by coming to Israel she and the others want to project their kinship with the Jewish state. “We wanted to send a message that Israel is not alone, not everybody hates them,” she said. ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Israel arrests U.N. employees

Israel arrested 13 United Nations employees who are suspected of participating in terrorism against the Jewish state.

This week's arrests come amid Israeli allegations that UNRWA, the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, aided Palestinian terrorism in the Gaza Strip.

Girl among Palestinian dead

Israeli forces killed a Palestinian girl and three gunmen in the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

Soldiers fired on the teenage girl Tuesday as she approached a checkpoint in the southern Gaza Strip, suspecting a bag she was carrying contained a bomb.

The soldiers fired warning shots before shooting at her. Residents of the girl's hometown of Rafah said she was on her way to school.

In Gaza's Jabalya refugee camp, where Israeli troops and tanks have been operating for a week, an Al-Aksa Brigade gunman was shot dead. Another armed Palestinian was killed after he opened fire on Israeli cars near the Gush Katif settlement bloc.

In the West Bank, Israeli troops killed an alleged Hamas fugitive in a clash north of Hebron.

3 killed in West Bank clash

An undercover Israeli policeman and two Palestinians were killed in a West Bank clash.

Initial findings were that the border police sergeant was accidentally shot by comrades while they were storming a terrorist hideout in Ramallah disguised as Arabs on Monday.

Two Fatah fugitives died in the shootout and another five Palestinians were arrested. Another wanted man, an apparent Hamas member, fled the scene with gunshot wounds.

Jewish Agency to help Sderot

The Jewish Agency for Israel promised to help the southern Israeli town of Sderot.

The Jewish Agency's chairman, Sallai Meridor, made the vow to help build the city's first emergency first aid facility in a visit Monday to Sderot, which has frequently been a victim of Palestinian rocket attacks.

Currently, it takes almost an hour to reach the closest hospital, located in Beersheba.

NORTH AMERICA

Koch: Split the ticket

Former New York Mayor Ed Koch is coaching Jewish voters to support President Bush, but to stick with Democratic congressional candidates.

Speaking to Jewish voters at a forum in suburban Philadelphia on Monday, Koch said Jews should back the White House for its foreign policy, but vote for Democrats in Congress because they have more oversight over domestic issues.

Koch, a Democrat, said if half of the Jewish community does not support Bush, they will seem ungrateful for his administration's support for Israel and the U.S.-led war on terrorism.

Also speaking at the forum, Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.) accused Bush of hurting Israel's negotiating ability by endorsing the "road map" for Middle East peace, which views Jerusalem as a city to be shared between Israel and the Palestinians.

Nadler also accused Bush of withholding money from Israel to force changes in the route of the West Bank security barrier.

Groups: Stop aiding UNRWA

Jewish groups are calling on the United States and Canada to suspend payments to UNRWA until a probe into the U.N. agency's alleged links to Palestinian terrorism is completed.

The calls by the Simon Wiesenthal Center regarding both countries, and by B'nai Brith Canada regarding Canada, came after the head of UNRWA, Peter Hansen, admitted that members of Hamas are working for UNRWA, the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees.

Emigre faces deportation

A Jewish immigrant to the United States from the former Soviet Union may be deported on a technicality.

Vladimir Karsaev is currently in a U.S. jail, awaiting deportation by the Department of Homeland Security because his papers for asylum were not filed after he came to the United States from Belarus, a problem he blames on a quack lawyer, the Intermountain Jewish News reported.

Homeland Security officials quoted by the paper confirmed that Karsaev is being deported.

Karsaev is hoping that ongoing anti-Semitism in Belarus will help his cause if he is deported and has to reapply for asylum.

Court refuses Ten Commandments case

The U.S. Supreme Court refused a case brought by an Alabama judge contesting his removal from office for refusing to take down a Ten Commandments monument.

Monday's decision came in response to Roy Moore, a former chief justice of Alabama's Supreme Court, who had refused to remove the monument from the state judicial building.

In response to the decision, Moore said, "God is sovereign and shall remain so despite what the Supreme Court and the federal district courts of this land say."

WORLD

Jewish candidates elected in Brazil

Jewish candidates were elected to city councils in two cities in Brazil. Isaac Ainhorn was elected a councilman in the city of Porto Alegre in Sunday's vote, while Teresa Bergher and Patricia Filler Amorim Sihman will be on the council in Rio De Janeiro.

But in Sao Paulo, where half of Brazil's 120,000 Jews live, none of nine Jewish candidates was elected.

Torture center to become museum

A center used to torture people during the Argentine dictatorship is being turned into a museum.

The center in Buenos Aires was used between 1976 and 1983 to torture 700 people, most of whom became "missing."

The Argentine dictatorship government lasted from 1976 to 1983. During that period, an estimated 30,000 people went missing or were abducted, imprisoned and murdered.

It is estimated that more than 3,000 Jews were murdered.

"Although they were not captured based on their conditions of being Jews, they certainly received different treatment," local Rabbi Daniel Goldman told JTA recently.

Plane diverted to Cyprus

A Lufthansa plane traveling from Frankfurt to Israel was diverted to Cyprus following warnings that there were bombs on board.

After the plane landed in Cyprus on Tuesday, it was searched, and nothing suspicious was discovered.

There were 331 passengers on the flight, some Israeli and some German.