

IN THE NEWS

Two Palestinians die in Gaza Strip fighting

Israeli troops killed two Palestinians in a Gaza Strip clash.

Soldiers patrolling the Gaza-Egypt border fired on a squad of Islamic Jihad gunmen who approached their outpost Wednesday, killing one terrorist.

Witnesses in the nearby town of Rafah said a Palestinian passerby also was slain by Israeli fire.

Israeli officials said the second fatality is under investigation.

Presbyterians blasted for Hezbollah meeting

Jewish groups blasted a Presbyterian Church delegation for meeting with Hezbollah leaders.

The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, the umbrella group of U.S. Jewry, called the meeting "irresponsible."

During the meeting, which was broadcast this week on the Al Manar satellite network, one church elder was shown praising Hezbollah, which the U.S. State Department includes on its list of terrorist groups.

Jewish officials recently met with Presbyterian leaders after the church called in July for divestment from companies that do business with Israel.

Iran improves missile tipping nuclear stakes

Iran said it had improved a missile capable of reaching Israel.

Iranian officials said Wednesday the country test fired a more accurate version of its Shihab-3 missile, which independent experts believe can carry non-conventional warheads.

The missile's range also has been boosted from 815 miles to 1,250 miles, posing a threat to U.S. bases in the Persian Gulf as well as to Israel.

Western intelligence sources believe that the improved Shihab-3 is in fact a Shihab-4, but that Iran decided to avoid using a new title to duck censure from European mediators trying to open its nuclear facilities to inspection.

WORLD REPORT

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In Presidents Conference, debate continues on Gaza statement

By RACHEL POMERANCE

NEW YORK (JTA) — The effort to produce a statement supporting Israel's planned withdrawal from the Gaza Strip has revealed the political forces roiling the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

President Bush may have praised Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon six months ago for "historic and courageous actions" when he committed to withdraw from Gaza, but the Presidents Conference has kept mum on the issue.

Until now.

In an Oct. 14 meeting, the umbrella group of 52 Jewish organizations resolved to draft a statement, which was publicly released Wednesday.

"At the Conference's meeting, a substantial majority of the member organizations expressed support for the Prime Minister's disengagement plan as approved by the Israeli Cabinet, and an even larger number of member organizations said they could support such a plan when approved by the Knesset," the statement reads.

The rest of the five-paragraph statement explains the reasons and context behind Sharon's planned withdrawal. It reads like a narrative rather than a formal statement, noticeably lacking any formal quote or comment in the name of the conference.

To some conference members, it doesn't go far enough.

"It's a statement of the minutes of the meeting," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League. "It's more of an expression of what hap-

pened, and it lacks declarative" value.

"I believe that the prime minister of the State of Israel deserves a clear, full-hearted endorsement of the Jewish community in his effort to bring peace closer through disengagement," he said.

But, he added, the community should now put the issue to bed and "move on."

Foxman had complained that the Presidents Conference was dragging its feet on the statement since last week's meeting — especially since several frustrated observers said a show of hands at the meeting indicated clear support for withdrawal.

Several members had raised concerns — such as the wisdom of issuing a statement before the Knesset votes on the plan Oct. 26 — but it's unclear to what extent the divisions reflected competing political ideologies within the conference, whose member organizations span the political spectrum.

In any case, the time it took to craft a statement since the decision was taken signals the contentiousness of the issue, some say.

"This is a very divisive issue," said James Tisch, chairman of the Presidents Conference, who said he wrote the statement along with executive vice chairman Malcolm Hoenlein and a few other conference members.

The tone of the statement was meant to diffuse tension, he said.

"My thinking was if we were to report it as just one way or the other, the other side, to the extent that you want to call them a side, would feel vanquished," Tisch said.

While the statement reflects significant

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HEADLINES

■ Debate over Gaza withdrawal statement roils Presidents Conference

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support for withdrawal, "we didn't want to give short shrift to those" against it.

At stake in the debate, some say, is the U.S.-Israel relationship and the role of American Jewry in nurturing those ties.

Mortimer Zuckerman, a past Presidents Conference chairman, called on the group to pass a statement supporting the plan.

Sharon's failure to make good on his withdrawal pledge could wreak havoc on the U.S.-Israel relationship — so American Jewry is obligated to support the effort, Zuckerman said, according to Conference members.

The conference's decision to back the Israeli plan comes only weeks after Foxman began circulating such a statement of his own, saying his efforts to have the umbrella group draft a statement had been stymied.

Foxman froze his initiative once the conference took up the issue, and said he won't resume it.

Discussion at the Oct. 14 meeting followed a briefing by Israel's U.S. ambassador, Daniel Ayalon, who urged the group to back the withdrawal plan.

While some groups said they would rather wait until the Knesset signs off on the deal, others have moved to take matters into their own hands.

"We weren't going to wait for the Presidents Conference," said Hannah Rosenthal, executive director for the Jewish Council for Public Affairs.

Currently in Israel on a leadership mission, the group gave its support for the planned withdrawal to members of

Israel's Foreign Ministry and various party leaders in meetings Wednesday.

"It was critically important to take a stand," Rosenthal told JTA by phone from Israel. The group's federation-affiliated community relations councils had expressed "very broad support" for the issue, she said.

Israeli legislator Shaul Yahalom, of the National Religious Party, wrote to the Presidents Conference, in essence telling them to mind their own business.

"It would seem to me that it is highly inappropriate for foreign Jewish organizations to consider taking sides on a matter that has yet to be approved by the Knesset," Yahalom wrote Oct. 14 to Hoenlein.

Betty Ehrenberg, director of international affairs and communal relations for the Orthodox Union, said her group "would be more comfortable in waiting to see how the Knesset vote turns out."

Neil Goldstein, executive director of the American Jewish Congress, expressed a similar sentiment.

"We support the disengagement, contingent on a definitive decision by the Israeli government," he said.

Others dismissed the Knesset vote as irrelevant.

"When a prime minister represents a policy, it's the policy of Israel," Foxman said.

He added, "Why all of a sudden now we're having this political science debate, it's beyond me."

Others feel that their own understanding of the situation trumps any Knesset vote.

"The mission of the Conference of Presidents is to do what we think

is best for Israel, not necessarily to support any specific policy of any prime minister," said Morton Klein, national president of the Zionist Organization of America.

Klein said there was no consensus or agreement at the umbrella group's meeting. Furthermore, he said, "we should not get involved in a contentious issue while they're still sorting it out in Israel."

Yet Klein said he would oppose Israeli withdrawal from Gaza even if the Knesset supported the move.

Others say Israel has to withdraw to preserve its Jewish character and its democracy.

"Demography is not a question of opinion. It's a question of fact," said Mark Rosenblum, founder and policy director of Americans for Peace Now. ■

'It would seem to me that it is highly inappropriate for foreign Jewish organizations to consider taking sides on a matter that has yet to be approved by the Knesset.'

Shaul Yahalom
National Religious Party

British envoy: Rethink Mideast policy

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Europe and America need to strike a "new deal" that reassesses the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Britain's ambassador to the United States said. David Manning said the new presidential elections should bring about a review of core issues in the relationship, including the "resolution of the debilitating Israel-Palestine dispute, with the impact it has on relations between the Islamic and non-Islamic world."

Discussing the threat of terrorism Wednesday at the Johns Hopkins School

of Advanced International Studies, Manning called the conflict a "pretext that is used, much more widely than by Al-Qaida, to say that basically the Western world operates a double standard and is out of sympathy with the Arab world.

"And if we could get some movement on that particular problem, which is why the British government wants to put it at the top of its list of priorities, I think that would do as much as anything to start moving opinion and moving the problem of Al-Qaida forward." ■



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Outrage over column in Duke paper

By RACHEL POMERANCE

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Fourth Annual Conference of the Palestine Solidarity Movement may have gone off at Duke University without a hitch last weekend — but controversy erupted immediately after its conclusion.

An inflammatory editorial in *The Chronicle*, Duke's campus newspaper, has prompted an outcry by Jewish activists.

"Regardless of your political stance or position on the PSM conference, it is impossible to ignore the unprecedented outpouring of pro-Jewish, pro-Israeli support in defiance of free speech at Duke," columnist Philip Kurian wrote in an Oct. 18 Op-Ed titled "The Jews."

"What Jewish suffering — along with exorbitant Jewish privilege in the United States — amounts to is a stilted, one-dimensional conversation where Jews feel the overwhelming sense of entitlement not to be criticized or offended," he wrote.

"If the Duke administration had buckled under the influential weight of the Jewish establishment by not allowing the PSM conference, we would be suffering from the Orwellian notion of consciousness, where the only ideas that matter are the ones espoused by the powerful."

Kurian also accused Jews of exploiting the "Holocaust industry" for political gain.

Students associated with Duke's Hillel affiliate, the Freeman Center for Jewish Life, planned to call Wednesday for the newspaper's advisory board to hold an internal investigation.

Originally, Jewish students planned to call for the resignation of *The Chronicle's* editor. While some students still think the editor should resign, others fear that such a demand "plays into some of the arguments that Philip made, that we control the media," said Rachael Solomon, student president of the Freeman Center.

Meanwhile, the Anti-Defamation League wrote a letter to the editor, defending Jews' right to free expression and to "fulfill themselves in society without having to endure accusations of privilege."

The Chronicle defended its choice to run the column.

"The *Chronicle* has a very broad free speech policy and the opinions represented on the Op-Ed page by our columnists are exactly that. They are not the opinions of *The Chronicle* or *The Chronicle's* editorial

board," editor Karen Hauptman told JTA. "As such, we decided that it would be inconsistent with our practices and our beliefs to not run the column."

The paper would bar from print articles that call for violence against a group of people, she said.

"Do I believe the column was hate speech?" Hauptman said. "No, I do not."

Hauptman described herself as an "actively practicing Jew" whose Judaism is distinct from her professional life.

The incident comes after heated debate at Duke over whether the university should

host a conference that refuses to condemn the Palestinians' use of terrorism.

But last weekend's conference proceeded without much disruption, except for two incidents later found to be bogus acts perpetrated by pro-Israel activists and under investigation by the university — a bomb threat and a mass e-mail spewing anti-Semitic remarks, designed to look as if it came from a conference organizer.

Several hundred people attended both the Palestinian conference and a host of Freeman center lectures by speakers ranging from Avraham Burg, the dovish former speaker of Israel's Knesset, to hawkish analyst Daniel Pipes.

Some say Kurian's Op-Ed showcases the lingering effects of the Palestinian conference.

"Letters like this demonstrate that the risk of hateful speech and inflammatory speech and anti-Semitic dialogue now have a place at Duke because of President Brodhead's decision to allow the PSM to take place at Duke," said Steven Goodman, a Washington-based alumnus who had written letters to Jewish newspapers urging Duke not to host the conference.

The administration takes a different approach.

John Burness, Duke's senior vice president, attended many of last weekend's events, including the PSM conference, which he said exhibited "no hate speech."

"I would bet at Duke University this week there was more discussion about Israel and Palestine than any other place in

the United States," he told JTA.

The "conference ended up being a catalyst for much broader discussion," he said. "These are bright kids. They can reach their own conclusions."

Duke President Richard Brodhead plans

to meet with Jewish students regarding Kurian's column, Burness said, and suggested that the way to respond to the column is through letters to the editor.

Brodhead did just that in a letter to the editor in *The Chronicle* on Wednesday, comparing the rationale behind Kurian's column to the mind-

set of those who attacked Duke for even holding the PSM conference.

"This is the disindividuating, dehumanizing logic of prejudice. It says, I already know you because I know your type — more truthfully, your stereotype," he wrote.

"The column was headed 'The Jews,' as if Jews were susceptible to group definition, and though its author probably did not mean to, it revived stereotypical images that have played a long-running role in the history of anti-Semitism," he continued.

"The habits of mind that allow people to stereotype Jews are the same ones that allow them to denigrate blacks, gays and other objects of prejudice," Brodhead wrote. "These have no place at a great university."

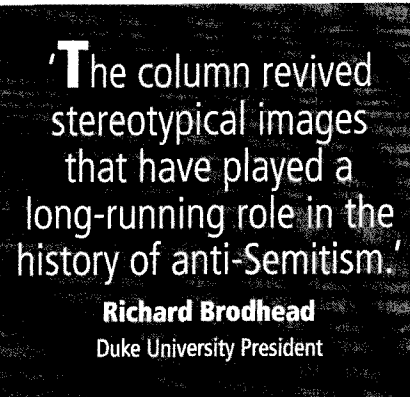
Duke's organized Jewish students had no comment in response to Brodhead's letter, Solomon said. But many Jewish students and alumni still are smarting from Kurian's column.

"I read that and I was just astonished that that appeared in my university's newspaper. It strung together just about every anti-Semitic stereotype imaginable," said Eric Fingerhut, a Duke alumnus and reporter for the *Washington Jewish Week*.

According to Solomon, the article was "hateful. I think it was racist, and I think it was anti-Semitic."

"We haven't even seen any kind of apology, any kind of acknowledgment that this was hurtful or this was offensive," she said. "That's a problem."

The Kurian article can be found online at: <http://www.chronicle.duke.edu/vnews/display.v/ART/2004/10/18/4173b1de57041>



NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

Charges dropped in Montreal arson

Charges were dropped in Montreal against a teenager accused of firebombing a Jewish school. The charges were dropped against Simon Zogheib for lack of evidence. A publication ban imposed on the case prevents the reasons behind the decision from being reported.

Cases still are going forward against other suspects in the April 5 attack on the United Talmud Torah school, which destroyed the school's library.

Harlem jobs program going to Israel

A jobs program from Harlem is coming to Israel.

The STRIVE program and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee are collaborating to help Israel's unemployed.

The program, expected to begin operating in Israel next year, offers a simulated work program to help unemployed workers enter the job force.

MIDDLE EAST

Israelis favor Bush

In polls conducted in 10 countries, only Israelis and Russians said they favored President Bush and his policies.

A majority of respondents in Australia, Canada, Japan, France, Britain, Spain, Korea and Mexico opposed the Bush administration's foreign policy and favored his challenger, Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry, in next month's election.

In the poll, carried out by 10 newspapers and reported Friday in Ha'aretz, Israelis favored Bush 50 percent to 24 percent for Kerry.

Rabbis against refusal

Rabbis affiliated with Israeli kibbutzim opposed calls for religious Israeli soldiers to refuse to evacuate settlements.

"We call on religious Zionist rabbis not to involve the Israel Defense Forces in the dispute on the disengagement plan, despite the opposition to it," the kibbutz rabbis said Tuesday in an open letter to residents of Gush Katif, one of 21 settlements in the Gaza Strip slated for removal next year.

Several leading Israeli rabbis have said recently that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's disengagement plan contravenes Jewish law, raising fears of a mutiny in military ranks.

Female terrorist nabbed

Israeli troops captured a Palestinian woman who allegedly planned to carry out a suicide bombing.

The would-be terrorist, a member of Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, was arrested Wednesday near Bethlehem. The army then removed a curfew placed on the West Bank city while the hunt was under way.

The woman's husband and brother, both Al-Aksa Brigade terrorists, were killed by Israeli forces earlier this year.

Kahanism on the rise?

More than one in four Israelis believes Arabs should be expelled, a survey found.

According to the poll commissioned by Channel Two television and published Wednesday, some 26 percent of Israelis believe the late Rabbi Meir Kahane was right to advocate the expulsion of Israeli Arabs and Palestinians.

A third of respondents said Kach, a Kahane-inspired political party banned for its racist platform, should be reinstated. A separate survey, commissioned by the left-leaning Geshet lobby ahead of the ninth anniversary of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's assassination, found that 33 percent of Israelis fear that another political killing looms.

WORLD

British cleric charged with incitement

A British Muslim cleric was charged with numerous offenses, including incitement to murder Jews.

Abu Hamza Al-Masri, who had been fighting extradition to the United States for separate offenses, now will be tried in the United Kingdom.

The 16-count charge sheet includes 10 charges of soliciting to murder, including several that specify that the Egyptian-born preacher called for followers to kill Jews.

Hamza, who lost his hand and an eye while fighting the Soviet army in Afghanistan, first came to London in 1979 and gained British citizenship by marrying an English woman.

Teen diary like Anne Frank's

There seems to be another Holocaust-era diary similar to Anne Frank's.

The diary and love letters written by Helga Deen, a Jewish 18-year-old, to her Dutch boyfriend recently were donated to a Dutch archive. Archivists in the Dutch city of Tilburg on Tuesday announced the rare discovery.

Deen kept the journal during the final month of her detainment from April-July 1943.

She then was shipped off to a concentration camp in Sobibor, Poland, with her brother, father and mother. All four died there.

Report: British Jews educated

British Jews are better educated, healthier and more likely to be self-employed than any other religious group in the country, according to a new report.

The study, by the National Office for Statistics and based on the results of the 2001 census, showed that 76 percent of U.K. Jews report they enjoy good health, compared to 71 percent of Christians.

Over half of Britain's 267,000 Jews — .5 percent of the total population — live in London. The community was shown to be well educated, with 37 percent holding university degrees.

Thirty-three percent of Jews are likely to be self-employed, compared to 10 percent of Christians, Sikhs and those of no religion, and 40 percent of U.K. Jews own their homes outright, a higher number than any other religious group.

France, Germany unite on Jewish papers

France handed wartime papers to Germany, including documents related to confiscated Jewish property.

In an official ceremony Tuesday at the Foreign Ministry in Paris, France's minister for European Affairs, Claudie Haignere, gave the documents to Klaus Neubert, Germany's ambassador to France.

The documents, which represent the first major return of archives since German reunification in 1990, contain files on Jewish property in the Sarre and Palatinate regions as well as the personal papers of Theo Zitchel, a local figure implicated in the extermination of Jews during the Holocaust.

Anti-Semitic allegations go to ring

U.S. boxing promoter Don King won a legal victory in London's Court of Appeal over allegations that he is an anti-Semite.

New York lawyer Judd Burstein made the claim in a 2003 magazine interview. Burstein's remarks were widely read in Britain, where King commenced proceedings to clear his name last year.

On Tuesday the Court of Appeal refused Burstein's attempts to stop the action.

He now will have to apologize to King and pay damages and costs, or lodge a defense.