

IN THE NEWS

Rice seeks support for democracy efforts

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said reforms will "come to nothing" if terrorist attacks on Israel continue.

"The Palestinian Authority needs to reform its security institutions in order to fight terrorism and lawlessness effectively," Rice said in London, addressing a meeting to determine ways to fund the Palestinian Authority.

"The United States is prepared to work with partners in the region and around the world to realize this essential goal."

She pressed the international community to encourage democratic reforms for the Palestinians, including the rule of law and an end to official corruption.

Supremacist may be linked to slayings

The husband and mother of a judge whom a white supremacist tried to have killed were shot to death.

Investigators in Chicago said it is too early to say who committed Monday's slayings of the husband and mother of Judge Joan Lefkow.

Matthew Hale has been convicted of trying to have Lefkow killed in 2003 after she found him in contempt of court.

Hale is the founder of the anti-Semitic World Church of the Creator.

Thousands mark reading of Talmud

Tens of thousands gathered to mark the culmination of a cycle of daily Talmud study.

Among the largest gatherings Tuesday of those celebrating the seven-and-a-half-year study known as Daf Yomi were events at New York City's Madison Square Garden and the Continental Arena in New Jersey.

Other events were held around the world.

The ceremonies mark their completion of the reading of the Babylonian Talmud.

WORLD REPORT

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Jews see cracks in church-state wall even as group backs the separation

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — As American Jewish organizations struggle to find funds for all their priorities, some are considering climbing the wall that separates church and state.

For years, Jews have been among the strongest advocates for a strict separation, arguing that any federal aid to houses of worship could be perceived as governmental endorsement or could lead to Christian proselytizing supported by tax dollars.

But those concerns seem to be fading in some segments of the Jewish world, as cash-strapped Jewish communities begin to think about alternative funding sources for their social service needs.

A change in direction could be especially important in smaller Jewish communities, which rely more on synagogues than on federations and outside Jewish organizations to provide social services. Synagogues that perform social services by and large have not sought federal funding in order to maintain the traditional church-state separation.

The debate is intensifying as the Bush administration continues to offer federal funding for social service programming under faith-based auspices.

The issue was a hot topic at the Jewish Council for Public Affairs' annual plenum here this week, bringing together local community relations councils from around the country with national organizations.

The umbrella organization, ending a yearlong examination into the issue, voted

Monday evening to support a resolution affirming the separation of church and state and rejecting efforts to insert language that suggested potential benefits for Jewish interests from federal dollars.

A majority of the delegates favored continuing strong support for the separation of church and state and remain wary of increased government intervention in religious-based social service programming.

While many Jewish social service agencies, especially federation-funded agencies, accept federal funding, the programs for which the funds are used are not religious and the funding requires them to be open to non-Jews as well as Jews.

The real objections are to federal funding of programs in houses of worship and religious schools.

Only the Orthodox community specifically advocates for more government engagement in religion, and has backed President Bush's faith-based initiative program, which allows churches and synagogues to accept federal funds for social service programming.

But even as the delegates of the policy organization as a whole stood firm in its traditional position, several suggested that certain circumstances might require flexibility.

"There is a sense that accepting public support for programs that serve humane needs does not breach that wall," said Barbara Kaplan, a JCPA community representative from Palm Beach County, Fla.

She said that her community, like most, is open to accepting federal funds for services that do not have a religious purpose, such

Continued on page 2

FOCUS
ON
ISSUES

■ *Some U.S. Jewish groups consider climbing the church-state wall*

Continued from page 1

as senior medical care and psychological services.

"These funds are just as appropriate going to a religious-backed agency as they are going to a non-religious-backed agency," Kaplan said.

Nathan Lewin, a prominent Orthodox attorney, said the battles the Jewish community have been fighting for decades on the separation of church and state are "obsolete."

In the past, Jewish groups had to worry more about charities trying to convert Jews or requiring Jews who sought social services to pray. But Lewin said those concerns are not as relevant today as they once were.

"The United States is phenomenal in the way it has treated and the rights it has given Jews," Lewin said during a debate at the plenum.

But Martin Belsky, a professor of law at the University of Tulsa, said large Jewish organizations are forgetting about Jews in smaller communities, where the fear of misuse is more real.

"You can't have an agenda based on whether it is true in Washington, D.C., New York and Philadelphia," he said. "You have to think about what is best for Jews across the country."

A growing number of Jewish communities already have signed on to accept federal homeland security dollars for the protection of high-risk sites, including synagogues.

Synagogues in Maryland were the first to receive such money.

But the Reform movement, among the most ardent supporters of maintaining a strict separation, opposes that idea as well.

Speaking on a panel on the subject, Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of the Reform movement, chastised Jewish community relations councils for coaxing Reform synagogues

to take federal homeland security money, despite the Reform movement directive.

The more controversial issue arises with social service programming for synagogues. These are the programs that many Jews are wary about in churches, because of the proselytizing risks and the fungibility of federal funds.

Jewish groups are also opposed to religious discrimination in hiring for programs that accept federal funds.

President Bush Tuesday — at a speech held at the same hotel as the JCPA plenum — pressed Congress to allow faith-based organizations to make employment decisions based on religion.

"Faith-based organizations also need a guarantee they will not be forced to give up their right to hire people of their

own faith as the price of competing for federal money," Bush said.

Stephen Silberfarb, executive director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and the Dakotas, said the Jewish community is very interested in finding alternative sources of funding, and the offers for federal funding are appealing.

"If these are the rules, why not benefit from the rules?" Silberfarb

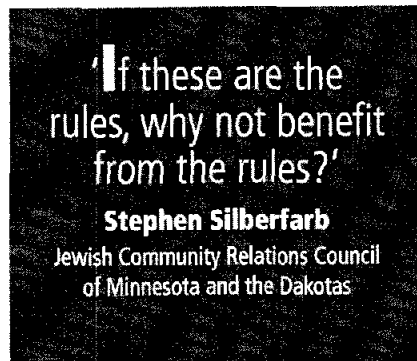
said. He compared the issue to campaign finance reform; candidates raise money even as they complain the system is flawed.

But other communities are hoping to maintain a strong stand against using federal funds in synagogues.

"I feel very strongly that if we believe in our principles, they shouldn't be sold," said Lynn Lyss, a JCPA past chair from St. Louis.

Tevi Troy, a former White House liaison to the Jewish community, joked that the Jewish community is trying to have it both ways, speaking out against faith-based initiatives while seeking funding at the same time.

He said he admired what he called Saperstein's "philosophical purity, but I wonder if we as a Jewish community really want to say we are not going to accept this money that is needed." ■



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Jihad Web sites removed from server

NEW YORK (JTA) — A Canadian Web hosting company has removed six sites that promoted jihad and vilified Jews from its servers.

A representative of Rackforce Wholesale Hosting Solutions said the offensive sites, including one linked to Hamas, were brought to their attention by the SITE Institute, a U.S.-based anti-terrorism group.

Leo Adler, director of national affairs for the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Canada, told the Canadian Jewish News that

most of the sites removed from the Canadian server, "were terrorist-oriented. One of the sites extolled the virtues of suicide bombing."

The Hamas-linked site, www.shareeah.org, was being investigated by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Shareeah.org, registered by a person or group using the name SupportersOfShareeah with an address listed as a London post office box, remains on the Internet after switching its Web site to another hosting company. ■

Bombing throws hurdle into peace process

By **LESLIE SUSSER**

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The late February suicide bombing in Tel Aviv shattered a three-month lull in terror and brought key Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking issues into sharp relief.

The terror attack, which came just three weeks after Israeli and Palestinian leaders declared an end to more than four years of hostilities, forced both sides to define their new relationship more clearly.

It enabled Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to clarify his policy toward the Palestinians, finger Syria and the Hezbollah as potential spoilers, and re-emphasize his view that there can be no real peacemaking until the Palestinians dismantle their armed militias.

It also highlighted Israel's vulnerability to suicide terror attacks and rekindled the debate on the security fence.

Lastly, it underlined the core Palestinian dilemma: How to stop rogue terrorist cells from subverting the peace process without actually taking them on.

The bombing last Friday night killed four Israelis on the Tel Aviv beachfront. A fifth later died of her wounds. Israeli military intelligence traced the orders for the attack to the Damascus headquarters of the radical Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

The Lebanon-based Hezbollah, which has dozens of agents in the West Bank, also was said to be implicated. According to military intelligence, the Jihad in Syria used Hezbollah channels in Lebanon to convey instructions to Hezbollah agents in the West Bank, who, in turn, operated a small Jihad cell in the West Bank town of Tulkarm.

In a pre-bombing video, the bomber identified himself as a Tulkarm-based Jihad operative. A few days later, Israeli forces found and dismantled a huge car bomb between Tulkarm and Jenin. Again Islamic Jihad in Damascus was said to be behind the planning, with the Tulkarm cell responsible for the actual operation on the ground.

The new terror, clearly designed to scuttle the nascent Israeli-Palestinian peace process, left Israeli policy planners in a quandary.

If they retaliated with military might they could play into the terrorists' hands and destroy the fragile process. And if they waited for the Palestinians to act, things

could get badly out of hand. Instead, they appealed to the international community to limit the spoilers' room for maneuvering and put pressure on the Palestinians.

On Monday, Israel's Foreign Ministry summoned ambassadors of countries on the U.N. Security Council and in the European Union for a briefing. Brig. Gen. Yossi Kuperwasser, head of research in military intelligence, explained the Syrian, Hezbollah and Jihad involvement.

Late Monday, the U.N. Security Council condemned the Feb. 25 attack "in the strongest possible terms." Noting in its statement to the media that the Palestinian leadership also had condemned the attack, the council urged the Palestinian leadership to "take immediate, credible steps to find those responsible for this terrorist attack and bring them to justice and encourage further and sustained action to prevent other acts of terrorism."

Clearly feeling the heat, Syria, Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad all vigorously denied the charges. Syrian President Bashar Assad, already under massive international pressure to pull his troops out of Lebanon, told the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica*, "It is a pointlessly offensive accusation. Syria had nothing to do with it."

Hezbollah officials dismissed the Israeli charges as "beneath contempt." And Islamic Jihad's Gaza chief, Mohammed al-Hindi, claimed the bombing was the work of a rogue cell acting on its own.

Israel also sought to apply pressure directly on Abbas's new Palestinian leadership. Sharon himself took the lead, warning that the new diplomatic process would get absolutely nowhere unless the Palestinian Authority confronted the terrorists and disarmed them.

"While Israel is interested in advancing toward a settlement with the Palestinians, there will be no diplomatic progress, no progress until the Palestinians take strong action to eliminate the terrorist organizations and their infrastructure," he told a meeting of Likud Party members.

"Israel," he warned darkly, "will not compromise over the security of its citizens."

Sharon has no wish to be caught in a situation where Palestinian rogue organizations carry out terrorism and Israel can't respond because of its concern for the peace process. And the subtext of his message was that if terrorism continues, Israel will take military action, even if that means sacrificing the chance for peace.

In the meantime, Israel is exploring other options. By far the strongest lever it has is the release of Palestinian prisoners. Writing in the mass circulation daily *Ma'ariv*, columnist Ben

Dror Yemini argued that Israel shouldn't stop the political process or its disengagement from Gaza and the northern West Bank, "because that is just what the terrorists want."

The bombing also highlighted the fact that the government has completed the construction of only one third of the security fence designed to keep the bombers out.

Even if there is progress in peacemaking with the Palestinians, politicians and pundits argued that Israel should rely on its own devices to keep the bombers out — devices like the fence. So far, only some 132 miles of the planned 372-mile route are in place.

On the Palestinian side, Abbas, in the short time he has been in power, has made some positive security moves. He has appointed a new interior minister, who is charged with enforcing the cease-fire, and warned a group of new military commanders that they would be fired if violence isn't stopped.

As for moves on the ground, Palestinian forces have closed down 12 arms-smuggling tunnels in Gaza and arrested six Jihad militants.

But the bottom line is that so far there is no sign of any willingness to actually dismantle the terrorist infrastructure. That could be fatal for the peace process.

If the terrorism continues and Abbas does nothing about the militias, the process will die. It could die, too, even if there is quiet, and Sharon continues to demand dismantling of the militias as a condition for progress in peace-making.

Which leads to what is perhaps the most important question of all: What will the American position be a few months down the road, if there is quiet — or relative quiet — but the militias remain intact? ■



**NEWS
ANALYSIS**

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

Bush seeks faith-based hiring freedom

President Bush called on Congress to pass legislation that would allow faith-based institutions that receive federal funds to use religion as a factor in hiring.

"Faith-based organizations also need a guarantee they will not be forced to give up their right to hire people of their own faith as the price of competing for federal money," Bush said in a speech Tuesday to the White House Faith-Based and Community Initiatives Leadership Conference.

Many Jewish groups oppose the faith-based initiatives, in part because they fear religious groups would be able to discriminate in hiring while using federal funds.

As part of his plan to affirm his faith-based initiative program, the president said Congress should pass charitable choice legislation that would give faith-based groups equal access to federal funds.

Bush also said he would like to reduce tax penalties on charitable giving, an initiative many Jewish groups support.

JCPA seeks Iran efforts

The umbrella group of Jewish community relations groups called on the Bush administration to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons.

In its resolution session in Washington Monday evening, the Jewish Council for Public Affairs also agreed to "affirm its historic support for the separation of church and state" and passed a resolution on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that backed the White House's decision to send \$350 million to the Palestinians.

It also passed a resolution calling on world leaders to take action against genocide in Sudan.

Clinton seeks U.N. resolution

U.S. Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.) told the Jewish Council for Public Affairs and Hillel's Spitzer Forum that she wants a U.N. resolution against international anti-Semitism.

"We can track the increase in anti-Semitism around the world, and we need to get people on the record once and for all on where they stand," Clinton told the JCPA at its plenum in Washington on Tuesday.

Groups praise court's death penalty ruling

Jewish groups applauded the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to outlaw the juvenile death penalty.

"As our nation grows ever more aware of the flaws inherent in capital punishment, we applaud the Supreme Court for its moral stand against this application of the death penalty," Jane Wishner, chair of the Reform movement's Commission on Social Action, said in a statement on Tuesday's decision.

"As Jewish tradition teaches us, the dangers of a wrongful execution are such that the limits on its implementation must be vast," she added.

The American Jewish Committee also hailed the decision.

The court ruled 5-4 in the case of *Roper v. Simmons* that executing killers who were younger than 18 when they committed their crimes was unconstitutional.

PETA runs ad against slaughterhouse

An animal-rights group is running an ad in some Jewish newspapers blasting a kosher slaughterhouse.

But other Jewish newspapers have refused to run the ad, which is paid for by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals.

The PETA ad targets the Agriprocessors plant in Iowa and is headlined, "Cruelty Uncovered: Is 'Aaron's Best' Kosher's Worst?" Aaron's Best is one of the labels whose meat is produced at the Agriproces-

sors Plant, which the U.S. Department of Agriculture is investigating for allegedly inhumane slaughter practices.

The full-page ad ran last Friday in the Jewish Journal of Los Angeles. It is also slated to run this week in the Forward. Among the papers that have refused the ad are the Cleveland Jewish News.

MIDDLE EAST

Rice sees Syria link to Israel attack

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice took Syria to task after last week's deadly bombing in Israel.

Speaking to ABC News while attending a conference in England on Palestinian security and reform, Rice said the Damascus-based Islamic Jihad group helped plan last Friday's bombing at a Tel Aviv nightclub, Reuters reported.

"There is evidence that Islamic Jihad, headquartered in Syria, was in fact involved with the planning of those attacks in Tel Aviv," she said. "And so the Syrians have a lot to answer for."

Patrol fired on

Palestinian terrorists wounded two Israelis outside a West Bank settlement.

The victims of Monday night's ambush at Kfar Oranim, just over the boundary with the Israeli city of Modi'in, were described as settlement security guards.

They managed to return fire, but the gunmen escaped.

Jihad cell busted

Israel foiled Palestinian plots to fire rockets from the West Bank and attack a Jerusalem school.

The Shin Bet said Tuesday it had arrested Jibril Zubeidi, the leader of an Islamic Jihad cell in Jenin, last December, and that the plans emerged during his interrogation.

Zubeidi, whose brother Zakariya is chief of the Al-Aksa Brigades in the same West Bank city, said he had tried to smuggle in rockets to fire into Israel.

His cell also planned to shoot up a school in Jerusalem's French Hill neighborhood and detonate a car bomb against an Israeli army unit, the Shin Bet said.

WORLD

Germany arrests denier

Germany arrested a Holocaust denier after he was deported from Canada.

Ernst Zundel, 65, who had lived in Canada more than 40 years, was sent to Germany on Tuesday.

During his stay in Canada, Zundel gained a reputation as one of the world's foremost Holocaust deniers.

He moved to the United States in 2000 but was deported back to Canada in 2003 on a legal technicality. He faces outstanding charges of spreading hate.

U.S., Russian Jewish groups ally

An American Jewish group and a Russian Jewish group formed a partnership.

The agreement signed Tuesday in Moscow between the American Jewish Congress and the Federation of Jewish Communities, a Chabad-led umbrella group, aims to combat anti-Semitism in Russia and improve U.S.-Russia relations.

The agreement partners the AJCongress with the most active Jewish group in Russia, while the federation gains a foothold in the American Jewish secular community.