

IN THE NEWS

Austrians agree on Nazi compensation

The Austrian government and Jewish community agreed on compensation for communal property looted or destroyed during the Nazi period.

The Board of the General Reparations Fund announced May 25 that it would pay some \$22.8 million to the Israelitisch Kultusgemeinde, the secular body representing Austrian Jewry, as soon as legal security for Austria is guaranteed against pending lawsuits.

The new funds will be used to cover social services, including old-age homes, counseling for Holocaust survivors and debt repayment, said Hannah Lessing, general secretary of the National Fund of the Republic of Austria and the General Settlement Fund for former slave laborers, from which the payment will be made.

U.S. rabbi speaks in Syria

An American Orthodox rabbi took part in a televised, interfaith conversation in Syria.

On a panel with Muslim and Christian leaders, Rabbi Marc Gopin spoke May 25 about Judaism and peace at the Arab Authors Union in Damascus, the Jerusalem Post reported.

It was the rabbi's second trip to Syria this year.

"There has never been a meeting like this before, not only of the three religions but also with a group that can ask questions," Gopin told the Post.

Nazi-looted art can't be returned

The British Museum can't return Nazi-looted paintings to a Jewish family, Britain's High Court ruled. The court ruled last Friday that returning the painting would require an amendment to a British law that requires British museums to maintain their collections.

The museum had agreed to return the paintings, which were taken from lawyer Arthur Feldmann in 1939 after the Nazis invaded Czechoslovakia.

WORLD REPORT

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In Britain, U.S., sides rearming in struggle over Israel boycott

By DANIELLA PELED

LONDON (JTA) — A British teachers union has decided to retract its ban on two Israeli universities, but the boycott battle in British academia looks to be far from over.

Both those calling for links to be severed with Israeli institutions, and those hailing the Jewish state as a beacon of academic freedom, are preparing to regroup and rearm for the next confrontation.

There was widespread jubilation among pro-Israel activists May 26 when the council of the 48,000-member Association of University Teachers canceled the previous month's motion blacklisting Haifa University for allegedly persecuting anti-Zionist lecturer Ilan Pappé and Bar-Ilan University for cooperating with a West Bank college.

That policy sparked international condemnation and led to a backlash, culminating in last week's specially convened session that overturned the boycott motion by a 2-1 vote.

The British government welcomed the decision. Kim Howells, the Cabinet's newly appointed Middle East minister, said "the best way we can help achieve a peaceful resolution in the region is to encourage both sides to take the steps necessary for progress through close engagement. We do not believe that sanctions and boycotts help toward that aim."

Both sides of the debate claimed the decision as a victory.

"It's fantastic to see the balance of reason" restored, said a spokesman for the Campaign Group for Academic Freedom, a Jewish-led organization formed to overturn the AUT's boycott decision.

"We hope the unambiguous results" will put an end to "any further misleading and destructive maneuvers, and allow British scholars to build bridges and promote peace in the Middle East," said Ronnie Fraser, chair of the Academic Friends of Israel lobby group.

Palestinian campaigners say they expected to lose the AUT fight — blaming intense lobbying and a "disinformation" campaign by a well-organized opposition, backed by the Israeli government — but believe it has put them on course to win the boycott war.

Not only were they given the opportunity to raise "Palestinian rights" at a time when relative calm has taken the conflict out of international headlines, but they also ensured that the idea of a boycott was placed firmly on the agenda.

They hope to capitalize on their comparison of Israel and apartheid South Africa through the aid of South African institutions, including church councils and prominent African National Council politicians.

"We gave notice," said a spokesman for the British University Committee for the Universities of Palestine, a coordinating group for the boycott campaign. "This is not some simple short-term battle to be decided by a vote at one meeting or another.

"People of conscience worldwide, in their families, in their communities, in their trade unions will ensure that the boycott movement will grow and continue until a just peace is secured."

British Jewish leaders are concerned that this is far from an empty threat. The boycott movement seems to have refined its methods

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NEWS ANALYSIS

■ *In Britian, a battle is won, but the war may still heat up*

Continued from page 1

since its launch in an April 2002 letter to the left-wing Guardian newspaper by professors Steven and Hilary Rose, who proposed a moratorium on European support for Israeli academia.

Their petition was followed by sporadic individual efforts. But the movement began to truly gather steam following the formation of the boycott coordinating group last year and an international conference held at a London college last December on strategies to resist "Israeli apartheid."

Activists, whose sweeping boycott motion in 2003 was overwhelmingly rejected by the AUT council, developed a more targeted policy, taking advantage of pressures of time, attendance and internal association politics to give their new motion the best chance of success.

Fraser, a lecturer in math at Barnet College in London, sees the boycott movement as the culmination of a long process that has seen left-wing British academia become increasingly hostile to Israel.

Others see it as a symptom of a wider anti-Jewish prejudice.

"What is it about certain areas of U.K. academia that finds every opportunity to slam Israel?" asked a spokesman for the Campaign Group. "To many in the community, this has all the hallmarks of anti-Semitism because it seeks to delegitimize, demonize and judge Israel by double standards."

Boycott supporters deny that anti-Semitism is a motive.

Outside of Britain, boycott opponents applauded the AUT's move.

"This wasn't a victory in the true sense where we've won the war; we've just won the battle," said Juda Engelmayr, chief communications officer for the American Jewish Congress, which coordinated letters of protest to the AUT from Congress and a group of Rhodes Scholars and encouraged its members to do the same.

Just after the AUT revoked the boycott, another British college teachers' union was taking up the issue.

At its annual conference May 28-30, the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education was set to consider a resolution calling for boycotts against Israeli universities, according to Ed Beck, president of Scholars for Peace in the Middle East, a group that aims to counter anti-Zionist messages.

Additionally, the Palestinian Union of University Teachers and Employees called for the resignation of Al-Quds University President Sari Nusseibeh, who condemned the AUT boycott, for issuing a joint statement with Hebrew University President Menachem Magidor supporting academic cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians.

Pro-Israel activists say the activity spawned by the AUT boycott has helped lay the groundwork for future battles.

Both Scholars for Peace and the Association for Jewish Studies, an international association for professors of Jewish studies, issued condemnations against the boycott and encouraged members to ask other academic associations to protest the AUT boycott.

Some groups, such as the American Association of University Professors, issued a strong statement of condemnation. The group took particular note of the boycott's exemption for Israeli professors who object to their state's "colonial and racist policies," saying that "deepens the injury to academic freedom rather than mitigates it" because it "requires compliance with a political or ideological test in order for an academic relationship to continue."

Other North American groups were silent.

The National Education Association, for example, told Scholars for Peace that it would not consider the issue, and gave no further explanation, Beck said.

In Canada, the president of the Canadian Association of University Teachers said the group would take no action on the matter since the AUT was reconsidering its

'It's fantastic to see the balance of reason' restored.

Anti-boycott spokesman

stance.

Scholars for Peace urged its roughly 650 members to write letters of protest to the AUT. The group also worked with the Anti-Defamation League to collect more than 450 names of university faculty from around the world for a petition delivered to the AUT.

The group also encouraged faculty to apply for affiliate appointments at the blacklisted Israeli universities. Some 400 faculty have applied for affiliate appointments, Beck said.

"The thing that we learned is that people were able to separate their feelings from the current government of Israel, Israeli policy and the question of academic freedom and scholarship, and they were able to land on the issue of the academic boycott as a violation of academic freedom," he said.

Some people, such as Jeff Weintraub, a social and political theorist at the University of Pennsylvania, worked on their own to make a difference.

Weintraub drafted an online petition to academic associations endorsing the American Association of University Professors' statement and asking other academic associations to adopt it. To date, he has garnered nearly 5,000 signatures.

On the whole, the British Jewish community was encouraged by the support it received for its anti-boycott efforts.

"We've seen a situation we haven't seen for a long time, where Israeli policy can be healthily debated in the U.K. without questioning Israel's right to exist," said a spokesman for the Campaign Group for Academic Freedom.

(JTA Staff Writer Rachel Pomerance in New York contributed to this report.)



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Evangelicals, Jews protest Gaza withdrawal

By RACHEL POMERANCE

NEW YORK (JTA) — A Jewish-evangelical protest mission to Israel represents one of the latest acts of opposition to Israel's Gaza Strip withdrawal plan — and an uncommon step for members of both groups.

New York State Assemblyman Dov Hikind is coordinating the trip, which leaves New York on Sunday, to support the Jews of Gaza.

Hikind is part of a vocal minority staging demonstrations against the withdrawal plan, which has broad backing from Israelis, American Jewry and the Israeli and U.S. governments.

Some have opposed the withdrawal on religious grounds, stressing that Gaza has a long Jewish history and belongs under Jewish control.

THIS WEEK

TUESDAY

■ The German and Israeli embassies will host a concert on Tuesday to mark 40 years of diplomatic relations between Israel and Germany. Full diplomatic relations came relatively late because of resistance in Israel to recognizing the political successors to the Nazis.

■ The House of Representatives is out of session this week, and some members are using the time to tour Israel and Palestinian areas ahead of Israel's withdrawal this summer from the Gaza Strip. Among them: Rep. Jim Kolbe (R-Ariz.), the chairman of the powerful foreign operations subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee, and the congressman who sponsored tough restrictions on recent aid to the Palestinians; and Gary Ackerman (D-N.Y.), the ranking member on the Middle East subcommittee of the International Relations Committee.

SUNDAY

■ The annual Salute to Israel Parade takes place in Manhattan. More than 30 floats and 400 marching groups will take part in the annual event.

■ New York State Assemblyman Dov Hikind leads Jews and evangelical Christians opposed to Israel's Gaza withdrawal plan on a solidarity mission to the Gaza Strip. More than 100 people on the mission will spend three days in Gaza.

■ U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales delivers the keynote address at the Orthodox Union's 107th anniversary dinner in New York City. The address will be Gonzales' first such appearance before a national Jewish organization.

But Hikind thinks it's just bad policy: He takes issue with Israel's move because it's a unilateral decision; in return for uprooting some 8,000 Jews, Israel won't receive any corresponding concessions from the Palestinians.

"How do you take these people and throw them out of their homes? For what?" Hikind said. "What is Israel getting in return?"

"Palestinians are doing zero, zilch, nothing," he said, suggesting that the withdrawal would elate Palestinian terrorist groups, who have yet to be disarmed and who view Israel's withdrawal as a surrender to violence.

Hikind helped organize a May 22 rally opposing the plan when Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was in New York to address Jewish leaders.

Hikind also will speak at an anti-withdrawal rally the evening his mission departs for Israel. That rally, in Manhattan's Central Park, will follow New York's annual Salute to Israel Parade, the country's largest pro-Israel event, where tens of thousands of synagogues, schools and Jewish groups march along Fifth Avenue.

The upcoming mission will draw on the pro-Israel sentiment among evangelical Christians, many of whom oppose the Gaza withdrawal.

That includes James Vineyard, a pastor from Oklahoma City. Vineyard has raised more than \$600,000 and spent more than \$750,000 to protest the withdrawal plan, taking pastors to Israel, coordinating lectures and rallies and taking out full-page ads in the Washington Times.

For Vineyard, the mandate is biblical and dates from Genesis, where God told Abraham that he would bless those who bless Israel and curse those who curse Israel.

The withdrawal plan puts a curse on the Jews of Gush Katif, Vineyard said, referring to a bloc of Jewish communities in Gaza.

"The judgment of God will fall on America if this goes through," he said, predicting another catastrophe like the Sept. 11 terrorist strikes.

Vineyard has written daily letters to President Bush on the matter, but doesn't have the president's ear.

Even in the world of Jewish-evangelical relations, Hikind's mission represents a departure.

Neither "we as an organization nor me as an individual, who works with the evangelical community, endorses or would participate in such a move," said Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, founder and president of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews.

"When you have a situation here where the president of the United States and the

prime minister agree on this, then we are not protesting it" — despite the fact that many of the group's 40,000 evangelical financial supporters disagree with the plan, said Eckstein, whose group has met with high-level Israeli and U.S. officials, including Sharon.

The mission could exacerbate tensions between Jews and mainline Protestants, who reject the Christian Zionist theology of the evangelicals and often are harshly critical of Israel.

"One of the things we keep hearing from our mainline Protestant friends is their concern about the alliances with the evangelical community," said Rabbi Gary Bretton-Granatoor, director of interfaith relations for the Anti-Defamation League.

When asked about Protestant churches considering divesting from companies that do business with Israel, Granatoor said "divestment was, if anything, an outgrowth of the work we had left to do."

Unlike the long-standing dialogue with the Protestant community, "we have not done our homework enough in learning about the evangelical community. That is the new frontier for us in interfaith dialogue," Granatoor said. He added that he was worried the relationship was merely a political one and that each side is being used.

Eckstein, who has worked in evangelical-Jewish relations for more than 25 years, disagrees.

He concedes that the relationship isn't a full-fledged dialogue yet, but said, "I wouldn't discredit it by saying, 'Oh, that's just a political relationship.'" ■

'The judgment of God will fall on America if this goes through.'

James Vineyard
Oklahoma City pastor

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

Canada ups aid to Palestinians

Canada's prime minister said the country would give \$9.5 million to the Palestinian Authority.

Paul Martin made the announcement after meeting with P.A. President Mahmoud Abbas on Saturday.

The money supplements Canada's annual aid package of nearly \$20 million to the Palestinians.

Canada has stipulated that the additional funds must be used for housing in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, reforms to the legal system, scholarships for refugee women, and to pay for 50 Canadian monitors to Palestinian legislative elections scheduled for this summer.

Martin praised Abbas for his efforts to curb terrorism and said the aid package was "just a down payment" for future gifts, provided the Palestinian Authority continues its progress toward reform and peace with Israel.

Uzbek attackers designated terrorists

The United States designated as terrorists the Uzbek group that bombed Israel's embassy.

Two people were killed in joint attacks on July 30, 2004 on the U.S. and Israeli embassies in Tashkent and on an Uzbek government office.

On May 25, the State Department designated Islamic Jihad Group, the organization behind the attacks, as a terrorist group.

The Specially Designated Global Terrorist classification blocks "all property, and interests in property of the organization that are in the United States, or come within the United States, or the control of U.S. persons."

Congress to consider energy pact

Eighteen members of the U.S. Congress introduced a bill to fund joint U.S.-Israeli energy programs.

The bill would recognize Israel's advances in energy conservation and argue that cooperation could help reduce U.S. reliance on foreign oil.

The lead sponsors are Rep. Brad Sherman (D-Calif.) and Rep. John Shadegg (R-Ariz.).

Lieberman speaks to the children

Former U.S. presidential candidate Joseph Lieberman gave a graduation speech at a Jewish day school in New Orleans.

"You celebrate today your own history and your connection to the long history of the Jewish people," the Democratic senator from Connecticut told the 10 graduating eighth-graders on Sunday at the New Orleans Jewish Day School, according to the Times-Picayune newspaper.

Lieberman has two grandchildren who attended the school this year.

As Lieberman took the podium, he quipped, "I accept your nomination."

Son of survivors buys NFL squad

The son of Holocaust survivors is at the helm of a group set to purchase the Minnesota Vikings.

Shopping-mall magnate Zygmunt Wilf is leading the group, which recently received permission from NFL owners for the \$600 million deal.

According to a report by the Associated Press, Wilf sits on the board of Yad Vashem, in addition to several other Jewish educational and charitable institutions.

Robert Kraft, whose New England Patriots won the last two Super Bowls, also is involved in Jewish life.

Wilf's group includes his brother, Mark Wilf, a JTA board member.

Program teaches Judaism to journalists

Twenty journalists were chosen for this summer's Gralla Fellows program in Jewish journalism.

The annual program is designed to enhance Jewish journalists' knowledge of Judaism, American Jewish life and religion reporting.

Funded by Jewish philanthropist Milton Gralla, the program will take place July 17-21 on the Brandeis University campus near Boston.

WORLD

French journalists defame Israel

Two reporters and the directors of the Le Monde newspaper were found guilty of racist defamation for an article about Israel.

The Versailles court of appeals ruled on an article that ran June 4, 2002, called "Israel-Palestine: The Cancer."

The court ordered the directors, Edgar Morin and Jean-Marie Colombani, as well as the two authors, to pay a symbolic fee in damages to a human-rights alliance and to Lawyers Without Borders, and ordered Le Monde to publish a condemnation of the article.

Russian cemetery hit

A Jewish cemetery in Russia was vandalized last week. Vandals spray-painted red swastikas on 26 tombstones in a Jewish cemetery in the city of Kazan, the capital of Tatarstan, a predominantly Muslim Russian autonomous republic in the Volga region.

Local law-enforcement agencies described the incident, which was discovered May 25, as a hate crime and opened an investigation.

According to a spokesman for the local police department, this was the first large-scale act of racially motivated vandalism in Kazan in years.

The city council issued a statement condemning the attack, which local lawmakers called "a serious emotional trauma for all citizens."

MIDDLE EAST

1995 terror victim dies

An Israeli man injured in a 1995 terrorist attack died Monday in Israel.

Yona Malina, 38, had been paralyzed from the neck down since a bus bombing in Jerusalem. Malina was born in Slovakia, and immigrated to Israel after visiting a kibbutz in the 1980s.

When he went into a coma last year, his parents petitioned the Israeli courts to have his respirator disconnected.

But he suddenly regained consciousness a few weeks later.

Israeli official backs strikes on Iran

Military strikes would not stop Iran's quest for nuclear weapons but could effectively delay it, a former Israeli air force chief said.

"You cannot eliminate an idea, a national will. But you can delay progress on a nuclear program with the appropriate military action," David Ivry, who masterminded Israel's 1981 airstrike on the Iraqi reactor at Osirak, told Reuters on Monday.

Serial killer caught?

An Israeli is suspected of serial murder.

The 32-year-old man was arrested this week on suspicion of killing at least four people in Haifa and burning their bodies, police said Monday.

The suspect, an immigrant from the former Soviet republic of Moldova, confessed to the killings but may not be mentally competent to stand trial, Israeli media said.

Serial murders have been virtually unheard of in the Jewish state.

Pilgrimage to Tunisia

Approximately 4,000 Jews made a pilgrimage to the Tunisian island of Jerba.

The annual Lag B'Omer pilgrimage to Ghriba, a 2,600-year-old synagogue in the North African country, took place last Friday.

Some 1,000 Israelis, most of Tunisian origin, were joined by a number of groups from Europe, as well as a significant number of Tunisian Jews.