

IN THE NEWS

Israel seals Gaza Strip

Israel declared Gaza settlements off-limits to outsiders ahead of their evacuation.

The 21 settlements became a closed military zone under an order signed Wednesday by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, meaning that only residents and visitors with army-issued permits are allowed to enter.

The order is expected to remain in force through the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and northern West Bank, slated for next month.

Israel targets Islamic Jihad

Israeli forces raided a West Bank city used as a Palestinian terrorist base.

Troops and tanks swept through Tulkarm before dawn Wednesday, clamping a curfew on the city.

A Palestinian Authority policeman fired on the soldiers, wounding two of them, before he was shot dead.

Tulkarm was the launch-pad for Tuesday's suicide bombing by Islamic Jihad in the Israeli city of Netanya, and the army said it would remain in the city until the masterminds of the attack were captured.

Five suspected terrorists were arrested.

Argentina sorry for AMIA probe

Argentina formally took responsibility for the failure to solve the bombing of a Jewish community center.

President Nestor Kirchner said Tuesday that previous Argentine governments had covered up facts that could have helped solve the July 1994 bombing of the AMIA center in Buenos Aires, in which 85 people were killed. Iran is believed to be behind the bombing, a charge Iran denies.

The decree formalizes a declaration of responsibility that Argentina made in March.

The 11th anniversary of the bombing is July 18.



WORLD REPORT

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Israel details Gaza aid request, estimated at more than \$2 billion

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The Bush administration is considering the aftermath of Israel's evacuation of the Gaza Strip, weeks before soldiers remove the first settler.

A team of top Israeli officials met this week with their American counterparts to present in detail, for the first time, how much Israel money wants from the United States for the withdrawal and for helping to resettle Gaza residents in the Negev desert and the Galilee region.

Monday's meeting "was very useful in giving us a better understanding of what the Israeli plans are for the development of the Negev and Galilee, and we will be considering how the United States can best assist Israel with these efforts," said a spokesman for President Bush's National Security Council, where Yossi Bachar, the director-general of Israel's Finance Ministry, and Ilan Cohen, his counterpart at the Prime Minister's Office, made their presentation.

No one would discuss numbers, but Israeli reports said the request was for \$2.2 billion, in addition to the at least \$2.5 billion Israel receives each year in U.S. aid.

The \$2.2 billion would include the immediate cost of rebuilding military bases outside the Gaza Strip, an amount Israeli officials earlier had said would be around \$600 million.

The rest would go to creating the right conditions for resettling up to 10,000 people in the Negev and Galilee.

The meeting struck a rare positive note just weeks before the withdrawal, which is scheduled to begin Aug. 15. Settlers are ratch-

eting up their resistance to the evacuation, and Israeli officials are prepared for violence, including Palestinian terrorist attacks, such as the blast Tuesday in Netanya that killed four people and wounded at least two dozen.

Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian Authority president, said the bombers were "idiots" and vowed to punish them.

A spate of terrorist attacks could turn Israeli public opinion against the withdrawal.

The United States condemned the attacks, but said it would stay the course.

"Our focus for right now is ensuring that the disengagement from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank does move forward," Tom Casey, the U.S. State Department spokesman said after Tuesday's attack. "We do believe this creates a new and genuine opportunity for Israelis and Palestinians to move forward and to make progress on the 'road map' peace plan."

Einat Wilf, a top adviser to Shimon Peres, the Israeli vice prime minister who is handling civilian aspects of the withdrawal, said Israel was seeking assistance in three broad areas: infrastructure to accommodate a population influx; investment seed money to create new industrial zones; and development funds designated for minorities in both regions — Bedouin in the Negev and Israeli Arabs in the north.

The Bush administration is adamant that it will not directly pay for settlers to relocate, since for decades America urged Israel against settling the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

Framing the request in terms of development — especially targeting minorities — is

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likelier to win U.S. approval, said Wilf, who had a hand in drafting this week's presentation.

"There's a big emphasis on minority development, with a special emphasis on job creation for minority women," she said. The Bush administration consistently emphasizes women's rights in its Middle East initiatives.

Considering minorities was wise, sparing potential problems down the road, according to Larry Garber, the New Israel Fund's executive director. Government appropriation of land in the Negev could impinge on some Bedouin claims in the region, said Garber, whose organization advocates for minorities in Israel.

"The process should be deliberative, not through fiat," he said.

Wilf said that whatever Israel requests from the United States ultimately would be just a fraction of the total withdrawal cost.

An official at a pro-Israel lobby in Washington said the sides had yet to come to a final determination on money but predicted that whatever sum the Bush administration recommends will be approved easily by Congress.

Bush and Congress both understand that Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon needs a show of support for the risks he's

taking, said the official, who spoke anonymously because the request has yet to be finalized.

Meanwhile, competing surveys show vastly different levels of support for the withdrawal among Americans.

The Anti-Defamation League, which in the past has pushed the U.S. Jewish leadership to endorse the Gaza withdrawal plan, published a poll this week showing that 71 percent of

Americans consider the withdrawal "a bold step for peace."

The Zionist Organization of America, which leads opposition to the plan among

American Jews, criticized the ADL, saying the question polled support for the idea that Israel is taking a "bold step," but did not assess support for the actual pullout.

The ZOA published its own poll last week, which it said showed that 63 percent of Americans oppose the withdrawal.

The question in that poll was: "Do you think Israel should unilaterally give away a section of Gaza and a section of the Northern West Bank to the Palestinian Arabs, forcing 10,000 Israeli Jewish men, women and children to leave their homes, schools, farms and businesses, without an agreement of peace or without Israel getting anything else in return from the Palestinian Arabs?"

Critics say that such questions lead respondents to the ZOA's desired answer. ■

Emphasizing minority development could help Israel get money from the United States.

In Canada, Jewish community split after country OKs same-sex marriage

By MICHAEL CARIN

MONTREAL (JTA)—The legalization of same-sex marriage in Canada has polarized the country's Jews in much the same way it has divided other religious denominations.

For the most part, Orthodox Jews in Canada oppose same-sex marriages, while liberal Canadian Jews embrace the fact that gays and lesbians now can share in a central Jewish institution.

The controversial legislation, passed late last month, was shepherded through Canada's House of Commons by Justice Minister Irwin Cotler, a former professor of law at McGill University.

The new law applies to civic weddings: Gay and lesbian couples now face no barriers to marriage in venues like city halls and courthouses.

However, as Cotler has said on numerous occasions, no religious group will be forced to sanctify same-sex marriage if such unions run counter to its beliefs.

The issue remains far from settled. Polls indicate that a majority of Canadians are opposed to a redefinition of marriage.

Nor has the debate ceased among spiritual leaders in the Canadian Jewish community.

For Rabbi Asher Jacobson of the Chevra Kadisha B'nai Jacob Congregation, an Orthodox synagogue in Montreal, laws that

violate Jewish tradition will be ignored.

"Within our shul, this law does not exist. The community does not have to say it's kosher, and put a stamp on it," Jacobson said.

Within society at large, Jacobson believes traditional Jews should speak out against the new law. He has done so himself as a member of the Rabbinical Council of Canada, which published advertisements in the national media stating that Jewish morality and custom allow only for the union of a man and a woman.

When two same-sex members of Jacobson's congregation asked him to preside at their marriage, "I said to them, I love you both, but I cannot be part of something that goes against our tradition and our Torah," he recalled. "I explained that marriage in Jewish tradition is not just a civil union. Marriage is a sacred act, affiliated with holiness."

In Toronto, one congregation that characterizes itself as "traditional-egalitarian" has come out in support of the right of gays and lesbians to marry.

The First Narayever Congregation uses an Orthodox liturgy and keeps a kosher kitchen.

"We do everything in a traditional way, except that men and women participate equally in the life of the synagogue," said Rabbi Ed Elkin, the congregation's spiritual leader. ■

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Argentine Jews support homegrown charities

By FLORENCIA ARBISER

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — After years of depending on the kindness of others, donations from Argentine Jews to their own Jewish charities are increasing.

Despite the fact that Argentina's Jewish community lacks a comprehensive fund-raising strategy and tax deductions for charitable giving never surpass 5 percent, more and more Jews are contributing to local projects and institutions.

The Buenos Aires-based Tzedakah Foundation, created in 1991 with the help of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee to assist impoverished Argentine Jews, saw a 25 percent increase in donations last year. The largest expansion was in the group of donors who give less than \$400 annually, which rose from 62 people in 2000 to 3,273 in 2004.

The total number of Argentine Jewish donors to Tzedakah last year was 3,595. Of the more than \$1.4 million collected — which doesn't include subsidies from JDC and the Claims Conference — 80 percent came from local donors and 8 percent from international donors. The rest were contributions of medicine.

"Donations are growing among Argentine Jews," Jorge Schulman, the foundation's executive director, told JTA.

Tzedakah was conceived of as a central collection agency, inspired by the American Jewish federation system. Unlike AMIA, the community's 111-year old central body — which is funded largely by burial contributions to the community's four cemeteries — Tzedakah relies only on solicitations to fill its coffers.

Sponsoring an event is the best way to raise funds, Schulman said. This year, Tzedakah organized a summer golf tournament on the Uruguayan coast, two Israeli orchestra concerts and a gala dinner for donors.

One of its strongest draws is a young donors dinner that targets recent college graduates. Tzedakah also plans fund-raising campaigns that tie in with Passover and Rosh Hashanah.

Considering the obstacles to attracting substantial charitable donations in Argentina, Schulman cites the small number of Jewish families with large fortunes and stresses that there simply is no established culture of giving in the community.

But Schulman says the country's recent financial crisis motivated Argentine Jews across the religious spectrum to help each other. A JDC survey conducted in 2004 and the first three months of 2005 shows that 53 percent of Jews in the Greater Buenos Aires area made a charitable donation to the Jewish community in the past year, including 38 percent who donated money. Others gave food, clothing, mattresses and other materials or performed volunteer work.

According to the poll, donor numbers from among the lower, middle and upper classes were almost equal.

Some 40,000 of Argentina's 250,000 or so Jews currently live below the poverty level, which is defined as a monthly income of less than \$300 for a family of four.

Seventy percent of Jewish parents who want to enroll their families in Jewish schools or community centers can't afford to do so without outside assistance — a sign that there are few potential large donors in the community.

"Contributions from local donors are certainly increasing. But in comparison with the need, local funds do not allow us to complete our mission," Chabad-Lubavitch's Argentine director, Tzvi Grunblatt, told JTA.

According to Grunblatt, Chabad projects received \$600,000 from local Jews in 2004, but the organization's annual budget was \$4 million.

"We're educating people, and slowly the culture of charitable giving is widening," he said. "We're going through a mentality change."

The drive to support the community with more locally donated funds can be seen in a new, large-scale construction project that got under way last year: A total of \$3.4 million was raised from 50 large donors to create a new Jewish home for the elderly.

After learning that Jews make up 60 percent of the inhabitants of private, non-Jewish homes for the elderly in Buenos Aires, the Argentine Jewish businessman Jorge Fainzaig started devoting four

hours daily to raising money for another Jewish facility.

Two of Buenos Aires' three existing Jewish elderly homes are located on the city's outskirts. One is filled to capacity and another, which needs extensive renovation, is located in an outlying area with a rising crime rate.

Envisioned as a self-sustaining entity with the capacity to

house 295 elderly Jews and host 150 more for daily activities, the new senior living and community center will be located close to Buenos Aires neighborhoods with large Jewish populations and will be easily accessible by public transportation.

Convinced that the project is "truly needed and transparently planned," Fainzaig, 59, started knocking on doors to raise the \$10 million needed to open the home and cover operating costs for its first year.

"I'm surprised and moved. The magnitude of the project and the local funds donated make this a historic milestone," he said.

According to Fainzaig, the average donor to the project is about 60 years old and may hope eventually to live in the new elderly home.

Seated in his office a few feet from Buenos Aires' main downtown square, Fainzaig is proud of how well the campaign has gone.

"Rabbis with the strongest local connections to fund-raising opened their address books to offer their donors' phone numbers to be part of the project," he said.

To Fainzaig, the effort's success isn't due just to the improvement in Argentina's economy in recent months, noting that fund-raising and giving to charity are key components of Jewish identity.

Fainzaig's family moved his father, Isaac, a Polish-born tailor, into a non-Jewish home for the elderly in 1990. Sensing that it wasn't the right environment for the family patriarch, after a few days they moved him back to his son's house, where he lived out his days.

"Thanks to Jewish support, Jews now will have a better chance," Fainzaig said.

'We're going through a mentality change.'

Tzvi Grunblatt

Chabad Lubavitch's Argentine director

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

NEWS IN BRIEF

WORLD

Second Jewish victim named

A second Jewish victim of the London terror bombings was named. Miriam Hyman, 31, is believed to have died in the bus bombing in Tavistock Square.

Minutes before the explosion, the freelance photo editor had phoned her father, John, from Kings Cross Station to assure him that she was all right.

Susan Levy, 53, a mother of two, was the first fatality named by police Monday. She had been traveling to work from her home in Hertfordshire when a bomb exploded on the packed subway train near Kings Cross Station.

Hopes are now fading for Israeli Anat Rosenberg, 39, who was thought to be traveling on the same bus as Hyman.

At least 52 people are known to have died in the synchronized attacks, which police believe were carried out by four British-born Muslim suicide bombers.

MIDDLE EAST

Another death in suicide bombing

A fourth person died from wounds suffered in Tuesday's Palestinian suicide attack in Netanya.

Three of the victims — a 31-year-old woman and two teenage girls — died outright in the attack outside a shopping mall in the coastal city. A fourth woman, aged 50, succumbed Wednesday to wounds sustained in the bombing.

At least 30 people were hurt. The White House condemned the bombing and demanded that the Palestinian Authority fulfill its pledges to dismantle terrorist organizations.

P.A. President Mahmoud Abbas condemned the bombing, which was carried out by Islamic Jihad, as "idiotic" and said those behind it would be punished.

Israel to share info with Britain

An Israeli official said the country would increase intelligence cooperation with Britain in the wake of the July 7 terrorist attacks in London.

On Wednesday, Reuters quoted an aide to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon as saying the ties would be heightened.

The aide added that similar action has been taken with other countries hit by Islamic terrorism.

Israel's northern peace partners?

Syria said it wanted to partner with Lebanon for any peace talks with Israel.

"The Syrian and Lebanese tracks have not separated and the reason is very clear," Syria's deputy foreign minister, Waleed Al-Mualem, told Syria's Al Thawra and Kuwait's al-Anbaa newspapers in a joint interview Wednesday. "When we negotiate with the Israeli enemy together we can achieve better results."

Syria ended its occupation of Lebanon under international pressure earlier this year, stirring speculation that Beirut might break with its longstanding policy and seek a separate peace deal with Israel.

But Mualem said that Lebanon would risk being ostracized in the Arab world if it did so.

Israel has conditioned peace talks on a crackdown by Syria and Lebanon on terrorists based in their territory.

Sharon to immigrants: We'll help you

Ariel Sharon promised to help a record number of North American immigrants who arrived in Israel.

"Life in Israel is not always easy, but you have our support and we

will help you in any way we can," the Israeli prime minister, speaking in a hangar at Ben-Gurion Airport, told the 500 immigrants who arrived Wednesday. "Aliyah is the primary goal of our government."

Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres, Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom and Zeev Bielski, chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel, also spoke to the group, which was also met by Israeli soldiers and the army's rabbinic band.

The flights from New York and Toronto were sponsored by Nefesh B'Nefesh and the Jewish Agency.

This is the first year since 1983 that more than 3,000 North American Jews will be making aliyah.

Jerusalem stabbers nabbed

Three Palestinians are suspected of trying to stab an Israeli in Jerusalem.

The three were arrested at a roadblock after a Jerusalem resident reported escaping a knife attack in the capital's Lifta neighborhood.

A knife was found in the suspects' car.

Abbas to ADL: Help me stop incitement

Mahmoud Abbas wants to re-establish a tripartite commission on incitement.

The Palestinian Authority president told an Anti-Defamation League delegation Tuesday that incitement is a problem among his people — and among Israelis as well.

The Palestinian-Israeli-American governmental commission monitoring incitement fell apart during the last intifada.

"He said he has been somewhat successful, but there's much to do," ADL National Director Abraham Foxman said.

Abbas also accepted an ADL offer to set up a committee of non-governmental organizations parallel to the tripartite commission.

Abbas told the ADL there also is much for him to do in establishing security.

NORTH AMERICA

U.S. officials finger Syria, Iran in attack

Bush administration officials suggested that Syria and Iran may be linked to a suicide bomb attack in Israel.

The attack Tuesday in Netanya killed four Israelis.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said that though he did not know of a direct link to Iran, "We know that Iran has been assisting Hezbollah and other organizations and moving equipment and people down through Damascus into Beirut and down into positions where they can attack Israel for years and years and years and years."

Iranian officials accused Rumsfeld of trying to "cover up" U.S. failures in the region with the accusation.

Condoleezza Rice, the U.S. secretary of state, condemned the attack and said it was "essential that the Syrian government end its support for terrorist organizations, particularly those which are headquartered and harbored in Damascus, such as the Palestinian Islamic Jihad."

Russian overtakes French

More Canadian Jews speak Russian than French.

The Canadian Jewish News reported this week that Russian had surpassed French as the second most-popular language among Canadian Jews, according to an analysis of the 2001 national census.

Russian is the mother tongue of 7 percent of Canadian Jews, or 26,500 people, while French is the mother tongue of 22,125 Canadian Jews.

English is the mother tongue of 70 percent of the community, or 260,500.