

IN THE NEWS

Palestinian group kills Arafat nephew

Palestinians assassinated Yasser Arafat's nephew, a Gaza strongman.

The Popular Resistance Committees, a coalition of Palestinian terrorist splinter groups, claimed responsibility for the killing of Moussa Arafat in his Gaza City home on Wednesday morning.

Arafat, a nephew of the late Palestinian leader, recently was deposed as Gaza security chief after several armed factions accused him of corruption, but he continued to wield influence on the street.

His son also was abducted in the predawn attack.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, who is under pressure to demonstrate that he can rein in chaos in Gaza as Israel completes its withdrawal from the territory, vowed to bring the assassins to justice.

Israel to complete Gaza Strip withdrawal

The final stage of Israel's Gaza Strip withdrawal will begin Monday.

Israel's interministerial committee on the pullout announced Wednesday that ground forces would begin leaving Gaza on Sept. 12 and complete the move within three days.

As part of the redeployment, Israel will hand over security control of Gaza's southern border to Egypt.

Israel's Cabinet is expected to approve the final withdrawal at its weekly session Sunday.

Greece vows to block gathering

Greece vowed to block an upcoming meeting of far-right extremists.

Greek Jewish groups, as well as international Jewish organizations, have been lobbying to halt the event.

However, organizers of the Sept. 16-18 event vowed it would still take place.

WORLD REPORT

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As students return to campus, activists prepare a new approach

By CHANAN TIGAY

NEW YORK (JTA) — At the University of Illinois, Arab students refuse to let an Israeli into their Arabic language course, forcing the cancellation of the class.

At the University of Florida, an Arab affairs club puts out an essay claiming that Zionists fall in line behind American political candidates who will be "of use to the bandit state."

At the University of Alabama, Arab students distribute a list of "Zionist war crimes in Palestine."

Sound familiar?

These events occurred more than 30 years ago. Recounting them now, though — after the Palestinian intifada engendered heated debate and charged rhetoric at U.S. universities — shows that the challenges facing the pro-Israel community on American college campuses today aren't new.

That, at least, is a finding of a new survey of Israel-related trends, patterns and events on American college campuses.

But while much remains the same, the Israel on Campus Yearbook 2005, to be released Thursday by the Israel on Campus Coalition, also posits that for Israel to compete in the campus milieu — which is saturated with interesting and engaging opportunities for students — its message must be tailored to reach the modern, "millennial" student.

"Other generations have spoken in large groups, in protest rallies," says Wayne Firestone, executive director of the ICC, an umbrella organization of some 30 pro-Israel groups. "This generation has a voice

via blogs, a voice via Web sites. They are their own editors, filmmakers, opinion makers."

"Where people used to have diaries to record their secrets," he adds, "this generation sends e-mails to the university president and writes about relationships and spring-break travel on personal blogs."

Indeed, the yearbook says, the so-called millennial students differ from the Baby Boomers and Gen-Xers who preceded them in significant ways: They choose the music they want to listen to and download it to their iPods and they get their news on the Internet and from Comedy Central's "The Daily Show," a self-declared "fake news" program.

Most of the class of 2005 entered college just before or after the seminal terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. They're savvy when it comes to sex, drugs and violence, and that savvy extends to how they approach on-campus pro-Israel activity, the report contends.

"Cookie-cutter solutions, mass-appeal type of campaigns and messages are going to fail with this generation," Firestone says. "You've got to look at this bottom-up instead of top-down, and the best people to do this are student leaders on campus."

Those familiar with campus activism say today's student leaders understand their campuses and what makes their particular school unique. They've realized that what works at one school may differ from what's needed in another.

Students have begun taking a more customized approach to pro-Israel campus advocacy, as well as stressing a strategic

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FOCUS
ON
ISSUES

■ *Pro-Israel activists seek a new approach to reach college students*

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approach that burnishes Israel's overall image rather than reacting on a case-by-case basis to each anti-Israel poster or conference that pops up.

The students "hold the key to our success," says Aaron Goldberg, the ICC's associate director. "Students understand their campuses and they're activist, they want to institute change. We have to find mechanisms to support them and foster that activity."

One such mechanism is the new Schusterman Israel Scholar Awards, given by the American-Israel Cooperative Enterprise to a few students pursuing academic careers in Israel studies.

Another one is "Israel Starts With i," a new ICC initiative being launched Thursday at an event at New York University.

ICC leaders won't go into details about the new initiative yet, but say it will involve several Israel-related "mega-events" at universities throughout the country; Israel trips for student leaders that stress "advanced advocacy" and Israel's accomplishments in realms beyond the military; the launch of a new Web site, www.israelstartswithi.org; and efforts to allow campuses and students to customize initiatives that promote and enhance relationships between U.S. universities and Israel.

The report highlights several customized student projects in the past year to promote Israel's image on campus. Among them was a documentary film made by Duke University student Maital Guttman that focused on young Israelis

preparing to enlist in the army. The film was intended to change the perception of Israel at Duke by examining similarities and differences between Israeli and American youth.

"People are looking for a different way to understand the conflict," Guttman says. "The film shows a more complicated and more real side of Israel."

The documentary has been screened several times at Duke, and will be shown on other campuses across the country as part of the new ICC initiative.

The yearbook also includes a calendar documenting dozens of Israel-related activities that took place on campus during the 2004-2005 academic year. Among them are student-sponsored efforts to combat moves to divest from Israel and "Let Our Students Go!" — an ICC project urging activists to protest barriers to study-abroad programs in Israel.

It further puts campus Israel activism in historical context and looks at specific challenges facing Israel on U.S. colleges, including an academic environment often at odds with or even hostile to pro-Israel sentiments.

While there is a need to tailor efforts to specific campuses, "the anti-Israel onslaught is fairly monolithic," says Charles Jacobs, president of the David Project, a pro-Israel group that produced a controversial documentary alleging intimidation of Jewish students by pro-Palestinian professors at Columbia University.

"The combination of factors on that campus — egregious behavior on the

part of professors, courageous Jewish students willing to speak out, a city with an aggressive press, a strong Jewish community, and more — will not be found everywhere," he says.

"Still, the anti-Israel campaign on campuses has general characteristics: It is nationally or even internationally organized; it is based on the same set of lies and misunderstandings; anti-Israel feelings are embedded in the American professoriate nationwide; and the radical-left/Muslim alliance is the engine," he says.

The intifada roused Jewish professionals,

says Lisa Eisen, chair of the ICC's steering committee and program director of the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation. The foundation founded the coalition in 2002 along with Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life and a larger network of organizations.

"When the intifada began, the watchword was, 'the campuses are on fire,' " she says. "The fact is, they weren't on fire. There were fires, and students were really not very prepared."

"It was a real wake-up call when the intifada started that we had not done our homework with our young people," she adds.

Since then, Eisen says, projects like Guttman's have been having the desired effect, and the perception of Israel on campus has improved. That's of extraordinary import, she says.

"All of the future leaders, the future policy makers and opinion shapers in this country, their opinions are being forged on college campuses right now," she says. "We need to work with them, to educate them, to connect them to Israel right now." ■

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Executive director, Israel on Campus Coalition

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Immigrant who set self on fire dies

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A U.S.-born Israeli who set himself on fire to protest the Gaza Strip withdrawal died.

Baruch Ben-Menachem, a recent American immigrant, doused himself in lighter fluid and then lit himself at his Hebrew-language learning center in Jerusalem last week.

He succumbed to his injuries Tuesday.

At the time of the self-immolation, medics who arrived to treat Ben-Menachem quoted him as saying that he had acted "in memory of Gush Katif," a reference to the main Gaza settlement bloc that had just been evacuated. ■

Second Supreme Court vacancy raises stakes

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The nation's eyes were supposed to turn this week to the confirmation hearings of Judge John Roberts for the U.S. Supreme Court. But changing circumstances have raised the stakes and narrowed the timetable for influencing the future of the high court.

Roberts' hearings were to have commenced Tuesday, but were postponed after the death of Chief Justice William Rehnquist on Saturday.

And even when Roberts does face the Senate Judiciary Committee as a nominee for chief justice next week — President Bush nominated him Monday to replace Rehnquist as the court's leader — America's attention will likely still be focused on the Gulf Coast region, and the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

The story-line changes over the Labor Day weekend have left some Jewish groups pondering, with the rest of the nation, how they can be most effective in steering the future direction of the court.

The new vacancy, as well as Roberts' possible ascension to chief justice, "dramatizes the seriousness of what the debate of the future of the court is really about," said Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

This is particularly true for those who view Roberts' policy positions as too conservative for the court. The chief justice holds limited power over the other eight justices, but does control who authors opinions when he is in the majority. That could affect how opinions are written, and the jurisprudence made by them. In addition, the chief justice wields considerable influence over the entire federal court system.

The future of the court, analysts said, will largely depend now not on Roberts, but on whom Bush names to replace Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, who will remain on the court until a replacement is confirmed. While Rehnquist was a reliable conservative who is now being replaced by a conservative, O'Connor is viewed as the moderate core of the court.

Replacing her with another conservative would shift the court squarely to the right on issues such as the separation of church and state and abortion rights; replacing her with a moderate would keep

the court close to where it has been in recent years.

"It opens the door up for President Bush to look at this next vacancy and put in a more moderate candidate," said Phyllis Snyder, president of the National Council of Jewish Women, which opposes Roberts.

Liberal Jewish leaders are quietly expressing hope that Attorney General Alberto Gonzales will be named to replace O'Connor. Gonzales has been criticized in some Jewish camps for his work as White House counsel on the encampment of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, but he is seen as more moderate than other jurists Bush considered for the high court earlier this summer.

Conservatives have raised strong concerns over Gonzales, but have been quieted by Bush, a close friend.

"He has said some of the right things, so I think people are more hopeful than they have any real reason to be," one Jewish leader said of Gonzales. "But it's all speculation and it's all impossible to know for sure."

Jewish groups did not appear to be planning new advocacy campaigns. Many Jewish groups — including the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League — choose not to endorse or oppose presidential nominations, and have sent letters to lawmakers, stressing questions they would like asked about Roberts' record.

The AJCommittee's letter, released Tuesday, urged lawmakers to probe Roberts on numerous issues regarding the separation of church and state, including government funding of religious activity and school prayer.

The Reform movement was scheduled to vote on Sept. 13 on whether to oppose Roberts. The movement have criticized his record at length, but wanted to wait until after his hearings before taking a position. The group's meeting in New York, however, now is scheduled for the day Roberts' hearings begin. The decision has not been made whether the vote will be postponed.

"We really thought the proper thing to do was to wait and see what comes out of the hearings before making a decision," Saperstein said. "This is a person who is quite qualified, but raises many questions on fundamental rights."

On the other side, some concerns have been raised about lawmakers disapproving of Roberts, a Catholic, because of his strong Christian beliefs. The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty suggested Monday in a full-page ad in *The New York Times* that a religious test for nominees would bring the United States back

to the 19th century, when Catholics were thought to be loyal to the pope, and Jews were seen as untrustworthy.

Roberts' supporters said they wanted more Jewish groups to speak out against this type of response to the nominee. Thus far, only the Orthodox Union has sent a letter of concern over religious tests.

"I'm very concerned," said a Republican Senate aide, who asked not to be identified. "If you don't do it to protect the other guys, it's going to happen to you."

Meanwhile, much of the nation's attention has shifted to Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath. The news media is more focused on the destruction along the Gulf Coast, and it is unclear whether the press will cover Roberts' confirmation hearings as intently as one might have expected.

Jewish groups have also been focusing so much attention on the hurricane's aftermath in recent days, limiting resources available for monitoring the court. Mark Waldman, director of public policy for the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, said he had been working on providing aid and other support "non-stop" in recent days, and had not focused on the court developments.

Saperstein, who said he spent two hours on a Hurricane Katrina conference call Tuesday, said he believed his movement's membership can focus on both issues.

"When issues of fundamental values and rights are at stake, our congregations really have the energy to convey their strong feelings and engage on these issues," he said.

'It opens the door up for President Bush to look at this next vacancy and put in a more moderate candidate.'

Phyllis Snyder

President, National Council of Jewish Women

BEHIND
THE
HEADLINES

NEWS IN BRIEF

WORLD

Europeans celebrate Jewish culture

Some 120,000 people attended events for the sixth annual European Day of Jewish Culture. Sunday's events were held in 260 towns and cities in 26 countries, according to figures released Wednesday.

In Italy alone, some 45,000 visitors attended activities in 40 localities — about 10,000 more people than the country's total Jewish population.

Jewish Culture Day is held each year on the first Sunday in September.

Synagogues, Jewish cemeteries and other sites of Jewish heritage are opened to the public, and exhibits, concerts, performances and other events are held.

This year's theme was Jewish cuisine and heritage.

Tallinn to get new synagogue

A ceremony to mark the ground-breaking of Estonia's first new synagogue in almost a century will be held later this month.

The Sept. 19 ceremony will be held in the country's capital of Tallinn.

The presidents of Estonia and Israel, Arnold Ruytel and Moshe Katsav, are expected to attend the ceremony for the synagogue, which also will serve as a Jewish community center.

According to the president of the Jewish community of Estonia, Boris Oks, construction of the shul and JCC is slated to be completed within eight months.

Estonia is believed to be the only E.U. member nation that does not have a synagogue building.

Major funding for the project comes from Alexander Bronstein, a Moscow-based entrepreneur and Estonian native.

The facility is a project of the Federation of Jewish Communities of the C.I.S. and is being supported by an additional grant from the U.S.-based Rohr Family Foundation of Miami, the federation's major partner in building synagogues and community centers across the former Soviet Union.

Estonia, with 1.4 million people, is home to some 3,000 Jews.

Britain spied on Jews

Newly released documents reveal that the British government monitored some Jewish groups in the 1950s over fears that they could be infiltrated by Communists. Papers from the National Archives showed that the British intelligence agency MI5 investigated the Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women, tapping phone calls and observing public rallies. Though the suspicions turned out to be unfounded, the government believed the group's opposition to fascism could make it a prime target for Communist agitators. They also investigated another organization, the Jewish Defence Committee, which was set up to combat anti-Semitism by the Board of Deputies, the representative body of British Jewry.

Holocaust trial delayed in France

A French court postponed the trial of a politician on trial for denying the Holocaust.

The criminal court of Lyon decided Tuesday to postpone the trial of Bruno Gollnisch, the No. 2 man to National Front leader Jean-Marie Le Pen.

Gollnisch is on trial for contesting crimes against humanity over comments he made last October questioning the way the Nazis used gas chambers.

The delay was put in place to allow the European Parliament to grant Gollnisch's request for parliamentary immunity before the trial begins.

The new trial is slated for Nov. 29.

MIDDLE EAST

Rabbi blames Katrina on withdrawal

A leading Israeli rabbi said Hurricane Katrina was God's way of punishing President Bush for supporting the Gaza Strip withdrawal.

"Bush was behind the Gush Katif expulsion," Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, founder of the powerful religious political movement Shas, said Wednesday in his weekly sermon, referring to the main Gaza settlement bloc.

Katrina "was God's retribution," Yosef said.

Noting that many of the hurricane's victims were African-American, Yosef suggested they were punished for being irreligious.

"What, Kushites study Torah?" he asked rhetorically, using a derogatory Hebrew term for people of African descent.

"The Almighty said, 'Let's bring a tsunami and drown them.'"

Yosef regularly has stirred outrage in Israel for comments targeting Arabs, Muslims, left-wing politicians, and more recently, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Israel says shelling possible

Israel hinted that it could respond in kind to future Palestinian shelling from the Gaza Strip.

"We also have mortars," the army's chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz, told the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on Wednesday when asked about cross-border mortar fire from Gaza.

Halutz recommended that Israel "reassess" its responses to Palestinian terrorism from Gaza after it completes its withdrawal from the area next week.

Previous military actions have been pinpoint ground and air strikes, but Israeli officials have suggested that artillery be incorporated to avoid risking personnel in Gaza in the future.

Tulkarm clash account challenged

An Israeli newspaper accused the army of killing five unarmed Palestinians during a West Bank raid.

According to Wednesday's expose in Ha'aretz, the army gave a false account when it said undercover troops who raided Tulkarm last month shot five terrorists who had opened fire.

Ha'aretz said two of the dead Palestinians were indeed on Israel's wanted list but were unarmed at the time of the incident, while the other three fatalities were teenagers with no connection to terrorism.

Responding to the report, Israel's military chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz, vowed to mount an investigation.

NORTH AMERICA

Rabbis protest Gaza withdrawal

Five Canadian rabbis released an open letter to Ariel Sharon protesting his actions related to the Gaza withdrawal.

Noting that the Toronto community is usually one of the most supportive of Israel in the Diaspora, the rabbis wrote that they felt compelled to protest what they called the government's lack of respect for free speech and human rights regarding Gaza settlers, as well as its alleged failure to arrange fair compensation for them.

The rabbis, including Dovid Schochet, president of the city's Orthodox rabbinical council, called on the Israeli prime minister "to respect the rights of each and every citizen of Israel and to uphold the dignity of the nation he has been appointed to lead."