

IN THE NEWS

Three Israelis killed in West Bank

Palestinian terrorists killed three Israelis in a roadside ambush in the West Bank.

The Al-Aksa Brigade claimed responsibility for Sunday's drive-by shooting, which targeted hitchhikers waiting for a ride at the Gush Etzion junction.

The gunmen's car then sped southward, toward Hebron.

Settler leader Shaul Goldstein told Israel Radio that the attack proved that the eight-month-old Palestinian truce is a sham.

Al-Aksa is a terrorist wing of Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah faction.

Karzai considers Sharon meeting

The president of Afghanistan said he is willing to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Hamid Karzai told an Israeli newspaper last Friday he believes the time is right for Afghanistan to formally acknowledge Israel, following Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and Pakistan's opening of dialogue with the Jewish state.

"The times have changed," Karzai told Yediot Achronot. "Pakistan took a step toward Israel. We will too."

Mark Regev, a spokesman for Israel's Foreign Ministry, called the comments a "positive sign."

Israeli soldiers kill Islamic Jihad leader

Israeli troops killed a Palestinian terrorist in a West Bank clash.

The fugitive, said to be a leader in Jenin of Islamic Jihad, was shot dead Sunday after opening fire at an Israeli army patrol south of the city.

Earlier, troops arrested five Hamas terrorists in ongoing West Bank sweeps.

Due to Sukkot, the JTA World Report will not be published on Wednesday, Oct. 19, and Thursday, Oct. 20.

WORLD REPORT

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Delegation: American Jews must help improve Israeli Arabs' status

By GIL SEDAN

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A small group of American Jewish leaders that came to Israel recently is determined to put the issue of Israel's Arab minority higher on the American Jewish agenda.

In an interview at a Haifa hotel, Rabbi Brian Lurie of San Francisco, the force behind the initiative, spoke calmly but could hardly hide his emotions.

Time is running out, he warned: Unless drastic action is taken to equalize the standard of living of Israeli Arabs and Jews, Arab frustration could endanger the country's security.

The Jewish-Arab Task Force met Sept. 20 for a day of discussions with politicians and experts to discuss ways to make Arab citizens feel more equal. The meeting, organized by the New Israel Fund, will be followed by a meeting in New York in November to take action in the American Jewish community on behalf of Israel's Arabs.

"We are trying to create an umbrella organization that looks at the Israeli Arab issue as a priority issue," Lurie said.

The specifics of the plans are still unclear, but, according to Larry Garber, the New Israel Fund's executive director, they should include more funds to minorities in Israel, a broad educational program about why the effort is necessary and "a dialogue with Israeli leaders on these issues."

Lurie initiated the idea several years ago, but now is giving it an additional push.

Helping Israeli Arabs was a cause celebre among many American Jewish groups in the late 1990s, but it receded as a priority

after the Palestinian intifada began in September 2000.

Israeli Jews were shaken when Arab citizens rioted in solidarity with the Palestinians shortly after the intifada began. A number of Israeli Arabs also were involved in terrorist attacks, raising Jewish fears that the community could serve as a fifth column for Palestinians who do not accept the Jewish state.

But Lurie, a former head of the United Jewish Appeal, says his conviction that more needs to be done on Jewish-Arab relations has intensified since the intifada began.

"The October 2000 riots were a wake-up call," he said.

Also attending the meetings in Israel were Steve Schwager, the executive vice president of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee; Harriet Weiss of the UJA-Federation of New York; Jeffrey Solomon, the president of the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies; Ami Nahshon, the president of the Abraham Fund; and Garber.

The task force spent the day listening to briefings from Israeli legislators, jurists, leaders of the Islamic Movement and civil-rights groups such as Sikkuy.

Some of the guests already are involved in projects to improve Israeli Arabs' standard of living. But no one has any illusions: Task force participants are aware of the fact that it will take considerable time and effort to recruit American Jewish organizations — and public opinion — for work with the Arab community.

Since its establishment 26 years ago, the

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FOCUS
ON
ISSUES

■ A U.S. Jewish group sounds the alarm to help Israel's Arab population

Continued from page 1

New Israel Fund has devoted 25 percent of its funds to Israel's minorities. The challenge has been to reach a broader spectrum of American leadership and convince them of the importance of the issue.

"Among our supporters there is an appreciation that this is a crucial issue, but we still need to reach a broader spectrum," Garber told JTA.

The need to face Israeli Arab issues has become more urgent in recent months due to growing public debate about the "demographic danger" inherent in Arabs' growing proportion of the Israeli population.

The task force was briefed by Rabbi Michael Melchior, deputy minister in the Prime Minister's Office, who warned that talk of the "demographic threat" is used to disenfranchise Israeli Arabs.

"The moment you refer to Israel's Arabs and the Arab womb as a demographic threat, you can no longer treat them fairly and equally," Melchior told JTA.

He added: "If we grant them rights as individuals and as a community this could, in fact, strengthen the Jews in this country. My approach to the issue is moral rather than demographic."

Some insist that fully equal rights for Israeli Arabs must be accompanied by equal responsibilities on the Arabs' part, such as national service instead of military service.

Arnon Sofer of Haifa University has said that the number of Israeli Arabs

will reach 2 million in 2020 and the Jewish majority will shrink to 65 percent, compared to its present 80 percent.

Knesset member Avigdor Lieberman, head of the far-right Israel, Our Home Party, has made demography a key issue of his platform. Lieberman says Israel should exchange territory with the Palestinian Authority so that blocs of Arab villages along Israel's border with the West Bank will be turned

over to P.A. control in exchange for Israeli control of Jewish settlements in the West Bank.

If boundaries are redrawn to exclude Israeli Arabs, "it's the beginning of the Arab-rein concept," a variation of the Nazis' wish to have an area that was Judenrein, or clear of Jews, Lurie said.

"Then what — are we a democracy? This is a frightening reality," he said.

However, advocates of plans like Lieberman's note that it conforms with the historic principle of separating Jewish and Arab populations into two states for two peoples, one rationale behind the recent eviction of Israeli settlers from the Gaza Strip. All involved understand that a future Palestinian state will contain no Jews, even if it means uprooting tens of thousands of Jews from their homes.

Participants in the discussions heard data from Shuli Dichter, co-director of the Sikkuy Association for the Advancement of Civil Equality, illustrating al-

leged Israeli discrimination against Arab citizens. For example:

- An Arab family is three times more likely to be poor than a Jewish family;
- Only 63 percent of Arab men aged 45-54 are in the workforce, compared to 87 percent among Jewish men of the same age;
- In Arab towns, specialty medical clinics serve an average of 29,500 residents, compared with 15,500 residents per clinic in

The average American Jew does not even know that 20 percent of Israel's citizens are non-Jews.

Larry Garber
Executive Director, New Israel Fund

Jewish towns; and

- Only 1.5 percent of government allocations to nonprofits go to Arab groups that help the poor.

Arab participants in the meetings expressed interest in the involvement of American Jewry on their behalf. That represented a change from the past, when Arabs were hostile to American involvement in the region, Lurie said.

Is the American Jewish public receptive to supporting the Arab population in Israel?

"That's a difficult question," Garber said. "Parts of the American Jewish community are disconnected from Israel; others focus on security issues. I think we should focus on the leaders."

But not only them.

"The ignorance of American Jewish public opinion is enormous," Lurie said. "The average American Jew does not even know that 20 percent of Israel's citizens are non-Jews."

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Colorado inmate to get kosher meals

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A Jewish prisoner in Colorado, whose kosher meals were revoked for a year as punishment for a minor offense, had his rights restored last week.

The move came after the American Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit on Timothy Sheline's behalf Oct. 11.

The lawsuit charged Department of Corrections officials in Colorado Springs with violating Sheline's First Amendment rights, as well as federal statutes protecting prisoners' religious practices, for taking

away his kosher meals after a guard caught him pocketing two packages of butter and salad dressing from his food tray.

According to the lawsuit, Sheline has been eating only what he can buy from the prison canteen, and has lost 30 pounds since April.

The ACLU praised the department for "quickly taking action" in the case, but noted that the decision does not address a second issue in the lawsuit challenging the department's policy of revoking religious diets for "unjustifiable reasons."

U.N. request on Palestinians piques interest

By CHANAN TIGAY

NEW YORK (JTA) — On the surface, there's nothing special about a recent U.N. committee request to renew the mandate of divisions that promote the Palestinian agenda at the United Nations.

But some Jewish groups are watching how U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the General Assembly react to the annual request. They see it as a barometer of how serious the United Nations is about reform — and about institutionalizing an improved atmosphere for Israel.

The request from the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to look at the mandates of the Division of Palestinian Affairs and the Special Information Program on the Question of Palestine came on the heels of last month's U.N. World Summit, where world leaders signed on to a document calling for significant U.N. reform.

THIS WEEK

MONDAY

■ Judge T.S. Ellis, presiding over the case against two former American Israel Public Affairs Committee staffers on charges of accepting classified information, holds a closed hearing on whether the government may withhold wiretapped recordings from the defense.

THURSDAY

■ President Bush meets with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in Washington to discuss moving forward on the Palestinian-Israeli peace process. Abbas wants assurances from Bush about getting Israel to ease movement for Palestinians within Palestinian areas and across borders. Bush is likely to press Abbas to crack down on terrorist groups.

FRIDAY

■ The Holy Land Ecumenical Foundation holds its annual conference in Silver Spring, Md., through Saturday. The conference focuses on helping Christians "in crisis" in Israel, the Palestinian areas and Jordan. The organization has a history of tough criticism of Israel, while holding back on Arab authorities.

SUNDAY

■ Chaim Yavin, the veteran Israeli TV news anchor, screens his controversial film, "Land of the Settlers," in Washington. The documentary is the culmination of two years of interviews with Jewish settlers in the West Bank, and is harshly critical of their actions and beliefs.

"Has Kofi Annan been given the power to organize his own house?" wondered Amy Goldstein, director of U.N. affairs at B'nai B'rith International. "If he can do it for everything else but the Middle East, then it is absolutely illegitimate. That would just demonstrate that the U.N. is signaling out Israel and the Middle East for special treatment which basically is anti-Semitic."

Israel recently has undertaken a series of steps aimed at increasing its role at the United Nations. Israel's U.N. ambassador, Dan Gillerman, last month submitted Israel's first-ever candidacy for the Security Council. Israel also recently proposed its first U.N. resolution.

The Israeli mission and U.S. Jewish organizations hope the 30-year-old Palestinian-related committees will be shut down. Goldstein sees them as "the institutionalization of the Zionism = Racism resolution," the infamous 1975 resolution that stood until 1991.

As part of the U.N.'s management reform, Annan is looking to review General Assembly mandates that are more than five years old. Member states are negotiating over whether or not the secretary-general will be given the power to make recommendations with regard to the future of older mandates.

In the meantime, at least, the General Assembly itself has the final say, and most likely will take up the issue during its current session, which ends in December.

"Getting rid of these entities is very important," said Shai Franklin, director of international organizations for the World Jewish Congress.

But he added, "If the member states refuse to empower the secretary-general or if they refuse to do what they need to do in order to get rid of these entities, that doesn't mean that the secretary-general or his advisers are not genuine in their efforts to promote Middle East peace."

A U.N. spokesman told JTA that Annan would look into the mandates in the near future.

"That review will be done looking at what these bodies do and what their

usefulness is," said Farhan Haq. "There wouldn't be any specific comment about this or that body at this stage."

Annan "should be objective enough and courageous enough to say that the mandates are against the principles of the organization because they simply take sides in a conflict; they serve to adopt and promote the narrative of one side of the conflict," a diplomatic source at Israel's U.N. mission,

who asked to remain anonymous, told JTA. "And they really don't, I think, reflect the priorities of the organization in the 21st century."

Even if Annan does find that the committees have outlived their usefulness, the diplomatic source was skeptical that the General Assembly would adopt a recommendation to kill them.

"It is obviously a test case, but with some reservations," he said. "It's important to remember that there is a distinction to be made between the secretariat and membership" of the General Assembly.

At a moment when the United Nations is looking to bolster its credibility, it should break with the "business as usual" of anti-Israel activity, said Hillel Neuer, executive director of U.N. Watch in Geneva.

The Palestinian committees are part of a larger, systemic problem, he said.

"Kofi Annan ought to be at the forefront of exposing this obvious waste of U.N. resources, money that could be used for Palestinian development and humanitarian aid and is instead wasted on propaganda," he said. "Kofi Annan should be the first to speak out on this and ought to lead the rest of the General Assembly in moving forward, away from its ignoble past."

Gillerman has said that the committees cost the U.N. \$6 million annually. But Franklin noted that it's not a huge sum in the context of the U.N. budget.

"We're not looking to save money," he said. "It's the symbolism, and it's the idea that there is a U.N.-sponsored propaganda machine turning out material which undermines the efforts that the U.N. is on record as supporting." ■

'Has Kofi Annan been given the power to organize his own house?'

Amy Goldstein

B'nai B'rith International

NEWS IN BRIEF

WORLD

Pinter wins Nobel

British Jewish playwright Harold Pinter won the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Pinter, 75, has attributed some of the alienation and isolation that permeates his work to the anti-Semitism he experienced as a child in London's East End.

His works include "Betrayal," "The Homecoming" and "The Birthday Party," and his spare style — echoed in the works of David Mamet and a host of other playwrights — has spawned the adjective "Pinteresque."

Announcing Pinter's prize Oct. 13, the Swedish Academy said his writing "forces entry into oppression's closed rooms."

In recent years, Pinter has been an outspoken opponent of the Iraq war and a supporter of Mordechai Vanunu, the Israeli jailed for 18 years for revealing his country's nuclear secrets.

Paper: Israel, Vatican close to deal

Israel and the Vatican reportedly are close to an agreement on church properties in the Holy Land.

The Times of London reported Oct. 13 that the sides were readying the agreement in time for a visit by Israeli President Moshe Katsav to the Vatican next month.

The Times reports that Israel will hand over control of the reputed room of Jesus' last supper, in a building on Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

In return, a historic synagogue in Toledo, Spain, which became a church after the Inquisition, will be returned to Jewish use, the newspaper said.

Testimony tags 'Dr. Death'

An Israeli visiting Spain reportedly helped authorities track down a Nazi war criminal who has hidden in the country for years.

Spanish police expect the imminent arrest of Aribert Heim, whose notorious medical experiments on concentration camp inmates earned him the nickname "Dr. Death," in part thanks to the testimony of an Israeli who spotted the 91-year-old fugitive in Ibiza, Ha'aretz reported Sunday.

According to the newspaper, Heim, considered one of the two most-wanted Nazi war criminals still alive and at large, is believed to be living in the Costa Brava area.

Efraim Zuroff of the Simon Wiesenthal Center said there is concern that Heim, who eluded capture several times before despite a distinctive appearance that includes a facial scar, may have already slipped out of Spain.

Although he never completed medical studies, Heim served as an SS doctor at Mauthausen, Sachsenhausen and Buchenwald, killing hundreds of inmates.

Prague Jews to choose leadership

Elections for the Prague Jewish community's 25-seat Parliament will be held Nov. 6.

Once votes are tallied, the winners will choose a chairman.

More than 100 members of the community have submitted their candidacies, including Tomas Jelinek, the former chairman who was ousted in an extraordinary meeting last November.

Jelinek does not accept the legitimacy of the ouster.

MIDDLE EAST

Palestinian Authority claims crackdown

The Palestinian Authority announced it has stopped a wave of attacks by Gaza Strip terrorists against Israel.

In a report published Saturday, the Palestinian Authority Interior

Ministry said police foiled 17 attempted attacks since Israel completed its Gaza pullout on Sept. 12.

Police also confiscated 17 rockets and 75 bombs, and prevented seven attempts to smuggle in arms across the southern Gaza border from Egypt, the ministry said.

An Israeli official said Palestinian Authority efforts to rein in terrorism were welcome, but that Jerusalem would continue insisting on a full crackdown as required by the U.S.-led "road map" for peace.

General attacked at Western Wall

Worshippers at Jerusalem's Western Wall attacked a top Israeli army official who helped carry out the recent Gaza withdrawal.

Maj. Gen. Elazar Stern, head of the army's manpower branch, was assaulted last Friday night when he came in civilian dress to pray at the wall with his family.

Worshippers surrounded Stern, yelling insults and trying to prevent him from reaching the wall.

Police officers surrounded Stern as worshippers began throwing stones and other objects at him, Ha'aretz reported.

Stern was not hurt.

Celebrating Sukkot together

Jews and Christians convened to mark the beginning of Sukkot in Jerusalem.

More than 2,000 Israeli Jews and local Christians joined thousands of international visitors Sunday for a gala concert outside the Old City, an annual event for the festival.

Israel's Tourism Ministry plans to give the event's sponsor, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, an award for its work in helping draw tourists to the Holy Land.

NORTH AMERICA

Bush extends PLO office

President Bush extended a waiver that allows the PLO office in Washington to remain open.

Bush extended the waiver last Friday for six months, saying it is important to the national-security interests of the United States.

The Palestine Liberation Organization is banned from operating in the United States under a 1987 anti-terrorism statute, but successive presidents have waived the provision since the early 1990s.

Hitler reference gets candidate in hot water

Jewish groups criticized the Republican candidate for governor in Virginia for running an advertisement referring to the Holocaust.

The ad, run by Jerry Kilgore's campaign, features a father whose son and daughter-in-law were killed recently saying that Kilgore's Democratic opponent, Tim Kaine, doesn't think Hitler "would qualify for the death penalty."

B'nai B'rith and the Anti-Defamation League criticized the Kilgore commercial, with the latter group saying the ad, was "inappropriate and insensitive."

Rep. Eric Cantor, a Virginia Republican who is Jewish, backed Kilgore, saying he was not offended by the use of Hitler's name.

Hockey player sits out Yom Kippur

A professional hockey player sat out a game because of Yom Kippur.

Jeff Halpern, the captain of the Washington Capitals, sat out the team's Oct. 12 game against the Carolina Hurricanes.

"I'm not the most religious person in the world, but this is something my family has always observed," Halpern told The Washington Post.