



IN THE NEWS

Olmert clinches coalition

Ehud Olmert's Kadima Party joined forces with Shas, giving Kadima enough strength for an Israeli coalition government.

Kadima and the religious party signed a coalition deal Sunday, bringing 67 of the Knesset's 120 seats under the prime minister's control — a crucial majority for implementing his planned West Bank withdrawals. The new government is expected to be sworn in Thursday, after Yom Ha'atzmaut, Israel's Independence Day.

Kadima's other coalition partners so far are the Labor Party and pensioners' party, Gil. Shas is expected to get four Cabinet portfolios.

German Jewish leader Spiegel dies

The leader of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, Paul Spiegel, died Sunday. Spiegel, who was 68, had been hospitalized in Dusseldorf with cancer.

As the head of the council for the past several years, Spiegel represented one of Europe's largest Jewish populations, numbering more than 100,000 members.

In a statement, German Chancellor Angela Merkel remembered Spiegel as "an impressive personality, who campaigned with great passion and all his energy for a good future for the Jewish community in Germany."

Hamas softening stance?

Hamas may endorse an Arab League proposal for normalization with Israel.

Officials from the radical Islamic group said in weekend reports that while they had no intention of recognizing the Jewish state, they might accept the so-called 2002 "Saudi peace proposal."

Under the proposal, Israel would enjoy normalization with the Arab world if it withdraws from territories captured in the 1967 Six-Day War.

WORLD REPORT

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'Never again, again': Jewish groups and individuals fuel Darfur rallies

By RACHEL SILVERMAN and DAVID SILVERMAN

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Some, like Seattle resident Julie Margulies, 50, flew thousands of miles to the nation's capital to attend. Others, like high school student Adam Zuckerman, 18, from Portland, Maine, raised money to help bring friends — both Darfuri and Jewish — to Washington for the big day.

Toting signs of "Never again, again" and "Not on our watch," Jews representing Hillel groups and day schools, synagogues and youth groups, community centers, Hadassah chapters and all denominations came from around the country to the National Mall in Washington for Sunday's Save Darfur rally.

With the genocide in Darfur topping the Jewish community's national agenda, an unmistakable Jewish presence ran through Sunday's rally. Organized by the Save Darfur Coalition, a collection of 150 faith-based advocacy and humanitarian aid organizations initiated by two Jewish agencies, the roster of speakers included Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel; Ruth Messinger, president of the American Jewish World Service; and Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

Other speakers included political heavyweights such as Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), minority leader of the U.S. House of Representatives, and Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.); celebrities such as actor/director George Clooney, Olympic skater Joey Cheek and the Rev. Al Sharpton; and Sudanese representatives like Simon Deng, who recently walked from New York City to Washington to call attention to the situation in his homeland.

Their voices joined to oppose the genocide being waged by Arab militias against black Africans in a poor, desert-ridden region of Sudan known as Darfur. Since 2003, the government-backed militias have been decimating towns and raping, torturing and killing hundreds of thousands of Darfuris, leaving behind scorched earth.

Famine and disease are now endemic in the region, where refugees subsist in makeshift displaced persons camps. Officials in Chad nervously monitor the conflict, which they worry will spill over to their country.

The situation in Darfur, which some estimate has claimed more than 400,000 lives, constitutes the first time the U.S. government has recognized genocide while it is still occurring.

Those behind the Save Darfur Coalition say Sunday's rally aimed to galvanize a multinational peacekeeping force to stop the attacks and ensure that humanitarian aid can be delivered.

David Rubenstein, a coordinator of the coalition, elaborated on these goals in a memo to the White House that called for guaranteed access to food and medical aid in the region, a beefed-up force on the ground from the African Union, a more effective United Nations peacekeeping mission and a presidential envoy focused on Darfur.

Addressing the sea of faces in Washington, Saperstein challenged listeners to realize these goals.

"An 'A' for effort doesn't do it," he said. "Your legacies and ours will be measured not by efforts alone but by whether, in the end, we stop or fail to stop this genocide."

Jewish participants like Joseph Milgrom,

Continued on page 2

FOCUS
ON
ISSUES

■ Attendance at the Washington rally was estimated at some 75,000 people

Continued from page 1

92, a wheelchair-bound Holocaust survivor from suburban Maryland, found the message particularly salient because of the Holocaust.

"I was standing in line and they were sending people right, left, right, left," he said of his experiences in the Holocaust, the tears rolling down his cheeks. "I was sent to work. Everybody else in my family died."

Other Jews said their desire to participate came from a sense of social action rooted in Jewish tradition.

"Our halachah dictates that we help save lives," said Rebecca Stone, 23, who organized a fleet of six buses from Yeshiva University in New York City. "Apathy is really antithetical to Torah values."

For these reasons and others, Jewish participants turned up in droves Sunday under hot and sunny skies. Rally organizers reported Jewish representation from all major cities along the Eastern seaboard and from as far away as Wisconsin, Oregon and California.

Participants came from more than 90 synagogues in Washington. New York City contributed 100 buses; Boston, up to 25. Other substantial contingents hailed from Philadelphia, Baltimore, New Jersey and the New York City suburbs.

Rally Director Chuck Thies estimated the day's turnout at roughly 75,000 people.

Activism on Darfur has been a rallying cry among socially conscious Jews for months. In February, the issue topped the agenda of the Jewish Council for Public Af-

fairs' annual plenum, which sets national priorities for local Jewish community relations councils.

The American Jewish World Service also has taken a lead role, with Messinger making two trips to Darfur. The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum issued a genocide alert for Darfur even before the government did. The AJWS and the museum formed the Save Darfur Coalition in 2004.

The weekend's pre-rally lineup included a smattering of Jewish-led Darfur events. Last Friday morning, Messinger and JCFA's executive director, Steve Gutow, along with a slew of others, succeeded in getting arrested while protesting on the steps of the Sudanese Embassy.

Meanwhile, the Million Voices for Darfur campaign, also launched by the Save Darfur Coalition, deluged the White House on Sunday with 1 million handwritten and electronic postcards.

On Monday morning, volunteer lobbyists were to descend on Capitol Hill seeking intervention to stop the genocide.

Even Sudanese participants noticed a disproportionate Jewish presence at the rally and in relief efforts in general.

"The people in Darfur know very well and welcome the support of the American Jewish community," said Iessa Dahia, a Darfuri now living in Portland, Maine. "They know the Jewish community has been through that in the Holocaust. The Jewish community has said we cannot allow this to happen again. That's why they are here more than any other community."

Karlo Okoy, a Sudanese pastor living in Lakewood, Colo., echoed the sentiment.

"The present Sudanese killing is exactly the picture of Jewish killing in Germany. They feel the same pain, that's why they came heavily to help out the Sudanese community," he said. "We see that the American Jewish people helps us more than any other people or country in the world."

The Washington rally wasn't the only such event on Sunday, though it was by far the largest.

Other rallies were staged in Portland and Eugene, Ore.; St. Paul, Minn.; Austin, Texas; Tucson and Prescott, Ariz.; Boca

Raton, Fla.; San Francisco; Seattle; Somerville, N.J.; Toronto; and Boulder, Colo.

New York City also hosted a Dining for Darfur event Sunday, in which more than 60 participating restaurants donated 5 percent of sales to humanitarian relief efforts.

In San Francisco, the nation's second-largest Darfur rally kicked off in the morning with at least 2,000 people linking hands at a silent vigil on the Golden Gate Bridge. That was followed by an afternoon rally at the Presidio and a concert and fund-raiser at San Francisco's Temple Emanu-El.

As in Washington, Jewish groups took the lead in San Francisco, with major sponsors including the AJWS, the local JCRC and the Holocaust Center of Northern California.

More than 30 Bay Area Jewish congregations sent groups to the Presidio rally, representing every Jewish stream as well as several college Hillels and Chabad of Stanford University.

The master of ceremonies at the rally, Rabbi Henry Shreibman, West Coast director for advancement and outreach at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, told the crowd that two weeks ago the college divested \$20 million from its endowment fund representing companies that did business with the Sudanese government.

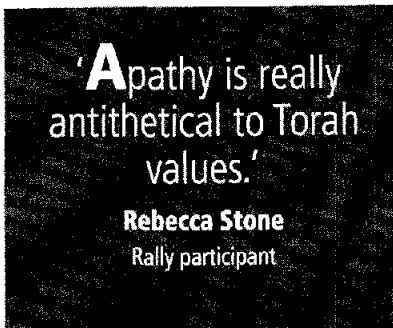
Stanford junior Elissa Test, organizer of the San Francisco rally, told JTA she was inspired by her Judaism and her grandfather's experience as a Holocaust survivor.

"The stories my grandfather taught me spoke of a need to care about each other in the world and do all we can to end the suffering that we see," she said. "Darfur is the site of today's most intense suffering, within the context of a genocide, and I think my grandfather would want me to live the lessons learned after the Holocaust."

It was a sentiment repeated by Jews around the country.

Said Judah Klausner, who came to the Washington rally from New York, "After Yom Hashoah, there is no better way to pay respect to the dignity of the Jewish people that suffered and died and were lost forever than to say, 'Not on our watch.'"

Correspondent Sue Fishkoff from San Francisco contributed to this report.



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Study: Orthodox ascendant among U.S. Jews

BY CHANAN TIGAY

NEW YORK (JTA) — The latest in a flurry of studies on young American Jews suggests that Orthodoxy will become a larger and more influential force in coming decades.

The study, which looked at the 1.5 million U.S. Jews between the ages of 18-39, found that Orthodox Jews comprise some 11 percent of all U.S. Jews, and 16 percent of 18-29 year-olds.

Among even younger Jews, the percentage of Orthodox is even higher, those behind the report speculate.

Further, the survey found, Orthodox Jews marry at a younger age, have more children and are more Jewishly engaged than their non-Orthodox counterparts.

Released April 27 by the American Jewish Committee as part of its centennial celebration, the findings confirm both anecdotal and quantitative evidence from previous reports. Taken together, the authors say, the facts strongly indicate an ascendant Orthodoxy among U.S. Jews.

"Younger Orthodox adults are likely to play increasingly important roles in organized Jewish life given their commitments, numbers and fertility patterns," said Steven Bayme, director of contemporary Jewish life at the AJCommittee, which commissioned the study by Ukeles Associates.

Looking at young American Jews and their connection to Judaism, the study — "Young Jewish Adults in the United States Today: Harbingers of the American Jewish Community of Tomorrow?" — found they can be broken down into four sub-categories: Orthodox; non-Orthodox inmarried couples with children; non-Orthodox Jewish singles and married couples without children; and intermarried couples, with and without children.

The first two categories make up about 25 percent of Jews aged 18-39, the study found. They are the most engaged with Judaism, the Jewish community and Israel.

The remaining three-fourths of young Jews are "much less engaged."

The study is based on current knowledge of Jews in the 18-39 age bracket. It analyzes data from a series of Jewish community studies by Ukeles Associates; the National Jewish Population Survey of 2000-01; and AJCommittee's national surveys of American Jewish opinion since 2000.

It's one of several studies of young Jews to come out in recent months, including surveys by Brandeis University; Reboot, a nonprofit group that promotes creative Jewish initiatives; sociologist Steven M. Cohen of Hebrew Union College-New York; and Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life.

"The future Jewish community is going to be shaped by paths not yet taken," said Jack Ukeles, president of Ukeles Associates. "While we don't have a

crystal ball, we do have a pretty good sense of how these behaviors are going to change the community."

The report found that the percentage of Orthodox Jews aged 18-29 is nearly double the percentage in the 30-39 age group. Considering that a higher percentage of Orthodox Jews marry, do so earlier and tend to have more children than other groups, this could indicate a growing role for Orthodoxy down the line.

More than half of all American Jews under the age of 40 are not married, the study found. That figure goes up if Orthodox Jews, who are more likely to be married by age 30, are excluded.

"The implications of this are staggering when one considers how much of the Jewish community's resources are dedicated to the family," Ukeles said.

Other notable findings include:

- The Holocaust is proving more important than Israel in positively affecting Jewish identity among many young Jews.

"The Holocaust continues to be pro-

foundly important to a broad spectrum of young Jews, yet Israel appears to be much less important in positively affecting Jewish identity," the study said.

However, among those who have traveled to Israel and among the Orthodox, Israel retains a powerful positive resonance, the report found.

- Warnings that young Jews are deserting in droves and that the community faces extinction are overblown. While young Jews are not joining conventional Jewish institutions and organizations as their pre-

decessors did, they still are connecting with Judaism — but more personally, informally and episodically.

Identification is "built around common interests and experiences," not organizations, Ukeles said.

The study raised questions about what impact the growing power of

the Orthodox community would have.

"As Jewish organizational planners think in terms of the community of the future, the more they try to appeal to that group that is most interested, it may find itself losing an even larger group that doesn't want that kind of intensity," Bayme said.

On the other hand, if organizations cater to the larger but less engaged group, they risk alienating the most committed Jews.

"Understanding the Jewish community of tomorrow is imperative if present-day Jewish organizations are to remain relevant," said Amb. Alfred Moses, chairman of the AJCommittee's centennial committee.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Much of the Jewish community's resources are dedicated to family, but a new study says that more than half of American Jews under the age of 40 are unmarried.

Bush declares Jewish heritage month

WASHINGTON (JTA) — President Bush proclaimed May as Jewish heritage month.

"As a nation of immigrants, the United States is better and stronger because Jewish people from all over the world have chosen to become American citizens," Bush said in his proclamation Friday. "Since arriving in 1654, Jewish Americans have

achieved great success, strengthened our country and helped shape our way of life.

Through their deep commitment to faith, family and community, Jewish Americans remind us of a basic belief that guided the founding of this nation: That there is an Almighty who watches over the affairs of men and values every life."

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Olmert blasts Ahmadinejad

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is a psychopath and an anti-Semite, Israel's Ehud Olmert said.

"Ahmadinejad speaks today like Hitler before taking power," Olmert told the German newspaper Bild on Saturday. "He speaks of the complete destruction and annihilation of the Jewish people."

The prime minister cited Ahmadinejad's repeated calls for Israel's destruction as a reason for the international community to curb the Iranian nuclear program.

"You see, we are dealing with a psychopath of the worst kind, with an anti-Semite," Olmert said. "God forbid that this man ever gets his hands on nuclear weapons, to carry out his threats."

Peretz faced Labor challenge

The leader of Israel's Labor Party faced down a rebellion from senior members of his faction over planned ministerial appointments.

Amir Peretz was given the power Sunday by a narrow 667-633 margin as the Labor Central Committee voted to appoint the Labor lawmakers of his choice to the seven ministerial portfolios which the party is to receive in the next government.

Peretz, who agreed last week to join Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's coalition government, called a meeting of the Labor committee earlier Sunday to ratify the deal and his list of proposed ministers.

He was challenged by senior Labor lawmakers Danny Yatom, Matan Vilnai and Ami Ayalon, who submitted a motion for ministers to be selected through a central committee vote.

The Labor "rebels," none of whom is on the current ministerial roster and all of whom are veterans of the Israeli military top brass, were galvanized by Peretz's decision to take over the Defense Ministry in the next government.

New security barrier section approved

Israel approved a key modification to the West Bank security barrier. The Cabinet voted Sunday in favor of rerouting the planned barrier to include the West Bank settlements of Ariel and Kedumim, in such a way that it encompasses fewer Palestinian villages.

Under the new plan, rather than forming one bloc, the two settlements will be fenced in separately, bisected by a highway allowing travel between Palestinian communities in the area.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has ordered construction to be stepped up despite delays caused by legal appeals against its route.

Referring to a lethal suicide bombing in Tel Aviv in mid-April, Olmert said to the Cabinet: "The decisions we make today will enable us, in the vital areas, to complete building the fence very quickly and to thus improve our counter-terrorist abilities. ... on the assumption that we will have to deal with this problem in the future as well."

Sex scandal on Israeli air base

The Israel Air Force was rocked by allegations of serial statutory rape at one of its bases.

Police lifted a gag order Sunday on a year-long investigation into allegations that as many as 30 airmen at a base in southern Israel had sex with a local girl when she was 13 and 14.

According to media reports, the suspects told police investigators that the girl, whose father serves on the base, claimed she was 16 — the age of consent in Israel.

The teen told investigators that the sex was consensual. Air force chief Maj.-Gen. Eliezer Shkedy, who recently fired a senior officer for running an illicit stockbroking operation for soldiers, ordered a crackdown in the latest scandal.

WORLD

Polish coalition makes Jews uneasy

The conservative minority government of Poland's Law and Justice party has agreed to enter a coalition with two extreme right parties.

The two parties which signed the agreement, the League of Polish Families and Self-Defense, have a history of anti-Semitic stances.

Jan Maria Jackowski, a prominent member of the League of Polish Families, has warned against Poland becoming a "land reserve" for Jewish settlement and called accusations of pedophilia against a Polish priest a "Judeo-Communist plot."

The party also is closely aligned with Radio Maryja, frequently cited for its anti-Semitic broadcasts.

Andrzej Lepper, leader of the populist Self-Defense Party, has referred enthusiastically to Goebbels' "propaganda skills" and Hitler's "economic policy," according to the Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Anti-Semitism and Racism at Tel Aviv University.

The Law and Justice party has struggled to form a coalition since a narrow parliamentary election victory in September and has been in a de facto coalition with Self-Defense and the League of Polish Families without a formal agreement.

Pope's Auschwitz visit finalized

The Vatican announced the details of the pope's upcoming trip to Poland. A stop at Auschwitz is set for the last day of Pope Benedict XVI's May 25-28 visit, during which he is expected to deliver a significant address.

At the former Nazi death camp, he will visit the site's Centre for Dialogue and Prayer and take part in a memorial service for Nazi victims, according to the Catholic News Service.

NORTH AMERICA

Wolfensohn quits as Quartet honcho

James Wolfensohn is quitting as the top international envoy to Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

Wolfensohn will step down at the end of this month, his office said last Friday.

Wolfensohn represents the "Quartet," the body guiding the Middle East peace process. It is comprised of representatives from the United States, Russia, United Nations and European Union.

The former World Bank president, who assumed his current role last year at President Bush's behest, was instrumental in creating the conditions that led Israel to withdraw peacefully from the Gaza Strip last year.

However, Wolfensohn grew disillusioned, especially after the electoral victory in January of Hamas, a Palestinian terrorist group that rejects Israel's existence.

Jews arrested at Darfur protest

Three Jewish leaders were arrested for protesting outside Sudan's embassy against the genocide in Darfur.

Police escorted Ruth Messinger, executive director of the American Jewish World Service; Steve Gutow, executive director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs; and Rabbi Michael Namath, program director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, away from the embassy in plastic handcuffs.

Last Friday's protest was a prelude to Sunday's larger rally on the National Mall in Washington.

U.S. Reps. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), Jim Moran (D-Va.), Jim McGovern, (D-Mass.), John Olver (D-Mass.) and Sheila Jackson Lee, (D-Tex.), also were arrested.