

IN THE NEWS
New Darfur rally planned

Organizers of April's Save Darfur rally are planning another event for September. The second protest to draw attention to the continuing genocide in Sudan will be held in New York City on Sept. 17.

Like its predecessor, the rally will be orchestrated by the Save Darfur Coalition, a collection of 150 faith-based advocacy and humanitarian aid organizations.

Unlike the first rally, which was aimed at President Bush and policymakers on Capitol Hill, this event will court a more international audience.

Palestinians threaten to kill Israeli settler

Palestinians who claimed they abducted an Israeli settler threatened to kill him.

The Popular Resistance Committees said Wednesday it would kill a West Bank settler abducted earlier this week unless Israel called off its Gaza offensive.

Israel has not confirmed the terrorist group's kidnapping claim, but there is mounting concern for Eliyahu Asheri, an 18-year-old from the Itamar settlement who went missing Sunday.

Consul: Invasion will pressure Palestinians

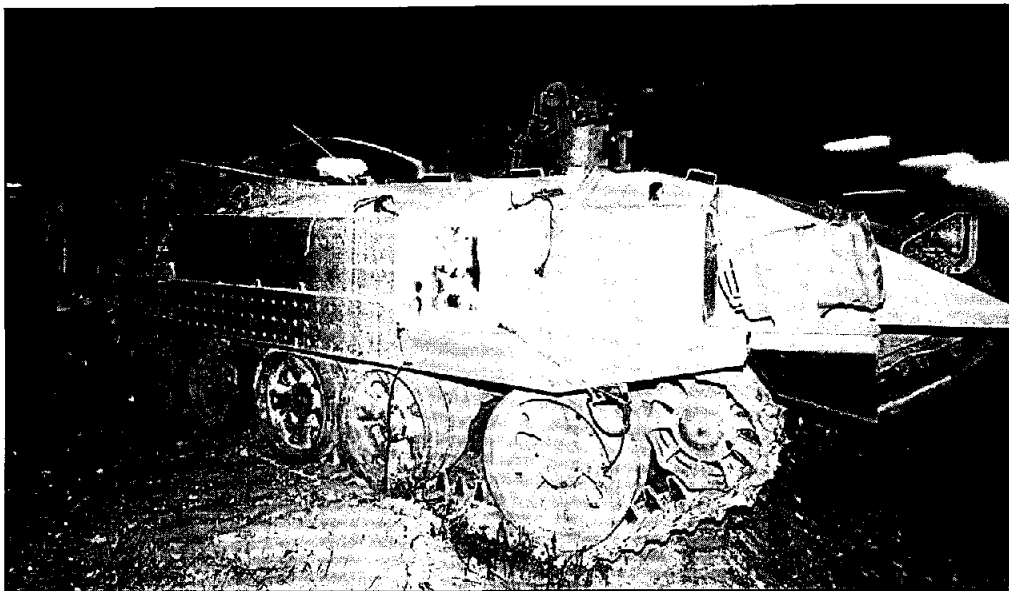
Israel's Gaza invasion is intended to pressure Palestinians to turn over a kidnapped soldier, Israel's consul general in New York said.

In a meeting Wednesday with JTA's editorial staff, Arye Mekele contrasted the current large-scale invasion, launched several days after Palestinian militants kidnapped Cpl. Gilad Shalit, with a 1994 operation by a small team to rescue another kidnapped soldier.

In the current case, Israel is not believed to have specific information on Shalit's whereabouts, but Mekele said the invasion may pressure Palestinians into handing him over.

WORLD REPORT

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IDF

An Israeli tank is readied to move into Gaza on June 28, 2006.

Olmert: Gaza reinvasion only a search for kidnapped soldier

By DAN BARON

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Israeli tanks and troops are back in Gaza, less than a year after a landmark withdrawal from the coastal strip billed as breaking a diplomatic deadlock with the Palestinians.

Under pressure to keep his West Bank pullout plan on track, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said the sweep launched Wednesday was aimed at recovering an abducted Israeli soldier and did not constitute reoccupation.

"The objective is bringing Gilad Shalit home alive, healthy and in one piece," Olmert said in a speech. "We have no intention of recapturing Gaza. Neither do we intend to stay there."

But with no sign of life from Shalit, a 19-year-old armored corps corporal captured

Sunday in a cross-border raid by Hamas and other Palestinian gunmen, there was fear of a major flare-up in fighting.

Raising the stakes further, Palestinian terrorists in the West Bank announced they had abducted a young settler, Eliyahu Asheri, 18, and would kill him unless Israel calls off its Gaza offensive.

As of Wednesday morning, Israeli forces had taken up positions around the defunct Palestinian Authority airport near the southern Gaza town of Rafah, effectively cutting off access to neighboring Egypt.

Security sources had expressed concern that Shalit might have been spirited across the border and on to Lebanon, where Hamas' armed wing is headquartered.

That was ruled out by Maj. Gen. Yoav

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■ *Less than a year after withdrawal, Israeli tanks and troops are back in Gaza*

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Galant, commander of Israeli forces in and around Gaza.

"Gilad Shalit is in the Gaza Strip," he told reporters.

In parallel to the ground operation, the Israeli air force struck two bridges in central Gaza in a bid to prevent Shalit's captors from moving him. Another strike, on Gaza's main power station, knocked out electricity to many residents.

"To our regret, our response may bring about the suffering of civilians in the Gaza Strip. With that said, our operation is focusing on the terrorist operational infrastructure, to limit the possibility of Shalit being moved," Galant said.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, who has been in talks with the Hamas government on defusing the crisis, condemned the Israeli offensive as a "crime."

But the lack of serious casualties in the first stage suggested Israel was exercising restraint in hope of pressuring the Palestinians to produce Shalit.

Evidence was mounting that Sunday's raid, in which two other soldiers were killed and seven wounded, was ordered not by Hamas politicians in Gaza but by the group's top leader abroad, Khaled Meshaal. Meshaal, based in Syria, was said to be upset at talks between P.A. Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, of Hamas, and Abbas' more moderate Fatah faction on a policy document that could be construed

as implicitly recognizing Israel.

Israel has called the manifesto, penned by Palestinians in Israeli jails, insufficient to warrant resuming peace talks. But it could go some way toward helping Palestinians lift a Western aid embargo imposed when Hamas took power.

Olmert has hinted that Israel could strike at Meshaal, but for now efforts are focused on rescuing Shalit.

Failure to do so, combined with unabated Palestinian rocket fire from Gaza, would be a major setback to Olmert's plan to "realign" Israeli borders by removing most West Bank settlements and annexing a few others behind the security fence.

Facing off with right-wing lawmakers in the Knesset on Tuesday, Olmert said he would not be dissuaded from his West Bank plan. ■

Teaching Muslim-Jewish tolerance

By TOM TUGEND

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Like many young Americans, Aaron Tapper and Gibran Bouayad are traveling to Europe this summer. It's no pleasure trip, however, and they've got some company.

Tapper, 33, and Bouayad, 29, are the co-founders and executive directors of Abraham's Vision, dedicated to creating a new generation of mutually respectful Jewish and Muslim leaders. They are taking 24 U.S. university students — 12 Jewish and 12 Muslim, mainly of Palestinian descent — to Balkan countries recently torn apart by civil war.

Like the staff and students of Abraham's Vision, the leadership is ethnically mixed.

Tapper is Jewish, an alumnus of yeshivahs and the Conservative movement's Camp Ramah.

Bouayad, a native Angeleno, is Muslim. His father is Moroccan; his mother has a Jewish father and Christian mother.

The two met in the summer of 2003, when they were in Holland to attend the Institute for International Mediation and Conflict Resolution in The Hague and were assigned as roommates. There, they founded Abraham's Vision, named for their mutual biblical ancestor.

One challenge was how to be different from existing organizations striving for Israeli-Palestinian and Jewish-Muslim understanding.

They arrived at a two-pronged approach,

one program called Unity, the other, Vision.

Unity is a collaboration between Jewish and Muslim high schools and focuses on interfaith studies, taught by educators of both religions. Classes and exchange visits compare the sacred texts and rituals of both religions and study the history of Muslim-Jewish relations, stressing past eras of harmony.

"Students learn a great deal about their own faiths by having to explain to the 'other' what their religion really means to them," Bouayad said.

The first Unity program began in the fall in New York.

In September, the organizers expect to launch Unity programs in Los Angeles, Detroit, San Francisco, Philadelphia and Washington, as well as a second partnership in New York City.

The Vision program, largely for college and university students, focuses on conflict analysis and resolution, and examining and comparing the Israel-Palestinian situation with other ethnic and religious conflicts.

Since early 2005, Vision workshops have been conducted at 16 university campuses across the country, in addition to adult education programs.

In the latest Vision initiative, Bouayad, Tapper and their staff left Sunday with the students for a monthlong trip to Serbia, Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

This year, Abraham's Vision raised \$450,000 from private individuals and foundations, including Steven Spielberg's Righteous Persons Foundation. ■

'Students learn a great deal about their own faiths by having to explain to the "other" what their religion really means to them.'

Gibran Bouayad

Co-founder, Abraham's Vision

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Giving made easier with a 'personal shopper'

By CHANAN TIGAY

NEW YORK (JTA) — Call him a personal shopper, a matchmaker or a boutique investment adviser.

However he is described, Joseph Hyman is trying to chart a new course in the world of Jewish philanthropy. A longtime Jewish organizational professional and fund-raiser, Hyman last year launched the Center for Entrepreneurial Jewish Philanthropy to support and advise philanthropists who are considering major gifts to Jewish and Israel-related causes.

Hyman acts as the middle man between donors and organizations, working with philanthropists to understand their particular interests, then hits the pavement to locate worthwhile organizations that meet their philanthropic requirements.

The center's goal is simple: to attract dollars to Jewish groups that might otherwise have gone elsewhere.

"If successful, we believe that CEJP will help to create a new paradigm in Jewish giving," says Hyman, who is going public about his organization for the first time. "One that empowers and inspires a new generation of philanthropists to participate because they want to, not because they have to."

His endeavor comes at a time when wealthy American Jews make a disproportionately high number of large gifts in America, but overwhelmingly make them to non-Jewish institutions.

It also comes as philanthropists are increasingly looking to have a say in exactly where their dollars go.

■ The approach seems to be working.

Since its launch 18 months ago, the center already has facilitated more than \$10 million in philanthropic donations to Jewish and Israel-related causes.

Recipients include some well-known projects, such as birthright Israel, which provides free, 10-day trips to Israel for young Jewish adults. They also include some lesser-known ones, including Meshi, a center in Israel offering the parents of special needs kids a break from child care; and Project Kesher, a group devoted to Jewish education and advocacy for women in the former Soviet Union.

"CEJP is revolutionary," says Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi, president and founder of

the Israel Project, which has received two six-figure multiyear commitments from donors working with the center.

"What it is doing is taking the desires of the philanthropists to heart and saying, 'What is the outcome that you want? What is the investment that you want to make so that you can make positive change? And what's the most cost-effective, reliable way to achieve those goals?'"

Adam Frieman, a longtime investment banker on Wall Street and a financial sponsor of the new center, says, "There are people out there who are not giving to the level that they're capable of giving. Some portion of that group would give meaningfully more if somebody were able to connect with them on a personal level and make the giving personal."

Hyman hopes that his efforts to eliminate much of the work involved in finding worthy causes will attract new dollars to Jewish groups.

"Beginning with the creation of birthright about 10 years ago, it has been a core group of committed Jewish philanthropists who have challenged the community to move forward," says Hyman, who stresses that his work is meant to complement that of the federations and other more traditional fund-raising arms, not replace them.

"We are now beginning to see a new generation of mega-donors emerge whose support is crucial to our future."

The center today is working with nine North American philanthropists, including real estate developers, senior management of Fortune 500 companies and hedge fund managers, according to Hyman. And while all have donated to Jewish causes before, some now are giving at a much higher level.

■ Donor-advised funds are not new, say philanthropy insiders, and in fact have become increasingly popular over the last number of years in Jewish philanthropic circles.

But, says Sue Dickman, executive vice

president of the Jewish Communal Fund, which facilitates and promotes charitable giving through donor-advised funds, the center is doing something different.

"What we do, and what other donor-advised funds do, is simply facilitate people's philanthropy," she says. "We don't provide advice and input into the direction of their philanthropy. What Joe does is help people think strategically about their philanthropy and maximize the input that they can have."

Other Jewish groups, notably the Jewish Funders Network, offer some donor advice. And several organizations are doing similar work in the general philanthropic world — among them the Wealth and Giving Forum, Rockefeller Advisory Services and the Philanthropic Initiative in Boston.

The center is also seen as attractive because it is supported by investors and does not charge for its work. Donors say that for this reason, they feel the group's advice is objective.

"We felt that he could offer us something that we needed" because Hyman is "not connected to any particular organization but very well connected in the greater Jewish community both here in the U.S. and in Israel," says the administrator of a private family foundation in the Chicago area who requested anonymity for reasons of privacy.

■ Nearly two years ago, shortly before the center was launched, Hyman sat down with a Chicago-based private investor, Robert Sklare, to chat about philanthropy. They spent some 10 hours talking, Sklare says, discussing the Jewish philanthropic interests he and his wife, Yadelle, shared, the areas that got them excited and the problems they hoped to help solve. Then Hyman got to work tracking down a series of organizations that fit their bill.

Several did. In fact, Sklare says, since then he's donated a "substantial" amount of money to Israel-related organizations — certainly more than he'd have given had he never met Hyman. ■

FOCUS ON ISSUES

What it is doing is taking the desires of the philanthropists to heart and saying, "What is the outcome that you want?"

Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi
President and founder, Israel Project

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

White House: Release soldier first

The onus is on the Palestinians to end the current escalation of violence in the Gaza Strip, the White House said.

"The Israeli forces are trying to reclaim somebody who was kidnapped and is being held hostage in Gaza, and they're doing what they can to return him," White House spokesman Tony Snow said Wednesday in describing Israel's incursion into Gaza in search of kidnapped soldier Cpl. Gilad Shalit.

"It would be a lot easier if the Palestinian Authority and if Hamas simply returned the kidnapped soldier."

Snow refused to criticize Israel's actions, but urged Israel to make sure "that innocent civilians are not harmed, and also that it avoid the unnecessary destruction of property and infrastructure."

Separately, the U.S. secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, said it was "time to mobilize the international community" to get the soldier released.

The U.N. secretary-general, Kofi Annan, said he had reached out to the leaders of Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Syria to end the crisis.

Israel believes Damascus-based Hamas terrorists ordered the kidnapping, with Syrian government approval.

Katsav calls Conservative rabbi 'rabbi'

Israel's president referred to a leading Conservative rabbi as "rav," or rabbi, the clergyman told JTA.

Rabbi Jerome Epstein, executive vice president of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, said that during a 45-minute meeting in Moshe Katsav's office on Wednesday, the Israeli president began referring to him with the honorific.

He said he believes Katsav's move will extend to other Conservative rabbis, adding that he did not know if Katsav differentiated between Conservative and Reform rabbis.

This follows an uproar earlier this month when Katsav refused to address Eric Yoffie, president of the Union for Reform Judaism, as a rabbi, saying he was bound by state regulations that recognized only Orthodox rabbis.

Compromise on circumcision ritual protested

New York City's health commissioner criticized a compromise on a controversial circumcision ritual. Dr. Thomas Frieden recently wrote to the state's health commissioner, Dr. Antonia Novello, protesting the compromise reached over metzitzah b'peh, the blog Canonist.com reported.

Under the compromise, agreed to by New York State health officials and Orthodox rabbis, mohels who perform the procedure must sanitize their hands like a surgeon and must clean their mouths with a sterile alcohol wipe and rinse with a mouthwash that contains at least 25 percent alcohol beforehand, among other things.

A controversy erupted after a mohel's use of metzitzah b'peh, in which blood is sucked from the baby's wound, allegedly led to the death of an infant who contracted herpes.

MIDDLE EAST

Israeli planes buzz Assad's palace

Israeli warplanes flew over Syrian President Bashar Assad's palace. Wednesday's flyover was seen as a warning to Assad for hosting Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal.

Israel has been calling on the international community in recent days to press Syria to hand over Meshaal, who is seen as being behind the recent kidnapping of an Israeli soldier.

Lawmaker opposes West Bank plan

A leading Israeli dove told Ehud Olmert his party would not support Olmert's West Bank withdrawal plan.

Yossi Beilin, leader of the left-wing Meretz Party, told Olmert he would not support the plan because some evacuated settlers would remain within the West Bank, the Jerusalem Post reported.

Meretz had been expected to support Olmert's move, and it's unclear if the plan would pass Israel's Knesset without Meretz support.

Y.U. degrees not accepted in Israel

Israel's Education Ministry still is not accepting degrees from Yeshiva University, despite being ordered to do so a year ago.

The Knesset's Education Committee discussed the issue Sunday, joined by the university's president, Richard Joel.

The degrees are being rejected due to a bureaucratic loophole that bars giving full credit for a student's year abroad in an Israeli yeshiva.

As a result of the rejection, immigrants with Yeshiva University degrees who take government-paid education jobs receive lower pay, since salaries are based partly on level of education.

Limor Livnat, the previous education minister, last year declared that the degrees of graduates who appealed to the ministry must be recognized immediately, but her demand did not change policy.

The government evaluation body insisted Sunday that its policy was reasonable.

Lawmaker Rabbi Michael Melchior ordered the body to present a viable resolution to the committee within one month.

Abortion bill rejected in Knesset

The Knesset on Wednesday reportedly rejected a bill that would have made it easier for Israeli women to have abortions.

Ha'aretz reported that the bill, proposed by Meretz lawmaker Zehava Gal-On, would have gotten rid of a committee that decides on women's abortion requests.

Gal-On said that wealthy women bypass the committee by paying private clinics some \$1,500 to perform abortions.

WORLD

E.U. wants soldier released

The European Union pressed Palestinian officials to ensure the release of a captured Israeli soldier.

Austria, which holds the rotating E.U. presidency, also called on both sides to show restraint and "avoid further escalation," The Associated Press reported.

The statement was released as Israeli troops entered the Gaza Strip in a show of force aimed at pressing Palestinians to release Cpl. Gilad Shalit, who was kidnapped Sunday.

German Cabinet OKs archive deal

Germany's Cabinet approved a plan to open up a Holocaust-era archive.

Wednesday's decision OKs a deal reached in May regarding the archive, which contains 50 million files and is administered by the Red Cross. The protocol is expected to be formally signed July 26.

Suspect held in Polish attack

Polish police are holding a suspect in last month's attack on the country's chief rabbi, Reuters reported.

A young man last month sprayed Rabbi Michael Schudrich with pepper spray on the day before Pope Benedict XVI was visiting, hit the rabbi and yelled "Poland for Poles," before running away.