

**IN THE NEWS**
**Nine soldiers killed in Lebanon**

Nine Israeli soldiers were killed in southern Lebanon.

More than 20 others were believed to be wounded in fighting Wednesday in Bint Jbeil, a town in southern Lebanon that military officials had described as being under almost total Israeli control.

Between 20 and 30 Hezbollah gunmen have died in Bint Jbeil, according to Israeli estimates.

In nearby Maroun Ras, which the army conquered last week, a Hezbollah rocket struck an Israeli infantry unit, killing an officer and wounding three soldiers.

**U.N. Security Council is pressed on killings**

China asked the U.N. Security Council to condemn Israel's killing of four U.N. peacekeepers.

Israel said the attack was an accident and promised to investigate.

Though the Chinese ambassador's initial text included a reference to the "apparently deliberate targeting" of U.N. troops by Israeli forces, this line was deleted in a later draft, Reuters reported.

Also deleted was a call for an immediate end to hostilities.

**Parley ends without cease-fire agreement**

International leaders meeting in Rome failed to agree on a plan for ending Israeli-Hezbollah violence.

But the leaders agreed in principle to create an international force under U.N. auspices "to support the Lebanese armed forces in providing a secure environment."

Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora appealed Wednesday for efforts toward an immediate cease-fire, but U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice reiterated the American position that there could be "no return to the status quo ante." The Associated Press reported.

# WORLD REPORT

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## Solidarity missions to Israel mix moral support, high-level briefings

By DINA KRAFT

**H**AIFA (JTA) — Surveying the damage of an apartment building hit by rocket fire, playing with children evacuated from the North and meeting with Israel's top leaders, a parade of Jewish solidarity missions are making their way through Israel to show their support in a time of war.

Most of the groups toured Haifa and other northern towns, trying to assess needs and concerns of Israelis suddenly in the firing zone of Hezbollah rockets.

"You begin to realize this is truly an act of terror," said Steven Nasatir, the president of the Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, who was in Israel as part of a United Jewish Communities mission that visited Haifa on Tuesday. The Haifa visit came an hour after a barrage of rockets hit the city. They viewed one of the buildings that was damaged.

"When you think about this kind of a weapon being used, its pretty frightening," he said. "It was up close and personal today."

Many of those participating in the delegations said they had an obligation to be in Israel to show their concern in person.

"I want to hear firsthand what the intentions are, and to give our support that they should not pull out too early," said Jerry Platt of American Friends of Likud, who came to Israel as part of a delegation from the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert met with several of the visiting delegations and reiterated his message of determination that Israel would defeat Hezbollah.

Six representatives from the Conference of Presidents delegation met with the families of two soldiers kidnapped by Hezbollah on July 12. The kidnappings precipitated Israel's dramatic counter-response.

"It was extremely moving," said Robert Abrams of the America Israel Friendship League. "They have not heard anything new, but told us how they heard about the abduction."

The group told the families that they would try to keep the soldiers' fate in the public view. The visitors were deeply impressed by the families'

"courage and the control of their emotions," Abrams said.

Groups also were briefed by high-ranking army commanders, getting an overview of the situation with maps, photos and explanations of Israeli strategy.

Other solidarity missions have come from the European Jewish Congress, the Reform and Conservative movements and ORT. The American Jewish Committee, which came last week, met with Haifa officials, visited victims in the hospital and donated blood.

Many of the visiting groups have launched special fund-raising campaigns to help offset the costs associated with the Hezbollah attacks.

On Monday, members of the UJC delegation visited a summer camp near Netanya for Ethiopian children evacuated from the northern city of Safed. The UJC has raised more than \$11 million for its Israel Crisis Fund, which will in part enable as many children as possible to attend camps in the center of the country.

Kids at the camp, which is run by the Jewish Agency for Israel, play sports and run

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**BEHIND THE HEADLINES**

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around outside, a contrast to the cramped and often unairconditioned bomb shelters back home.

John Ruskay, executive vice president and CEO of the UJA-Federation of New York, said the federation has received many calls from people who want to contribute funds for Israel. The federation is trying to send the money to aid to those who survived attacks and to provide safe places for families in the North to live while the fighting is going on.

They also are planning to make funds available for emotional support for Holocaust survivors, for whom a crisis like this can trigger past traumas, and for soldiers without family in Israel.

"The North American Jewish community is exceedingly united in its commitment to... the people of Israel, and expresses this in multiple ways, including writing a check," Ruskay said.

Nasatir said it soon would become clear how contributions would best be allocated. The cost of the war would likely make it difficult for the government to implement plans to up social welfare spending, and Nasatir suggested that American Jews might have to help make sure that the country's economic gaps don't widen even more.

"I think the issue now transcends one project or two projects. I think that if the American Jewish community really wants to step forward at this time, I think three main things to do are advocacy — coming here at a time when the airplanes are no longer full — raising significant amounts of money and to be partner to Israel at a time of great need," Nasatir said.

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# Calls to disband UNRWA rejected

By **RON KAMPEAS**

WASHINGTON (JTA) — U.S. lawmakers leading the effort to reform UNRWA rejected proposals to disband the U.N. body administering aid to Palestinian refugees.

Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Ill.), who has sponsored UNRWA reform legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives, and Sen. Norm Coleman (R-Minn.) said the U.N. Relief and Works Agency performs an indispensable service, despite what they called problems with its transparency.

"I don't think we should cut UNRWA off," Kirk said July 13 at a Capitol Hill briefing organized by the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs. "UNRWA does a lot of good."

The institute has long advocated for folding UNRWA into the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees.

Shoshana Bryen, the institute's director of special projects, opened the session by saying the continued existence of an agency uniquely dedicated to Palestinians dispersed by the 1948 war and their descendants, perpetuates a myth that Israel's creation was a mistake.

"As long as the Palestinian community is led to believe its status is unique, they become pawns for the most radical elements of the Palestinian leadership," Bryen said. "Israel is not a mistake that needs to be corrected."

Palestinians should be treated no differently than any other refugee community, and should be settled where they now live, Bryen said.

Coleman, who leads U.N. reform efforts in the Senate, would not count out folding UNRWA into UNHCR in the future, but said

that the agency fulfills a critical need for now.

"One of the realities is we don't have anyone else on the ground," he said.

Coleman and Kirk continued their arguments for greater transparency for the agency, which they say does not have a transparent budget.

UNRWA's budget runs about \$400 million annually, most of it from Western nations. Now that Hamas, a terrorist group, has assumed governance of the Palestinian Authority, the Bush administration and other Western nations are considering funneling

assistance money through UNRWA.

Last Friday, David Welch, the top State Department envoy to the region, met in Ramallah with P.A. President Mahmoud Abbas and announced plans to funnel \$50 million in humanitarian aid through UNRWA.

UNRWA officials say the agency undergoes periodic audits, adding that one such audit should be ready in six weeks.

Kirk says UNRWA's previous audits have been too broad and opaque, and that U.N. auditors lack credibility. UNRWA officials counter that the U.N. Board of Auditors is an independent body comprised of individual auditors rotated in by member countries.

Auditors from South Africa, the Philippines and France are carrying out the current audit.

Kirk and Coleman also allege that among UNRWA's 25,000 employees are individuals loyal to Hamas. UNRWA says its employees are banned from any political activity, and notes that those who ran for political office first had to quit the organization.

**'As long as the Palestinian community is led to believe its status is unique, they become pawns for the most radical elements of the Palestinian leadership.'**

**Shoshana Bryen**

Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs

## Israeli hospital will treat Lebanese victims

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An Israeli hospital said it would treat Lebanese victims of the Israel-Hezbollah conflict. Sheba Medical Center in Tel Hashomer said private donors in Israel and abroad would pay for the care. "We are not to blame for

the war," said the hospital's director general, Zev Rothstein.

"We don't ask who is to blame." The offer is being promoted on Arabic-language radio broadcasts and in Cyprus, where many Lebanese have gone.

# Gay pride parade in Jerusalem delayed

By BRENDA GAZZAR

JERUSALEM (JTA) — In light of ongoing fighting on Israel's northern and southern borders, organizers of an international gay pride parade that was slated to take place in Jerusalem have delayed the march indefinitely.

"It's important for us to hold the march under safe and peaceful circumstances, and obviously, at this time, due to the political circumstances in the region, that's not the case," said Hagai El-Ad, executive director of Jerusalem Open House, a center for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people that is organizing the weeklong WorldPride 2006 event.

Police also had indicated that they might not be able to protect the three-hour event due to potentially violent opposition and Israel's current conflicts with Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Palestinians in Gaza.

Expected to attract more than 10,000 participants from around the world, the parade sparked strong opposition among fervent Jews, Muslims and Christians who said the holy city was an inappropriate venue.

While the Aug. 10 march will not take place, about 40 other gay pride events planned for WorldPride 2006 — including a gay film festival, a health day and an interfaith conference — will take place beginning Aug. 6, organizers said. A new date for the march will be announced once fighting stops.

Police officials said anywhere from dozens to "hundreds of thousands" of protesters had intended to confront parade participants "with the goal of hurting them physically."

Even with reinforcements from other districts, police might not have been able to allow the parade in its requested format, according to a July 20 letter to El-Ad from Jerusalem District Police Chief Ilan Franco's office.

At the same time, due to ongoing fighting and general security concerns, "the level of vigilance has increased" and police might not permit assemblies and parades to take place. Additional intelligence that cast doubt on the police's ability to secure the parade also had been obtained, the letter said.

Organizers suggested alternate parade routes, to no avail.

Regardless of whether the parade is held, American synagogues and Jewish

groups will be sending delegations to Jerusalem for WorldPride 2006 activities.

"As long as there are planes going from New York to Tel Aviv, my synagogue is still going," said Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum, head of New York's Congregation Beth Simchat Torah, one of the largest gay synagogues in the world.

The delegation from Congregation Beth Simchat Torah is to leave Aug. 5, and will be joined in Jerusalem by other North American delegations, including one from the Philadelphia Jewish federation and San Francisco's Jewish Community Relations Council.

Opponents cheered the parade's delay and said they would continue fighting to ensure that the event is never held in Jerusalem.

"I feel that it is a small step in the right direction," said Rabbi Yehuda Levin of Brooklyn, who represents more than 1,000 rabbis from the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada and the Rabbinical Alliance of America and who has spearheaded opposition to the event in Israel and around the world.

"I can tell you that we're not going to be satisfied until all events associated with this, and Jerusalem Open House itself, is closed down," he said.

Levin, who spent the past two months in Israel drumming up opposition, said he and other prominent rabbis are calling upon Jerusalem Mayor Uri Lupolianski to forbid the use of city facilities, such as the Binyanei Hauma convention center, for the gay film festival.

"It's pornography in my book," he said.

Research showing an alleged correlation between gay pride events and new HIV cases in those populations has been collected and is being provided to senior Israeli health officials, Levin said. He and other opponents called on the municipality "to make an emergency ruling" forbidding gay pride gatherings in Jerusalem in order to prevent what they depicted as a serious health hazard.

"I'm here to oppose the homosexualization of Israel, making this the homosexual

tourist capital, pushing homosexual marriage, parades, outreach to youth," Levin said.

Jerusalem City Councilwoman Mina Fenton, who worked with a group of Orthodox mothers to collect signatures for a petition opposing the parade, said she, too, will continue to fight such events.

"We will carry on fighting now, so that it's never, ever in Jerusalem, any day, not even a local" parade, Fenton said. "This is our fight now, that this should be a permanent decision, not a decision for a day, for a year, for a month."

Since 2002, Jerusalem Open House has held a local gay pride parade each year in the city. When Lupolianski attempted to ban last year's parade, organizers went to court and secured approval days before the June 26 event.

A fervently Orthodox man was convicted to 12 years in prison for stabbing three participants at the event, which organizers say drew roughly 10,000 people from around the country.

Earlier this month, a handful of anonymous anti-parade flyers were found in the fervently Orthodox neighborhood of Mea Shearim, offering a reward of some \$4,500 for killing homosexuals.

Noa Sattath, chairwoman of Jerusalem Open House, said she was saddened by the parade's delay but remained hopeful that the political situation would improve dramatically in coming weeks.

"I think this is a very important struggle. It's important for us to win it," Sattath said. "Our chances in the public eye, inside our community and within the legal system are better when there is no war going on in the background or foreground."

El-Ad agreed.

Once the situation settles, he said, "I'm confident that the police, perhaps with the assistance of the Supreme Court, will reach this realization" that they're obligated to protect freedom of speech and the public's right to demonstrate.

Kleinbaum, who also is North American co-chairwoman of WorldPride, said "there's no question it will be a smaller event" with the parade delayed, but the important thing is "the message that we're bringing: Tolerance is holy." ■



## NEWS IN BRIEF

### MIDDLE EAST

#### Gaza strikes kill 17

Israeli airstrikes against Gaza Strip terrorists killed 17 Palestinians. Wednesday's attacks targeted several suspected hideouts of Hamas and other Palestinian factions.

At least eight of the dead were combatants, including six Hamas men and a member of Islamic Jihad. But there were also at least three civilian bystanders, two of them children.

#### Missiles injure Israelis

Several Israelis were reported injured as rockets rained down Wednesday on northern Israel.

Hezbollah fired an estimated 119 rockets at cities including Haifa, Tiberias, Safed, Rosh Pina and Kiryat Shmona.

#### Sharon in intensive care

Ariel Sharon was taken to an intensive care unit at an Israeli hospital. The former Israeli prime minister was taken Wednesday to Sheba Hospital in Tel Hashomer in order to drain fluids from his body. Sharon's condition has deteriorated in recent days.

He has been in a coma since suffering a Jan. 4 stroke, which followed a milder stroke.

#### Nasrallah threatens deeper strikes

Hezbollah's chief threatened to launch rockets deeper into Israeli territory. Sheik Hassan Nasrallah made a rare appearance on his militia's Al-Manar television station late Tuesday, saying that Hezbollah rocket salvos would be directed "beyond Haifa" if the fighting with Israel intensifies.

Israeli analysts said Nasrallah was referring to long-range missiles that Hezbollah is believed to have and which may be capable of carrying biological or chemical warheads and of reaching as far south as Tel Aviv and Beersheba.

While the Israeli air force has struck many of Hezbollah's rocket and missile batteries on the ground, Nasrallah's past threats have been borne out.

### NORTH AMERICA

#### Bush: Missiles are a go

The United States will honor its commitment to provide Israel with precision-guided missiles, President Bush said.

"I don't see a contradiction in us honoring commitments we made prior to Hezbollah attacks into Israeli territory," Bush said Tuesday when he was asked about a report in The New York Times that the United States is rushing the missiles to Israel to use in Lebanon.

#### House passes U.S.-Israel energy bill

The U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill that would establish joint U.S.-Israel programs for energy cooperation.

The U.S.-Israel Energy Cooperation Act outlines grants for research, development and commercialization of alternative energy, as well as improved energy efficiency and renewable energy sources.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert touted such cooperation when he addressed both houses of Congress in May. The American Jewish Congress, which led lobbying for the bill, called it a "crucial tactic for taking the oil-weapon out of the hand of America's and Israel's enemies." The bill now goes to the Senate for consideration.

#### Jewish congresswoman makes 'most beautiful' list

U.S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, a Jewish Democrat from Florida, made the "50 Most Beautiful People on Capitol Hill" list. The

Hill newspaper, which publishes the list, cited Wasserman Schultz's curly tresses this week in making its decision.

### WORLD

#### Germany, Israel, U.S. sign archives agreement

Germany, Israel and the United States signed an agreement that would open millions of Holocaust era files. Wednesday's signatures raised to eight the number of countries who have signed the April pact.

The pact was devised by the governing body of the International Tracing Service, the arm of the International Committee of the Red Cross that oversees the archive.

The agreement opens the files to researchers. "Those who suffered from the Holocaust will welcome access to these archives as they hope to answer longstanding and agonizing questions about the fate of family members and family property," said the U.S. ambassador to Germany, William Timken Jr.

#### Holocaust memorial in Belgium defaced

A Holocaust memorial in Brussels was vandalized. The gate of the memorial's crypt was pulled out, documents were destroyed, windows broken and an urn containing ashes from Auschwitz victims was emptied, the European Jewish Press reported.

Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt said he is shocked by the attack.

#### Cartoon compares Olmert to Nazi

An editorial cartoon in Norway likened Israel's Ehud Olmert to a Nazi commandant.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the cartoon in the Dagbladet newspaper showed a likeness of Olmert standing with a rifle on a balcony overlooking a camp, similar to SS Maj. Amon Goeth, who killed people that way in the Plaszow camp in Poland during World War II.

Goeth was depicted in Steven Spielberg's "Schindler's List."

The cartoon appeared July 10, before the conflict with Hezbollah began.

Jewish groups have called on Norway to denounce the cartoon.

#### Australians pull out of WJC

The Executive Council of Australian Jewry withdrew from the World Jewish Congress.

The council pulled out after the congress refused to withdraw its defamation suit against one of its former senior vice presidents, the Jerusalem-based Australian, Isi Leibler.

Leibler, who is being sued in a Tel Aviv court, was expelled from the congress' steering committee in 2004 following a published report in which Leibler alleged financial improprieties at the congress.

An investigation by the attorney general of New York state, where the congress is based, found financial impropriety but no criminal wrongdoing or loss of charitable funds.

Grahame Leonard, the president of the Australian group, wrote to the congress' president, Edgar Bronfman, saying that although Jewish unity is necessary during Israel's conflict with Hezbollah, the congress cannot claim to speak for the Australian Jewish community.

The WJC's secretary-general, Stephen Herbits, released the following statement: "Jewish communities around the world are united by their support for Israel, the commitment to seeing the safe return of their soldiers, and the fight against terrorism.

That is our united focus, anything else is secondary."