

IN THE NEWS
Vatican opens prewar archive

The Vatican opened its archive covering its early relations with Hitler and Mussolini to scholars.

The material covers the 1922-1939 reign of Pope Pius XI.

Scholars are particularly eager to examine the prewar writings of the future Pope Pius XII, who was the Vatican's ambassador in Berlin in the 1930s and has been criticized for not taking more action as pope to protect Jews during the Holocaust.

The archives from the Holocaust era remain closed.

Egypt sees prisoner swap

Egypt's president laid out the terms for an anticipated prisoner exchange between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

Hosni Mubarak said Monday that an Egyptian-mediated draft deal was in place for the return of Cpl. Gilad Shalit, an Israeli soldier seized by Gaza Strip gunmen in a deadly June 25 raid.

Shalit's captors have demanded the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners in exchange for Shalit.

Israel at first ruled out a swap, but more recently has hinted it could relent.

Report: U.S. warns Abbas on P.A. deal

The United States reportedly warned Mahmoud Abbas over his efforts to form a Palestinian Authority coalition government with Hamas.

Yediot Achronot reported Monday that a senior U.S. official recently told the P.A. president that if he entered a planned unity government with the Islamic terrorist group in its current format, he would be shunned by Washington.

Abbas is expected to meet President Bush later this week on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly summit.

WORLD REPORT

PUBLISHED WEEKDAYS BY JTA—THE GLOBAL NEWS SERVICE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE • WWW.JTA.ORG

Jewish leaders press concerns as potential U.N. heads reach out

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — As the U.N. General Assembly opens, diplomats vying to be the world's top peacekeeper are taking the time to consult with a group that has emerged as a critical constituency: American Jewish leaders.

At least three of the favored candidates to replace Kofi Annan as U.N. secretary-general have met in recent months with leaders of the U.S. Jewish groups that routinely deal with the United Nations, JTA has learned.

"It's a recognition that we're part of the equation and the political calculus," said David Harris, executive director of the American Jewish Committee, who acknowledged "several" meetings with prospective candidates.

"It's clear that no candidate can win without the support of the five permanent members, and there is thinking that American Jewry would have some impact on the thinking of the United States."

The United States, Russia, France, China and Britain are the five permanent members wielding veto power on the U.N. Security Council, the body that recommends a candidate for secretary-general to the General Assembly for confirmation.

The casting call comes because Kofi Annan's term lapses at the end of this year, and Jewish leaders are considering the disappointments of his term as well as its highlights.

Many of the issues that characterized the last part of Annan's 10-year term — the Iranian nuclear threat, the aftermath of the Lebanon war and the prospect of reviving Israeli-Palestinian peace talks — will be high on the Jewish

agenda the week that world leaders arrive to address the General Assembly during its opening session.

"We want to gauge the international mood toward Israel post-summer conflict and get a sense of whether there's any traction of rumors of resumption of peace talks," said Harris, who said his organization planned 60 meetings with world leaders this week and next. "We'll be talking about the challenges of anti-Semitism."

After two Africans held the secretary-general job — Annan is from Ghana and his predecessor, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, is from Egypt — the assumption is that an Asian will now get the position.

Of the declared candidates, Shashi Tharoor, a U.N. undersecretary-general backed by his native India, and Surakiart Sathirathai, Thailand's deputy prime minister, have met with Jewish groups.

Another candidate, Ban Ki-Moon, South Korea's foreign minister, has also met with Jewish leaders and is in the process of setting up a second meeting, and Jewish groups have strong ongoing relations with another candidate, Prince Zeid al-Hussein, Jordan's envoy to the body.

Community leaders were loath to endorse a particular candidate, but Tharoor at least made a favorable impression.

"We should take him seriously as a candidate," said Shai Franklin, director of international organizations at the World Jewish Congress. "He was instrumental in putting the Holocaust on the U.N. agenda."

Jewish groups count 2005 commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the liberation of

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BEHIND THE HEADLINES

■ *At least three candidates for Annan's position have recently met with Jewish leaders*

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Auschwitz, and subsequent Holocaust memorials, as the highs of Annan's time at the United Nations.

Lows include Annan's failure to directly confront Iran's leaders on their Holocaust denial and what is perceived as his eagerness to rush to blame Israel for civilian casualties in its recent war with Hezbollah in Lebanon.

"We wanted to make him understand how the community felt, how important the U.N. was in dealing with Israel issues, and some of the disappointment we felt in the past in how the United Nations could have dealt with those issues," Jess Hordes, director of the Anti-Defamation League's Washington office, said of the Sept. 7 meeting with Tharoor.

The ADL has virtually cut off Annan because of his statements during the war with Hezbollah.

Another disappointment is the Human Rights Council that Annan initiated. It replaced the stridently anti-Israel Human Rights Commission, but if anything, in its first three months the new body has been even more persistent in criticizing Israel, a problem Annan himself has acknowledged.

"Right out of the box it went back to business as usual," said Dan Mariaschin, executive vice president of B'nai B'rith International, who also attended the meeting with Tharoor.

"I tell diplomats, 'Because you all go along with these resolutions, you raise expectations from Palestinians and alien-

ate Israel. From a standpoint of making the system work, you're not accomplishing anything.'"

Such concerns were shared by the United States.

The secretary-general "doesn't represent a national government, and so the important thing is that we have a leader who's going to help make the U.N. an effective organization in supporting democracy-promotion efforts and in defending human rights," Kristen Silverberg, assistant secretary of state for international organizations, said last week.

"We've been disappointed, really profoundly disappointed, by the quality of the resolutions that are coming out of the Human Rights Council," Silverberg continued. "We think they have an unconstructive focus on Israel, and that they really need to turn their attention to some of the key human rights problems in the world."

In a straw poll conducted by the 15-member Security Council last week, Ban of South Korea came first, followed by Tharoor of India and Sathirathai of Thailand.

Jordan's Hussein came a distant fourth because, according to insiders, he is an Arab who has warm ties with Israel — an outcome that underscored reluctance in the Jewish community to reveal recent meetings with candidates.

In fifth place came Jayantha Dhanapala, the top U.N. disarmament official, from Sri Lanka. A dark horse not on last week's

ballot is Chan Heng Chee, Singapore's ambassador to the United States. U.S. officials reportedly favor her because, among other reasons, she would be the first woman in the job.

Tharoor's meeting with Jewish leaders in Washington was organized by Chabad-Lubavitch, representing another development in the evolving U.N.-Jewish relationship.

The fervently Orthodox outreach group recently has assumed a high profile at the United Nations, and is interviewing for staff to deal full time with the world body.

"I can speak for a movement with an energetic, ongoing presence in 73 countries,"

said Rabbi Levi Shemtov, Chabad's envoy in Washington, who organized the Tharoor meeting and is spearheading the effort to establish a permanent Chabad presence at the United Nations.

Chabad's participation is the latest signal that the movement, which for years shunned mainstream Jewish alliances, is now forging them.

Officials at other organizations said Chabad and the Unit-

ed Nations made a natural match because of Chabad's permanent presence in nations that otherwise lack any Jewish presence.

"Chabad has an effective international network of Jews," said the WJC's Franklin.

Mariaschin of B'nai B'rith International said the more Jewish organizations involved at the United Nations, the merrier.

"We're such a small community, and it's a big world out there," he said. ■

'The important thing is that we have a leader who's going to help make the U.N. an effective organization in supporting democracy-promotion efforts and in defending human rights.'

Kristen Silverberg

Assistant U.S. secretary of state for international organizations

Human rights group presses council

NEW YORK (JTA) — A leading human rights group called on the U.N. Human Rights Council to end its one-sided approach to the Middle East. In a release Monday, Human Rights Watch said the recently formed council has passed three resolutions against Israel, but has ignored the actions of Hezbollah and armed Palestinian groups. The council, which begins its second regular session Monday,

should shift some of its focus away from the Middle East to human rights issues in areas such as Darfur and Sri Lanka, Human Rights Watch said.

The U.N. General Assembly created the council in March to replace the old Human Rights Commission, which included several nations with poor human rights records and which focused disproportionately on Israel. ■

JTA
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JTA WORLD REPORT is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For more information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.
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Rallying for Darfur

By JACOB BERKMAN

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Jewish presence was again large, as an estimated 30,000 demonstrators gathered in Central Park here on Sunday calling on the international community to help end the crisis in Darfur.

"All the sides in the Darfur conflict are predominantly Muslim. But this is not about politics, this is about people," former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright told the crowd.

"We need to tell the United Nations that this is what it is here for. And President Bush has to make it clear to the United Nations that the United Nations has to get in there."

Albright was among 30 speakers issuing similar statements at the park on Save Darfur Day, when protests took place in more than 80 cities around the world — including in Cairo and Jerusalem and Khartoum, Sudan.

The rallies were aimed at persuading the United Nations to deploy to the Sudan the peacekeeping forces it promised this summer.

An estimated 200,000 to 400,000 people have been killed in the western region of the Sudan since 2003, when the Sudanese government enlisted Janjaweed militias to rout out government dissenters. The situation has turned into a tribal war between Arab and African Muslims in which some 2.5 million people have been driven from their homes.

In August, the United Nations authorized the deployment to the region of 22,600 peacekeeping troops, but they have not yet been sent to Sudan because of an inability to recruit the soldiers from U.N. nations — and Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir's reluctance to allow them into his country.

The New York protest, organized by the Save Darfur Coalition, a 2-year-old coalition of more than 170 faith-based and social action organizations, was heavily attended by Jews, much like an April protest in Washington that drew between 60,000 and 75,000 people.

In Washington, some 20 percent were Jewish, according to some estimates.

Among a sea of New York protesters wearing blue hats and berets — which organizers suggested people wear to symbolize the blue helmets worn by U.N.

peacekeepers — were many Jews wearing yarmulkes.

Jewish groups from all over the country came to hear speakers such as Albright; the executive director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, Rabbi Steve Gutow; the director of the National Council of Churches, Tony Kireopoulos; and actress Mira Sorvino.

Some came to the protest — which also featured musical performances by Suzanne Vega, O.A.R and others — as the leaders of Jewish groups.

Arieh Liebowitz, the chief communications director of the Jewish Labor Committee, an organization that acts as a liaison between the Jewish community and organized labor, brought a handful of people to the rally.

Kaitlin Tufts and Nicole LaHousse are students at Colgate University who traveled four hours from upstate New York to the rally on a bus chaperoned by Rabbi David Levy, the Jewish chaplain at Colgate.

The group of 55 students from the university's interfaith community — 12 of whom were Jewish, according to Levy — were accompanied on their trip by a Sudanese refugee who found out about the protest because he worked in the silkscreen shop that made the T-shirts the group had printed for the rally.

"In the Jewish community, we should be playing up the need to help," said Ruth Messinger, the president of the American Jewish World Service, which co-founded the Save Darfur Coalition along with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

"We learned from the Holocaust about what happens when people are not willing to stand up for you. Now we are willing to stand up for people who are victims."

Messinger, who was not at the event for personal reasons, but was checking in with organizers, said she is proud that the Jewish community has taken up the

Darfur cause, especially since it is one that involves mostly Muslim victims and aggressors — a fact that she acknowledges is often downplayed.

But while Jews were well represented at the rally, some wondered about the relatively small turnout of another group that would seemingly have a natural connection with the plight of those suffering in Darfur — African Americans.

Though several black churches brought groups to the event, Albert Nzamukwerekwa was disappointed that there was not a heavier black turnout.

Nzamukwerekwa, a Tutsi survivor of the 1994 Rwandan genocide in which members of the Hutu tribe killed hundreds of thousands of Tutsis and moderate Hutu, is the director of peacebuilding efforts for Never Again International. With his organization, he and other native

Africans regularly speak at schools — including Jewish schools here and in Europe — teaching children about what happened in Rwanda and what is happening in Darfur.

He said he has some optimism about the situation in Darfur because, while most people did not know about what was going on in Rwanda, many of the students with whom he speaks seem to have a general understanding that something bad is happening in the Sudan.

Flanked by three Africans who are members of his speaking bureau and by the executive director of another speaking bureau, Voices of Rwanda, Taylor Krauss, who recently traveled to Darfur with the World Jewish Congress, Nzamukwerekwa told JTA that he was impressed by the Jewish turnout and by the efforts of Jews involved in the movement to save Darfur.

But he wondered, "Why is it that the African American community is less represented here? Is it because they are not aware of it or they don't want to be a part of it?" he asked. "They should be a part of this."

Among a sea of New York protesters wearing blue hats and berets — symbolizing the blue helmets worn by U.N. peacekeepers — were many Jews wearing yarmulkes.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Gay pride parade in Israel slated

A postponed gay pride parade in Israel will take place in November. Petitioners to Israel's High Court reached an agreement Monday with the government on a Nov. 10 date for the parade, the Jerusalem Post reported.

Organizers postponed the parade in August due to Israel's war with Hezbollah and following police warnings that they might not be able to ensure safety at the march. Dates proposed by organizers for late September were not accepted because of their proximity to Rosh Hashanah.

Hezbollah men on trial

Three Hezbollah gunmen captured during the Lebanon war were indicted in an Israeli court.

Prosecutors at Nazareth District Court on Monday charged the three men, all in their early 20s, with crimes including murder, attempted murder and belonging to a terrorist group.

Several of the charges related to a July 12 border raid in which Hezbollah abducted two Israeli soldiers and killed eight, triggering a monthlong war.

If convicted, the defendants could be jailed for life, but they are widely expected to be repatriated as part of a possible swap in which the two Israeli soldiers held in Lebanon are released.

Israel on holiday alert

Israeli security forces were put on high alert for the High Holidays. National police chief Moshe Karadi said Monday that an alert was declared following intelligence that Palestinian terrorist groups were planning attacks around Rosh Hashanah.

Karadi also said security has been beefed up around Israeli churches for fear they could be attacked by Muslims angry over Pope Benedict's recent controversial comments on Islam.

Hezbollah plans 'victory' rally

Hezbollah plans to hold a rally celebrating its "victory" over Israel. Hezbollah's chief, Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, announced this week that his group would parade through Beirut's devastated Shi'ite southern district Friday to celebrate what he described as Israel's "defeat" in the recent Lebanon war. How the rally will be received by mainstream Lebanese will be a gauge of Hezbollah's postwar domestic standing. Another test of Hezbollah's confidence is whether Nasrallah himself will attend: The Hezbollah chief has not appeared in public since the war erupted July 12, for fear he could be assassinated by Israel.

WORLD

Holocaust survivor siblings reunite

Two siblings who survived the Holocaust were reunited Monday in Israel thanks to Yad Vashem's database. Two grandchildren of Hilda Glazberg, who doesn't like to talk about the war years, searched the database and found a page her family erroneously filled out saying Glazberg had been killed during the war. Her brother Simon flew from Canada to Israel, where Glazberg lives.

Another brother is ill in Canada, and another reunion is expected to take place there soon. The database is available at www.yadvashem.org.

Nations condemn Israel

A group of countries from the developing world condemned Israel's actions in Lebanon. Meeting over the weekend in Cuba,

representatives of the 118 countries in the Non-Aligned Movement also called for a peaceful resolution to the international dispute over Iran's nuclear program.

The countries backed Iran's claimed right to a peaceful nuclear program and voiced concern over Israel's presumed nuclear capability.

German extremists gain in local elections

German Jewish leaders called extremist gains in German state elections "alarming."

Voters on Sunday in the former East German state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania gave the neo-Nazi National Democratic Party of Germany 7.3 percent, passing the 5 percent threshold necessary to have a seat in the state Parliament.

The state becomes the fourth to have right-wing extremist parties in their local Parliament in reunified Germany.

Many observers say that high unemployment in eastern states plays a role in turning voters to the right.

Catholic Church honors rescuer

The Catholic Church honored a Hungarian nun who saved dozens of Jews during World War II.

Sara Salkahazi was beatified, the last step before sainthood, during Sunday Mass in Budapest.

Salkahazi was killed in December 1944 by Hungary's wartime fascist regime for hiding Jews in the building used by her religious order.

Interfaith effort backs Jews in Norway

Muslim and Lutheran leaders expressed solidarity with Jews in Norway after an attack on an Oslo synagogue.

The synagogue was hit Sunday by several gunshots in the early morning; no one was hurt.

Police are seeking the perpetrator.

The Oslo bishop of the Church of Norway, Ole Christian Kvarme, said, "This is a situation in which we must raise the barricades against all types of anti-Semitism." The Islamic Council in Norway expressed "sympathy to our Jewish friends" in a letter to the Mosaic Religious Community, the umbrella group for Norway's Jews.

The gunshots follow a series of threats to the country's Jewish population, including an assault on a man with a yarmulke and desecration of a Jewish cemetery.

NORTH AMERICA

Funders network donates money

The Jewish Funders Network contributed \$10 million to help residents of northern Israel recover from the recent war with Hezbollah.

The money is part of a \$60 million effort by the Sacta-Rashi Foundation, an Israel-based group. Some \$2 million of the Funders Network money already has been allocated for scholarships in regional colleges in northern Israel.

Jewish clergy calls for turn to peace

More than 300 U.S. rabbis and cantors called on U.S. Jews to "actively pursue peace" during the High Holidays.

In a statement released late last week by Brit Tzedek v'Shalom, or the Jewish Alliance for Justice and Peace, the clergy said they "hope that hearts that have been closed by hate can turn to compassion."

They said the Bush administration should use the recent ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah as a first step in efforts to disarm the Shi'ite militia, strengthen pro-democracy forces in Lebanon and achieve peace between Israel and its neighbors.