

Press Review n°230. By Gilberte Jacaret

THE WEST BANK

....Palestinian Police Kill Israeli Visiting West Bank Holy Site.... By Ethan Bronner. New York Herald Tribune, April 24, 2011

....Jerusalem: The Palestinian police shot and killed one Israeli and wounded four others early Sunday after the Israelis surreptitiously visited a Jewish holy site inside a Palestinian-controlled area, officials on both sides said. The shooting occurred outside Joseph's Tomb in the West Bank city of Nablus after three carloads of religious Israeli Jews visited the site to pray, without coordinating their plans through the Israeli Army. Twice-monthly trips to the tomb have been organized with army escorts for the past four years without incident.

Palestinian security officials said they were questioning the Palestinian police officers who fired their weapons during the episode. The dead man was identified as Ben-Yosef Livnat, a 24-year-old father of four from Jerusalem and a nephew of Limor Livnat, the minister of culture and sport from the Likud Party in Israel. Mr. Livnat grew up on a settlement near Nablus, where his parents still live.

After the shooting, Palestinian youths set fires outside the tomb. Israeli and Palestinian security officials extinguished them. Later, at a funeral procession for Mr. Livnat that began at the nearby settlement, dozens of masked Israeli settlers attacked Palestinians along the way, smashing their cars and wounding a boy.

The procession ended at a grave site on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem where Ms. Livnat, the minister and aunt of the dead man, called his killing "a cold-blooded murder";

A statement from Defense Minister Ehud Barak, who is responsible for Israeli security in the West Bank, also used the term "murder," adding, "No failure of coordination can justify an event of this kind and firing on innocent people." Mr. Barak instructed the army to investigate and demanded that the Palestinians do the same and that they take all necessary measures against those who fired.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu condemned the killing as well.

The Palestinian governor of Nablus, Jibril al-Bakri, told Israel Radio that the shooting was a result of lack of coordination between the worshipers and the Israeli Army. He said that Palestinian police officers who were on a regular patrol shot a warning into the air before firing at the cars. He stressed that the shooting was a mistake.

An Israeli military spokesman said at day's end that Israeli and Palestinian security officials had met and exchanged what they knew and were continuing their inquiries.

The Palestinians, he said, accused the Israeli worshipers of having thrown rocks at the police before the shooting began.

David Ha'ivri, a Jewish settler spokesman who is involved in coordinating visits to Joseph's Tomb with the Israeli Army, said some worshipers refused to visit in this way and sneaked in on their own.

"We do not endorse that," Mr. Ha'ivri said. "We call on people to be responsible." He added that the organized visits to the tomb were nonetheless still too infrequent to accommodate all who wished to go. Most of those who sneak in are members of the Breslov Hasidic sect who live in Jerusalem, he and others said.

The military spokesman said that on Jewish holidays — it is Passover now — it was not uncommon for some devout Jews to sneak into holy sites under Palestinian control. If caught by the Palestinians, they are nearly always handed over to the Israelis without violence, he said.

Many Jews believe that Joseph's Tomb is the final burial place of the son of Jacob, the biblical patriarch.

A spokesman for the Israeli rescue service, Magen David Adom, said that the cars had been fired upon after visiting the tomb. He said that apart from Mr. Livnat, who died of a gunshot wound to the head, two others in a second car were evacuated by helicopter. Others were lightly wounded and treated on the spot.

GAZA

Red Cross: There is no humanitarian crisis in Gaza... By Yaakov Lappin. Jerusalem Post. April 21, 2011

Deputy ICRC head in Strip notes Gazan supermarkets have food, slams Hamas rocket fire, but says Israel should let more materials in.

The Gaza Strip is not suffering from a humanitarian crisis, the deputy head of the Red Cross in Gaza said this week.

Mathilde Redmatn, who had been assigned to Congo and Colombia in the past, said that the "fabric of life" in the region was problematic.

"There are two peoples, one living under closure and one living under daily rocket fire, which violates international law," she said. Her comments were made available on Thursday by the IDF Spokesman's Office.

"There is no humanitarian crisis in Gaza. If you go to the supermarket, there are products. There are restaurants and a nice beach. The problem is mainly in maintenance of infrastructure and in access to goods, concrete for example," Redmatn said.

"Israel has the legitimate right to protect the civilian population; this right should be balanced with the rights of 1.5 million people living in the Gaza Strip," she said.

Redmatn condemned Gazan rocket attacks on southern Israel, while also calling on the government to allow more materials to enter the Strip.

"Rocket fire from the Gaza Strip is against international law because it is directed at civilians," she said. "We conduct confidential or bilateral dialogue with Hamas on the matter. As time passes, the dialogue also develops."

She said the Red Cross would continue to seek access to abducted IDF soldier Gilad Schalit — who will begin his sixth year of captivity on June 25 — but stressed that the organization lacked the capability to "force anything on Hamas."

The Red Cross and the IDF are in close contact to "coordinate the entry of goods into Gaza and the entry and exit of people, sometimes our personnel and sometimes patients who are going to Israel to receive medical care," she said.

The organization is now seeking to strengthen its relationship with soldiers stationed at the Erez border crossing and around the Gaza Strip, the official said.

"Our goal is not to negotiate peace, but to ensure the well-being of the civilian population," Redmatn said. "We understand and recognize Israel's right to security, but it needs to maintain the balance between that and the right of Palestinians living in Gaza to a living and to proper medical care. Of course this is also the responsibility of Hamas to its citizens and therefore we also have relations with them."

ANTI-SEMITISM

Synagogue targeted by arsonists on the Greek island of Corfu... European Jewish Press. April 19, 2011

Athens: The Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (KIS) and the Jews in Greece strongly condemned the attack against the synagogue on the Ionian island of Corfu by unknown extremists.

Vandals broke late last night into the synagogue, piled a number of prayer books on the floor in front of the holy ark and set a fire.

Police and fire department of Corfu intervened in time and prevented the fire from spreading into the wooden interior and destroying the historic Scuola Greca synagogue which was built during the 17th century in the Venetian architectural style.

The synagogue, which is the only synagogue remaining on the island of Corfu out of three that existed before World War II, was closed at the time and nobody was injured.

In a statement, the Board said: "It is obvious that the vandals wished to give their action a highly symbolic message by choosing this specific date for their shameful attack: the day of the Jewish festivity of Passover, the day when Jews around the world celebrate the liberty of their ancestors from the Egyptian rule, the day that represents freedom."

"On the day of Passover anti-Semitism brutally manifested itself in Corfu, expressing hatred and fanaticism, in the same way that the Nazis chose to start the implementation of the "Final Solution" of the "Jewish problem" by burning books and synagogues," it said.

"In contemporary Greece, society cannot allow or tolerate anti-Semitism, given that such attacks undermine our civilization, our dignity, our human nature, our democracy."

The island of Corfu has the sad privilege to be one of the cities with the higher rates of extermination of Jewish population during the Holocaust.

The city is also where Jews have a long historic presence and made a significant contribution to the island's development, culture and heritage.

It is also the native city of world known writer and philosopher Albert Cohen.

The Board called on the Greek authorities to take the necessary measures to arrest the perpetrators and bring them to justice.

“Those who burned the Jewish books today will be the future criminals who will turn against the principles of democracy, and against the values of our civilized society. The citizens and the society of Corfu have the moral obligation to protect their city's history and heritage”.

No arrests have been made so far.

Jewish community cemeteries and monuments in various parts of the country are sporadically targeted by vandals.

A similar attack on a synagogue on the island of Crete in 2010 destroyed hundreds of rare books.

Greece's pre-war Jewish community was decimated by Nazi deportations and now numbers around 6,000 people.