



ISRAEL MATTERS!

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Israel Quiet on Mystery Explosion in Sudan

Canada and US: UN Official Calling for Israel Boycott Should Quit

Canada joined the United States and Israel in calling for the resignation of a United Nations official charged with monitoring and reporting on human rights in the Palestinian territories.

Richard Falk, the UN's special reporter for the Palestinian Territories, had called for a worldwide boycott of companies doing business with Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories. That recommendation was immediately condemned by the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, who termed Falk's call to action "irresponsible and unacceptable," and said it would "poison the environment for peace."

A spokesman for Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister said Falk was "offensive and unhelpful but not overly surprising." Falk, a professor emeritus of international law at Princeton University, once compared the state of Israel to Nazi Germany, the Associated Press reported. "Richard Falk has a long history of making outrageous statements, and frankly, has only tarnished the reputation and integrity of the United Nations," the Canadian representative said.

Falk listed 13 companies in his report to the UN that he said ought to be boycotted -- including Volvo, Caterpillar, Hewlett Packard and Motorola. "Canada calls on Mr. Falk to either withdraw this biased and disgraceful report - or resign from his position at the United Nations." [cnews]

Israeli officials did not confirm nor deny that the Israeli military carried out a recent attack on a weapons factory just south of the Sudanese capital of Khartoum. Sudan directly accused Israel of launching a night time air raid on the Yarmouk factory, with a senior minister telling reporters, "The people have seen it with their eyes — four planes coming from the east, and we have no enemy other than Israel."

Israel has long accused Sudan of being a base of support for Iran and the Palestinian militant group Hamas, calling it a conduit for arms heading to militant groups in the Gaza Strip via the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula.

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak refused to comment in an interview but a top aide, Amos Gilad, repeated those accusations on Israel's army radio. "Sudan is a dangerous terrorist state. To know exactly what happened, it will take some time to understand," he said.

Sudanese officials have denied the allegations of arms smuggling.

The alleged attack reportedly killed two. Sudanese officials initially said a fire started in a storage hall and that nothing pointed to an "external" cause. Journalists in Khartoum were shown a video from the site showing a large crater next to two destroyed buildings and a rocket on the ground, the Reuters news agency reported.

Video of the aftermath of the explosion posted online looked like fireworks being set off, followed by raging fires and thick plumes of smoke.

Sudan's state news agency reported four Israeli planes used "hi-tech jamming devices" in the attack and a local Sudanese reporter told Israel's Haaretz newspaper that there was a telecommunications blackout for about an hour before the explosions at the factory.

Sudan's Culture and Information Minister Ahmed Bilal Osman said that contrary to Israeli belief, the plant didn't make advanced or nuclear arms, only "traditional weapons." Sixty percent of it had been destroyed, he said. Osman warned that Sudan would now respond "at a place and time we choose."

Haaretz reported that "opposition sources" in the Sudan claimed the factory was actually owned and operated by Iran's elite Revolutionary Guard. Alex Fishman, an Israeli military analyst, agreed. "One thing is certain: That factory did not belong to the Sudanese military industries," he said. "It was a factory that belonged to the government in Tehran which was run by Iranians. If there were any casualties in the attack, it is

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reasonable to assume that some of them were Iranian.”

Iran analyst Yoel Guzansky at the Institute for National Strategic Studies, who used to work at Israel's National Security Agency, also agreed, saying he believed the target was an Iranian facility within the Yarmouk complex known to Israeli intelligence. Asked whether Israel carried out the strike, Guzansky responded, "I really don't know." "It's easy for Sudan to blame Israel, even if they know it's other countries like Egypt or the U.S. It's not as costly politically," he said.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Ramin Mehmanparast placed blame for the explosion squarely on Israel, calling it an attack that was a "clear violation of international rules and regulations" and said it "would escalate tensions in the region," according to Iran's official Islamic Republic News Agency.

It was reported that some 300 protesters demonstrated against Israel outside the government building where the Sudanese cabinet was in an emergency meeting, shouting "Death to Israel" and "Remove Israel from the map."

This is not the first time Israel has been accused of carrying out a strike against a Sudanese target. In 2011, a missile strike on Port Sudan that killed a Hamas weapons smuggler was blamed on Israel, along with another similar strike in eastern Sudan in 2009. [Reuters]

Israel, India Issue Joint Stamp

Israel and India have issued two commemorative stamps to mark 20 years of diplomatic relations as a sign of cooperation between the countries. India issued 2 stamps, a First Day Cover and a Sheetlet (100 Rs. 20 Stamps).



The theme of the stamps is "Festival of Lights." Israel's stamp depicts the Jewish festival of Hannukah with a row of candles and features a menorah with the Hebrew word "Zion" inscribed inside a Magen David star. The menorah featured on the stamp was inspired by the wooden menorahs used by the Jewish

community in Bombay, India.

India's stamp shows a row of lamps representing the Indian holiday of Deepavali and features diya.

The two stamps will be available in Israel later this year. They were designed by Indian artist Alka Sharma and Israeli artist Ronen Goldberg. [PhilaMirror]

Israel National Library Wins Ownership of Kafka Archive

After five years of sometimes Kafkaesque legal debates, the Israeli National Library has won ownership of more than 10,000 previously unpublished manuscripts written by Franz Kafka.

Kafka, a Jewish writer who lived in Prague, is considered one of the greatest writers of the 20th century.

Two sisters in Tel-Aviv, Ruth Wiesler and Eva Hoffe, had received the archive from their mother, Esther Hoffe. Esther was the secretary of Kafka's long-time friend, Max Brod. After their mother's death in 2007, the sisters sued for private ownership of the archive.

Although Kafka passed on his writings to Brod before his death, asking for their destruction, Brod published and edited several of the manuscripts, and kept others with him.

In 1939, Brod fled the Nazi invasion in Europe to Israel, where he died in 1968. He left Kafka's writings in the possession of his secretary, Hoffe, and asked in his will that the manuscripts be given to the Israeli National Library.

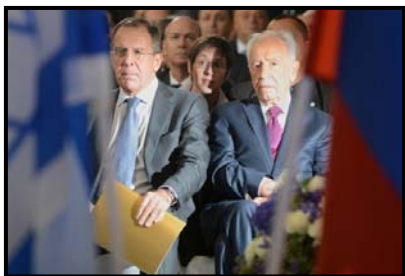
"This case, complicated by passions, was argued in court for a long time across seas, lands and times," wrote Tel Aviv District Court Judge Talia Pardo-Kuplemen in her decision. "Not every day does the opportunity befall a judge to delve into the depth of history as it unfolds before him."

The Hoffe sisters and their inheritors claimed that the documents were a personal gift from their mother, which they planned to sell to the national German Library, which was interested in the scripts. However, "due to the strict requirements of proof required, I do not believe that the plaintiffs (the Hoffe sisters) have met the requirements", Pardo-Kuplemen wrote. "The gift was never carried out to completion. One can determine that the Kafka manuscripts, like the Brod estate, were not given to them as gifts but for safe-keeping," the judge wrote. "I hope that the inheritance of the late Brod will finally find its place according to the wishes of the deceased," Pardo-Kuplemen concluded.

Meir Heller, who represented the National Library at the trial, said the court ruling was "a decisive victory for the National Library. All the library's claims were accepted. The court ruled that the estate -- including the Kafka and Brod manuscripts -- are to be bequeathed to the public and will be transferred to the National Library." [IANS]

Israeli President Opens Jewish Museum in Moscow

Israeli President Shimon Peres recently opened a major Jewish museum in Moscow. Housed in a converted 1920s bus garage, it tells the story of Jews in Russia from Tsarist times, through the horror of the Holocaust, to the present day. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov [photo, at left] and Peres [photo, at right] opened the Jewish Museum and Tolerance Centre which is located in Moscow's stunning Bakhmetevsky Bus Garage.



“There is no museum like this,” Peres said at the opening ceremony. “This is great historical evidence of the greatness of man but also his weaknesses.” The building was handed over by the Russian authorities to Moscow's Jewish community in 1999 after it stopped being used as a bus depot.

Russian President Vladimir Putin hoped the new museum would become “a place for dialogue and agreement between peoples,” said a statement read at the ceremony by Lavrov. “Any attempt to review the contribution of our country to WWII victory or to deny the Holocaust is not just a cynical lie but a forgetting of history,” it added.

The galleries aim to evoke the lives of Jews in Russia from the late 19th century using exhibits, letters, and 13 hours of video testimony recorded with Russian Jews living all over the world. High-tech multi-media rooms seek to recreate the sights, sound, and even smells of the past. A memorial gallery offers complete silence for visitors to reflect on the tumultuous history of Jews in Russia.

Jews were repressed in Tsarist times when, starting in the late 18th century, they were largely forced to live in an area of the western Russian empire known as the “Pale,” where many lived in impoverished towns known as shtetls. During World War II, Hitler's armies occupied most of today's Belarus, Ukraine, as well as western Russia, leaving Soviet Jews exposed to the full brunt of the Nazi killing regime.

Heavily targeted during the 1930s purges, Jews suffered even after World War II in the USSR under Stalin's rule, especially when the purported discovery of a so-called “doctors' plot” against him unleashed a wave on anti-Semitic hysteria.

Of major interest are newly declassified documents relating to the fate of Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg who saved thousands of Jews in Nazi-occupied Hungary in World War II and then mysteriously disappeared in the Soviet prison system. [AFP]

Israel's “Iron Dome” Gets Smarter

Israel has successfully completed tests of new software for its Iron Dome anti-rocket system. The improvements enable the Iron Dome missiles to intercept incoming rockets farther away.

Israel has bought seven batteries of Iron Dome. Four are in action and a fifth one will soon enter service. Each battery has radar and control equipment, and four missile launchers, and costs about \$37 million, which includes over fifty missiles. In the last two years Iron Dome has intercepted more than 100 rockets headed for populated areas.

Iron Dome uses two radars to quickly calculate the trajectory of an incoming rocket. It is programmed to do nothing if the rocket's projected trajectory indicates it will land in an uninhabited area. However, if the computers predict a rocket will come down in an inhabited area, it will fire a \$40,000 guided missile to intercept the incoming rocket. The selective firing design makes the system cost-effective, because Hezbollah fired 4,000 rockets in 2006, and Palestinian terrorists in Gaza have fired over six thousand Kassam rockets in the past eight years, and the Israelis know where each of them landed. More than 90 percent of the rockets landed in uninhabited areas and few of those that did hit inhabited areas caused casualties. Israel already has a radar system in place that gives some warning of approaching rockets. Iron Dome will use that system, in addition to another, more specialized radar in southern Israel.

[StrategyPage]

Israel's Neuronix Offers Alzheimer's Treatment

Israel-based Neuronix has developed a non-invasive medical device to help treat Alzheimer's disease. It expects the system to be approved by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration in late 2014. The device, which combines electromagnetic stimulation with computer-based cognitive training, is already approved for use in Europe, Israel, and several Asian countries. It consists of a chair containing an electronic system with software in the back and a coil placed at the head. It has been tested on mild to moderate Alzheimer's patients who suffer from dementia, but are not totally dependent.

The system is in trials at Harvard Medical School/Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Centre. Patients are treated for one hour a day, five days a week, over six weeks.

“We see improvement lasting for 9-12 months and the good thing is that patients can return and undergo treatment again,” said Neuronix CEO Eyal Baror. “If out of 10 years the patients have left to live, we can keep them at home in a relatively mild state of the disease for three, four, five years, it's a lot.” [Reuters]