

# JAC NewsBreak

VITAL NEWS & RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR JAC LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

October 23, 2009

## On my mind this month...



Barbara Bluhm-Kaul

Spain disqualified a group of Israeli academics from a solar power design competition in protest over Israeli settlements

policy and because their university is in the West Bank. England revoked several licenses granted to U.K. companies to sell weapons parts to Israel. Norway decided to sell its shares in Elbit Systems Ltd., an Israeli company that provides surveillance equipment for the separation barrier between Israel and the West Bank. The government of Egypt prohibited Israeli researchers from attending a medical conference there. (Egypt dropped the ban due to American pressure, but the Israelis did not attend.) Of the twenty-six resolutions regarding human rights abuses passed by the Human Rights Council of the United Nations, twenty have been about Israel - this despite the horrendous human rights records of so many regimes in the Middle East. The organization Human Rights Watch continues to pummel Israel, in violation of its own mandate to make a distinction between democratic societies that have mechanisms to combat human rights abuses and authoritarian regimes that do not. HRW earned the criticism of its own founder and chairman emeritus for casting aside that important distinction. And the list goes on...

Support for Israel, even among democratic countries, has eroded. Human rights organizations reserve most of their criticisms for Israel while letting Middle East dictatorships off the hook. America is different because American Jewish organizations like JAC insist upon it. We will keep the pressure on.

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## Israel

The Israeli cabinet met on October 20. There were no discussions of the formation of a committee to discuss the Gaza war and the Goldstone report. Several ministers, including Defense Minister Ehud Barak objected to consideration of the issue. Israel chose not to cooperate with Judge Richard Goldstone and his team when they were in the region to probe human rights violations related to the war. Israel had previously done its own investigation and "decided that its army acted within international law." (International Middle East Media Center, 10/22/09). Israel's foreign minister, Avigdor Lieberman has asked UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to keep the Goldstone Commission report from advancing to further votes within the international body. The report was endorsed by the UN Human Rights Council last week despite opposition from Israel and its allies. Lieberman's stance is that bringing the report for vote in the Security Council or at a General Assembly would harm Middle East peace talks. "It is impossible that the Palestinians will negotiate with Israel in the local arena and fight against Israel in the global arena."

On September 22, President Obama brought Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President Abbas together at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York and declared, "It is past time to talk about starting negotiations; it is time to move forward." He asked both sides to send diplomats to Washington for serious talks and directed Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton to report back to him in a month about what had been accomplished. The deadline was reached this past Thursday, October 22. The secretary "advised the president that challenges remain as the United States continues to work with both sides to relaunch negotiations in an atmosphere in which they can succeed." Israel has agreed to curtail construction of settlements, not a total halt. The PA has strengthened its security and

*(Israel, continued on page two)*

## United States

### CHOICE

A new Oklahoma law, set to go into effect November 1, would allow the state to publish detailed information about abortion patients online. Doctors will be required to report the information to the State Department of Health so that it can be posted on a public web site. Supporters say that patients' privacy rights are protected because their names and other personal information will not be reported. Critics argue that these details - date of abortion, county where abortion is performed, age of mother, marital status, race, years of education, number of previous pregnancies - will make it possible to identify patients, especially those who live in small towns. "These are women who are already in a tragic situation, and the law will expose them... It's a violation of patient privacy rights," said Lora Joyce Davis, an Oklahoma resident, in an interview with Fox News. Davis and former state Rep. Wanda Jo Stapleton have filed a lawsuit over the measure. The Federal Trade Commission is planning a series of public discussions to begin December 7 in Washington, D.C. The focus will be on privacy risks "associated with the collection and use of consumer information." (*WSJ*, 10/13/09)

According to the Associated Press, unsafe abortions kill 70,000 women annually. More than half the deaths, are in sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time, a recent Guttmacher Institute report showed that increased contraceptive use leads to fewer abortions worldwide. A similar survey was conducted in 1999. The Institute's president, Sharon Camp said, "[I]n much of the developing world, abortion remains highly restricted, and unsafe abortion is common and continues to damage women's health and threaten their survival." The report makes three recommendations: 1) Expand access to modern contraceptives and improve family planning services; 2) Ensure that safe, legal abortions are available to women in need; 3) Improve the coverage and quality of post-abortion care. Sub-Saharan Africa is the area of greatest concern. (*NYTimes*, 10/13/09)

## Research & Races

### SENATE

**Florida** --The newest appointment to the Senate is Republican George LeMieux who replaces GOP Sen. Mel Martinez. Sen. LeMieux is a place holder who says he will not seek the seat in the regularly scheduled November 2010 election. Sen. LeMieux is a lawyer, has been an aide to Gov. Charlie Crist and was the Broward County Republican Party chairman from 2000-02. Gov. Crist is expected to be the GOP nominee for this Senate seat, but he does have a primary opponent.

**Massachusetts** -- The special election to fill the seat of JAC supported Democratic Sen. Edward Kennedy will be held January 19, 2010. The winner will hold the seat until November 2012, when Sen. Kennedy's term would have expired. The front-runner in the Democratic primary on December 8 is Attorney General Martha Coakley. She will face Rep. Michael Capuano, Boston Celtics co-owner Steve Pagliuca and community service activist Alan Khazei. Coakley

has been elected to statewide office twice and easily has the highest name recognition in the Democratic field. The winner of the primary will be the heavy favorite in the January special.

### HOUSE

**Florida**--JAC supported Dem. Rep. Robert Wexler (FL-19) is leaving office in early January to become the head of the Center for Middle East Peace and Economic Cooperation. Rep. Wexler is currently serving his 7th term in the House and has been outspoken on issues concerning Israel during his entire tenure. He will be missed. The scramble to fill his shoes has already started. State Sen. Ted Deutch (D) won Wexler's seat in the state Senate in 2006, with the Congressman's help. Three of Deutch's potential competitors are st. Sen. Jeremy Ring (D), Broward Mayor Stacy Ritter (D), and Broward County Commissioner Ben Graber, who came in third in the 1996 primary that Wexler won in his first race. All three come from Broward County which

makes up less than one-third of the Congressional district. The majority of Deutch's state district lies in Palm Beach County. West Palm Beach mayor Lois Frankel is also considering running. JAC will not be in this crowded primary.

**New York** -- GOP Rep. John McHugh was recently confirmed as Secretary of the Army. The special election to fill this seat will be November 3. Attorney Bill Owens, the Democratic nominee, has also received the endorsement of the labor-based Working Families Party. Owens will face Republican nominee, st. Assemblywoman Dede Scozzafava and Conservative Party nominee Doug Hoffman. Scozzafava has a moderate record in the state assembly and is pro-choice. Doug Hoffman has the backing of the anti-tax group Club for Growth. Although this seat has been held by McHugh for almost 18 years, Democrats think they have a good pickup opportunity. President Obama has headlined a fundraiser for Owens.

## Right Wing Watch

The Value Voters Summit, sponsored by the Family Research Council (FRC) and other religious right organizations, was held last month in Washington, D.C. This is the religious right's largest national political gathering. The biggest difference between this year's summit and past conferences is that there is a Democrat in the White House. Several speakers openly addressed "how best to recapture Congress for the GOP in 2010 and the presidency in 2012." Former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee told the group that the very existence of the country is at stake, "It is at times a country that is almost difficult to recognize." And his solution, "Send a bunch of

congressmen home next year." Rep. Eric Cantor (R-VA), the House GOP Whip, said that the institutions of the nation are at risk, "We need your help right now...the battle for our democracy is being fought today, this hour, in the halls of Congress and throughout 435 Congressional districts across this country. We must win this battle to change the troubling course America is now on." Several of the groups sponsoring the event are 501(c)(3) organizations and are legally prohibited from political involvement - the FRC, the Heritage Foundation, American Values and the American Family Association. Attendees were invited to a special reception hosted by the FRC Action

PAC to be briefed on upcoming races and meet PAC President, Connie Mackey. Mackey told the group that, "We will pray a lot, but if we don't change the numbers on Capitol Hill, the Democrats are going to continue to overtake us all with government," FRC has also formed the Virginia Values Voter Political Action Committee and is running ads against the Democratic gubernatorial candidate, R. Creigh Deeds, in Virginia. Virginia is one of two states holding gubernatorial elections this year in November. The GOP candidate, Bob McDonnell, aligns himself with the views of FRC and is anti-choice in all situations, including rape.

### *Israel, continued from page one*

institutions, but not as much as the administration would like. Special envoy George Mitchell has been going back and forth working on other issues such as Israel's borders in the hope that it will not put an end to peace negotiations before they start. The work has been complicated by the Goldstone Report, dealing with "war crimes" in Gaza last winter. In her meeting, Mrs. Clinton said, "Mideast gains are modest...Mr. Mitchell will keep at it." (NYTimes 10/23/09)

Iran's envoy to the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) says "his country will respond next week to a UN-drafted plan to ship much of its uranium to Russia for further enrichment." The US, Russia and France endorsed the UN plan after discussions with Iran earlier in the week. Iranian state TV said that Teheran was waiting for a response to its proposal to buy nuclear fuel rather than ship low-enriched uranium to Russia for further enrichment. Iran has often used

counterproposals to draw out negotiations. Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak did not like the UN plan, even before Iran's response. "This agreement, if it is signed, will set Iran's accumulation of enriched material back by about a year...what is required is a halt to enrichment in Iran, not just an export of the enriched material to build fuel rods...We suspect that this is another attempt by Iran to buy time. Israel must rally the world as this is not solely Israel's problem." (Jerusalem Post 10/23/09)