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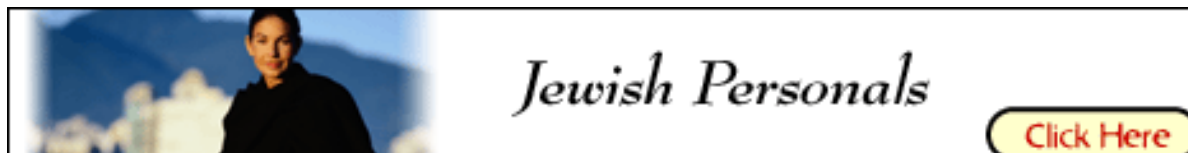
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Bias charges spark Washington Post boycott

by Paula Amann

News Editor

A local campaign is taking shape to urge Jews to drop their subscriptions for one week to *The Washington Post*, to protest alleged anti-Israel bias in its news coverage.

Rabbi Elly Krinsky hosted a first meeting of more than a dozen organizers at the synagogue he serves, Potomac's Beth Shalom Congregation and Talmud Torah, on Thursday of last week.

As the protest, called for June 10-17, develops, organizers are at work on a Web site, www.boycottthepost.org, to dramatize their concerns.

"We think *The Washington Post* is biased, they're not fairly reporting the news and we are trying to come up with the most effective means to let them know that we won't stand for it and we want it to end," Krinsky said the day after last week's meeting.

He described what he views as a pattern of editorial bias, including headlines, emphasis, page placement and reporting angles.

Opinion has its place, the rabbi said, but not in straight news reporting.

"The op-ed page should not be seen on the front page," Krinsky contended.

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Rabbi Yosef Singer of Congregation Young Israel Ezras Israel of Potomac is also taking part in the boycott.

"When the United States is engaging in military actions against al-Qaeda, it has been referred to as a firefight," Singer lamented. "When Israelis react to terrorist attacks, it's called retaliation."

In a column on Sunday, *Washington Post* ombudsman Michael Getler tried to address charges of anti-Israel bias in the newspaper's pages.

"Is it possible that so many major American news organizations are getting this story wrong; that some sort of national media conspiracy is at work here?" Getler writes, defending the *Post*. "That, of course is not the case, and news organizations will persevere in reporting this story in an unflinching, unintimidated fashion that presents the news in the most accurate way possible for their entire readership."

Potomac activist Aaron Cohen offers an example of what concerns the boycott organizers. In headlining its story on the April 15 rally for Israel near the U.S. Capitol, the *Post* noted "Thousands Rally for Israel," adding the subhead, "U.S. Urged to Support Reprisals for Suicide Bombers."

"We were there in solidarity with Israel, not in support of military aggression against Arabs, but it was turned around," Cohen said.

For Rockville's Neal Jacobs, who joined the other two at last Thursday's meeting, the final straw came March 8 when his wife, Nehama, telephoned a friend in Israel. That day, the friend's son's yeshiva on the outskirts of Gaza had been attacked by terrorists, and five teens murdered.

Jacobs said that the next day's *Washington Post* headlined "Deadliest Day in Mideast," and reported on Palestinians killed in an Israeli offensive. Nowhere did it report or picture the massacre of five yeshiva students.

He said the only reference was in a map of Israel and the territories that indicated Israel Defense Forces strikes and the yeshiva attack.

"We never read an evenhanded account" of what happened, Jacobs said. "They knew five men were murdered. They ignored it."

In his March 10 letter canceling the paper, Jacobs wrote,

"Has *The Washington Post* failed to provide its readers with objective, fair and honest reporting regarding Moslem terrorists in Israel? And, has *The Washington Post* consistently been a willing soapbox for the claims of the Moslem terrorist murderers of innocent Jewish civilians? The answer is clearly Yes!"

Krimsky stresses that the group is not out to hurt the *Post*, but to improve its policies.

"We want something constructive and positive, not simply to bad-mouth one of the country's leading papers," Krimsky said.

As it plans its approach to the problem, the group is looking with interest at similar efforts across the country.

In Los Angeles, some 1,000 people have dropped their subscriptions to the *Los Angeles Times* to protest what they view as the daily's pro-Palestinian stance, according to news reports. One campaign is calling for a boycott of the venerable *New York Times*; another campaign is urging Jews to suspend advertising and obituary notices in that paper.

Meanwhile, a group called Minnesotans Against Terrorism took out an full-page ad in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* to criticize the avoidance of the term "terrorist" in reference to Palestinian suicide bombers.

"We monitor what's going on in Los Angeles, New York ... and Minnesota in the Twin Cities," said Krimsky, "and we're in touch with a wide array of individuals."

Potomac's Warren Manison, meanwhile, has been reaching out to such groups as the World Hindu Council and Christians for Israel. He also hopes the majority of area synagogues will support the boycott.

"We're shooting for at least 5,000 people," he said. The *Post* has a daily circulation of 770,600.

Debra Rubin, WJW editor, contributed to this article.

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