



## NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ Prime Minister Shimon Peres said Israel would not redeploy its forces in Hebron until the Palestine National Council amends its covenant calling for the destruction of the Jewish state. Under the peace accords signed last fall, Israel was to withdraw its troops from most of Hebron by the end of March. [Page 3]

■ Many Israeli schoolchildren will remember 1996 as the year without Purim. In deference to the victims of suicide bombings in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, schools and synagogues canceled their annual Purim festivities. [Page 2]

■ Calls in some quarters to form a national unity government to address the security situation in Israel are reminiscent of the mood prior to the 1967 Six-Day War. Some ministers are urging Prime Minister Shimon Peres to hand over the Defense Ministry to Foreign Minister Ehud Barak, the former Israel Defense Force chief of staff. [Page 1]

■ President Clinton, who told the people of Israel that the American people "stand with you" in the fight to end a wave of suicide bombings, sent bomb-detecting equipment to Israel to help fight terrorism. He was to address a memorial service for the bombing victims at the Israeli Embassy in Washington.

■ Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole threatened to cut off U.S. funds to the Palestinians. "Unless and until serious anti-terrorist actions are implemented by Chairman [Yasser] Arafat, it is difficult to justify continued U.S. assistance to the Palestinian Authority," he said.

■ Four Israel Defense Force soldiers were killed and seven wounded in a roadside bombing in the southern Lebanon security zone. Arab fighters reportedly ambushed an Israeli patrol on the border, setting off the bomb when the soldiers pursued the attackers.

■ Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.) protested a U.N. plan to construct a Middle East gas trunkline that would traverse Iran. D'Amato urged U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in a letter "in the strongest terms" to halt the project.

### NEWS ANALYSIS

## Israel hopes incursion threat will prod Arafat to curb terror

By David Landau

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Israeli officials, seeking a course of action to protect their wounded and bleeding country and to reassure the Israeli public, have announced that they will not rule out strikes within Palestinian autonomous areas to root out known terrorists.

But can such actions be taken, even for a limited duration and in limited areas, without triggering a resumption of the intifada — the Palestinian uprising — on a wide scale? Israeli officials believe that this will depend on the political and moral leadership shown by Palestinian Council President Yasser Arafat to his own people.

Arafat has been desperately anxious since the dawn of Palestinian autonomy in May 1994 to avoid an all-out civil war with Hamas, the fundamentalist Islamic group that claimed credit for the four suicide bombing attacks in Israel in nine days.

But after the fourth attack this week, Arafat went significantly further than ever before, outlawing the military wings of Hamas and Islamic Jihad in the self-rule areas and pronouncing himself "ready to cooperate with Israel" in fighting terrorism.

This unequivocal formulation was seen in Jerusalem as encouraging.

And it resulted in a public call late Monday night by top Hamas political leaders in the Gaza Strip to the military wings of their movement to cease the chain of terror attacks.

This call did not elicit any favorable responses from government officials — primarily because recent events have proven that Hamas is not a unified, hierarchical body with a disciplined command structure.

The likelihood is that the four recent suicide bombings were planned and perpetrated by a splinter unit of Hamas. This would explain why repeated offers of a truce with Israel by certain Hamas spokesmen during the past two weeks were followed by attacks.

Within Israel, public opinion seemed less than reassured by the government's performance in the immediate wake of the bombings.

The national mood sank after the Feb. 25 bombings in Jerusalem and Ashkelon. It plummeted Sunday, when the same Jerusalem bus route targeted a week earlier was again struck with lethal efficiency. But rock bottom was reached when a terrorist struck Monday in Tel Aviv.

### Striking at the heart of the heart

True, Jerusalem is the capital, the Holy City, the focus of the nation's dreams and prayers.

But it is colorful, Mediterranean-style Tel Aviv that in many ways is the true heart of the country.

Moreover, Dizengoff Street is the heart of Tel Aviv — and the Dizengoff Center, a modern, garish shopping-and-entertainment mall, is the heart of the heart.

When the bomb exploded outside the mall, that heart stopped beating momentarily.

At such moments of supreme national crisis, the yearning for unity is natural.

On Sunday, and with redoubled force Monday, calls were voiced for the creation of a national unity government, comprising both the Labor Party of Prime Minister Shimon Peres and the opposition Likud Party.

But with elections less than three months off and Peres' popularity rating dropping like lead, the Likud, understandably, is reluctant to join the current government.

Peres is said to be prepared to add several Likud ministers to his government — on the condition that the Likud agrees to postpone the national elections, recently advanced at Peres' own initiative from October to May 29.

Within Labor itself, key ministers are thought to be urging Peres to hand the Ministry of Defense, which he heads, over to Foreign Minister Ehud Barak, who, until a year ago, was the Israel Defense Force chief of staff.

The historical analogy of the period preceding the 1967 Six-Day War is in many people's minds. At that time, Peres himself, then secretary general

of the opposition Rafi party, pressed for Labor Prime Minister and Defense Minister Levi Eshkol to add both the Rafi and Herut — the forerunner of today's Likud — parties to his government.

Eventually Eshkol succumbed — and Rafi leader Moshe Dayan became minister of defense, taking much of the credit and glory for the triumphal victory that followed.

Whether Peres, almost 30 years later, is now prepared to offer any political opportunities to Likud rival Benjamin Netanyahu is unclear.

Minister Yossi Beilin, the man perhaps closest to Peres, denied Tuesday that any move toward forming a national unity government was afoot. Peres himself would only say, at a Monday night news conference, that he had not heard such reports and was concentrating exclusively on the operational issues at hand.

But these pressures are likely to grow in the days ahead — because the “all-out war” that Israel declared this week on Hamas does not look like a short one.

The war was launched at an emergency Cabinet meeting called immediately after Monday's terror attack.

At the news conference later that day, Peres announced the creation of a “special headquarters” to fight the suicide bombers. The anti-terror command, Peres said, would be led by Ami Ayalon, the recently appointed head of the Shin Bet, Israel's domestic security agency.

Peres added that Ayalon's staff would be empowered to send Israeli forces into “any place, anywhere, where this terrorism begins to grow” — leaving open the possibility that this could include areas under Palestinian control.

Other ministers made it clear that, when possible, the Palestinian Authority would be given the first opportunity to confront known terror targets within its territory. If the Palestinians fail to act, or fail to act forcefully or successfully, they added, then Israel would go in.

In Gaza, many Palestinians feared an imminent massive Israeli invasion Monday night.

But Israeli sources, after emergency consultations between Peres and military commanders through the night, said there would be no “demonstrative” military actions in the Palestinian autonomous areas that would be designed solely to improve public morale inside Israel.

But, these sources added, operations would be directed at known and specific targets — which still left open the possibility of a strike within Gaza or the West Bank autonomous areas. □

#### **BEHIND THE HEADLINES**

#### **A year without Purim: No parades, only funerals**

*By Michele Chabin*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Many Israeli schoolchildren will remember 1996 as the year without Purim.

In deference to the victims of this week's suicide bombings in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, schools and synagogues canceled their annual Purim spiels and parties.

Usually brimming with little Queen Esthers, Power Rangers and Ninja Turtles, downtown Jerusalem this year was nearly devoid of youngsters.

Fearing more terrorist attacks, most parents decided to keep their kids at home. Those children who did venture out appeared sad and bewildered at the lack of festivities.

For the adults, the horrible cycle of suffering has been even more traumatic. For the second week in a row, Israelis have rushed to newsstands to check in the papers whether someone they know has been killed or injured.

Even people with no actual ties to the victims were affected by the front-page photos of soldiers, schoolchildren and grandparents who were killed in the blasts.

Among the victims of this week's attacks:

- On their first outing without parental supervision, Kobi Zaharon and Yovav Levi, both 13, had a good time roaming the Dizengoff Center shopping mall in Tel Aviv. But they never made it home.

After walking around the mall on Purim, the two boys were about to board a bus when the blast occurred. Kobi, who was preparing to celebrate his Bar Mitzvah next month, was killed immediately. Yovav died soon after in the hospital.

- Last week, Gavriel Shamashvili heard the terrible news that a close relative, Simon Tarakashvilli, had been killed in the first No. 18 bus bombing in Jerusalem.

Exactly one week later, Shamashvili himself was killed when another No. 18 bus was blown up in the heart of Jerusalem.

A Soviet immigrant who arrived in Israel four years ago, Shamashvili worked in a factory that produced medical supplies. Just a week earlier, his fellow employees had given him a bouquet of flowers for his 43rd birthday.

A grieving relative noted that “the family has just gotten up from one shiva, and now we are once again in mourning.” He leaves a wife and two children, ages 14 and 16.

#### **'Like a flower who was cut down'**

- Anna Shingeloff, another immigrant from the former Soviet Union, could not believe her luck last week when she barely missed boarding the first ill-fated No. 18 bus. “After the first attack, she spent the whole week in shock,” said a close friend.

The mother of two young daughters, ages 2 and 9 months, Shingeloff, 36, was again on her way to work on a No. 18 when it exploded in the heart of Jerusalem.

“She is like a flower who was cut down,” said a friend. “Now, who will raise her children?”

- When Shoshana Wax asked her two children, Assaf, 21, and Mital, 27, to join her on Dizengoff Street, she had no way of foreseeing the tragedy that would soon befall her family.

After a day spent shopping, Shoshana departed for home. Just five minutes later the bomb went off. For the next several hours, she and her husband, Dov, ran from one place to another, frantically searching for their children. It was only hours later that they located Mital, her foot amputated, hospitalized in very critical condition.

About midnight, they learned that Assaf's body had been identified at the morgue.

- Gidi Taspanish, a 23-year-old from Ethiopia who was living in Israel on a tourist visa, was in a rush Sunday morning. Hurrying to her job as a nanny in the Givat Ze'ev neighborhood of Jerusalem, she boarded the No. 18 bus and was killed instantly.

“When she didn't arrive at work we decided to try to find her, and we did — in the forensics institute at Abu Kabir,” said Ronen Vinogard, her employer.

“I don't know how to tell my children what happened to Gidi. They loved her so much.”

- As close as four teen-age girls could be, ninth-graders Bat-Hen Shahak, Dana Gutman, Hadas Dror and Nili Zeltzer traveled Monday to Tel Aviv for a day of sun and shopping. Due home in the late afternoon, they telephoned their parents to ask whether could stay just a little longer.

When the bomb on Dizengoff went off, Bat-Chen and Hadas, both 15, and Dana, 14, were killed on the spot. Nili was badly injured and is now hospitalized.

Shortly after hearing the news, one of the girls' friends said through tears, “We have to do something to protect ourselves. We really want peace, but it has to be a real peace.” □

## IDF redeployment in Hebron now linked to ending terror

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — With the future of peace with the Palestinians thrown into question by a rash of closely spaced Hamas suicide bombings, Israel has imposed stringent security measures in an effort to stave off the wave of fundamentalist terror.

And in a departure from previous policy, Prime Minister Shimon Peres this week linked an Israeli redeployment in the West Bank town of Hebron scheduled for later this month to a demand that Palestine Liberation Organization officials revoke those portions of their charter that call for the destruction of Israel.

The redeployment, which in the past had been linked to the Palestinian leadership's ability to combat terror, "will be examined in light of Palestinian fulfillment of obligations," Peres told reporters.

PLO leader Yasser Arafat, responding to Peres' sharp calls for a crackdown on terror, said Monday that he was ready to cooperate fully with Israel and announced that he had outlawed the military wings of Hamas and other Islamic fundamentalist groups in the self-rule areas.

Later that day, Palestinian security officials said they had arrested Mohammed Abu Wardeh, 28, of the West Bank town of Ramallah, who they said was the "mastermind" behind the four suicide bombings of the past two weeks.

Wardeh acted under the instructions of handlers based in Damascus, according to Israel Television. It remained unclear whether Wardeh would be turned over to Israel or face prosecution by Palestinian authorities.

In Israel, security forces adopted punitive measures Tuesday against the families of suicide bombers, sealing the homes of 11 terrorists, including that of Yehiya Ayash, who was assassinated in an explosion in Gaza in January.

Public Security Minister Moshe Shahal announced that Hamas institutions in eastern Jerusalem would be closed down.

In addition to the closure already imposed on the territories after the Feb. 25 suicide bombings in Jerusalem and Ashkelon, Israeli officials began taking additional steps to control traffic into Israel from the territories.

Maj. Gen. Ilan Biran, head of the Israel Defense Force's central command, announced the imposition of a closure on some 460 Palestinian villages in the West Bank.

Speaking at a news briefing Tuesday, he said about 1.2 million Palestinians were effectively under restrictive orders.

### Stormy protests

In a move directed at Israeli employers of low-paid Palestinian laborers, Biran also announced that Israelis would be prohibited from driving Palestinians into Israel in their own vehicles, and that the Egged and Dan bus cooperatives were barred from transporting any Palestinians into Israel.

Police also launched a campaign to identify and arrest Israelis found to be illegally employing Palestinians in their homes.

The wave of violence of the past two weeks has placed a question mark on the future of the peace process.

In Tel Aviv on Monday, demonstrators converged on the site of the suicide bombing in an outpouring of grief and anger.

After stormy protests the night before, a strong security presence Tuesday kept crowds behind police barricades to allow traffic to pass.

Some of the demonstrators lit memorial candles for the victims and scrawled anti-government slogans on sheets

of paper at the site. Groups of protesters intermittently burst out shouting, "Death to Arabs," and "Peres, go home."

A steady stream of people made their way through the crowd, some stopping to look at the memorial candles and flowers laid at the site, others to stare silently at the stores with blown-out windows, curtains flapping in the breeze.

The shouting of demonstrators was interspersed with the sound of drilling, as shopkeepers set to the task of repairing the damage. □

### Victims of two latest bombings

NEW YORK (JTA) — The following people died in the latest two terror attacks in Israel, according to the Israeli Consulate in New York.

On Sunday in Jerusalem, a suicide bomber on a No. 18 bus killed:

- Sgt. Haim Amedi, 19, of Jerusalem
- Sarina Angel, 45, of Beit Jala
- Maya Birkan, 59, of Jerusalem
- Uzi Cohen, 54, police officer, of Jerusalem
- Raya Daushvili, 55, of Jerusalem
- Mirze Gifa, 39, Romanian worker
- Marian Grefan, 40, Romanian worker
- Dimitru Kokarascu, 43, Romanian worker
- Valerian Krasyon, 44, Romanian tourist
- Sgt. Yoni Levy, 21, of Jerusalem
- Dominic Lunka, 29, Romanian worker
- Daniel Petenka, 33, Romanian worker
- Shemtov Sheikh, 63, of Jerusalem
- Anna Shingeloff, 36, of Jerusalem
- Gavriel Shamashvili, 43, of Jerusalem
- Jaday Stepanz, Ethiopian tourist
- Gidi Taspanish, 23, Ethiopian tourist
- George Yonan, 38, of Jerusalem
- Naima Zargary, 66, of Jerusalem

On Monday in Tel Aviv, a suicide bomber outside the Dizengoff Center killed:

- Inbar Attiya, 21, of Ramat-Efal
- Gail Balkin, 48, of Herzliya
- Sylvia Bernstein, 73, of Hod Hasharon
- Hadas Dror, 15, of Tel Mond
- Tali Gordon, 24, of Givatayim
- Dana Gutman, 14, of Moshav Mishmeret
- Yovav Levi, 13, of Tel Aviv
- Leah Mizrahi, 60, of Tel Aviv
- Rahel Sela, 82, of Tel Aviv
- Bat-Hen Shahak, 15, of Tel Mond
- Dan Twersky, 58, of Tel Aviv
- Assaf Wax, 21, of Holon
- Kobi Zaharon, 13, of Tel Aviv

### Israel frees Jordanian prisoners

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel has released seven Jordanian prisoners who had been held after being accused of infiltrating Israel and conducting illegal military activities.

The group of seven, who Feb. 29 crossed the Allenby Bridge into Jordan, was the first of three groups — totaling 36 Jordanians — that Israel has agreed to release after more than a year of negotiations with Jordanian officials.

Meanwhile, Jordan's new ambassador to Israel, Omar Rifai, took up his post in Tel Aviv late last week.

Rifai replaced Marwan Muasher, who was made information minister in the Jordanian government. □

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES**
**Purim tale tensions reflected in recent terrorist bombings**

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — The timing of Monday's suicide bombing in Tel Aviv could not have been more striking.

It was the day before Purim, the Jewish calendar's most passionately joyous holiday, when for the fourth time in nine days a Palestinian suicide bomber aligned with the fundamentalist Hamas destroyed the lives of innocents.

There are remarkable parallels between the recent horrifying events in Israel and the story of Purim.

The Purim narrative, like all good mythical and biblical sagas, is full of tensions — between evil and justice, hope and despair, death and life, victimization and vengeance, suffering and redemption.

As the peace process unfolds, Hamas attacks against Jews provoke precisely those same tensions — between hope for the possibility of peace and the despair of recently losing scores of members of the Jewish people to the murderous hatred.

"Purim is a holiday in which you have to look carefully to find God, since God isn't mentioned in the Megillah (Book of Esther)," said Rabbi David Wolpe, a lecturer in Jewish thought at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York.

"Clearly this is a time when a lot of Jews have to look quite carefully to find God."

The Book of Esther tells the tale of Haman, the prime minister of the ancient Persian city of Shushan, who was bent on murdering all its Jewish citizens. He was a direct descendent of Amalek, the man who is the very embodiment of evil and the biblical archetype of all persecutors of Jews.

One of Shushan's Jews, Mordechai, learned of Haman's plans and convinced his niece Esther to join him in trying to avert them. She agreed to become part of King Ahasuerus' harem so that she would have a chance to talk him into helping.

In the end, Esther and Mordechai save their community from Haman's murderous plans, and Haman and his 10 sons are hanged on the gallows they had erected for the Jews.

The story of Purim really begins the Shabbat before, with a special Torah reading, a cautionary tale to Jews in their own land given to them by God. The reading ends with a commandment to never forget that Amalek, the enemy, always surrounds us.

**'Pay attention to your enemies'**

Given what happened in Tel Aviv the day before the holiday, "there's an incredible irony that the whole Purim story is about a continual battle against enemies and evil," said Rabbi Daniel Gordis, dean of the Ziegler School of Rabbinical Studies at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles.

"It's a paradox that we want to wipe out the names of our enemies and we tell our children to do that by sounding groggers at the mention of Haman's name," Wolpe said.

"The result is that the names of Mordechai and Esther go by without anyone noticing, but the name of Haman we pay tremendous attention to," he said. "That's a lesson of Jewish history, to pay tremendous attention to your enemies."

But what is the proper way to pay "tremendous attention" to one's enemies? Is it the way that Baruch Goldstein did when he murdered 29 Palestinians on Purim in 1994?

In a section that gets little attention in many contemporary Purim celebrations, the Jews of Shushan are full of revenge.

After the Jews are saved, they go out and kill 75,000 of their persecutors, presumably Haman's army troops.

When Goldstein chose the Tomb of the Patriarchs in the ancient city of Hebron as the place he would go to kill Palestinians, he elected a site layered with religious, psychological and political meaning.

The tomb is where Isaac — a father of the Jewish people — and Ishmael — regarded as the father of the Arab peoples — came together after the rupture in their relationship in order to bury their father, Abraham.

One of the central themes of Purim can be found in the name of the holiday. Purim, a Hebrew word meaning "lots," refers to the way that Haman decided in which month he would conduct the slaughter.

"Lots are totally random, and there is something horrendously random about" the way the Hamas suicide bombers do their work, Gordis said.

Although Esther and Mordechai ultimately triumph over Haman, and Shushan's Jews are redeemed from their death sentence, the drama often seems too close to call.

And there have been a number of other strikingly close calls for Jews on Purim, the 14th of Adar, throughout Jewish history.

In 1991, Saddam Hussein's Scud missiles stopped raining on Israel, and Jews there finally got to take off their gas masks and come out of their sealed rooms.

On Purim in the year 1574, the Jews of Thrace — a region now covered by parts of Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey — were saved from extermination, as were the Jews of Rhodes in 1840.

On Purim in 1631 the Jews of Ragusa, Italy, were saved from the accusation of blood libel. On the same date in 1833, in Trieste, Italy, a leading Jew-baiter died, as did a persecutor of Jews named Count Aginsky, on the same date in 1863, in Ritova, Lithuania.

In some instances, Jewish vengeance against enemies was carried out by other parties.

For instance, it was Purim 1946 that the Nazis found guilty during the Nuremberg trials were put to death.

Eleven men were sentenced to death, but one, Hermann Goering, committed suicide before he could be hanged.

**Some metaphysical connection?**

As the 10 Nazis — like Haman's 10 sons — went to their deaths, one of them, Julius Streicher, shouted out, "Purimfest!"

Is there some metaphysical connection between Purim and important events in Jewish history, between the Jewish role in the Purim story and subsequent occurrences?

"Predicting or interpreting particular events that way can be tricky and misleading because we can't decipher the divine tea leaves," said Rabbi Meir Fund, the charismatic spiritual leader of the Flatbush Minyan in Brooklyn and a teacher of Jewish mysticism.

"It's very hard to decipher spiritual cause and effect," Fund said.

The model of Jewish vengeance presented by the Purim story is also a difficult one to tackle.

"The line between being Mordechai defending your community, and being Amalek and Haman, destroying others, is a line that everybody's really got to examine," said Rabbi Arthur Waskow, director of the Shalom Center, which is part of Aleph: The Center for Jewish Renewal, based near Philadelphia.

People "have to struggle with the Amalek within and without," he said. □