



# Daily News Bulletin

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82<sup>nd</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Premier gives statehood warning

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned Sunday of severe consequences should Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat unilaterally declare an independent Palestinian state on May 4, the end of the interim period spelled out in the Oslo accords. [Page 4]

### Appeal blocked in Sheinbein case

An Israeli Supreme Court justice ruled against hearing an appeal of a decision not to extradite a Maryland teen-ager accused of committing a murder last year in the United States.

Sunday's decision paves the way for Samuel Sheinbein, 18, who fled to Israel after the murder, to be tried in the Jewish state.

### Premier calls for Russian aliyah

Russian Jews should respond to growing anti-Semitism in the country by making aliyah, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said during a visit Sunday to Moscow's Choral Synagogue.

Earlier in the day, he made a brief stopover in Ukraine, where he visited Babi Yar, the site of a Jewish massacre during the Holocaust. While in Moscow, the premier is slated to discuss Russian military aid to Iran during a meeting with his Russian counterpart, Yevgeny Primakov. After visiting Moscow, Netanyahu is scheduled to make a one-day visit to the former Soviet republic of Georgia.

### Cardinal blasts 'Jewish agencies'

The Vatican's top liaison to the Jewish community harshly assailed certain "Jewish agencies" for damaging Catholic-Jewish relations and declared that the Jewish umbrella group charged with handling inter-faith dialogue is dead.

Cardinal Edward Cassidy was quoted by The New York Jewish Week as saying that one of the "largest members" of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations had conducted a "systematic campaign to denigrate the Catholic Church."

Eugene Fisher, director of Catholic-Jewish relations for the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, said the cardinal was referring to the World Jewish Congress. The WJC's executive director, Elan Steinberg, denied the charge and was quoted by the paper as calling Fisher's remarks a "provocation."

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### Gaza violence sparks question: Is Arafat facing internal intifada?

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Is Yasser Arafat losing his grip on power?

The sight of Palestinians protesting against Palestinians earlier this month in the streets of Gaza — where police shot and killed two protesters and the air hung thick with the smoke of burning tires — prompted some to wonder whether Arafat had a full-blown intifada on his hands.

But while most observers believe that Arafat's grip remains intact for now, the protests provided a dramatic reminder of the deep frustrations that periodically boil to the surface of Palestinian society.

"This is not yet an intifada against Arafat," said reserve Col. Shalom Harari, a former Arab affairs adviser at Israel's Defense Ministry.

"But it means that if Arafat goes, the street may be ripe for a military coup against the present ruling establishment."

Along with the frustrations among his people over the lack of progress in the peace process, Arafat has to contend with the frequently violent internecine strife involving local clans.

But perhaps most dangerous of all is the deep resentment felt by the Palestinian masses regarding what they perceive as a corrupt judicial system.

It was this sense — that an arrogant ruling elite is regularly dispensing injustice in the Palestinian courts — which brought the crowds into the streets two weeks ago for two consecutive days of violent demonstrations.

The protests erupted after a Palestinian court handed down a death sentence in a politically charged murder case.

The March 10 sentence had been imposed on Raed Attar for the slaying last month of policeman Rifat Joudeh.

To protest the verdict, members of Attar's family marched in the southern Gaza town of Rafah, where they protested outside the local headquarters of the Palestinian police.

The police opened fire to disperse the crowd — and when the smoke cleared, two Arab teen-agers lay dead on the streets.

Arafat, who has the final say on death sentences, subsequently bowed to public pressure and agreed to review Attar's case. He also ordered the release of those involved in the protests.

Some observers said Arafat had no choice in the matter.

"I would regard this as an act of submission," Palestinian human rights activist Bassem Id said in an interview. "Arafat is giving in to the street."

"He simply runs the business without a proper legal system," he said, echoing a familiar Palestinian complaint that the legal system is totally dependent on Arafat's executive powers.

"We don't need a revolution," he added. "The laws are all there. They only need to be executed" properly and consistently.

To accomplish this, Id called for the appointment of a respected independent judge to head the Palestinian judicial system.

Palestinians have long been complaining about the swift, summary sentences dispensed by the Palestinian courts.

Last year, two Palestinian security officials who killed two agents of another

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Israel seeks suspects' handover

Israel asked the Palestinian Authority to hand over three Islamic militants suspected of a 1995 bombing that killed seven Israeli soldiers and American student Alisa Flatow.

In addition to the extradition request stemming from the 1995 attack in the Gaza Strip, Israel also asked for the transfer of four Palestinians implicated in a 1993 break-in at a factory near Tel Aviv.

### Monitors blame Israel, Hezbollah

The five-nation group monitoring the 1996 cease-fire reached between Israel and Hezbollah ruled Sunday that both sides recently violated the accord.

But the monitoring group, which includes representatives from Israel, the United States, France, Lebanon and Syria, did not agree on recent incidents in the Lebanese village of Arnoun, where the Israel-allied South Lebanon Army destroyed two houses after Israel said the Lebanese government was doing nothing to stop the planting of mines around the village.

### Hamas denies cease-fire talks

Hamas officials denied claims by Palestinian security sources that members of the Islamic militant group imprisoned in Israel are engaged in contacts with Israel to negotiate a cease-fire. Palestinian security sources had maintain they had a letter sent by the Hamas prisoners to their political leadership abroad informing them of the contacts.

### Iraqi envoy blasts Israel

An Iraqi diplomat criticized the international community for allowing Israel to keep its nuclear facilities closed to inspectors while other states face demands to dismantle their arsenals.

"Our present world is witnessing an era of nuclear apartheid," the envoy told a meeting March 18 of the U.N. Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

agency — and who belonged to a different clan — were executed, with Arafat's approval, after a trial that lasted only a few hours.

And last month, a Palestinian colonel who had been convicted of rape was executed by a firing squad on the night the sentence was issued.

Palestinians have long complained that security officials act as if they are above the law, that they treat the local population as they please. Police officers enter homes without court orders and carry out searches without any legal authority, critics charge.

In addition, critics complain, the judicial system is subservient to political expediency.

According to Id, some 400 political prisoners have been languishing in Palestinian jails for more than two years without trial.

Critics further charge that the absence of the rule of law goes far beyond political differences, noting that even tax offenders are frequently jailed without trial.

Compounding the situation are the large number of security agencies operating without any clear-cut distinctions regarding mission or responsibility.

There are at least eight different security agencies working for the Palestinian Authority, with members often belonging to rival clans.

At last week's trial, it emerged that Attar and two co-defendants, who were convicted but not sentenced to death, were members of one of the security agencies. But there were also claims that they were members of Hamas. In any event, all three were on Israel's wanted list.

Some observers believe that Arafat is devoting too much time to the peace process — particularly whether to declare Palestinian statehood in May — at the expense of pressing domestic social issues.

"Arafat spends most of his time trying to revive the peace process, or thinking about May 4," said Id, who charged that the Palestinian leader "lacks the proper infrastructure to create a state."

The Palestine Liberation Organization's governing bodies are expected to meet next month in the self-rule areas to decide whether Arafat should unilaterally declare Palestinian statehood in May.

The 125-member Central Committee and the 18-member Executive Committee are expected to review the recommendations from American and European leaders that Arafat postpone the declaration past May 4, the end of the interim period in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations under the terms of the Oslo accords.

Meanwhile, Arafat finds himself not only contending with the resentments of the Palestinian public, but also engaging in an ongoing sparring match with human-rights groups and Palestinian legislators.

Earlier this month, a human rights group based in the West Bank town of Ramallah said complaints by Palestinian citizens against the Palestinian Authority nearly doubled last year.

The Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens Rights dealt with 825 complaints last year, an increase of 97 percent from 1997, according to its annual report.

Haidar Abdel Shafi, the group's commissioner, blamed the increase on the absence of checks on the Palestinian Authority's power.

A similar criticism has repeatedly been sounded by the Palestinian legislative council, which has often complained about its lack of real power.

Since its establishment three years ago, the Palestinian legislature has enacted 59 laws — but only nine have received Arafat's necessary signature.

Relations between Arafat and the legislature further eroded when Palestinian lawmakers revealed two years ago the presence of widespread corruption among some of Arafat's ministers.

Arafat — who had not been personally linked to the allegations — promised at the time to clean up shop, but little was done and some of the same corrupt ministers remain in power.

Critics of the Palestinian leader say Arafat should act soon to confront the many criticisms confronting his government, warning that the continued frustrations coming from so many sectors of Palestinian society constitute a ticking time bomb.

With Hamas and other rejectionist groups waiting in the wings, they warn, a failure to confront the sources of social tension could one day explode in Arafat's face. □



## Daily News Bulletin

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## JEWISH WORLD

### ADL groups visits Moscow

A 25-member delegation of the Anti-Defamation League arrived in Moscow for several days of talks focusing on the recent surge in Russian anti-Semitism.

The delegation, which is headed by ADL National Director Abraham Foxman, is slated to meet with Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov and other top Russian officials.

The group is also scheduled to meet with the leadership of the Russian Jewish Congress to discuss ways of combating the growing anti-Semitism, which has been prompted in part by Russia's ongoing economic woes.

### Senate leader issues clarification

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) distanced himself from a racist political group he has been linked to.

Responding to a letter from the Anti-Defamation League asking him to clarify his views toward the Council of Conservative Christians, Lott said last week that although he once spoke to the group, he had never been a member of the group and "can't imagine being associated with an organization that promotes any form of racial supremacy."

The ADL welcomed Lott's letter, but said he and other government officials have a "responsibility to prevent such groups from gaining the imprimatur of legitimacy they dearly seek through any kind of association" with political officials.

### Vandals strike in central Russia

Vandals sprayed anti-Semitic graffiti on the walls of a public school in a central Russian city that rents space to the Jewish community for Hebrew classes.

After slogans including "Kill a Jew" were spray-painted last week on the building, Jewish leaders in the city of Oryol said they are afraid of continuing to hold classes at the site.

Meanwhile, the lower house of the Russian Parliament refused to censure a lawmaker for making an anti-Semitic diatribe.

In its second such decision in four months, the State Duma last Friday rejected a motion condemning Communist deputy Albert Makashov.

The body also passed a resolution criticizing the media for exaggerating the dangers of "Russian fascism."

### Two war crimes charges lifted

A British judge last Friday dismissed two of four murder charges against Anthony Sawoniuk, accused of killing Jews in Belarus during World War II.

Making the ruling in the war crimes trial, the judge said he did not think a conviction could be reached on the two charges.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Cornered by Ken Starr, Monica found solace from Jewish heroines

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Surrounded by Ken Starr's minions, her world collapsing all around her, Monica Lewinsky's thoughts turned to Hannah Senesh, a Jewish poet and war heroine who parachuted into Nazi-occupied Europe to rescue Allied prisoners and organize Jewish resistance.

The Jewish presidential paramour was sustained by thoughts of the Hungarian Jewish fighter on that fateful day at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Washington, and later said she identified with the plight of Holocaust diarist Anne Frank, according to her authorized biography, "Monica's Story," written by Andrew Morton.

"This is not how we should be living in America in this century," she said of the "bullying" tactics of the independent counsel's office. "It reminded me of the 'The Diary of Anne Frank.' We were living in constant fear."

For those who haven't had their fill of all things Monica and are still wondering how a Jewish girl came to be the source of a constitutional crisis, the book offers bits and pieces that provide a slightly more revealing glimpse into Lewinsky's Jewish identity.

From her acknowledgment of having received spiritual counseling from New York Rabbi Mark Gollub to a confession of having once made "virtually inedible" matzah-ball soup for a charity group in Portland, Ore., there's something for every variety of voyeur.

According to the book, she learned about Senesh after seeing the 1988 film "Hannah's War," which depicts the life of the woman who became a symbol in the Zionist movement of devotion and self-sacrifice.

Deeply concerned about the fate of European Jewry and her mother in Budapest, the Hungarian-born Jewish poet joined a group of parachutists organized by the Haganah in pre-state Palestine and infiltrated Hungary in 1944.

She was captured by Hungarian police and cruelly tortured, but did not reveal any information before she was shot by a firing squad. "I wish that I had the inner conviction that Hannah Senesh had," Lewinsky once wrote in an essay for school.

"I am not nearly half as brave as she was. However, what I have in common with Hannah is that I too share a very close relationship with my mother. Hannah and her mother had a bond that could not be broken by anything and that is the same with me."

Detained by armed FBI agents and Starr's deputies in January 1998, the day Linda Tripp betrayed her, Lewinsky said she found some comfort not only in Senesh's story, but in reading the hotel room's Bible over and over, pausing on a few lines in the 91st Psalm: "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God; in him will I trust."

Recounting her childhood, Morton describes Lewinsky's resentment at being sent to a "strict" temple for Hebrew school and her desire to have an elaborate Bat Mitzvah celebration. "Monica anticipated a big celebration," Morton writes. "Instead, Bernie [Lewinsky, her father] offered to spend \$500 on a party in the backyard of the family home. A full-scale party was not beyond his means but he believed that that was quite sufficient to celebrate an event that was supposed to be religious.

"Monica, knowing well how this would fail to impress her peers, let it be known in no uncertain terms that it most certainly was not sufficient, nor was it what she wanted."

Her father, who used to call Monica "my little farfel," is described as being in a state of mourning, "crouched on the bed constantly saying Kaddish," when news of his daughter's exploits became public. Later, he "had to listen in helpless, silent indignation as local Orthodox Jewish elders discussed the possibility of using religious law to cast Monica out from the faith," according to the book.

Her mother, recalling her horrific experience before the grand jury and Starr's attempts to use her against her daughter, said, "My own family saw that technique used very effectively by Josef Stalin, which is why they left Russia." □

## United Kingdom's JNF chapter splits from Israel headquarters

By Avi Machlis

JERUSALEM (JTA) — After a yearlong power struggle, the Jewish National Fund's United Kingdom fund-raising office is breaking away from Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael-Jewish National Fund, one of Israel's most prominent fund-raising organizations.

The move marks the first time that one of the more than 30 Keren Kayemeth overseas offices has split from the Israel headquarters of the organization known primarily for land development and tree-planting in Israel.

Though not considered to be at issue here, the British split coincides with growing tension between Israel and Diaspora Jewry, as many Jewish communities consider changing funding priorities amid an intensifying conflict over religious pluralism in Israel.

The divorce could also have far-reaching financial implications. JNF UK, Britain's third largest Jewish charity, raised \$8 million last year.

But more importantly, it has contributed its funds through Keren Kayemeth, known as KKL, for 90 years. KKL owns some 17 percent of Israel's land.

"They were trying to turn us into a British chapter of KKL," Gail Seal, JNF UK president, said in a telephone interview with JTA. "If we accepted this, we would be in danger of losing our charitable status in the UK."

In Israel, KKL World Chairman Shlomo Gravetz reversed the charges. He accused the British office of "political manipulation" aimed at wresting control from KKL in Israel and of trying to convince other overseas JNF offices to do the same.

"We will never agree to allow the center of activity to be transferred from Jerusalem," he said.

KKL, founded in 1901, was the vehicle through which Jews around the world funded the acquisition of land in Palestine. This acquisition was instrumental to Israel's establishment in 1948. KKL's controversial charter bans the sale of land to non-Jews.

Seal sent a harsh letter to Gravetz last week, explaining the group's decision. In the letter, which was obtained by JTA, Seal accused Gravetz of trying to control internal affairs and even shut down the London office, which is registered as an independent charity in the U.K.

"We are, with immediate effect, formalising the steps we have already taken to fund raise through Israel through other avenues," said the letter, citing a unanimous decision by its board on March 7.

For his part, Gravetz slammed JNF UK for its "brutal" treatment of Israeli representatives who had been working in London. The dispute reached a climax in January, when JNF UK barred two Israeli representatives of KKL from entering its London office. KKL demanded an apology.

Seal conceded that JNF UK could have handled the situation in a more diplomatic fashion, but she defended the decision, saying JNF UK kept the Israelis out to protect the organization's assets and donor confidentiality.

Seal has scheduled a meeting with representatives of all British Jewish organizations and said the battle may strain relations between Britain's Jewish community and Israel.

But, she added, JNF UK intends to continue raising money for

Israel, and will channel all funds raised to date through JNF UK.

However, KKL plans to take the dispute to a London court, and will try to force JNF UK to change its name.

"In the name of KKL's goals and ideals, moneys will be raised from Jews in England but will not be transferred to KKL," said Gravetz. "We will demand that they return every penny collected that has not been transferred to us." □

## Issue of Palestinian statehood prompts threats, counter-threats

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The issue of Palestinian statehood is generating increasingly heated threats and counter-threats from both Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned Sunday of severe and forceful consequences should Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat unilaterally declare an independent Palestinian state on May 4, the end of the interim period under the Oslo accords. Final-status talks, which have barely gotten off the ground, were supposed to tackle the issue of Palestinian statehood by that date.

Netanyahu's warning came after Arafat told supporters of his Fatah movement last Friday that the Palestine Liberation Organization is ready to fight anyone who tries to prevent the declaration of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

Arafat was quoted as saying everyone should know that the PLO is ready to wage a "Karameh battle," referring to the first major battle Palestinian forces fought with the Israeli army in 1968 at Karameh, Jordan.

Arafat says he is entitled to declare a state unilaterally on May 4, although he has come under international pressure to postpone such a move.

But Netanyahu said Sunday that Arafat is making a "grave mistake if he thinks he can gain anything from a unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state."

Netanyahu added that Israel would respond to the declaration in a way that would only "cause the Palestinian Authority to lose" more than it would gain. While Netanyahu did not elaborate on the threat, he has previously stated that Israel might respond to a unilateral declaration of statehood by immediately annexing portions of the West Bank.

On Saturday, Egypt and Jordan said they backed Arafat's right to declare statehood as long as it is done within the framework of the Oslo accords.

The backing came in a statement issued by Egyptian Foreign Minister Amre Moussa and his Jordanian counterpart, Abbed el-Aila Hattib, after a meeting in Amman that also included Palestinian officials. The statement's reference to the "framework" of the Oslo accords can be interpreted as allowing the declaration to be made as soon as the interim period expires.

In a related development, the Palestinian Authority criticized Israel on Sunday after Israeli officials imposed travel restrictions on three Palestinian officials for hosting a meeting last week of foreign diplomats at the Palestinian Authority's de facto headquarters in eastern Jerusalem.

Privileges were revoked from the Palestinian Authority's top official in Jerusalem, Faisal Hussein; Palestinian Minister of State Ziad Abu Ziad; and lawmaker Hanan Ashrawi. □