



# Daily News Bulletin

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84th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Peres: Too soon to meet Arafat

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said Sunday it is still too early for him to meet with Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, despite what Peres called a "slight drop in terrorism."

In a speech to Palestinian legislators a day earlier, Arafat called on the Israeli government to resume peace talks from the point where they left off before February's Israeli elections.

In his comments Sunday, Peres noted that in Arafat's speech, "There was no clear appeal to stop terrorism."

Meanwhile, Arafat pledged Sunday that the intifada will continue, according to the Jerusalem Post.

The paper reported that during an interview with Palestinian journalists, Arafat said he does not accept Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's demand that Palestinian violence cease before the two sides resume negotiations.

### U.S. Embassy comment blasted

Arab nations are criticizing U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell for saying Jerusalem is the capital of Israel.

On March 8, Powell told members of Congress that while there is no immediate plan to relocate the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv, President Bush is committed to moving it "to the capital of Israel, which is Jerusalem."

### Supremacist speech sparks fights

Fights broke out in a Connecticut town as a white supremacist leader gave a speech inside a local library.

Matthew Hale, leader of the World Church of the Creator, decided to give a speech in Wallingford after he learned that the town's mayor had been reluctant to grant municipal workers a paid holiday for Martin Luther King Day.

In addition to the fights, which were broken up by police, counterdemonstrators drowned out Saturday's speech by Hale, who attacked the "Jewish-owned press" for monitoring his movements and the U.S. border police for "coddling" illegal immigrants, according to The New York Times.

The World Church of the Creator made national headlines in the summer of 1999, when one of its followers killed two and wounded six during a week-end shooting spree in the Chicago area.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### October riot inquiry exposes rift between Israeli Arabs, Jews

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A commission probing last fall's riots, in which 13 Israeli Arabs were killed by police, is exposing the raw nerves that first provoked the deadly clashes.

Last October's riots — most of which took place in the Galilee as an expression of Israeli Arab solidarity with the then-nascent Palestinian uprising in the West Bank and Gaza Strip — left many Israeli Jews questioning the loyalty of the nation's Arab population.

From the perspective of the Israeli Arab community, the police actions that resulted in the 13 deaths only intensified the feeling that Israeli Arabs are subject to discrimination in the Jewish state.

Since then, Israeli Arab solidarity with the Palestinian uprising has only grown, and "the blood of 13 Arab Israeli citizens is still fresh," according to relatives of those killed in the riots.

Under pressure from the Israeli Arab community and Jewish doves, former Prime Minister Ehud Barak created a state commission of inquiry, headed by Supreme Court Justice Theodor Orr, to look into the October events.

Barak apologized for the deaths of the 13 shortly before the Feb. 6 elections for prime minister.

The move was widely seen as an attempt to court Arab voters.

In addition, former Internal Security Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami, who oversaw police operations in the Barak government, sought to distance himself from top police brass.

The Arab community was not mollified, however, and its boycott of the elections contributed to Barak's landslide defeat at the hands of Ariel Sharon.

The commission is still in the early stages of its work, but the fact that police officials find themselves under interrogation for the deaths of the 13 has provoked some criticism from Israeli Jews.

The inquiry's findings likely will determine the professional fate of Commissioner Alik Ron, who as head of the police force's northern command was responsible for dealing with the October riots.

In recent years, Ron has been among the foremost voices warning of the radicalization of Israeli Arabs and the growth of support for Muslim fundamentalist groups.

Israeli Arabs, in response, claim Ron is a racist who treats Arabs with unnecessary harshness.

Conspiracy theories about Ron abound in the Arab community.

Just after the riots, for example, Arab teen-agers in Kafr Manda told a reporter that Ron himself appeared at the scene of a particularly intense clash at the entrance to the village and urged his men to use live ammunition against the Arab rioters in order to save money on tear gas.

Ron has stated in recent weeks that his hands are clean and that, given the extent of the rioting, police could not have acted differently.

He also insists that police acted in self-defense in those incidents that resulted in the 13 deaths.

This is precisely one of the points the commission will have to determine.

Arab human rights groups are concerned that the panel will whitewash events —

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Sharon: No reoccupation plans

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said he would not respond to ongoing Palestinian violence by having the army reoccupy lands in the West Bank and Gaza Strip that were handed over to the Palestinian Authority under the Oslo accords.

"I think the situation is irreversible" in those areas, Sharon said Sunday in a joint interview with *The Washington Post* and *Newsweek*. "That doesn't mean Israel will not take steps against people who find shelter there," he added.

### Palestinians seek U.N. help

The Palestinian leadership issued a statement Sunday calling for the U.N. Security Council to convene and for the international community to act "to bring an end" to Israel's tightened blockades of West Bank cities.

Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, Yehuda Lancry, said the Palestinians called on U.N. officials to dispatch an armed international observer force to the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Lancry told Israel Radio he fears that the U.N. Security Council will approve the request.

### Shots fired at defense minister

Israeli Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer was shot at in the Gaza Strip, but the bullets missed him, Israel Army Radio reported.

Ben-Eliezer was observing Palestinian areas from the roof of an Israeli military building last Friday when two shots were fired.

### Iraqis train to help Palestinians

Several thousand Iraqis began military training over the weekend to be ready to join the Palestinian uprising against Israel, according to the Iraqi News Agency. President Saddam Hussein, in an open letter to the Iraqi people on Feb. 17, ordered the formation of 21 military divisions to help the Palestinians.

or even justify the police actions. But Israeli legal expert Moshe Negbi disagrees, saying the commission has a broad mandate from the government.

Negbi and other supporters of the commission point out that in the first two weeks of the hearings, commission members toured the sites where the killings took place and went into painstaking detail to find out where police had shot from and why.

Arab observers fear that even if the commission finds some police actions unjustified, it may conclude that the riots caught police unprepared and that this would be used to explain the strong police reaction.

They likewise fear the commission may determine that police were justified in believing the Palestinian uprising was spilling into Israel from areas under Palestinian control — and that the police reaction therefore was understandable.

Some legal experts estimate it could take months, perhaps even a year, before the commission delivers its findings.

That means that the commission will still be in session when Israeli Arabs mark Land Day on March 30.

A day of protest against Israel's allegedly discriminatory land use policies, recent Land Day demonstrations have been more violent and confrontational.

Israeli Arab leaders first claimed the October riots were "peaceful protests" against the Israeli response to Palestinian violence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The demonstrations quickly took on a more violently nationalistic tone, however, as groups of Arabs began trashing banks and government buildings in their cities, simultaneously chanting "Slaughter the Jews" and "With blood and fire we will redeem Palestine."

Rioters blocked roads — including a major highway connecting Tel Aviv to the Galilee — pulled Jewish drivers from their cars and beat them, and set forest fires across the Galilee.

The Israeli military considered evacuating one kibbutz whose Arab neighbors were marching on it with firebrands in hand.

Seeing the backlash from Israeli peaceniks and Jewish residents in the Galilee, who suddenly feared to eat or shop in Arab areas, a few Arab leaders allowed that they may have crossed the line of permissible protest.

Since then, however, those voices have faded amid the community's portrayal of the dead as innocent victims of Jewish security forces who place little value on Arab life.

In fact, even at this early stage of the proceedings, it seems the Arab population will settle for nothing less than a full indictment of all police officials involved in the 13 deaths.

Any leniency the commission shows police commanders and officers may well be countered with a strong Arab reaction that could further inflame relations between Israeli Arabs and Jews.

Hassan Jabarin, director general of the Arab civil rights group Adala — which insisted on gathering and filtering all Arab testimony to the commission — told JTA that "there is the absolute truth and the legal truth."

"As far as we are concerned, the facts speak for themselves. Thirteen Israeli citizens were killed in cold blood by police forces," Jabarin said. "That is the absolute truth. It is now up to the commission to find the legal truth."

The value of the commission has been the subject of much debate in the Israeli media.

Right-wing columnist Nadav Haetzni argued in the Israeli daily *Ma'ariv* that "nothing good could come from the commission," which he said Barak created as part of a "surrender to the leaders of Israel's Arabs, and whose purpose was to bribe politically the Arab voters and buy power with their votes."

"Eventually, like everything else in the political career of Ehud Barak, everything went wrong," Haetzni wrote.

"He paid the ransom, but did not receive the benefit" in terms of Arab support in the February elections.

On the other hand, Yosef Elgazi wrote in *Ha'aretz* that many Israelis have forgotten that 754 Arab citizens were arrested in the last three months of 2000 for their role in the riots, 171 are still in custody and many already have been sentenced.

"The Arabs are paying for their deeds, but the security officers only now are being asked to account for their acts," Elgazi wrote. □



## Daily News Bulletin

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## JEWISH WORLD

### Clinton to address Reform leaders

Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.) is slated to address hundreds of Reform rabbis and synagogue leaders at the movement's biennial policy conference. The conference, which began Sunday, marks the 40th anniversary of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

In another development Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg is slated to address hundreds of Jewish women attending the National Council of Jewish Women's conference this week. The organization also plans a Capitol Hill rally for affordable and quality child care Tuesday.

### Toronto shul evacuated on Purim

Police evacuated 1,000 people from a large Toronto-area synagogue after security officials discovered a suspicious package outside the Sephardic Kehila Center on Purim eve.

The package had wires on the outside in order to resemble a bomb, but was found to contain no explosive material. The synagogue had been filled with congregants when the March 8 scare took place.

### Freudians give Said the slip

The Freud Society of Vienna canceled a lecture by a leading Palestinian intellectual because a photograph showed him poised to throw a stone across the Israeli-Lebanese border last summer.

The May 6 lecture by Edward Said, a professor at Columbia University, was canceled because several members of the society "can't accept" a Palestinian who "throws stones at Israeli soldiers," August Schlein, the president of the society, was quoted as telling *The New York Times*. Said responded to the cancellation by saying, "Freud was hounded out of Vienna because he was a Jew. Now I am being hounded out because I'm a Palestinian."

### ORT official dies at 86

Paul Bernick, the executive director of American ORT for almost 30 years, died March 5 from congestive heart failure at the age of 86. Bernick, who lived in New York, led the philanthropy from 1952 to 1981 and was an authority on aid to developing nations.

### Six-Day War journalist dies at 84

Michael Elkins, a journalist known for his radio scoops during the 1967 Six-Day War, died over the weekend in Jerusalem at the age of 84. Elkins was the first to get the story that Israeli planes were destroying Egyptian, Jordanian and Syrian air forces on the first day of the war, but CBS refused to air the news because it was not being reported elsewhere.

Elkins was involved in shipping illegal arms to Jews in Palestine before Israel was founded in 1948.

## Revelations of wartime massacre force Poles to examine their past

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — Responding to widespread debate over Poles' participation in a 1941 massacre of Jews, Poland's political and religious leaders are calling on Polish citizens to confront their past.

"We have an obligation to honor the memory of the victims and to establish the truth," Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek said March 6 of the massacre in the small town of Jedwabne in northeastern Poland.

"We need to confront the darkest facts in our history."

Buzek and other leaders have pledged to commemorate the victims. They have also urged a thorough investigation of the case.

Debate has raged in Poland since the publication last year of Polish-born American scholar Jan Gross' book, "Neighbors." In the book, Gross says that Polish villagers of Jedwabne — not the Nazis — murdered some 1,600 of their Jewish neighbors in July 1941 by herding them into a barn and setting it on fire.

The revelations in the book, which is due out soon in English, have sparked a re-examination of the Poles' role during the Holocaust.

Some 3 million Polish Jews died in the genocide. A similar number of non-Jewish Poles were killed by the Nazis.

There have been numerous conferences, articles in the media and heated roundtable discussions. A documentary on the case is slated to be released soon.

An investigation launched last year by the Polish National Remembrance Institute has not yet been completed.

"There is no doubt that Poles participated in the crime," Buzek said. "But the murder was done neither in the name of the nation nor in the name of the Polish state."

"We object to the use of the Jedwabne case to spread false statements about the Polish co-responsibility for the Holocaust or on innate Polish anti-Semitism," Buzek said.

Nor, he added, "should all inhabitants of Jedwabne of today be reproached for a murder committed 60 years ago."

Most of Jedwabne's current 2,000 residents settled there after the war. Townspeople last week prepared an open letter that condemned the wartime atrocity, but also said today's residents should not bear the blame.

"You have to realize that asking the town to make peace with its past is tantamount to desecrating its deepest beliefs of patriotism and Catholicism," Jedwabne's mayor, Krzysztof Godlewski, told Reuters. "And this is difficult, especially since our town was probably not an isolated incident."

President Aleksander Kwasniewski recently pledged to publicly apologize for the massacre.

"This should be done by the authorities of the Polish Republic," he told Polish television. "The anniversary" of the massacre "on 10 July, is a good day, and Jedwabne, because of the tragedy that took place there, is a proper place for that," Kwasniewski said.

In an interview with the Israeli newspaper *Yediot Achronot*, which was quoted in the Polish media, Kwasniewski called the Jedwabne case "an act of genocide which Poles from Jedwabne carried out against their Jewish neighbors," adding that it was "an exceptionally bestial killing of innocent people."

Kwasniewski, however, drew fire in the media for announcing the apology before a full investigation of the case was completed.

Poland's leading Roman Catholic cardinal, Josef Glemp, called for a thorough investigation of "the causes of such barbaric and hateful attitudes of Poles toward Jews."

He said that, after receiving a letter from Warsaw Rabbi Michael Schudrich, he would eagerly participate in "common prayers of Poles and Jews, either in front of the Ghetto Heroes' Monument, in one of the churches or in the synagogue" to mourn the victims on the 60th anniversary of the massacre this summer.

At the same time, however, he also said he awaited the publication of Gross's book in English "with anxiety, because the truth thereby revealed to Americans is expected to unleash Jewry's sharp attacks on Poles." □

## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

**Loved and hated, 'Dr. Laura' gets award from Orthodox group***By Julie Wiener*

NEW YORK (JTA) — For Laura Schlessinger — better known as “Dr. Laura” — the fact that Jews were among the most vocal opponents of her new nationally syndicated television show was “more devastating to me than if someone had burned a cross upside down on my front lawn.”

Schlessinger, the lightning rod of a talk-show host whose sharp tongue and moralistic advice have earned her millions of fans and enemies, is a close second to Joseph Lieberman as America's most famous observant Jew.

Yet Schlessinger's controversial radio and television shows have been embraced far more enthusiastically by Christians than by fellow Jews. Many Jews bristle at her one-liner approach to morality and her outspoken opposition to things like feminism, abortion and homosexuality.

Last week, however, at an Orthodox Jewish gala where she received the “National Heritage” award, Schlessinger — whose TV show recently was moved to overnight time slots after a massive grassroots campaign by gay-rights advocates — felt vindicated.

The program for the National Council of Young Israel dinner described Schlessinger as “a powerful source of inspiration and pride for all Jews.” The mainly right-leaning Orthodox Jews filling the large room applauded her, and many approached her afterward to ask for autographs and declare their admiration.

One even extended Schlessinger, whose Star of David necklace has become one of her trademarks, a Shabbos invitation.

“I'm not much of a guest,” Schlessinger responded politely. “After services, I usually sleep all day.”

Born to a Jewish father and a Catholic mother, Schlessinger, 54, grew up in an Italian section of Brooklyn, raised with “no religion, no God, zippo in that department.”

She earned degrees in biology and physiology — and is a licensed marriage, family and child counselor who was in private practice for 12 years — but became best known for her sharp-tongued show. Then, several years ago, prompted by a question from her son, Schlessinger began poring over books on Judaism.

“When I got to ‘nation of priests,’ I went yelling into the room my husband was in and said, ‘I know what I'm supposed to do now — I'm a priest,’ ” she recalled in an interview with JTA at the Young Israel dinner.

When a Conservative rabbi informed her she would have to convert, Schlessinger was indignant, saying, “Excuse me, I was Jewish enough to go to a concentration camp, but I'm not Jewish enough to be accepted into the club?”

Nonetheless, she completed a Conservative conversion process, unaware that there were different streams of Judaism and that not all Jews who went to synagogue obeyed Jewish law.

That all changed with her first public speech at a Jewish organization, the women's division of the Jewish Federation of Greater Dallas. In that 1997 incident, she claims she was unjustly criticized for advocating observance of Jewish law and kashrut.

People at the event — including a columnist for the Dallas Morning News — complained that Schlessinger had been abrasive, interrupted questioners and flippantly criticized Reform Judaism and working women.

The incident initially made Schlessinger want to give up on all things Jewish. After discussing the incident with an Orthodox rabbi friend in Canada, however, she decided to undergo an Orthodox conversion. Her husband and son converted as well.

“A large part of me wanted to make a statement after that experience, to stand even taller about Jewish values,” she said.

“Besides, if you don't have an Orthodox conversion you can't get buried in Israel,” she said. “I want to be close to ground zero.”

On air, Schlessinger is a larger-than-life powerhouse, responding to the dilemmas and deficiencies of her callers with strident admonitions.

In person, she is surprisingly small, a petite blonde in a glittery silver high-necked top and long black skirt. She urges a reporter to eat more — “I'm a Jewish mother,” she says — and jokes that while the pears on her plate are undercooked, they are “probably good for the intestines.”

Now a member of a Lubavitch shul — Chabad of Agoura in suburban Los Angeles — Schlessinger admits that she does not meet all Orthodox standards. She observes Shabbat and kashrut, she says, but “the wig thing I'm not up to.”

Many liberal Jews worry that Schlessinger's strident pronouncements give Middle America an oversimplified and inaccurate impression of Judaism.

In addition, critics contend that Schlessinger's show contributes to anti-gay sentiment.

A letter sent to her last year, whose signatories included 24 American Jewish leaders — many of them prominent Reform and Conservative rabbis — took Schlessinger to task for saying on-air that homosexuality is “deviant,” that gays can and should be cured and that homosexuality is a “biological error.”

According to the letter, Schlessinger also has claimed that gays are more likely than heterosexuals to molest children, despite what the letter-writers say is scientific evidence to the contrary.

Advocates for gay rights began a campaign last spring pressuring advertisers not to appear on Schlessinger's radio or television programs. The TV show eventually was moved to middle-of-the-night hours with small viewership because so many advertisers pulled out.

Despite the campaign against her, Schlessinger insists her views on homosexuality have divine sanction.

“The Torah says this is behavior that's unacceptable, and marriage is between a man and woman,” she says.

For Schlessinger, Judaism is about absolutes, the clear rights and wrongs of the Ten Commandments, not the hairsplitting debates of the talmudic sages.

But is it really possible to make moral judgments based on the few sentences she allows her callers?

“You don't need a long conversation to make moral judgments,” she says. “You know the Ten Commandments?” she asks. “They're very short: Thou shalt not bear false witness. It doesn't go into a whole bunch of other things or say, ‘Let me explain the background.’ It just says you don't do that.”

Schlessinger's rabbi, Moshe Bryski, insists that — soundbites aside — his most famous congregant is serious about the moral questions she receives, researching Jewish ethics and frequently calling him to consult on issues that arise on her show.

“There is a sense of responsibility, because at times she'll call me about specific questions and I realize the answer is going to be broadcast to 20 million people, and I better get it right,” Bryski says. □