



# Daily News Bulletin

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## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Sharon calls for cease-fire

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said Israel views the Mitchell Commission report as a basis for renewing peace negotiations — but said the first step must be a halt to Palestinian violence.

"I propose to our neighbors to work together for an immediate cease-fire and hope the Palestinians will answer the call positively," Sharon told a news conference Tuesday.

Shortly after Sharon spoke, Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer issued a directive to cease firing on Palestinians, adding that Israeli troops should only open fire "when lives are endangered."

White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said President Bush was "encouraged" by Sharon's comments.

Fleischer also said the White House would welcome similar remarks by Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

Palestinian official Ahmed Abdel Rahman, an aide to Arafat, later told The Associated Press that the Palestinians "reject everything Sharon said about a cease-fire."

### Senate exempts Shoah payouts

The U.S. Senate voted to ensure that settlements paid to survivors of the Holocaust and their heirs are exempt from federal income taxes.

Monday night's vote was on an amendment to the tax bill, which is still being debated.

Similar legislation also was introduced Tuesday in the House of Representatives by Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.) and Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.).

### Taliban policy echoes Nazis'

Afghanistan's Taliban rulers announced plans to make Hindus wear an identity label on their clothing to distinguish them from the nation's Muslims.

The edict, reminiscent of the yellow Star of David that Jews were forced to wear during the Nazi era, prompted an angry statement from India.

Because of the Memorial Day and Shavuot holidays, the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Monday, May 28, Tuesday, May 29 or Wednesday, May 30.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### Cracks seen in Israeli government over proposals in the Mitchell report

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Mitchell Commission report on the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian violence appears to be widening cracks in Israel's unity government, as well as in what has been the Israeli public's solid support for government policy.

Among its recommendations, which drew the support of the Bush administration Monday, the report calls for an immediate cease-fire followed by a cooling-off period and a series of confidence-building steps.

Among those steps is a call to halt all Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, including the "natural growth" of existing settlements.

Analysts parsed the words of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, the leader of the Likud Party, and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres — the leader of the Labor Party, which joined the unity government that Sharon formed following his election in February — for signs of dissension. The differences between the government's two principals are subtle, and could either be a question of nuance — or could represent more fundamental gaps.

Peres has said Israel will agree to a geographic settlement freeze — that is, it will not expand settlements' boundaries — but cannot freeze demographic growth within existing settlements.

Sharon, too, has insisted on the settlements' right to "natural growth," and pledged in comments on the Mitchell report Tuesday that Israel would not expropriate any more Palestinian land for the settlements. Some analysts, however, wondered if that meant Israel might take land to blaze roads in the West Bank. Opinion polls continue to reflect a high level of support for Sharon. But at the same time, the polls indicate that a large majority of Israelis favors a halt to settlement construction — and indeed a withdrawal from some settlements — in exchange for a truce.

On Tuesday, Peres predicted that Israel and the Palestinians would accept the Mitchell report and resume "within a few days" their negotiations on the basis of the report. Israel and the Palestinian Authority got copies of the report earlier this month, when the report's findings were leaked to the press. Former Sen. George Mitchell officially released the report Monday in New York.

Mitchell's blue-ribbon commission was conceived as part of a peace package at a summit in Sharm el-Sheik, Egypt, last October. Central to the package was an immediate cease-fire, so that the commission would be examining the roots of a violent Palestinian uprising that presumably would long have ended by the time the commission began its work. In the end, the report was the only element of the package that was implemented, infuriating Israeli officials.

Panel members include Mitchell, the group's chairman; Turkish President Suleyman Demirel; Thorbjørn Jagland, Norway's minister of foreign affairs; and Javier Solana, the European Union's top diplomat.

Among the report's other recommendations:

- The Palestinian Authority should crack down on terrorism;
- The Palestinian Authority should prevent Palestinian gunmen from firing on or from populated areas, and establish a clear chain of command for all armed personnel operating in areas under its control;
- Israel should lift closures on Palestinian areas, permit Palestinian workers to return to their jobs in Israel and transfer to the Palestinian Authority all tax revenues owed; and
- Israel should ensure that its security forces avoid destroying homes, roads and

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Israel reviews Red Cross policy

Israel informed the International Red Cross that it is reviewing its policy toward the organization, according to the Jerusalem Post.

Monday's move followed a statement last week from a Red Cross official who called Israeli settlements "war crimes."

In a related development, Israel's Foreign Ministry is circulating a position paper indicating, among other things, that "Jewish settlement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip has existed from time immemorial and was expressly recognized as legitimate in the Mandate for Palestine adopted by the League of Nations."

### Palestinians again fire on Gilo

Palestinian gunmen fired on the Jerusalem neighborhood of Gilo for a second consecutive night, Israel Radio reported. There were no immediate reports of injuries from Tuesday's attack.

Jerusalem's police chief warned that Gilo could face Palestinian mortar attacks.

Micky Levy issued the warning Tuesday at a ceremony recognizing a Jerusalem pub owner who last Friday averted a terrorist attack when she discovered a bomb in the crowded bar.

On Monday night, a gun battle raged for about six hours, with Palestinian gunmen shooting from the West Bank town of Beit Jalla at Gilo.

Five people were injured in Gilo, including an Israeli who lost an eye. Israeli tank shells severely damaged two homes in Beit Jalla.

### Israel accused of poisoning candy

A Palestinian official accused Israel of air-dropping poisoned sweets and chocolates over the Gaza Strip.

The official told Israel Radio that Palestinian security officials had managed to gather up most of the candies, but there were some cases of food poisoning.

trees in Palestinian areas. By spotlighting the settlement issue, the report had the effect — likely unintended — of exacerbating existing tensions within the Israeli government between moderates and hardliners.

These tensions already were running high after Sharon responded to a terror bombing last Friday that killed five Israelis by launching Israel's first jet strikes on the West Bank and Gaza Strip since the 1967 Six-Day War.

The strikes by the F-16 warplanes — which killed 12 Palestinians and wounded dozens of others — were widely condemned around the world.

While Sharon and Peres are trying to keep the differences between them as muted as possible — in the interests of government stability — other Cabinet members have been outspoken in their reaction to the settlement issue.

This has sparked speculation that the unity government may be seriously threatened by the Mitchell report, especially if the United States energetically pushes to have it implemented.

Infrastructure Minister Avigdor Lieberman, a member of the hawkish National Union Party, warned this week that Israel's acceptance of the Mitchell panel's recommendations would spell the beginning of the end of the unity government.

Legislator Reuven Rivlin, a member of Sharon's Likud Party, termed the Mitchell recommendations "a prize to terrorism."

Meanwhile, Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, a member of Labor, told the Israeli daily Ha'aretz he would be prepared to accept a full settlement freeze if it were limited to a period of months.

Significantly, Ben-Eliezer hinted broadly to the newspaper that he also would consider evacuating certain settlements — an option Sharon has categorically ruled out.

On Monday, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell said the United States would use the Mitchell report as a basis to try to end Israeli-Palestinian violence.

But in an effort to take account of Israeli sensitivities, Powell noted pointedly that the call for a complete cessation of violence was "unconditional" — in other words, not dependent on a settlement freeze.

Sources close to Sharon welcomed Powell's careful language.

The Palestinians have announced that they accept the Mitchell recommendations as one integral whole — and will make any cessation of violence contingent on a settlement freeze.

However, in numerous previous agreements with Israel and international summit meetings, the Palestinians already have agreed to many of the anti-violence steps the Mitchell report demands of them — and promptly ignored them.

Sharon and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat began holding separate meetings this week with U.S. officials as the Bush administration — cautiously — appeared to intensify its involvement in regional diplomacy.

The growing controversy about the recommended settlement freeze came as Sharon was under attack for the F-16 strikes. "What do we use next time," legislator Dan Meridor, a Center Party member who is chairman of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, asked this week, "if we use F-16s this time?"

The same question was voiced by Maj. Gen. Eitan Ben-Eliahu, a former commander of Israel's air force.

Meridor and others noted that any tactical advantage obtained by the warplanes was outweighed by the setback Israel suffered in the battle for world sympathy.

The ongoing Israeli-Palestinian violence is "a war on two fronts," Meridor warned. "On the battlefield and on the TV screens."

All the major Israeli newspapers condemned the F-16 bombardments as hasty and ill-conceived — the first time since Sharon took office that his tactics in fighting Palestinian violence have been widely challenged.

The criticism surged anew Sunday night, when an Israeli tank fired two shells at the Ramallah home of Jibril Rajoub, the head of Palestinian security forces in the West Bank and one of the few senior Palestinian figures still in constant contact with the Israeli side. Only hours earlier, Rajoub, who was not hurt in the shelling, had hosted Israeli reporters for a briefing in his office.

The imbroglio was compounded Monday, when the major commanding the tank unit told a radio interviewer that he and his men had known they were firing on Rajoub's home — but were returning repeated fire from a Palestinian forces positioned beneath Rajoub's house. □



## Daily News Bulletin

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## JEWISH WORLD

### FOCUS ON ISSUES

## Facing 'Messianic Jewish' challenge, Russia's Lubavitch swings into action

By Lev Gorodetsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — When two youngsters blocked a bus traveling in the Belarussian capital of Minsk recently, they turned around so the passengers could read the words on the backs of their shirts: Jews for Jesus, written in Russian.

The reaction was astonishment.

"Those Yids have robbed us of everything — and now they're even taking away our Jesus," one woman said angrily, according to Eduard Paryzh, a Belarus Jewish leader affiliated with Chabad Lubavitch who witnessed the scene.

The anti-Semitism in the passenger's reaction is nothing new in this part of the world — but this time the Jews took a stand. Paryzh convinced the Minsk city council that missionaries like Jews for Jesus are provoking interethnic tensions, and persuaded the council to ban Jews for Jesus members from Minsk streets.

The episode in the Belarussian capital is just one example of the Lubavitch community's increasingly active stance against the "messianic Jews" who have proliferated in the former Soviet Union during the past 15 years.

Chabad members have been following Jews for Jesus activists to cities in the region, disrupting their campaigns.

Chabad publishes counter-advertisements in newspapers, informs the local Jewish community of the events and calls on Russian Orthodox Church officials to speak out against the "messianic Jews" — with some success, in fact, because the church also has little stomach for Jews for Jesus.

Chabad members even try to convince local authorities to cancel the events.

In the most recent move, the Lubavitch sponsored a conference in Moscow on "The Missionary Threat and How to Struggle Against It."

At the conference, Jewish leaders from across the former Soviet Union demonstrated rare unanimity, agreeing to establish a counter-missionary group called Magen — Hebrew for "shield" — to coordinate their activities. They also established an educational center to counteract the "messianic Jewish" threat.

"It is a real and serious danger. They are catching Jews who don't know anything of their own culture and tradition," said Roman Spector, the leader of a Russian Jewish umbrella group called the Va'ad.

Representatives of a variety of Jewish groups are participating in Magen, but the Lubavitch clearly are leading the fight — and they have a lot to combat.

The first Jews for Jesus began appearing in Moscow in the mid-1970s, without any substantial financial help from U.S.-based organizations.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the international movement of Jews for Jesus and other "messianic Jewish" groups have stepped up their efforts, pumping dollars into the former Soviet republics.

The situation is worrisome, especially in Ukraine. More than 1,000 Jews come to weekly Sabbath celebrations arranged by "messianic Jews" in Kiev, the Ukrainian capital, according to Alexander Lakshin, the Lubavitch coordinator of counter-missionary activities in the region.

The messianic campaigns target younger Jews — apparently with some success.

More than 40 percent of the "messianic Jews" in Riga, Latvia, are between 16 and 25 years old, according to Jewish sources in Riga.

Jews for Jesus also has taken its campaign to the airwaves.

New programs aimed at Russian-speaking Jews, whom they call "the lost sheep of the House of Israel," air each Saturday in Belarus and Ukraine.

Jews living in Russia are not left out. The same programs have started to air on St. Petersburg TV, and soon are slated to air on one of Russia's national TV channels.

During commemorations of the Soviet Union's defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II, "messianic Jewish" groups published ads in newspapers equating it to Jesus' victory over evil.

All this is pushing the Jewish community — and particularly the Lubavitch movement — to act. "We can't be silent anymore," said Berel Lazar, a Lubavitch leader and one of Russia's chief rabbis. □

### Italian politician sets off alarms

An Italian politician whose anti-immigrant policies are causing alarm across Europe renewed his push for a ministry in Italy's new government.

Umberto Bossi, whose Northern League was part of incoming Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's winning coalition in the May 13 election, said Monday that he wants the league to hold the presidency of the lower chamber of Parliament, a post which would give it power in helping to decide which legislation will get priority.

### Y.U. wants to raise \$400 million

Yeshiva University announced a \$400 million fund-raising campaign, adding that the school has already raised \$275 million of that amount from 10 donors. The New York institution, which is under Orthodox Jewish auspices, runs a rabbinical school and Jewish undergraduate college, along with several nonsectarian graduate schools.

### Lieberman blasts energy plan

The Bush administration's plan to produce energy without recognizing the consequences is wrong, Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) told religious environmental activists.

At an interfaith rally for energy conservation Tuesday in Washington, Lieberman said that just as Adam and Eve guarded the Garden of Eden, people are trustees of the earth and have a special responsibility to the environment.

### Schroeder: Slave payments soon

Holocaust-era slave and forced laborers should receive compensation "very soon" from a \$5 billion fund, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder said.

Schroeder also said Tuesday he welcomed a statement from leaders of German firms indicating that they are ready for the fund to proceed with payments.

### Court to rule on Kalejs extradition

An Australian court could rule next week on Latvia's application for the extradition of a war crimes suspect allegedly involved in the deaths of up to 30,000 Jews during World War II.

The case was adjourned Tuesday after lawyers for Konrad Kalejs concluded their defense.

### Terezin victims remembered

Some 500 people gathered in the former Czech ghetto of Terezin to pay tribute to tens of thousands of victims of Nazism.

Between 1940 and 1945, a total of 35,000 people died in the ghetto, and 100,000 were killed in concentration camps after being transported from the town.

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES****Despite pressure, U.S. quiet on Israeli use of American arms***By Matthew E. Berger*

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The Bush administration is remaining relatively quiet about Israel's use of American-made weapons in attacks against the Palestinians, despite demands by Arab American groups to investigate the practice.

Israel purchases much of its weaponry from the United States.

According to U.S. law, foreign governments are allowed to use U.S. weapons only for defensive actions or internal security.

Israel used American-made F-16s last Friday to attack Palestinian paramilitary installations in retaliation for a suicide bombing earlier in the day in Netanya.

Arab American groups have been pushing the government to review Israel's use of American-made weapons. Arab American Institute President James Zogby said the State Department has assured him that the matter is under review, and is pressing officials to expedite it.

"It's an outrageous acceleration," Zogby said. "It makes the United States appear implicated because we are supplying the technology, we are supplying the weaponry."

Arab sources say Congress may take action on the matter, but lawmakers are waiting for the State Department report before planning their next move. The administration will not say whether the matter is under formal review.

Israel — backed by allies in Washington — says the attack on security stations in the West Bank was defensive, and therefore permissible under guidelines for using U.S.-made weapons.

"The operation was a counterterrorism operation. Counterterrorism is by definition defensive," said Mark Regev, spokesman for the Israeli Embassy in Washington. "If there weren't Palestinian attacks against Israel, we would not have been forced to respond."

But Zogby, who just returned from the Middle East, characterized the attacks as "blind vengeance," not retaliation.

"In the rules of war, retaliation is striking the people who struck," he said. "The people who got struck were not the people who committed the crime."

A senior military analyst on Capitol Hill said the United States has "bent over backwards" not to restrict Israel's use of American weapons. He said Israel is following the letter of the law in meeting both the self-defense and internal security standards.

"Israelis are not going to dictate how they respond to a situation by what kind of equipment they can use and where it was made," the analyst said.

Publicly, the Bush administration has been reluctant to directly tackle the issue. Speaking Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press," Vice President Dick Cheney said Israel should not use F-16s against Palestinians. While the statement was highlighted by the media, it was part of Cheney's general call on both sides to stop violence.

In addition, he clarified that Israel faced a "very delicate situation" and that he would not try to evaluate the exact decisions being made by the Israel Defense Force.

A State Department spokesman said officials have not determined that any U.S. weapons have been used in violation of the Arms Export Control Act. But he said the department has a responsibility to continually monitor the issue.

However, no imminent report is expected about Israeli use of U.S.-made weapons, he said.

Zogby said he does not believe the State Department is dodging the issue. Rather, he said, officials haven't figured what direction to pursue. One Jewish activist said that while Israel's use of F-16s is legal, it may send a negative message to the world just as Israel is trying to gain support for its position in the Israeli-Palestinian violence.

"If you continue doing it, it will certainly create a problem," said Tom Neumann, the executive director of the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs. "It makes people uncomfortable."

Neumann said the use of American weapons also shifts attention away from the events that trigger the Israeli response.

"The appropriate question is what is Israel responding to and how does it handle the problem," he said. "It doesn't handle the problem with one hand tied around its back." □

**Czech Jews raise awareness of growing neo-Nazi activities***By Magnus Bennett*

PRAGUE (JTA) — Czech Jewish leaders are reaching out to the general public by launching a campaign for a public hearing into the growth of neo-Nazism in the country.

Representatives of the Prague Jewish Community and the Czech Federation of Jewish Communities released a statement Sunday expressing concern about recent neo-Nazi activities including rock concerts attended by far-right extremists.

Newly appointed Prague Jewish Community chairman Tomas Jelinek said Jewish leaders wanted to appeal directly to the Czech public for support.

"We want the public to start making it clear that such things do not have a place here," he said.

The official statement said the communities are disappointed that neo-Nazi activities are being tolerated in a country "in which some 80,000 of our relatives were killed by the Nazi regime" and argued that the Czech parliament, government and courts have failed to appreciate that it is unacceptable to tolerate expressions of Nazism.

Their stance was backed by the Jewish community's spiritual leader, Chief Rabbi Karol Sidon, who said this is the first time the Jewish communities in the Czech Republic have decided to appeal to the public for support.

"I agree that we must open up the debate to society here because I think there is a growing problem which has to be discussed openly," Sidon told JTA.

Czech officials have been under mounting pressure to take a hard line on neo-Nazi activities. Interior Minister Stanislav Gross said last month that he would make the issue a top priority after police and his ministry were heavily criticized by Czech Jewish and anti-fascist groups for failing to crack down on extremists.

But Jewish community leaders want to see action rather than just words.

"This statement is the start of a campaign which we expect to continue in the Czech Parliament," Jelinek said. "We already have the support of eight senators for a public hearing into neo-Nazism," which we expect will be held in September.

Jelinek wants legislators to examine current laws to establish whether they are strong enough to tackle what the government and police have already accepted as a growing problem. □