



# Daily News Bulletin

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84th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Car bomb explodes in Netanya

A car bomb exploded outside a high school in the Israeli coastal city of Netanya on Wednesday, lightly injuring six people. Hospital officials said four of those injured were teen-agers.

Classes were not in session at the time of the explosion, which Israeli police called a Palestinian terror attack. [Page 1]

### German legislators OK payments

Germany's Parliament gave its approval for the release of a nearly \$5 billion compensation fund for Nazi-era slave and forced laborers. Wednesday's move means that payments can begin within weeks, German officials said. Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder said Parliament's approval was "a signal to the world that Germany is aware of the horrible crimes of the past and will remain aware."

### Sharon chooses 'path of patience'

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said in a speech before the Knesset that Israel's "blood is boiling" over continued Palestinian attacks on Jewish settlers.

Speaking a day after Palestinian gunmen killed three West Bank settlers, Sharon said Wednesday the army nonetheless would maintain the limited cease-fire he announced last week. Dismissing calls from some hawkish lawmakers to retaliate for the attacks, Sharon said, "The responsibility on my shoulders requires that I choose a path of patience and restraint."

### Ex-Nazi guard gets life sentence

A German court sentenced a former Nazi SS guard to life imprisonment for beating to death a Jewish inmate during World War II. Anton Malloth, who was a guard at the Theresienstadt transit camp in Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia, also was found guilty of attempted murder in the shooting of another prisoner who hid a cauliflower under his jacket during forced harvest work in 1943.

"He tortured, humiliated and killed people because he considered them subhumans who had no right to live," the presiding judge said in Wednesday's verdict. Czech Jewish leaders welcomed the sentence against Malloth, who accepted the verdict without any visible signs of emotion.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### Security talks resume — alongside Palestinian attacks

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Lurching wildly from disaster to miraculous salvation to more death and mayhem, emotionally drained Israelis watched with little optimism this week as a new American envoy tried to offer hope in the eight-month-old violence with the Palestinians.

Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs William Burns, who shuttled between Israeli and Palestinian officials early in the week, managed to engineer a round of security talks between the two sides.

But by midweek there was little evidence that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's repeated calls for an immediate and unconditional cease-fire would be answered by the Palestinian side, which seemed more intent on waging unilateral war.

With the toll from Palestinian terrorism mounting daily, Sharon and other top officials warned Tuesday that Israel's unilateral policy of military restraint, enunciated by the premier a week ago, could not continue indefinitely.

"Both sides must declare a cease-fire, an end to terror, violence and incitement," Sharon said Tuesday. "We did, but unfortunately, the Palestinian Authority not only did not make such a declaration, but we see the opposite — an increase in violence."

For their part, the Palestinians have rejected Sharon's unilateral declaration of a cease-fire last week as a public relations ploy.

The only glimmer of hope in an otherwise dismal week was a meeting held Tuesday night in Ramallah between Israeli and Palestinian military officers and security officials, the first such encounter for many weeks.

But the meeting ended inconclusively after Jibril Rajoub, the head of Palestinian security in the West Bank, and Avi Dichter, the head of Israel's Shin Bet domestic security service, did not attend.

Even the planning for the meeting, which was to focus on violence in the West Bank, reflected the distance between the two sides: Israel spoke of a resumption of security "coordination," while the Palestinians refused to use the word "coordination" and spoke only of security "talks."

A second round of talks, this one focusing on the Gaza Strip, was scheduled for Wednesday night.

Optimists hoped the meetings portended a move to implement what both sides claim is their acceptance of a U.S.-led fact-finding panel's recommendations.

The panel, headed by former U.S. Senator George Mitchell, called earlier this month for an unconditional cease-fire as the first step toward moving from violence back to the negotiating table.

Under the Mitchell panel's formula, a cooling-off period after the cease-fire will be followed by "confidence-building measures" by each side — including a total freeze of Israeli settlement construction in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Israel's unity government insists that it endorses the Mitchell report, but it has voiced reservations over the settlement provision.

Sharon told CNN on Tuesday that the government's policy guidelines, which rule out building new settlements but allow for the expansion of existing ones, are flexible enough to enable Israel to accept the Mitchell plan.

Right-wing members of the coalition have threatened to quit if a settlement freeze goes into effect.

On Wednesday, a car bomb exploded outside a high school in the Israeli coastal

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Bomb found on road to Jerusalem

A bomb was discovered on the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem highway Tuesday night.

It marked the first time in the eight months of violence that an explosive was planted on the main road to the capital.

### Katsav visits Shoah museum

Israeli President Moshe Katsav visited the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, laying a wreath and lighting a memorial candle after touring the museum Wednesday.

Katsav's trip to Washington includes a meeting with President Bush on Thursday.

### Wagner dropped from festival

The Israel Festival dropped plans to have a work by anti-Semitic composer Richard Wagner performed in July.

The move announced Wednesday followed a drawn-out controversy over whether to perform a work by Hitler's favorite composer in the Jewish state.

### Police question Arab legislator

Israeli Arab Knesset member Azmi Beshara was questioned by Jerusalem police Wednesday regarding trips to Syria he has organized for Israeli Arab families.

Beshara maintains the trips are for humanitarian purposes, saying he has been working to reunite families split when relatives fled during Israel's 1948 War of Independence.

### Shas leader: Whip smokers

The spiritual leader of Israel's fervently Orthodox Shas Party says smokers should be punished with 40 lashes, the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot reported Wednesday.

Rabbi Ovadia Yosef also said smoking is prohibited in the Torah.

city of Netanya, lightly injuring six people. Hospital officials said four of those injured were teen-agers. Classes were not in session at the time of the explosion, which Israeli police called a Palestinian terror attack.

It came during a week filled with violence.

On Tuesday, an Israeli family of seven ran into a roadside ambush in the heart of the Etzion Bloc, just south of Bethlehem in the West Bank.

A resident of the settlement of Efrat — Sarah Blaustein, 53, an immigrant from the United States — was killed by shots fired at her car near the Israeli settlement of Neveh Daniel. Her husband, Norman, was slightly wounded, and a son, Sammy, was seriously wounded with three bullets in his back.

Another person in the car, Esther Alva, 20, died several hours after the attack.

The attack occurred as the minivan was driving to the funeral of a previous terror victim: Gilead Zar, gunned down in an ambush in the northern West Bank earlier on Tuesday. Zar had been a security coordinator for the settlement of Itamar near Nablus.

According to reports, when Zar's car stopped after the first round of gunfire, the gunmen approached and shot him at close range. The militia of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's Fatah Party claimed responsibility for the attack.

Palestinian terrorists also fired shots at the funeral procession for Zar, but no one was hurt.

In the Gaza Strip on Tuesday, two Israeli soldiers were wounded by a Palestinian who exploded a bomb strapped to his body. In addition, Palestinian militia members briefly kidnapped two Newsweek journalists, ostensibly to send a message to the British and American governments over their alleged pro-Israel bias.

Tuesday's three murders, dreadful as they were, sent fewer shock waves through the Israeli public than a brace of bombings in Jerusalem two days earlier that miraculously failed to end in carnage.

The first came after midnight early Sunday morning, when a car bomb exploded along a row of popular bars that are the center of Jerusalem's nightlife. Despite the large quantity of explosives in the vehicle, the only injuries were a few cuts.

Early the following morning, terror struck again. Barely 50 yards from the first car bomb, another huge charge exploded, hurling mortars and bomblets from a parked car for a radius of hundreds of yards in the center of the capital.

Again, somehow, there were only light injuries.

The city center was closed for hours as bomb experts toiled in the blazing heat to neutralize the mortars.

Israelis seemed paralyzed by a sense of impotence in the face of indiscriminate terror able to infiltrate their lives with such seeming ease.

There was more terror last Friday, when a car bomb exploded near the Hadera bus station in central Israel. At least 39 people were injured in that blast, which killed two suicide bombers. Another suicide bombing took place later that day outside an Israeli army post in the Gaza Strip, killing only the perpetrator.

Familiar with the thinking of the leaders of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, diplomatic observers sought to draw parallels between them, despite the obvious differences. Arafat, they say, believes he can wear out Israel with incessant violence, toppling Sharon and eventually installing a government that will offer him even more than former Prime Minister Ehud Barak did in rounds of peace talks last year.

Sharon, say these observers, believes that staunch military resolve can overpower the Palestinian Authority and force it — or its successor — to accept an interim arrangement far more stingy than the deal Barak offered and Arafat spurned.

Inside the Israeli political community, meanwhile, a third view appears to be gaining momentum. Some politicians, among them Haim Ramon of Labor and Dan Meridor of the Center Party, increasingly speak of the need for Israel unilaterally to lay down its border line along at least part of the West Bank.

The tactical goal is to halt or greatly reduce terrorist infiltration.

The "price" is obvious, too: The dismantlement of far-flung settlements, and perhaps more than just the far-flung ones.

Such a step inexorably leads into the heart of the Israeli political divide. But the unilateralists say this is no time for politics; it is time, they say, for effective self-defense. □

(JTA correspondent Naomi Segal in Jerusalem contributed to this report.)



## Daily News Bulletin

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## JEWISH WORLD

### Court refuses church-state case

The U.S. Supreme Court let stand a lower court ruling that a 6-foot monument inscribed with the Ten Commandments on public property violates the separation of church and state.

By refusing to hear the case Tuesday, the high court turned aside an appeal filed by officials from Elkhart, Ind. The high court is letting a U.S. court in Indiana decide what the city must do with the monument.

### Kurtzer nomination made official

The White House nominated Daniel Kurtzer as the next U.S. ambassador to Israel. The move, which was made official last Friday, had been anticipated for months.

Kurtzer's nomination has been a point of contention among some segments of the American Jewish community. Right-wing groups worry that because he is an Orthodox Jew, he may bend over backward to be even-handed and support Arab stances.

### Court backs Kalejs extradition

An Australian court ruled that an alleged Nazi war criminal should be extradited to Latvia, where he is wanted on charges of war crimes and genocide. Lawyers for Konrad Kalejs plan to appeal Tuesday's ruling.

For years, Kalejs has faced charges of being involved in the wartime slaughter of civilians when he served as an officer in Latvia's pro-Nazi Arajs Kommando unit. The militia is held directly responsible for the deaths of some 100,000 civilians, including 30,000 Jews, between 1941 and 1943.

### Tax bill exempts Shoah payments

The Claims Conference applauded the U.S. Congress' decision to exempt Holocaust survivors and their heirs from paying federal taxes on any restitution payments. The exemption was included in the tax bill passed by Congress over the weekend.

"Holocaust survivors will now know with certainty that they will receive the full payment to which they are entitled," said Gideon Taylor, the group's executive director.

### Demjanjuk trial opens

The U.S. government's case against John Demjanjuk, accused of working as a guard at Nazi death camps, is based partly on new documents that became available after the fall of the Soviet Union.

During the trial that began Tuesday, prosecutors plan to present an identification card, work rosters and other documents to prove Demjanjuk lied about his past to get into the United States after World War II. Demjanjuk, 81, denies that he worked for the Nazis.

## Israeli building methods face probe after 23 die in wedding hall collapse

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel has set up a state commission of inquiry into building safety after 23 people were killed and hundreds injured when a wedding hall collapsed last week.

The May 24 collapse at the Versailles wedding hall in Jerusalem's Talpiot neighborhood has spurred a public outcry over what are considered widespread problems of corner-cutting by contractors and lax enforcement of building codes by local authorities.

The collapse also heightened fears that poor construction practices could make many buildings disaster prone — all the more so since Israel is located in an earthquake zone.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said those guilty of negligence must be brought to justice.

Israelis "pay a heavy and needless price as a result of a disregard for law and order," the premier said at a joint news conference Tuesday with Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert.

The commission will address construction problems in general, not the Versailles hall collapse specifically.

A government statement issued Tuesday said the commission will examine the "full range of professional and legal questions related to the safety of buildings and places designed for public use."

In what was considered Israel's worst civilian disaster, 23 people were killed and more than 200 injured last week when the dance floor collapsed beneath the feet of wedding guests, plunging them three stories in a cloud of broken concrete and twisted steel.

One of the dead was a 3-year-old boy. Rescuers said they found the bodies of an entire family sitting around a party table smashed in the wreckage.

The bride and groom, Keren and Assaf Dror, were injured and received adjoining hospital beds.

A video of the collapse showed well-dressed partygoers dancing under colored lights when the floor gave way beneath them.

Police detained at least nine people for questioning — including the owners of the hall, engineers and building contractors — following the disaster.

Among those being held by police was the inventor of a lightweight construction method used in the wedding hall and in many other buildings constructed in Israel during the 1980s.

According to reports, more than 6,500 structures in Israel were built using the cheaper Pal-Kal method, which uses thinner sections of concrete than usual during construction.

The building method was banned in 1996 because of safety concerns.

An initial inquiry indicated that recent renovations at the wedding hall — including the removal of supporting walls and beams, as well as the use of the Pal-Kal method — could have contributed to the building's collapse.

Police also are investigating possible allegations of lax enforcement of building codes by municipal officials, including possible corruption.

Some of those detained were suspected of trying to remove municipal files regarding the wedding hall before police nabbed them.

Citing the sensitivity and complexity of the case, Israel's police commissioner transferred the investigation from the Jerusalem police to the national fraud squad.

In the wake of the collapse, a special hotline set up by the Israel Building Association was flooded with calls from worried Israelis.

Meanwhile, local officials have ordered inspections of buildings designated for public use.

Haifa's mayor, Amram Mitzna, on Tuesday ordered a banquet hall closed after city inspectors concluded that renovation work on the building had raised the risk of collapse. □

## Zionist elections in U.S. may now take place online

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — Embracing the technology of the 21st century, American Zionists may be able to register and vote via the Internet to elect their next delegation to “the parliament of the Jewish people,” the World Zionist Congress.

But not everyone is rooting for this technological advance.

While most agree it would boost voter turnout in the 2002 election, some are resisting, fueled by fears that online registration and voting would be vulnerable to sabotage or corruption.

The American Zionist Movement, an umbrella organization for more than two dozen groups, and its election committee are now hammering out the myriad logistics of the election, which will take place in the first quarter of next year.

At stake is more than representation in the World Zionist Organization and a voice among the 500 elected delegates who will attend the 34th World Zionist Congress, slated for next summer in Jerusalem.

There’s also the composition of the Jewish Agency for Israel’s 120-member Board of Governors — half of whom come from the WZO — and input about how the agency should spend hundreds of millions of dollars annually on issues such as aliyah and immigrant absorption.

The WZO’s most recent election, held in 1997, was touted as the most democratic vote of its kind in the U.S. Jewish community.

It drew slightly more than 100,000 voters, from some 150,000 registrants.

But the AZM was criticized for not doing enough to publicize the election and attract a greater turnout.

To improve turnout this time around, the AZM came up with the twin strategies of increased advertising and online registration and voting, said the organization’s executive director, Karen Rubinstein. Together, they could propel turnout into the hundreds of thousands, Rubinstein said.

“The belief here is, the more people know, the easier it is to do something like registering, then the more registrants there will be,” she said.

At the forefront of the opposition is the leading vote-getter in the 1997 election, ARZA/World Union: The Association of Reform Zionists of America.

It won 70 of the 145 seats allocated to U.S. Jewry last time around and may be able to muster enough votes to block the move. But other AZM members say they are seeking a compromise. A decision is expected in the next few weeks.

ARZA supports using the Internet to publicize the election and to allow Jews to download the registration application, said Rabbi Ammiel Hirsch, the group’s executive director.

But to require entry of credit card and social security numbers may jeopardize voter security — and the integrity of the entire election, Hirsch said. “The Internet is a powerful tool for reaching people, but there are many, many people who do not like Zionists and do not like Israel, and would like nothing more than to compromise these elections,” he said.

But some of ARZA’s rivals sense other motives.

They charge that Hirsch wants to discourage higher turnout in order to maintain the electoral bulge his delegation won in 1997.

Requiring voters to obtain an application, either in person or

off the computer, fill it out and mail it in would likely ensure that fewer will do it. As Hirsch himself concedes, “the more steps it takes, the more you depress participation.”

But, he added, if the elections are not considered fair, “the consequences would be tremendously damaging. We lean toward erring on the side of caution.”

The company with whom the AZM intends to contract, Election.com, has reportedly guaranteed a virtually glitch-free election, or it will cover the costs of a second vote.

“There are risks involved with online registration and voting. But my organization and I are convinced that the company has the kind of experience built up over some years to overcome any potential problems,” said Rabbi Robert Golub, executive director of Mercaz USA: The Zionist Organization of the Conservative Movement, which garnered 38 seats in 1997.

“In our view, the advantages outweigh all of the risks. It also gives a very positive image to Zionism, that Zionism is a very forward-looking philosophy and movement,” Golub said.

The other contentious issue is the timing of the registration period. At this point, it will stretch from September or October through December.

Some are concerned that if the registration begins just prior to the High Holy Days, it may give an advantage to the Reform movement. Reform temples might be more permissive about allowing registration and campaign talk while in the pews, compared with the more traditional movements.

To this, Hirsch responded: “My advice would be to focus on your own message and campaign, and don’t obsess over what particular day gives a competitor a greater advantage. Hard work is the most important factor.”

Aside from the registration process and period, also unclear is what the main campaign issues will be.

In 1997, ARZA and Mercaz rode a wave of resentment toward those forces in Israel opposed to religious pluralism.

Today, the topic has taken a back seat to peace and the security of Israel. If the Palestinian intifada continues through the winter, observers suggest it could translate into big gains for American Friends of Likud. Likud leader Ariel Sharon is currently steering Israel through the crisis as prime minister.

“This will be a chance par excellence for American Jews to make their voices heard in support of the State of Israel and its current government,” said Salomon Vaz Dias, executive director of American Friends of Likud, which won only three seats in 1997.

“There’s certainly more value in that than in the issue of religious pluralism,” he said. “It’s important that people vote on a Zionist issue and not on a religious issue. They should vote for what’s good for Israel and world Zionism, not what’s good for the synagogues.”

As for the World Zionist Organization itself, some observers question its relevance today, a century after Theodor Herzl convened the First Zionist Congress in 1897 in Basel, Switzerland.

Defenders like Hirsch say it’s important symbolically, if nothing else.

Amid a renewed push by the Arab world to equate Zionism with racism, the election illustrates “that the essence of Zionism is democracy, based on fair and full representation,” he said.

“And in an era when the Zionist idea is being challenged by anti-Zionists on one hand and post-Zionists on the other, to have the broadest possible participation in an election is a powerful message.” □