



# Daily News Bulletin

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84th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### U.S. Withdraw from Beit Jalla

The United States called on Israel to withdraw from the West Bank town of Beit Jalla.

In another development, Israeli police said Palestinians fired a mortar bomb at an empty community center in Gilo, but it injured no one and caused little damage. [Page 4]

### Canada may boycott U.N. meeting

Canada said it may boycott the upcoming U.N. World Conference Against Racism if anti-Israel language is not removed from a resolution to be presented at the meeting. "We have very serious concerns about the text," Foreign Minister John Manley said Tuesday. It "goes much too far in singling out one country, in this case Israel." [Page 1]

### Beersheba bombing prevented

A suicide bombing in Beersheba was prevented Tuesday when Israeli security officials arrested an alleged Palestinian terrorist and the man suspected of driving the bomber, according to the Jerusalem Post.

Security officials had been on high alert following intelligence reports that a suicide bomber was about to strike somewhere in Beersheba.

### Pro-Palestinians strike in Italy

Italian police on Tuesday safely deactivated a rudimentary bomb discovered near the U.S. Consulate in Florence.

Along with the device, which was packed in a shoe box, police found a leaflet containing anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist statements, as well as slogans backing the Palestinian cause.

### IDF gives settlers travel warning

The Israel Defense Force advised Jewish residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip not to travel from their homes unless they are in bullet-proof vehicles.

The recommendation followed Monday's slaying of Meir Linksberg, a 38-year-old father of five, in a Palestinian shooting attack in the West Bank.

Because of the Labor Day holiday in the U.S., the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Monday, Sept. 3.

## Sending message to foes of Israel, Powell to boycott Durban meeting

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Sending a strong signal to the international community, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell is boycotting the U.N. World Conference Against Racism — which begins this week — because of an anti-Israel atmosphere.

State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said Powell will not attend the conference in Durban, South Africa, because proposed resolutions for the conference unfairly criticize Israel — and the meeting itself will provide a forum for speakers to single out Israel repeatedly.

Washington is believed to be considering whether to send a very low-level delegation, like U.S. personnel from the embassy in South Africa, to serve as observers at the conference.

"There was a whole series of references to one particular government, to one particular country, and to its policies as being racist," Boucher said Monday. "That's what we object to."

Following the U.S. lead, Canada announced Tuesday it was reconsidering whether to send a Cabinet representative.

Also Tuesday, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan criticized the American decision.

"No country is immune from racism and xenophobia," Annan said during a trip to Austria. "I hope the U.S. will participate and that they will come and sit with other governments to move the process forward."

Meanwhile, at least one Arab delegate at the Durban conference seemed to celebrate the U.S. absence.

"It's a clear political message that the Americans are insisting to show they are not on the side of human rights defenders," Shaqi Issa, a spokesman for the Arab nongovernmental bloc, told Reuters. "It will make the conference easier. Usually the Americans are the obstacle to a good agreement on human rights."

Powell had expressed his interest in attending the conference, which begins Friday, and was being encouraged to do so by black and civil rights groups. Powell also had spoken with Annan several times over the weekend about the conference.

But U.S. efforts failed to remove anti-Israel statements from the conference agenda, prompting Powell to opt out of the meeting.

Taking their cue from Washington's actions, Israel and American Jewish groups also said they would boycott the conference or drastically reduce their presence.

Hadassah: The Women's Zionist Organization of America, has been following the issue for two years.

Hadassah sent a delegation to Durban, but by midweek was considering walking out.

On the ground in Durban this week, the atmosphere was already hostile to Israel and its supporters.

Some delegates from nongovernmental organizations milled about in T-shirts that read, for example, "Israel = Occupation = Apartheid."

Posters around the convention hall featured the image of a Palestinian boy killed in Israeli-Palestinian crossfire in the first few weeks of violence last fall.

And U.N. Watch, a human rights group run by the American Jewish Committee, was pressing conference organizers to kick out an Arab organization for reportedly circulating an anti-Semitic pamphlet.

U.N. Watch said the pamphlet was distributed by an organization calling itself the

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Israel levels Gaza houses

Israeli tanks and bulldozers demolished 14 houses in the southern Gaza Strip refugee camp of Rafah. Israel said Palestinian gunmen had used the houses to fire at Israeli troops in nearby outposts.

### Italy to try to ease crisis

Italy's foreign minister flew to the Middle East on Tuesday for meetings with Israeli and Palestinian leaders aimed at stemming the violence.

Italy said Renato Ruggiero's trip, which follows a similar visit by German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, "forms part of Europe's strategy of maintaining, via direct contact with the parties, a constant effort to get the peace talks going again."

### Israeli high-tech star goes bust

Chromatis, the Israeli high-tech company purchased for a record \$4.5 billion in a stock swap with Lucent just over a year ago, is closing its doors. The latest casualty of the high-tech bust, Chromatis informed workers Monday that the company is closing its Petach Tikva office and laying off its 130 employees.

### Poll: Palestinians back bombings

Some 81 percent of Palestinians surveyed support suicide bombing attacks against Israelis, as long as Israel's measures against Palestinians continue, according to a poll cited Tuesday by the Jerusalem Post. The survey, conducted by the West Bank-based Palestinian Center for Public Opinion, also found that 54.8 percent said they still would favor suicide bombings even if Israeli measures cease.

### Sharon to visit Russia next week

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is slated to visit Russia Sept. 3-6 to discuss Israeli-Palestinian violence with top Russian leaders, according to Nathan Meron, Israel's ambassador to Russia.

Arab Lawyers Union and depicts Jews with fangs dripping with blood and wearing helmets inscribed with Nazi swastikas.

"The countries of the world are making a decision right now to allow the Arab states and the Palestinians to hijack the conference and cynically manipulate the human condition to achieve narrow political victories," said Amy Goldstein, Hadassah's director of Israel, Zionist and international affairs.

"The Jewish people have a lot to say on the issue of racism, but unfortunately they're preventing Jewish civil society from speaking out by forcing us to defend our existence."

Israel Singer, secretary-general of the World Jewish Congress, said that after Washington's announcement, the WJC, the Israeli government and the Jewish Agency for Israel decided to boycott the Durban conference.

"There's very little to hope for, given the wording of the declaration and the hopelessness of 'friendly countries' not supporting us," Singer said.

"We want people to know that those who have put out this statement have undercut international organizations and the cause for human rights. We shall continue to support both international organizations and human rights, but not through this machinery."

The State Department decision was foreshadowed last Friday when President Bush told reporters that he did not want to send a delegation of any kind to Durban unless the language on the agenda was changed substantively.

"We have made it very clear, through Colin Powell's office, that we will have no representative there so long as they pick on Israel, so long as they continue to say Zionism is racism," Bush said at a news conference in Texas. "If they use the forum as a way to isolate our friend and strong ally, we will not participate."

The United States also is concerned about demands for slave trade reparations, but Boucher said the major sticking point was the language relating to Jews and Israel. Some proposals for the conference included writing the Holocaust with a small "h" — thereby minimizing its uniqueness — and criticizing the supposed "ethnic cleansing of the Arab population in historic Palestine."

Arab and Muslim states inserted the anti-Israeli rhetoric during preparatory conferences in which countries submitted referenda for debate.

American Jewish groups, which will attend the conference as nongovernmental organizations, worked with the United States and Israel to remove the language, to no avail.

The American Jewish community has had mixed views on whether Powell or a lower-level American delegation should go to Durban, but many felt Powell sent a strong message to the international community by deciding to boycott.

"It shows the Bush administration's commitment to not allowing those who are opposed to peace to use this conference for their anti-Israel agenda," said Rebecca Needler, spokeswoman for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

"That message is ultimately more important than coming here and trying to get the conference back on track," said Michael Salberg, a national commissioner for the Anti-Defamation League who is in Durban preparing for the summit.

Jason Isaacson, director of governmental and international affairs for the American Jewish Committee, said Powell's presence at the conference would have been significant because he is "emblematic of the struggle and the prospects of overcoming the hurdles of racism."

"He would have been a fitting representative of the United States at the conference, and the fact that those who are hijacking the conference have cost it the stature that would have come from his participation is significant," Isaacson said. "It has got to send a message to the rest of the world."

B'nai B'rith International President Richard Heideman called on the State Department last week to send the "most experienced delegation possible" to Durban. But he said Monday that Powell's decision balanced the need for experienced leadership with the need to distance the United States from the inflammatory statements.

"Sending Secretary Powell dignifies the conference," Heideman said. "By refusing to send Powell, the statement is being made very clear that the United States disapproves of the language of the conference and disapproves of the environment of hate that is surrounding the conference." □

(JTA Staff Writer Michael J. Jordan in New York contributed to this report.)



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## JEWISH WORLD

### Berlin puts last-minute touches on Jewish museum before gala

By Toby Axelrod

BERLIN (JTA) — With less than two weeks to go before its official opening, Berlin's new Jewish Museum remains under tight wraps.

That's because installation will continue until the last minute, museum director Michael Blumenthal said at a press conference here this week.

With 3,900 objects, the museum will paint a picture of the 2,000-year Jewish presence in Germany — religious and secular life, business and arts, politics and social relations.

A multimedia presentation will provide a virtual glimpse of everyday Jewish life in the medieval city of Worms, where the great 11th century Jewish philosopher Rashi studied.

A "Gallery of the Missing" will focus on the Holocaust.

Also covered in the museum will be the renewal of Jewish life in post-Holocaust Germany.

"We hope that visitors will not only learn about the history, but also about what it means to be Jewish in Germany today," Blumenthal said.

There are nearly 90,000 Jews in Germany today, more than half of them recent emigres from the former Soviet Union. Before the Nazis came to power in 1933, there were about half a million Jews in Germany.

German Finance Minister Hans Eichel said the museum's most important message should be that "society is enriched by people who are different," and that "it must never happen again — that people are murdered because they are different."

Eichel lauded Blumenthal and his team for creating an exhibition that complements the delicate, zigzag structure of Daniel Libeskind's building.

Blumenthal said he was mildly concerned that the week of high-profile opening events set to kick off Sept. 9 would divert attention from the content of the museum.

In fact, when the building opened in the winter of 1999, the opening event was the hottest ticket in town.

Since then, more than 300,000 people have walked through its halls on guided tours.

Though devoid of exhibitions until now, the empty building has had an obvious appeal to tourists and Berliners alike.

For the last few months, however, the museum has been closed to virtually all visitors.

That will change on Sept. 9.

The long-awaited opening week will begin with a concert by the Chicago Symphony conducted by Daniel Barenboim, followed by a gala dinner. Some 850 guests are expected.

Later in the week, school children will participate in hands-on projects, such as painting their names in Hebrew letters on T-shirts.

A day has been set aside to honor people from around the world — among them many Jews who fled Nazi Germany — who contributed material for the museum's exhibits.

German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and President Johannes Rau will be among the guests, along with numerous German dignitaries, Jewish communal leaders from Germany and abroad, and the mayor of Shanghai, China, Zhu Ronghi.

The presence of Shanghai's mayor "is especially interesting and important to me," said Blumenthal, whose family fled to Shanghai from Berlin in 1939 and emigrated to the United States in 1947. "Shanghai was a city in which thousands of Jews found refuge."

On Sept. 11, the doors of the building will open to the public for the first time.

Admission that day will be free.

"If too many people show up, we will have to close the doors," Blumenthal said, smiling.

The doors open officially the next morning, and from then on will be closed only for Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Dec. 24 each year. □

#### Survivor wins book lawsuit

A Holocaust survivor who says she received \$15,000 for her memoirs and later became homeless has been awarded \$7.5 million in a civil suit against her publisher.

A U.S. jury found that Mt. Ivy Press had breached its contract with Misha Defonseca, keeping royalties that belonged to her and hiding the money in offshore accounts.

Defonseca's story was a best seller in Europe.

The book includes her attempts to find her parents as she hid from the Nazis in the woods of Belgium for four years during World War II, sometimes living with wolves.

#### New deadline for Romania claims

The deadline for filing claims for real estate seized by Romania between March 1945 and December 1989 was extended to Nov. 14.

Further information can be obtained by writing the United Restitution Organization, 570 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10018, or by calling (212) 921-3860. Inquiries may also be sent by electronic mail to [uronewyork@att.net](mailto:uronewyork@att.net).

#### Brooklyn hiker dies in mountains

The body of an Orthodox Jewish businessman from Brooklyn was found dead in New Hampshire's White Mountains, where he had been hiking. Abraham Hauer is believed to have died of a heart attack. Hundreds of Orthodox Jews from Brooklyn to Montreal had joined in the search for Hauer, who disappeared earlier this week.

#### Jews open school in Turkey

Two years after a devastating earthquake claimed more than 25,000 lives in Turkey, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, along with the Turkish Jewish community, Israel's Foreign Ministry and the Turkey-Israel Friendship Association, dedicated a new school in the earthquake zone.

The Garih Friendship Elementary School has 16 classrooms, a computer laboratory, auditorium and a science laboratory.

Some 480 students are enrolled and will begin studies with the new school year.

#### 97 named as Nazi collaborators

The Simon Wiesenthal Center submitted to Lithuania the names of 97 Lithuanians suspected of collaborating with the Nazis.

The Center said Monday the individuals had served in Lithuanian police battalions and local police units that played an active role in the wartime persecution and murder of Jews in Lithuania and Belarus.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

## Israel heightens its retaliation as opposition warns of slide to war

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — As Israeli opposition leader Yossi Sarid noted this week, the slide into war often happens despite the fact that no one intends or wishes it.

As the Al-Aksa Intifada entered its 12th month this week with a new and ominous surge in the level of violence, Israelis are beginning to wonder if the “smell of war,” as Sarid wrote, indeed is in the air.

Attention focused this week on Monday's killing of Mustafa Zabri, secretary-general of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, who was killed in a pinpoint Israeli missile strike on his office in Ramallah.

Leader of a hard-line PLO faction that continues to reject a negotiated settlement with Israel, Zabri — better known as Abu Ali Mustafa — was the highest-ranking figure yet killed in Israel's policy of targeting terrorist leaders.

Zabri's political standing sets him apart from the other victims of Israel's assassinations, and led Israeli pundits to dissect Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's strategy.

While some questioned the wisdom of the move, others noted that Sharon had sent a message to the Palestinians that anyone who masterminds terror attacks on Israel is not safe from the Israel Defense Force.

“Too many people have become used to a situation in which the senior Palestinian statesmen of terror sit safely in their offices while those whom they dispatch kill and are killed,” the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot wrote in an editorial.

But Yediot concluded that “in a cost-benefit analysis, the disadvantages of killing” Zabri “are liable to outweigh its benefits” because of the possibility of inflaming the Palestinian street.

In the Jerusalem Post, however, former IDF Gen. Oren Shachor wrote that taking out terrorist leaders of Zabri's stature “is a crucial, not just a desired, tack to take.”

The remnants of the Israeli peace camp, however, harshly attacked the move. Labor Party politician Yossi Beilin called Sharon “a Nero burning himself and Rome while he plays the fiddle,” telling the Israeli daily Ha'aretz that “Sharon is escalating the conflict with no strategy to end it.” Beilin called on Labor to leave the unity government.

Saleh Tarif, the first Arab to serve as an Israeli Cabinet minister, said that “the distance from the assassination of” Zabri “to the assassination of” Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat is very small.” Sharon sought to stop such speculation in its tracks, however, as his Inner Security Cabinet decided Monday that Israel would not take out Palestinian elected officials — a signal that Arafat was not a target.

Diplomatic and military sources told Ha'aretz that the decision to include Zabri on Israel's “hit list” was made a few weeks ago. According to the sources, Israel warned the Palestinian Authority in recent months that Zabri was becoming involved in terror attacks, but “the Palestinians not only ignored what we said, they warned him he was in our sights.”

Escalation continued Monday night, when Israeli tanks and armored personnel carriers rolled into the Palestinian Christian town of Beit Jalla after Palestinian gunmen had raked the Jerusalem neighborhood of Gilo with fire for hours, injuring one Israeli.

The move made good on Israel's warning several weeks ago, after a particularly vigorous day of Palestinian shooting on Gilo, that Israel would no longer allow a residential neighborhood of its capital to be turned into a shooting gallery.

Unlike in previous incursions into Palestinian-controlled territory, however, the troops seized several buildings overlooking Gilo and dug in. U.S. officials assured Arafat that Israel would withdraw quickly, but Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer said Israeli troops would remain there until the Palestinians ceased firing on Gilo. On Tuesday evening, however, Palestinians fired a mortar into the center of Gilo, hitting a community center.

Taken together, the two Israeli actions were considered a significant escalation by many observers, and certainly by the international community.

On Tuesday, for instance, the United States called on Israel to withdraw from Beit Jalla.

Noting that Israeli troops had taken up positions next to a Beit Jalla orphanage affiliated with the Lutheran church, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher called Tuesday on both sides “to avoid any action that would jeopardize the safety of the children.”

The unspoken understanding had been that political figures on the Palestinian side were immune from assassination attempts. For instance, Marwan Barghouti, the chief of Arafat's Fatah Party in Ramallah who has risen to prominence during the intifada, has not been targeted, despite at least circumstantial evidence that he is deeply involved in the violence as leader of Palestinian militias in the West Bank.

Zabri, who returned to Ramallah from Damascus in 1999 with Israel's tacit consent, is more senior in the Palestinian hierarchy than Barghouti. His killing immediately triggered two reactions that Israelis found troubling:

- PFLP spokesmen vowed to take revenge against Israelis and Israeli targets everywhere. Veteran observers here recalled the organization's high-profile attacks during the 1970s, on planes, embassies and airports around the world, as well as its more recent involvement in car bombings in Israeli cities.

- Other Palestinian militant groups, including the fundamentalist Hamas and Islamic Jihad, urged unity and joint action against Israel, despite the deep ideological differences between such groups and the Marxist-secular PFLP.

On the same night as Israel entered Beit Jalla, IDF tanks were active inside Rafah on the southern edge of the Gaza Strip, leaving after they flattened several buildings used by Palestinian gunmen to shoot at Israeli troops.

The IDF's actions came after a series of grave incidents over the weekend and early this week in which more than 10 Israelis were killed. The IDF's actions on Monday served to boost the country's battered morale, and some observers factored that into their analysis of the decisions.

The violence made cease-fire talks between Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Arafat appear increasingly unlikely — and not just from the Israeli side. In recent days Arafat carried a gun while inspecting the rubble from one Israeli attack in the Gaza Strip, a gesture many considered his way of saying to his people that violence is legitimate.

German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, who was in the region last week, continues his behind-the-scenes efforts to set up the talks.

But even Fischer's and Peres' indefatigable optimism cannot obscure the fact that the week's escalation in violence means that the chance for diplomacy is that much bleaker. □