



# Daily News Bulletin

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84th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Ex-Iranian leader: Nuke Israel

The former president of Iran is calling on the Muslim world to develop nuclear weapons to annihilate Israel.

At a Dec. 14 lecture at Tehran University, Ali Hashem Rafsanjani said that if "the world of Islam" obtains nuclear weapons, it should use them against Israel, whose second-strike capability is not enough to destroy the entire Muslim world.

"Nothing will remain after one atom bomb is dropped on Israel, while a similar attack would only hurt Islam," Rafsanjani said.

Still one of the most powerful leaders in Iran, Rafsanjani described the founding of Israel as "the worst event in all of history."

### Arafat banned from Bethlehem

Israel barred Yasser Arafat from attending Christmas services in Bethlehem.

Israel's Security Cabinet said it made the decision Saturday night because the Palestinian leader is not doing enough to crack down on terrorism. The United States warned it would criticize Israel publicly if Arafat was denied access.

The Palestinian leader has been confined to the West Bank city of Ramallah since a series of Palestinian terror attacks against Israel earlier this month.

Arafat said Sunday he would take part in the Christmas celebrations regardless of the Israeli ban, though sources in his office said Arafat would not go. Israel said it would lift restrictions on other Palestinians who want to go to Bethlehem.

### Palestinian state plan denied

Israel's prime minister denied approving a draft peace plan that would recognize a Palestinian state. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon described as "dangerous" and "fantasy" a proposal reportedly drawn up by Foreign Minister Shimon Peres in contacts with the Palestinians.

According to Israeli media reports, Israel would recognize a Palestinian state within eight weeks. The state would be established in the Gaza Strip and about 42 percent of the West Bank, while negotiations would continue on final borders, Jerusalem and refugees.

Palestinian leaders said the plan falls short of Palestinian demands for the entire West Bank and half of Jerusalem.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### U.N. goes against its own rules to pass resolutions blasting Israel

By Rachel Pomerance

NEW YORK (JTA) — Not even parliamentary procedure can keep the United Nations from condemning Israel.

Circumventing its own regulations, the United Nations called a special emergency session Dec. 20 and overwhelmingly passed two resolutions condemning Israel for its treatment of the Palestinians. Conditions that would allow for a special General Assembly session are imminent danger to international peace and security, failure of the Security Council to act on the matter or a recess of the regular session.

The General Assembly currently is in the midst of its regular session.

Still, according to an official at Israel's mission to the United Nations, the Palestinians have a majority that permits them to do virtually whatever they want, regardless of technical procedures. And those numbers guarantee a victorious outcome.

"Even if the Palestinians bring for a vote at the G.A. a resolution that Israel is on the moon, they will have a majority for it," the official said.

"The legal question of the vote further demonstrates that the U.N. is delegitimizing itself," said Amy Goldstein, national director of Israel, Zionist and international affairs for Hadassah: The Women's Zionist Organization of America.

The first resolution, which passed by a vote of 124-6 with 25 abstentions, was a duplicate of the resolution that the United States vetoed in the Security Council the previous Saturday. Although it was the first time a U.N. resolution condemned "all acts of violence and terror resulting in the deaths and injuries among Palestinian and Israeli civilians," the resolution singled out the Jewish state for criticism.

The resolution stressed "the need for Israel, the occupying power, to abide scrupulously by its legal obligations," without naming specific responsibilities on the Palestinian side or specific terror attacks that led to the Israeli military response.

The Anti-Defamation League blasted the resolutions. "Throughout the more than 15 months since the Palestinian campaign of violence and terror began, the General Assembly has continued to recycle anachronistic and biased statements that have nothing to do with the actual situation on the ground," said the national director of the ADL, Abraham Foxman. "These resolutions serve only to encourage Arab and Palestinian theatrics on the world stage and have no practical purpose in creating a better future for Palestinians and Israelis."

The resolution also called for a "monitoring mechanism" to help implement the recommendations of the Mitchell Report. That report, drafted by an international panel led by former U.S. Sen. George Mitchell, outlines a series of steps to return to peace talks, such as a halt to the expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the disarming of Palestinian militants.

First, however, the Mitchell Report demands an unconditional end to violence. Israel insists it will abide by the Mitchell Report, but will not compromise on the precondition of a cease-fire.

The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, John Negroponte, vetoed the resolution when it came up in the Security Council, saying its purpose was to "isolate politically one of the parties to the conflict."

As one of the five permanent members of the Security Council, the United States has veto power over the body's binding resolutions. No nation can veto the nonbinding resolutions produced in the General Assembly.

This time, the U.S. was joined by Israel, Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, Nauru

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Israel allows Jerusalem reception

Israel allowed a Palestinian holiday reception in eastern Jerusalem.

Public Security Minister Uzi Landau found no reason to block senior Palestinian official Sari Nusseibeh from holding the Christmas reception for foreign diplomats and church leaders on Sunday evening, deeming it a "private event." Last week, Landau prevented Nusseibeh from hosting a reception for the Muslim Eid al-Fitr holiday, saying it was an attempt to assert Palestinian sovereignty in Israel's capital.

### Islamic Jihad to continue attacks

An Islamic Jihad leader said his group would continue attacking Israel.

The comments made by Ramadan Abdullah Shalah, published in a London newspaper, came after the militant group Hamas said it would stop suicide bombings in Israel.

Meanwhile, the Al-Aksa Martyrs Brigade of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's Fatah Party said it would increase attacks "if Israel continues its attacks against the Palestinians."

### P.A. arrests Islamic militant

Seven Palestinians were killed in weekend clashes with Palestinian police in the Gaza Strip. On Saturday, Palestinian police arrested an Islamic Jihad military leader, Shadi Muhana, and his senior aide in Gaza.

### British store bans Israeli goods

A British department store is refusing to sell some products with a "Made in Israel" label.

Selfridges is boycotting products made in the West Bank or Golan Heights. The decision came as company officials feared that anti-Israel protests in front of Selfridges' central store in London would disturb holiday shoppers.

and Tuvalu in voting against the resolution. The second resolution expressed support for the Dec. 5 declaration by signatories to the Fourth Geneva Convention, which condemned Israel for its "illegal" occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and its alleged mistreatment of Palestinian civilians.

That resolution passed by a vote of 133-4, with 16 abstentions. Opposing were Israel, the United States, Micronesia and the Marshall Islands.

"Like Zionism is racism, this is just declarative," said Ariel Milo, spokesman for the mission. Lacking legal or operative ramifications, the resolution is "rhetoric, and we're used to that."

According to Goldstein, the latest resolutions are another link in the chain of Arab attempts to turn Israel into a pariah state. "We have seen time and time again that the Palestinians are manipulating the goodwill of other countries to justify violence against Israel — and be perceived as the victims, no less," she said.

But this time, Goldstein said, the playing field has changed. Since Sept. 11, she said, the American people and the Bush administration are waging a war against terror, and the Palestinian leadership is perceived as part of the problem.

While gaining them symbolic victories at the United Nations, the Palestinians' decision to court world opinion rather than acting strongly against terrorism may be costing them with some world powers. The European Union recently denounced Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat and called on him to reign in terrorists.

The P.A.'s behavior may also damage it as the United States rethinks its investment on behalf of Mideast peace. "It boggles my mind that the Palestinian leadership can not understand how serious the American people are about this issue," Goldstein said. Right now, "the American community is more interested in action than public relations." □

## After series of delays, commission moves on compensating Slovak Jews

By Magnus Bennett

PRAGUE (JTA) — Slovak Jews have moved a step closer to receiving compensation for property confiscated by the Nazis. A commission investigating the issue agreed in a meeting earlier this month to resolve outstanding ownership questions and prepare a list of properties that could qualify for compensation.

The commission, which includes 10 state representatives and 10 Jewish representatives, is chaired by Slovakia's deputy prime minister, Pal Csaky. A spokesman for Csaky said the deputy prime minister is pleased with the progress made at the commission's meeting, its first.

The commission is to create a list of properties confiscated from Jewish citizens and establish a foundation to help maintain Jewish cultural heritage sites and compensate individuals. The foundation also will finance projects aimed at developing current Jewish communities in Slovakia. There are approximately 4,000 Jews in Slovakia today, most of them elderly.

Researchers from the Slovak Academy of Sciences and the Slovak National Archive will estimate the amount of confiscated property and list properties whose ownership is clear by the end of January. The commission will meet for a second time in the middle of February and Csaky hopes to present initial recommendations to the government by the middle of next year.

The commission originally was scheduled to meet at the end of September with a view to making recommendations to the Slovak Cabinet by the end of this year, but Csaky's schedule led to a series of delays.

Fero Alexander, executive director of Slovakia's Central Union of Jewish Religious Communities, expressed disappointment at the delays in setting up the commission.

"This is very much a question of speed," Alexander said. "Csaky has been very busy and this has caused quite a delay. We hope that these delays will not happen again."

The parties involved in the negotiations will not speculate on the amounts of money involved in the compensation claim. The value of qualifying properties is likely to run into millions of dollars, but local Jewish representatives have already conceded that a compromise will have to be reached because the Slovak government lacks the deep pockets necessary to foot the entire bill. □



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## JEWISH WORLD

### Funeral firm accused

The largest funeral company in the United States was accused of desecrating remains in several Jewish cemeteries in Florida.

Several families have filed a class-action lawsuit against the Houston-based Service Corporation International, alleging that its staff broke open burial vaults and dumped the contents in the woods, crushed vaults to make room for others and dug up and reburied remains in locations other than the plots purchased.

Florida's attorney general is investigating the company and issued a subpoena for all its burial records. SCI owns numerous Jewish funeral homes and cemeteries throughout the United States.

### Argentine Jews moving to Israel

An increased number of Argentine Jews reportedly are planning to move to Israel.

The reports came as Argentina undergoes an economic crisis that led to the fall of President Fernando de la Rúa's government.

In reaction, the Israeli government and the Jewish Agency for Israel, which long have viewed Argentina's 200,000-strong community as a promising source of potential immigrants, agreed to increase the benefits offered to Argentine Jews who move to Israel.

### Birthright to send fewer Jews

Birthright Israel expects to send 6,135 young Jews to Israel this winter.

The free 10-day trips start Dec. 26 and include 3,149 North Americans, 1,596 Jews from the former Soviet Union and 670 from Latin America.

The program initially had hoped to send more than 10,000 Jews this winter.

But recruitment has been difficult and cancellation rates high due to fears of terrorism that have hurt Israel's tourism industry.

"This will be the most heroic, noble, meaningful Birthright launch in its several-year history," said Michael Steinhardt, one of the three-year-old program's founding philanthropists.

Last winter, Birthright sent 8,653 Jews, aged 18-26, on free trips to Israel.

### 'The Greatest' takes a hit

Muhammad Ali is coming under attack for making ethnic jokes last week.

The Anti-Defamation League said the former boxing great had disappointed them with the jokes. One joke insulted Jews, while the other insulted Puerto Ricans, Mexicans and African Americans.

The jokes came before Ali, who is Muslim, was asked to make a public service announcement explaining American policy to Muslims in the Middle East.

## AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

### As former refuseniks reminisce, they think about a new movement

By Lev Gorodetsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — Fourteen years ago, dissident Yosef Begun paid 500 rubles to get rid of his Russian citizenship so he could emigrate to Israel.

Recently, Begun paid \$500 to get his Russian citizenship back so he could travel easily between Jerusalem and Moscow.

Begun, who spent 16 years in the Soviet Gulag for his underground Jewish activities, publishes books on Jewish culture and tradition. But he says he is less of a Zionist than he used to be.

"The Zionist idea" of the in-gathering of the exiles is "dead now," Begun told JTA. "The aliyah from the former Soviet Union and other countries is decreasing. We have to pay more attention to the work in the Diaspora."

Begun's views about the death of Zionism were not shared by the dozens of refuseniks who gathered at a Jewish community center in Moscow last week.

But the focus of the two-day conference — in addition to renewing old friendships and sharing memories of more harrowing days — suggests that the traditional goal of bringing Russian Jews to Israel has been replaced by a desire to build the 2-million strong "Russian Jewish Diaspora" around the world.

The conference supported a project to launch a worldwide union of Jews from the former Soviet Union.

The congress hopes to be in place by May 2002, according to Valery Engel, executive director of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia.

The federation, which has close ties to the Chabad Lubavitch movement, is behind both the conference and the worldwide group.

The goals of this group, according to federation leaders, are to initiate cross-cultural programs, to promote investments in Russia and Israel, to support Israel and Russia in their fight against international terrorism and to help Russia integrate into the world community.

The activists could play a vital role, one conference participant said.

"They have been active in the society, they have frequently played leading roles in their communities and they have a potential to serve as a basic activist network" in a worldwide organization of Russian Jewry, said Wolf Moskovich, a Ukrainian-born professor of Slavic studies at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

Yuli Edelstein, a former prisoner of Zion who is currently Israel's deputy minister of absorption, also supports the idea of uniting Russian Jewry — and of former refuseniks being instrumental in this process.

"There is still some common denominator for people who have come from one country, who fought for some bright ideals 25 years ago," said Edelstein, whose Russian immigrant party is led by perhaps the most famous former refusenik of all, Natan Sharansky.

Some Western Jewish leaders at the conference who had fought on behalf Soviet Jewry said they didn't understand the need for the new union.

"Most of the Russian Jews have become successfully integrated in the Israeli and U.S. societies," said Jerry Goodman, who in 1971 founded the National Conference for Soviet Jewry, a U.S.-based Jewish group.

"I think that now that they have solved their material problems, they have become nostalgic for some kind of Mother Russia."

Some other U.S. and Israeli participants told JTA of their misgivings that this new group would be sponsored and controlled by the federation, which they consider too close to the Kremlin.

But former dissident Felix Dektor said the intellectual and cultural potential of Russian Jews around the world is too great to waste.

Leonid Stonov of the Union of Councils of Jews in the former Soviet Union, himself a former refusenik, said that this is not the first time such a worldwide group has been proposed.

"But this time," Stonov said, expressing the view of most participants, "with the federation's financial support, it seems more feasible." □

## NEWS ANALYSIS

**Arafat confirms Israeli predictions on both sides of the political aisle**

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Those who argue that Yasser Arafat speaks out of both sides of his mouth could point to last week's events as proof.

On Dec. 16, the Palestinian Authority president offered a dramatic speech on Palestinian television calling for an end to violence — and in Arabic, no less.

It seemed that Arafat finally had abandoned his time-honored practice of making conciliatory statements about the "peace of the brave" in English, while inciting his followers with the most belligerent rhetoric in Arabic.

Given the international pressure that had forced Arafat to make his speech, the reactions were flattering.

World leaders, the Israeli media — and certainly the Israeli left — praised Arafat for finally saying what needed to be said.

However, the Israeli right, more distrustful than ever, played down the significance of the speech from a man it reviles as a chronic liar.

And then, just two days later, Arafat met with Palestinian notables from Jerusalem for the feast of Eid al-Fitr at the conclusion of Ramadan.

There Arafat made another speech in Arabic — but this time his language was totally different, and the context was war.

"You are standing now at the frontline of battle," Arafat told his guests. "Oh, brothers, there is a conspiracy to Judaize Jerusalem," he said, playing up the flammable religious aspect of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Then Arafat quoted an Islamic saying that could easily be interpreted as promoting violence: One Palestinian martyr in Jerusalem, he told his guests, is worth 70 martyrs anywhere else.

In other words, the more Palestinians who die fighting for Jerusalem, the better. What a perfect example of double talk, just two days after the dramatic call for an end to violence.

The Israel right cheered. Once again, Yasser Arafat had turned out to be his own public relations nightmare, apparently impatient to collect the fruits of his "end to violence" speech.

Arafat later explained, in an interview with Ha'aretz, that he had been misinterpreted, and that it was a common Muslim practice to idolize martyrs on holidays.

Some analysts use such double talk to expose what they call Arafat's hypocrisy and dishonesty.

Prestigious researchers like Yehoshua Porat of the Hebrew University long have argued that the left was misled by Arafat for the simple reason that most of its leaders, as well as the Israeli and Western publics, do not understand Arabic.

According to Porat, whoever followed Arafat's statements in Arabic was left with no illusions regarding his true — hostile — intentions toward Israel.

In recent years, a number of study groups emerged in Israel to follow the Arabic media and publicize its contents to non-Arabic speakers. Among the most prestigious is the Middle East Media and Research Institute.

"It is not only Arafat, but this is the practice of many Arab speakers and media around the world," Col. Yigal Carmon, the head of MEMRI, told JTA this week.

"Take Al-Ahram Weekly for example," Carmon said, referring

to the English edition of the official Egyptian newspaper. "When you read the English edition, it reads like Upper East Side" of Manhattan "yuppie press. But when you read the Arabic edition, well, it's bad, very bad."

That may be very true, but when people criticize Arafat for his double talk, it's possible that they fail to understand the man's political psychology.

It's not clear that Arafat uses double talk because he believes he can fool those who do not understand Arabic. Rather, it's likely that he does this because, from the outset of his political career, Arafat has needed to say the right things to please the right people at the right time.

Yezid Sayigh, a Palestinian intellectual at the London Institute of Strategic Studies, noted in a recent article that Arafat's behavior since the intifada began in September 2000 has reflected not the existence of a prior strategy based on the use of force, but the absence of any strategy.

Arafat's "political management has been marked by a high degree of improvisation and short-termism, confirming the absence of an original strategy and of a clear purpose, whether preconceived or otherwise," Sayigh wrote.

This theory fits Arafat's behavior last week. Europe and America wanted to hear the music of peace? Arafat made the "anti-violence" speech — though Israeli analysts who parsed the words carefully concluded that even that speech was not as pacific as it initially appeared.

The Palestinian street wanted to hear that it was part of "a nation of giants" that would fight for its dreams? Two days later, Arafat told his guests from Jerusalem, "We shall fight on this blessed land."

Whether by design or not, the belligerent rhetoric paid some dividends.

Having just shown his warlord credentials and his support for armed struggle, Arafat could allow his security forces to enter a violent confrontation with the Islamic militants of Hamas.

Only after this show of force did Hamas agree to temporarily refrain from suicide attacks inside Israel and from firing mortars at Israeli settlements. For the first time in five years, the Palestinian Authority had enforced its will on Hamas.

But anyone waiting for the "real" Arafat to stand up will have to go on waiting. □

**Fellowships intended for educators**

NEW YORK (JTA) — A North American program training for Jewish educators is offering 30 full-tuition fellowships each year.

The Conservative movement's Jewish Theological Seminary is hoping the new merit-based fellowships — the most extensive available so far in a North American institution training Jewish educators — will help alleviate the widespread shortage of Jewish day school teachers, educational administrators and other educators.

"We feel that people are out there," said Aryeh Davidson, dean of JTS' William Davidson Graduate School of Education. "If we minimize the impediment of cost, we're hoping to attract more people to this field."

Eventually, the school aims to enroll 50 students per year in its masters program, compared with the current class size of 20. Forty-five percent of graduates serve in Conservative institutions. □