



Daily News Bulletin

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85th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israelis continue offensive

With heavy fighting reported in Jenin and Nablus, Israel's Operation Protective Wall continued for a 10th day despite U.S. pressure to pull out of Palestinian-controlled territory. [Page 4]

Pro-Israel rallies in N.Y., Paris

Thousands of marchers took part in demonstrations Sunday in New York and Paris to express support for Israel. In New York, an estimated 10,000 people gathered outside the U.N. headquarters to protest President Bush's demand that Israel withdraw from the West Bank.

The Paris demonstrators also protested recent anti-Semitic attacks in France. Demonstrators also marched Sunday in several other French cities.

In a related development, the Jewish Agency for Israel has undertaken an Israel solidarity campaign among Jewish communities throughout the world. "The public must see that there is a worldwide coalition of Jews and people of conscience throughout the world in support of Israel," Jewish Agency Chairman Sallai Meridor said Sunday. He announced that this support includes rallies, advocacy, special solidarity missions, volunteerism and emergency funds.

Israeli left demonstrates

Thousands of Israeli doves demonstrated in Tel Aviv on Saturday night. Protesting outside the Defense Ministry in Tel Aviv, the demonstrators called on the government to pull the army out of Palestinian cities.

Knesset Speaker Avraham Burg participated in the protest march from Rabin Square to the ministry. There was heavy security at the demonstration, which included thousands of participants.

Thongs protest Israeli actions

Demonstrations took place across the Islamic world Sunday to protest Israel's West Bank incursion. The biggest rally took place in Rabat, Morocco, where a government official estimated the crowd at 500,000. The protest took place hours before U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell was slated to arrive in Rabat.

In Bahrain, the U.S. Embassy reopened Sunday with armed security men. Last Friday, thousands of protesters hurled firebombs and stones at the embassy in one of the most serious incidents of unrest in Bahrain for several years.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Israel rejecting larger role for United Nations and Europe

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — With the Israeli siege of Yasser Arafat's headquarters and Palestinian cities, the Arab world is again ratcheting up its campaign to "internationalize" the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Jewish analysts see a concerted Arab effort to exhort the U.N. Security Council and European Union to marginalize U.S. influence and seize a greater role for themselves.

But U.N. and E.U. diplomats, at least in their public comments, appear less vitriolic about the string of lethal suicide bombings in Israel than the Israeli response to them — and often seem to morally equate the two. This reinforces the notion among pro-Israel advocates that both bodies are biased against the Jewish state and cannot supplant Washington as the primary third-party interlocutor.

"The U.N. and E.U. are under heavy pressure from the Arabs, so you may have the appearance of greater involvement," said one Israeli diplomat.

"Are we happy about it? No. Can we live with it? Yes, because for any party to be truly involved, it must have the consent of Israel. And Israel will not accept a party that isn't legitimate in this process. This mounting pressure doesn't shift the Israeli position."

Yet a sudden shift in the U.S. approach to the United Nations has caught the attention of Jewish observers, who say it could have long-term repercussions.

The United States has traditionally believed that the Security Council is the improper venue for addressing the Middle East conflict.

Though the council is entrusted with ensuring global peace and security, and its resolutions are legally binding, it has been heavily politicized. Washington has consistently used this line of argument to block, or veto outright, anti-Israel resolutions, often asserting that the two parties themselves must resolve the conflict.

In response, the Palestinians and the Arab world have long accused Washington of a pro-Israel bias and of obstructing council action that would force Israel to alter the status quo, through, say, the insertion of international peacekeepers.

However, with the 15-member council increasingly frustrated with the bloodshed and its own inaction, the United States on March 12 sponsored — for what was said to be the first time in a quarter-century or so — a Mideast-related resolution.

It articulated a vision where "two states, Israel and Palestine, live side by side within secure and recognized borders."

Meanwhile, at the recent meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference last week in Malaysia, the 57-member group lauded the "blessed intifada," rejected the notion of Palestinian terrorism and said Israel is in fact guilty of "state terrorism."

While Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad suggested any deliberate attack on civilians — even by Palestinian suicide bombers — be classified as "terrorism," the Islamic group ultimately punted responsibility for defining terrorism to the United Nations.

There, debate over a definition for terrorism has dragged on for three decades, along the lines of the one-country's-terrorist-is-another-country's-freedom-fighter argument.

As for the Security Council, the sudden U.S. activism surprised some observers.

"It undermines Washington's consistent, rhetorical, principled position, that resolution of the conflict is best decided by the parties themselves," said Felice Gaer, a U.N. specialist and director of the American Jewish Committee's Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights. "It also further legitimates the role of outsiders, which has been the call made by the Palestinian side in order to avoid sitting

MIDEAST FOCUS

Zinni meets Arafat

U.S. envoy Anthony Zinni met with Yasser Arafat last Friday after receiving permission from Israel. The former Marine commander spoke with the Palestinian Authority president in Arafat's West Bank headquarters, where he had been held for more than a week.

Israeli soldiers threw stun grenades at about two dozen foreign journalists awaiting Zinni's arrival in Ramallah, after they failed to heed orders to disperse. No one was injured in the incident, but rubber-coated bullets were fired at some of the media vehicles as they retreated.

Ministers may rejoin government

Former Israeli ministers Avigdor Lieberman and Binyamin Elon are negotiating to return to the government. The leaders of the far-right Israel, Our Home — National Unity Party resigned last month, saying the government was not doing enough to combat Palestinian terror. Lieberman, who was the infrastructure minister, and Elon, the former tourism minister, want the government to topple the Palestinian Authority and exile Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

In a related development, the Labor Party has warned that it may leave the government if Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon broadens the governing coalition without Labor's approval.

Israeli schools open Sunday

Israeli schools opened Sunday following a three-week Passover holiday, despite concerns regarding security. The Parents Association had threatened a countrywide school strike if schools weren't properly protected.

The Education Ministry promised to provide 1,000 more school guards for schools lacking them by using teachers, parents and volunteers who were former soldiers. The guards will work an extra two hours beyond the school day, staying on the job until 4 p.m.

at a negotiating table and dealing with the difficult issues at the core of any negotiations."

Washington may have initiated the March 12 resolution, observers said, to blunt a harsher anti-Israel resolution in the works, or out of political calculation to curry both Arab and U.N. support for future action against Iraq. Or both.

But in lending credibility to the Security Council, some wonder if it may complicate U.S. efforts to fend off undesirable anti-Israel resolutions in the future.

Washington still maintains its right to veto. At the same time, the United States has been working more closely with the United Nations since its post-Sept. 11 war against terrorism. But as a former White House official told *The New Republic*, "We may well see this decision come back to haunt us in the future when others try to use the council and build on this resolution."

The concern now is that the Europeans on the council — like veto-empowered France and Russia — may become more assertive.

Russia was an official co-sponsor of the Mideast peace process begun in 1991, while France has been one of Israel's fiercest detractors.

On March 15, France presented the E.U.'s European Council with a proposal for immediate and formal recognition of the Palestinian state.

The effort failed, as Germany, Britain and the Netherlands echoed the U.S. stance and defended Israel's need for security. However, the Europeans have recently grown more vocal, apparently egged on by the Arab world and because the intifada has dented the E.U. investment in Palestine.

The 15-member European Union is the largest donor to the Palestinian Authority, to Palestinian refugees, to Israel's four Arab neighbors and to the Oslo peace process itself, donating hundreds of millions of dollars a year.

"The E.U. is pissed off completely, and for several years has been saying, 'Who's paying for the Palestinians? Who's paying for Oslo?' We are, and we haven't gotten a role" in the peace process, said one Jewish analyst.

In Geneva recently, Palestinian legislator Hanan Ashrawi called on the European Union to emerge as "a corrective force to the Americans."

Later, at the Arab League summit in Beirut in late March, Syrian President Bashar Assad was quoted as saying: "Europe must play a role" and "The Europeans have a cultural understanding of the region. They were here for hundreds of years."

The European Union, which is currently chaired by Spain, started off last week by presenting to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in Geneva its take on events in the Middle East.

According to the Geneva-based group U.N. Watch, three of the speech's 22 paragraphs criticized the Palestinian Authority for "failing to carry out proper investigations" of attacks on Israelis, for the lynching of alleged Palestinian collaborators and for censorship, and stated that the authority "bears the full responsibility for fighting terrorism."

The remainder assailed Israel for its settlements, targeted killings, incursions into Palestinian refugee camps, checkpoints and closures, indiscriminate and excessive use of force, arbitrary arrests, failure to protect journalists and other alleged transgressions.

"These kinds of speeches are counterproductive to E.U. aspirations to a serious mediation role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," said Andrew Srulovitch, U.N. Watch's executive director. "The E.U. presents a litany of charges against Israel, while giving the P.A. a verbal slap on the wrist at the same time suicide bombers are murdering civilians by the dozens."

A review of the world's two most influential news services — the New York-based Associated Press and the London-based Reuters — reveal that European leaders concentrated far more on Israel's response to suicide attacks and its occupation.

From Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar to French President Jacques Chirac to E.U. foreign policy chief Javier Solana, the Europeans have uttered words of condemnation for terrorist attacks, but seem more outraged by the moves against Arafat.

The Europeans also seem to harp on the "cycle" or "spiral" of violence, which Jewish observers suggest indicates a lack of distinction between attack and response, or between an attack on civilians and one on alleged perpetrators of terrorism.

Why this perspective? Jewish observers point to Europe's large Arab and Muslim populations, heavy reliance on Mideast oil, trade and investments — and in some cases, latent anti-Semitism. □



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JEWISH WORLD

French synagogue attacked

A synagogue outside Paris was damaged April 4 by a firebomb. Nobody was injured in the attack, the fifth on a French synagogue in the past two weeks.

Jews and Jewish institutions in France, Belgium and Germany have been the targets of a rising number of hate crimes, apparently spurred by tensions in the Middle East.

On April 3, three men were arrested for throwing gasoline bombs into a building that contained a synagogue in Montpellier.

Arson at Canadian shul

An arson attack on the only synagogue in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, caused an estimated \$30,000 damage to the building.

Last Friday's attack destroyed the synagogue's library of holy books, which were worth at least \$100,000.

Police say a firebomb was thrown through a basement window.

A Toronto synagogue was also seriously damaged in a March 11 arson attack, and an Ottawa synagogue was spray-painted by vandals on April 3.

AIPAC defends Israeli action

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee said Israel should not be forced to end its current military actions in the West Bank.

"Israel's ability to end its current military operation depends on the extent of the terrorist infrastructure to be rooted out," AIPAC President Tim Wuliger said in a statement.

"It is no more appropriate to place a time limit on Israel's acts of self-defense than on America's acts in its own defense."

Far-rightist elected in Ukraine

The leader of a xenophobic party was elected to Ukraine's Parliament. Andriy Shkil, the leader of the UNA-UNSO Party, was elected in the recent parliamentary elections in Ukraine.

Shkil has been in jail for more than a year, facing charges of organizing clashes with police during an anti-presidential protest in Kiev in March 2001.

Man stabbed at Ukrainian shul

An elderly Jewish leader was stabbed in a Ukrainian synagogue.

In the March 29 attack in the western city of Lutsk, a young man allegedly attempted to enter the city's synagogue, but was stopped by the activist, Boris Tsudechkus.

The intruder then stabbed Tsudechkus while yelling anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic slogans. Tsudechkus was treated at a local hospital.

Jewish property may become issue in Lithuania's presidential campaign

By Adam B. Ellick

VILNIUS, Lithuania (JTA) — The issue of Jewish property restitution may influence the upcoming presidential election here.

In a March 29 meeting with Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus, Lithuanian Prime Minister Algirdas Brazauskas proposed the president form a special committee to solve the nation's "very urgent and very sensitive" issue of Jewish communal property restitution.

Both politicians are the assumed leading candidates for president, although neither has become a formal candidate for the December election.

The prominent Polish newspaper, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, recently wrote, "Brazauskas wants the president to solve the problem of Jewish property restoration, which is unpopular in Lithuania, all the more so because anti-Semitic sentiments are still strong in Lithuania."

In January, Brazauskas formed a working group to address restitution issues, but he says its implementation is largely dependent on nonsubordinate institutions and Parliament.

Now, he's looking to enlist Adamkus' help.

All of this while international pressure to restitute Jewish property is heating up.

Brazauskas said returning Jewish property is "very closely related" to Lithuania's acceptance into Euro-Atlantic alliances like NATO and the European Union.

Perhaps because of a fear of widespread anti-Semitism, few politicians have willingly addressed Jewish issues since Lithuania gained independence in 1991.

Brazauskas tasted such sentiments in 1995, when as president he received widespread criticism in Lithuania when he apologized for his nation's contribution to the Holocaust during a visit to Israel.

A proposal to rebuild fragments of the former Jewish ghetto in Vilnius has stalled in Brazauskas' hands for the past 19 months, despite receiving sweeping approval in Parliament in 2000.

Approximately 240,000 Jews lived in Lithuania before World War II. Vilnius was known as one of the greatest Yiddish culture centers.

The Nazis and their Lithuanian collaborators annihilated approximately 94 percent of Lithuanian Jewry. □

Worried about your Jewish future? New Zealand's community wants you

By Henry Benjamin

SYDNEY, Australia (JTA) — Jews in distress are being encouraged to seek out a trouble-free environment way, way down under — in New Zealand.

With Jewish communities in Argentina and South Africa seen as potential pools of immigrants, the Orthodox community in Auckland and the local B'nai B'rith both have launched campaigns hoping to bring more Jews to New Zealand.

The Orthodox community, through a group known as the Auckland Jewish Immigration Organization, has produced a Web site in English and Spanish promoting the city's life style and outlining the steps immigrants must take to meet New Zealand citizenship requirements.

The organization was set up 18 months ago to encourage immigration that would bolster the flagging membership of the Auckland Hebrew Congregation.

A large number of Jews, mostly from the United Kingdom, made a new home for themselves in this quiet, peaceful country after World War II.

However, many of their well-educated and highly trained children left to find careers overseas after New Zealand suffered an economic decline in the 1980s.

About 7,000 Jews live today in New Zealand, which has a population of 4 million — and almost full employment. Most live in Auckland, the country's largest city. □

The Auckland Jewish Immigration Organization can be found on the Web at <http://www.aji.org.nz>.

Sharon presses on with campaign despite Bush call for a withdrawal

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Despite U.S. objections, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is continuing Israel's military operation in the West Bank.

President Bush called over the weekend for Israel to end its Operation Protective Wall, which was launched March 29 in an attempt to round up terrorists and collect illegal arms in Palestinian-controlled cities.

Sharon responded that he would do everything possible to end the operation as soon as possible, but on Sunday fighting continued to rage in several cities across the West Bank.

And as Israeli troops and Palestinian gunmen clashed, Hezbollah gunmen in Lebanon launched weekend attacks that threatened to open up a second battle front for Israel.

Sharon has widespread backing among Israelis for the operation. A recent Jerusalem Post poll found that 72 percent of Israelis support Israel's decision to engage in a wide-scale military operation, and 36 percent favor the expulsion of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat. Fifteen percent of respondents said they believe the reoccupation of Palestinian cities should be permanent.

Israeli military officials have said it could take eight weeks before the operation achieves its objectives.

But some political observers believe that the operation will end, or at least be significantly reduced, by the time U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell arrives in Israel on Friday.

Observers described the situation on the ground over the weekend as a race against the clock by Israel's military to achieve as much as it could in its anti-terror campaign before Powell's arrival.

On Sunday, the Israel Defense Force's chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Shaul Mofaz, told the Israeli Cabinet that some 70 terrorists had been arrested since the launch of the campaign. Mofaz also said 11 Israeli soldiers and some 200 Palestinians had been killed since the start of the military operation. He added that 143 Israeli soldiers and some 1,500 Palestinians had been wounded.

Bush announced in an April 4 speech that he was sending Powell to the Middle East. He made the announcement following widespread international criticism that the United States was not doing enough to end Israeli-Palestinian violence.

At a joint news conference Saturday from his Texas ranch with British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Bush called on Israel to withdraw from Palestinian cities "without delay." He also insisted that the Palestinian leadership order an immediate cease-fire and take steps against terrorist activity.

Bush reiterated his demand for an immediate Israeli withdrawal in a phone call Saturday night to Sharon.

Sharon promised to make "every effort" to end the operation as quickly as possible. But he said the army's effort to weed out terrorists was taking extra time because of precautions being taken to avoid harming Palestinian civilians.

On Sunday, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice clarified Bush's position, saying that while the president wants Israel to withdraw without delay from Palestinian cities, he understands "that it can't be helter-skelter and chaotic." But, she said on CNN's "Late Edition," the president "does expect this withdrawal to begin."

The question now is whether stepped-up American involvement in the conflict can have any effect on the two sides.

Four Israeli soldiers and some 30 Palestinians were killed in weekend clashes. An Israeli reservist, Staff Sgt. Nissan Avraham, 26 of Lod, was killed in a clash with terrorists near the Jewish settlement Rafiah Yam in the Gaza Strip on Saturday morning. Two Palestinian gunmen were killed.

And last Friday, three Israeli soldiers were killed during fighting in Jenin. They were identified as Sgt. Ro'i Tal, 20, of Ma'alot-Tarshiha; Cpl. Oded Kornfein, 20, of Kibbutz Ha'on; and Sgt. Marom Fisher, of Moshav Avigdor.

On Sunday, heavy fighting was reported in Jenin and Nablus. Palestinian officials said a leading member of the Tanzim militia was killed in Nablus. Also on Sunday, Israeli tanks and troops blocked roads and surrounded villages outside Ramallah.

In Bethlehem, Israeli troops urged Palestinians holed up in the Church of the Nativity to come out. The church has been surrounded by Israeli troops and tanks in a weeklong standoff aimed at capturing gunmen who have taken refuge inside the basilica.

On Sunday, Israeli soldiers announced through speakers that the Palestinians would not be harmed if they came out.

Meanwhile, Palestinian officials threatened to boycott meetings with Powell unless he meets with Arafat. The U.S. secretary of state said Sunday that he will meet with Arafat "if circumstances permit."

In other developments, Israeli troops fired an anti-tank rocket Saturday toward Arafat's compound in Ramallah. The army said the rocket was fired following repeated gunfire at Israeli troops from the building.

In Gaza, Israeli troops on patrol Saturday night near the settlement of Morag spotted terrorists moving near the community's green houses and opened fire on the infiltrators. On Sunday morning, the bodies of two terrorists were discovered during a search at the site of the previous night's shooting. A wagon containing a powerful bomb was also found at the scene.

Israel launched Operation Protective Wall after a March 27 suicide bombing at a Passover seder in a Netanya hotel.

On Sunday, an Israeli died of injuries she sustained in the "Passover Massacre." Sara Levy, 88, was a resident of Tel Aviv and a Holocaust survivor.

Her death raised to 27 the number of people killed in that attack. The alleged mastermind of the bombing, Kayas Adwan, and five other Hamas militants were killed in an Israeli military operation in the West Bank village of Tubas over the weekend.

Adwan was also suspected of involvement in other suicide bombings.

Meanwhile, Hezbollah gunmen launched a series of attacks on Israel's northern border. On Sunday, the Israeli military ordered civilians along the border with Lebanon to go into bomb shelters. The call came after Hezbollah launched several cross-border attacks in which six Israelis soldiers were injured. In one Hezbollah attack, four soldiers were injured in the village of Avivim by cross-border gunfire, according to rescue workers.

In an earlier attack Sunday, two other soldiers were wounded when Hezbollah gunmen fired on Israeli positions in a disputed area on the Israel-Lebanon border known as Shabaa Farms.

Israel responded by firing artillery and rockets at Hezbollah positions in southern Lebanon.

On Saturday, five people were wounded, one seriously, in a village straddling the Lebanese border, during a heavy missile and mortar bombardment by Hezbollah forces in Lebanon. □