



Daily News Bulletin

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85th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

French extremist places second

A far-right politician staged a huge upset in the first round of France's presidential election.

According to media projections based on exit polls, Jean-Marie Le Pen will come in second behind President Jacques Chirac, creating a contest between the two when a runoff vote is held May 5.

Confounding earlier predictions, Le Pen beat out Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, who is now expected to finish third.

Leading members of Jospin's Socialist Party said Sunday they would vote for Chirac in the runoff to ensure that Le Pen does not win.

The 73-year-old Le Pen is founder and head of the extreme-right National Front Party. He is notorious for once describing the Holocaust as a mere "detail" of history. "I am not perfect," he responded recently to a question about his history of anti-Semitic remarks, which he now refers to as "unfortunate phrases."

Le Pen amassed 4.4 million votes, nearly 15 percent of the French electorate, in the first round of the 1988 presidential election.

Israel to cooperate with U.N.

Israel said it would cooperate fully with the United Nation's fact-finding mission in Jenin. Israeli officials said Israel has nothing to hide, but insisted that the mission not be politically biased.

In another development, Israel withdrew its troops Sunday from Nablus and parts of Ramallah. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said the withdrawals marked the end of the "current phase" of Israel's battle against terror. [Page 4]

Barak addresses AIPAC meeting

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee opened its annual policy conference by equating the U.S. war on terrorism with Israel's military offensive in the West Bank.

At Sunday's opening session, former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak said he knew — from experience — that Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat is unwilling to negotiate a peace settlement.

"It is not about occupation. It is about terror, terror, terror," Barak said.

Former Prime Ministers Benjamin Netanyahu and Shimon Peres are also expected to address the conference.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Capture of Barghouti is Israeli coup, but some fear Palestinian retaliation

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — There were some who saw an element of poetic justice in Israel's capture of Palestinian militia leader Marwan Barghouti on the eve of Israel's Remembrance Day for fallen soldiers.

Leader of the Fatah Party's Tanzim militia, Barghouti, 42, has become a symbol — and coordinating force — of the Palestinian intifada against Israel, which has claimed the lives of 469 Israeli soldiers and civilians since it began in September 2000.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon vowed that Barghouti would be tried for involvement in the murder of Israelis.

He said Barghouti's trial would "be one of the greatest achievements" of the Israeli military campaign against terrorists in Palestinian cities that was launched at the end of March following a month of increasingly deadly suicide attacks.

When Sharon learned of Barghouti's capture, the Israeli daily Ma'ariv reported, he told close associates that he would have preferred to receive Barghouti's ashes in an urn. The reference was to Israel's trial and conviction of Nazi Adolf Eichmann, who was tried and hung and whose ashes were then strewn outside Israel's territorial waters.

With Palestinian groups already threatening retaliation, however, other observers suggested that Israel's seizure of Barghouti and a subsequent trial would only strengthen his standing among Palestinians and bring more grief to Israel. The military wing of Hamas said Israel's arrest of Barghouti had turned Israeli leaders, including Sharon, into legitimate targets.

Some senior Israeli security officials reportedly believe that instead of being put on trial, Barghouti should be expelled.

Political reaction to the capture was mixed.

Sport and Culture Minister Matan Vilnai of Labor said Barghouti's arrest was proof of Israel's commitment to track down those who attack its citizens.

Public Security Minister Uzi Landau of Likud said Barghouti should stay in prison "until the end of his life."

Shinui Party Knesset member Tommy Lapid expressed support for Barghouti's arrest and said he should be put on trial.

But, Lapid added, "I hope that Barghouti in custody will not cause us more grief than when Barghouti was free."

Labor Party member Yossi Beilin warned that the arrest would dash any remaining chances for peace. He also noted that leaders of Hamas and Islamic Jihad were still free.

About one thing there was no debate: The April 15 capture of Barghouti in his Ramallah apartment hideout was a coup for Israeli intelligence and security forces.

Barghouti went underground when Israeli troops invaded Ramallah at the beginning of Operation Protective Wall on March 29. He was wanted by Israel, which claimed that Barghouti was closely involved in planning, directing and financing terrorist attacks.

At one point, Barghouti was believed to have taken cover with other wanted Palestinians in the Ramallah-area office of the Palestinians' West Bank security chief, Jibril Rajoub.

When that group surrendered, however, Barghouti was not among them.

On April 15, Israeli security forces received a tip that Barghouti was hiding in a friend's apartment in the Ramallah neighborhood of A-Tira, not far from Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's compound.

Israeli troops and special units quickly surrounded the building, calling on

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israeli killed in Sinai

Egyptian authorities launched a manhunt for the killer of an Israeli on a Sinai beach last week. The body of Tel Aviv artist Meir Franco, 48, was discovered April 17 with stab wounds.

Egyptian police presently believe the motive for the murder was criminal, not nationalist, according to news reports.

Milo considered for D.C. posting

Israeli Cabinet minister Roni Milo is being considered for the post of ambassador to the United States.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon supports Milo, a former Tel Aviv mayor, to replace David Ivry, who left the post last week, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

Senior Hamas terrorists arrested

Israeli forces arrested two senior Hamas terrorists in Bethlehem last Friday. The two were identified as Haled Tapesh Daweib, 38, who heads Hamas' military wing in Bethlehem, and his assistant, Nasri Zir, 34.

The two are suspected of planning terrorist attacks and dispatching terrorists to carry out shooting attacks and suicide bombings. Israeli troops in recent days also arrested two Palestinian women from a village near Hebron on suspicion that they were planning to carry out suicide bombings.

Israelis change travel plans

Israelis are avoiding travel to certain countries because of world reaction to events in the Middle East.

Around 31 percent of the respondents said they would not travel to Turkey, 27 percent said they would stay away from France, 26 percent ruled out Austria and 22 percent said they would not visit Switzerland, according to a recent survey by the ISSTA Lines travel agency. Some 78 percent of respondents chose the United States as their favored destination.

occupants to come out. Most left of their free will. Following them, Barghouti's nephew Ahmed, a Tanzim militant also wanted for terrorist activity, surrendered.

Ahmed Barghouti told investigators that his uncle had fled when he suspected Israeli security forces were closing in. Another resident sent back to the building said Barghouti was not there.

Not believing the claims, members of a special unit entered the building. At the same time, troops outside spotted Barghouti by one of the building's windows, and Barghouti then gave himself up.

For months, even as it targeted other Palestinians who were organizing terrorist attacks, Israel declined to go after Barghouti because of his tremendous popular support.

As Shin Bet officials questioned Barghouti last week, he insisted he was a political figure and not a terrorist.

But the Israeli army described Barghouti as head of the Tanzim militia and founder of the Al-Aksa Martyr's Brigade, a terrorist group that has carried out some of the most brutal attacks of recent months, killing scores of Israelis and wounding hundreds.

The head of Israeli army intelligence, Maj. Gen. Aharon Ze'evi, said Barghouti was known to have directed, encouraged and financed terrorist activities, including the dispatch of suicide bombers.

Israeli security officials linked Barghouti to numerous attacks in which more than a dozen Israelis were killed, including a shooting attack at a Bat Mitzvah celebration in Hadera, a shooting spree on Jerusalem's Jaffa Road and a shooting at a Tel Aviv restaurant.

Israeli officials also want to examine Barghouti's relationship with Arafat to determine how much Arafat knew about Tanzim terrorist attacks and how involved in them he was. Documents confiscated during the anti-terror campaign show that funds Barghouti received, including allocations authorized by Arafat, were used to finance attacks by West Bank terror cells, the army says.

Once considered a possible moderate successor to Arafat, Barghouti's views became more extreme during the intifada. Heading an association of various groups involved in the uprising, Barghouti evolved into an outspoken advocate of armed struggle to achieve Palestinian aims.

According to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz, it was Barghouti who recognized that Hamas and Islamic Jihad suicide bombings were gaining popularity even among secular Palestinians, and steered Tanzim toward the same methods.

"This is the intifada of peace. I'm serious. This intifada will lead to peace in the end," Barghouti was quoted as saying earlier this year. "We need to escalate the conflict. It will be hard. Many of us will be killed, but there is no choice. Every one of us is willing to sacrifice himself."

Barghouti also had no patience for Israel's refusal to negotiate under fire. Not only was violence compatible with peace talks, he told The New York Times several months ago, it was the best way to ensure that Israel accepted Palestinian demands at the bargaining table.

Barghouti first became politically active in the Fatah youth movement in the 1970s. Later, at Bir Zeit University in the West Bank, he served as head of the student council.

In the early 1980s Barghouti was arrested for terrorist activities and spent six years in an Israeli jail, where he learned Hebrew. He was released in 1987 and deported to Jordan.

He remained politically active and ultimately joined Arafat and the PLO leadership in Tunis. In 1994, in the wake of the Oslo accords, Barghouti returned to the West Bank and was elected to the Palestinian legislative council as a representative from the Ramallah district. But he was not a member of the Palestinian Cabinet, and was critical of the Palestinian Authority's rampant corruption.

Barghouti built popular support by organizing regional meetings of Fatah branches in the West Bank. Under his leadership, Barghouti transformed the Tanzim in the intifada from a kind of civil guard to a militia carrying out shooting and bombing attacks against Israelis.

At times, it also appeared that the Tanzim's violent agenda under Barghouti challenged Arafat's occasional calls for a cease-fire and demonstrated a power struggle between the two.

But many Israelis believed that Arafat never was sincere when he called for cease-fires, and used the Tanzim to carry out terror attacks he could not sponsor directly. □



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JEWISH WORLD

Anti-racism rally in Brussels

A crowd estimated at 5,000 by rally organizers called for an end to anti-Semitic attacks in Belgium. "Our community is suffering. A chief rabbi has been molested, two synagogues have been firebombed, shops attacked and a Jewish bookshop burned down," the head of the nation's Jewish community, Philippe Markiewicz, said at Sunday's rally, which took place outside a recently firebombed Brussels synagogue.

Last week, a Brussels building housing a Jewish bookshop and kosher food store was badly damaged by arson. Belgian Jewish community leaders say the number of anti-Semitic incidents has risen to "a few a week" since the escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during the past month, and they have called for more protection from the Belgian government.

Varied crowd marches in D.C.

Some 35,000 demonstrators converged Saturday on Washington to march against causes ranging from globalization to the Bush administration's Middle East policy.

Arab and Muslim demonstrators chanted for an end to U.S. military aid to Israel. Some wore T-shirts proclaiming, "We are all Palestinians." The crowd also included anti-globalization demonstrators, pro-Communists and Black Panthers.

Auschwitz mall to open

A shopping center is due to open outside the former Auschwitz death camp, its owner said.

"We have received the necessary permission and plan to open for business on Monday," Janusz Marszalek told Reuters on Saturday. The construction project was halted by the Polish authorities in 1996 following an international outcry from Jewish groups.

Poland promises Jewish museum

Poland said it would speed up plans for a Jewish museum. President Aleksander Kwasniewski said he wanted to see the cornerstone for the museum laid next year.

Project officials said the \$55 million museum could be completed in four years. The project has been stalled for years because of difficulties ranging from financing to the portrayal of the complex history of Polish-Jewish relations.

Just say "Non!"

A Jewish group launched a consumer boycott against France because of the surge in anti-Semitism there.

The Jewish Action Alliance called on supporters to forgo trips to Paris and find alternatives to their favorite French products as a way of standing in solidarity with France's beleaguered Jews.

Arab anti-Semitism and incitement kill peace prospects, Congress told

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Congress got an earful about anti-Semitism in the Arab world last week, and members didn't like what they heard.

Lawmakers listened to experts at an April 18 U.S. House of Representatives subcommittee hearing speak about increasing anti-Semitism and anti-American incitement in the Arab world, and how it threatens peace prospects in the Middle East as well as U.S. security.

The Anti-Defamation League painted a grim picture of Arab anti-Semitism, and said hopes for regional cooperation in the Middle East have been shattered.

Political leaders must promote tolerance and reject hatred, ADL National Director Abraham Foxman said.

"Arab anti-Semitism and anti-Americanism, if allowed to flourish, could become one of the most destructive forces unleashed in this new century," Foxman testified.

The ADL called on Congress to take steps against the incitement and hatred that fuels terrorism.

"Now that we are simultaneously witnessing the unraveling of hopes for peace and a spurt of Arab anti-Semitism, it forces us to take another look at the connection between anti-Semitism, efforts to dehumanize Jews or Americans, and the terrorism against Israel and America," Foxman said.

New satellite channels cater to the masses' anti-American sentiments, according to Yigal Carmon, president of the Middle East Media Research Institute, which monitors Arab media.

Arab education systems are "no less powerful a tool of indoctrination of the youth," Carmon said.

At times, it seemed the experts were preaching to the choir.

Some lawmakers already are well versed in the problem and used their time to advance the message that anti-Semitism is rampant in the Arab world.

Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.) noted the revival of the "blood libel" by the government-controlled press in Egypt and Saudi Arabia — which claims that Jews drink or use the blood of non-Jews for ritual purposes — the pervasiveness of Holocaust denial, as well as conspiracy theories propagated by the Arab and Muslim press holding Jews responsible for the Sept. 11 attack on the World Trade Center.

"We find ourselves facing an ideological enemy that may turn out to be harder to defeat than Al-Qaida or the Taliban — the fanatical anti-American and anti-Semitic incitement that permeates the Arab world," said Gilman, chairman of the International Relations Committee's subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia.

"This propaganda constitutes a real threat to long-term U.S. interests in the region, and does great damage to the prospects for a real and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, and to the bilateral relations between the United States and its allies in the Arab world," he said.

Gilman said Arab leaders must make it clear that such anti-Semitic rhetoric is politically and culturally unacceptable.

Rep. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.) had prepared a report that included examples of incitement.

These examples included Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat making a call for "jihad" or holy war, and the Syrian defense minister saying he wanted to kill Jews.

"Every time an Arab government, newspaper, school, or mosque uses this inflammatory type of language, we set back any chances that the United States, Israel and the Arab world can come together peacefully," Engel said.

Foxman issued a series of recommendations to focus pressure on nations that "traffic in the weaponry of hatred and incitement."

The ADL wants incitement to be on the U.S. diplomatic agenda, recommends a focus on anti-bias education and wants Congress and the White House to report on how governments are dealing with incitement in their countries.

Foxman also called for a presidential commission to study U.S. responses to incitement. □

Israeli officials gird for PR battle over charges of Jenin 'massacre'

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli officials are preparing for what may be their biggest battle for world opinion since the intifada began in September 2000.

At issue is what took place in the Jenin refugee camp, site of the fiercest fighting after Israel began its military operation in the West Bank late last month in an attempt to round up terrorists and collect illegal arms in Palestinian-controlled cities.

Calls have mounted around the world for a probe of Jenin, where Palestinians say Israel carried out a "massacre" during its anti-terror operation.

According to Palestinian sources, Israel killed 500 innocent Palestinian civilians during the fighting in Jenin.

Israel, in turn, says it killed several dozen Palestinian gunmen — and lost 23 of its own soldiers — in the fighting.

While regretting that the Israel Defense Force caused some civilian casualties, Israeli officials also say that Palestinian gunmen used the refugee camp as a base for terrorist operations against Israel and were therefore responsible for bringing the fight with the IDF into a civilian area.

On Sunday, CNN reported that 43 Palestinians had so far been found dead amid the rubble of Jenin.

Also Sunday, international rescue teams sifted through rubble in the camp in an effort to find and defuse booby traps planted by Palestinian gunmen.

Rescue workers said it was possible but unlikely that someone would be found alive under the debris.

Last Friday, the U.N. Security Council voted unanimously to send a fact-finding team to Jenin to determine what happened there.

The 15-0 vote came hours after Foreign Minister Shimon Peres told U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan that Israel would welcome such a team.

"Israel has nothing to hide regarding the operation in Jenin," Peres told Annan, according to officials at Israel's Mission to the United Nations. "Our hands are clean."

Jenin had been the site of a fierce battle with armed terrorists, who had deliberately hidden themselves among the civilian population, Peres added.

Earlier last Friday, the United States proposed that the United Nations gather "information" about the devastation in Jenin.

The U.S. proposal came after the Americans had threatened to veto Arab demands for an official U.N. probe.

Supported by Israel, the American text omits the word "investigation," as Arab nations and others proposed in a draft resolution.

Instead, it says Annan, in cooperation with Israel, could "develop accurate information regarding recent events in the Jenin refugee camp."

While Israeli officials agreed to cooperate with the fact-finding panel, they are demanding that the mission not be politically biased. They want to exclude from the panel the U.N. Middle East envoy, Terje Roed-Larsen, and the U.N. commissioner for human rights, Mary Robinson.

Israeli officials say the two have a pro-Palestinian bias.

After visiting the Jenin refugee camp last week, Roed-Larsen condemned the Israeli military operation there.

Israel's attorney general, Elyakim Rubinstein, said at Sunday's weekly Cabinet meeting that Roed-Larsen's anti-Israel remarks

were lies and the diplomat should be declared persona non grata in Israel.

At the Cabinet session, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said that given the worldwide attention to the issue, Israel had no alternative to but to agree to the U.N. fact-finding mission.

But several Cabinet ministers criticized the decision.

Minister Dan Naveh said it would mark the first time that Israeli soldiers would be accountable to outside parties.

Minister Yitzhak Levy said the U.N. fact-finding mission should also look into the "Passover Massacre" in which 28 people were killed on March 27 following a suicide bombing at a seder in Netanya. That attack prompted Israel to launch its military operation in the West Bank two days later.

As Israel girds for a major public relations campaign related to Jenin, its anti-terror campaign appeared to be winding down.

After completing withdrawals from Kalkilya, Tulkarm and Jenin days earlier, Israeli troops on Sunday pulled out of Nablus and parts of Ramallah.

Sharon said Sunday the withdrawals marked the end of the "current phase" of Israel's battle against terror.

Security forces remained deployed around Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's Ramallah compound and around the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.

Israel claims that Arafat is hiding four Palestinians wanted for the murder last October of Cabinet Minister Rehavam Ze'evi, and a fifth Palestinian involved in the Karine-A weapons smuggling ship that Israel intercepted in January.

The Israeli daily Ha'aretz quoted Palestinian officials as saying the Israeli demand for the handover of the five is a pretense for the army to storm the compound and hurt Arafat.

Last Friday, Arafat offered to put the suspected killers of Ze'evi on trial in a Palestinian court. Arafat made the proposal after President Bush supported Israel's demand that the killers be brought to justice.

On Sunday, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell called on Israel to loosen its siege of Arafat's Ramallah headquarters.

Easing restrictions on Arafat would give the Palestinian Authority president a chance "to show whether or not he can control forces or bring this security situation under control," Powell said on NBC-TV's "Meet the Press."

After returning last week from a 10-day peacemaking tour, Powell also said he expects to return to the Middle East soon.

Asked during a CNN interview whether he considers Arafat a man of peace, Powell said Sunday, "We have to give Arafat a chance to demonstrate that he is a man of peace."

Meanwhile, Israeli security officials assessing the impact of the IDF operation in the West Bank gave positive, if carefully qualified, assessments of the campaign's impact on the Palestinian terror infrastructure.

According to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz, intelligence officials speculated that the operation had dealt a blow to 90 percent of the Palestinian terror network in Jenin; to 80 percent of the networks in Nablus and Ramallah; and to 60 percent in Tulkarm and Kalkilya.

The outcome of the Bethlehem operation was still contingent upon resolution of the standoff at the Church of the Nativity, where some 200 armed Palestinians have been holed up for more than two weeks, Ha'aretz reported.

Less of an impact was felt in Hebron, according to the report, and no impact at all was made in the Gaza Strip, which was not targeted in the IDF operation. □