



# Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 80, No. 79

Tuesday, April 30, 2002

85th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Aid team: No Jenin massacre

There was no massacre of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp, according to aid workers there.

The workers said they have so far unearthed 52 bodies in the rubble, CNN reported Monday.

The Palestinians have accused Israeli troops of killing more than 500 innocent Palestinian civilians during a military operation there earlier this month. Israel has repeatedly denied the charge.

### Israel enters Hebron

Israeli troops and tanks moved into parts of Palestinian-controlled Hebron early Monday.

The operation came after four Israelis, including a 5-year-old girl, were killed and seven wounded in a Palestinian terrorist attack Saturday at a nearby Jewish settlement.

Nine Palestinians were killed by Israeli fire, Palestinian sources said.

Leading terrorists were among the dead, including one allegedly involved in the Saturday attack on the settlement.

### U.S. returns to U.N. rights panel

The United States won back its seat on the Geneva-based U.N. Human Rights Commission.

Last year, the United States lost the seat for the first time since the body was founded in 1947.

The U.S. return to the commission was assured Monday after Italy and Spain pulled out of the race to make sure the United States was guaranteed one of the four seats that are earmarked this year for Western nations.

### Israel: Arafat free to leave HQ

Israel said Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat is free to leave his Ramallah headquarters. Israeli tanks, however, continued to surround his compound Monday.

Arafat is not expected to make a move until six Palestinians wanted by Israel are moved within a day or two from his compound to a prison in the city of Jericho, where their imprisonment will be supervised by U.S. and British officials, according to Palestinian Information Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo.

The six include the assassins of Israeli Tourism Minister Rehavam Ze'evi and the head of their Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Like other French protesters, Jews urge vote against Le Pen

By Andrew Diamond

PARIS (JTA) — Jean-Marie Le Pen has already been crowned the latest symbol of voter alienation in Europe, but France's beleaguered Jewish community wants to ensure Le Pen never makes it to the country's presidential palace.

The Jewish community has been disappointed by the French government's weak reaction to a wave of anti-Semitic aggression, carried out mainly by Arab youth in reaction to Israeli-Palestinian violence. Yet French Jews probably never thought the alternative would be Le Pen, a far-rightist who favors stricter controls on North African immigration to France — but also has a history of anti-Semitic statements.

In the week since Le Pen won a place in Sunday's runoff against incumbent Jacques Chirac, half a million French citizens have taken to the streets to say "no" to the Nazism, fascism, xenophobia, and anti-Semitism that Le Pen's National Front Party represents.

On Sunday, some 15,000 French Jews held an anti-Le Pen rally in front of the Pantheon in Paris, the burial place of several heroes of the French republic.

Unlike other rallies that world Jewish communities have held in recent weeks, this one was not to decry the assault on Israel or support the policies of the Sharon government. Rather, it clearly was designed to show that French Jews are proud to be members of the multicultural republic — and that they see anti-Semitism not just as an attack on them but as an attack on the fundamental values of the French republic.

"As a Jew, I am very concerned with the situation in Israel, but I was born in France," said Muriel, who works in advertising. "I came here today because I love this country and don't want to see it filled with hate."

"I am only half-Jewish and nonpracticing, but that is not important," said Thomas, a financial services worker. "Everyone here, Jewish or not, cares deeply that France had been hurt. That is why you see all the flags waving."

Co-sponsored by France's largest Jewish student union, the UEJF, and one of the nation's oldest and most militant anti-racist organizations, the League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism, the demonstration also showed that French Jews are no longer alone in their struggle against racism and anti-Semitism.

Joining the Jewish leaders on stage were one of the foremost Muslim clerics in France, a high-level representative of the Catholic Church and the mayor of Paris.

Taking the podium in front of a sea of French flags and anti-Le Pen signs, each speaker elicited rousing applause with exhortations to fight Le Pen and cast their votes for Chirac on Sunday.

One of the high points of the event occurred when Soheib Bencheikh, the mufti of Marseilles, announced, "I came here today because this is a very powerful moment for our Jewish brothers, and because the French Jew plays the role of a barometer for the Muslim, and if the Jew of France is worried, Muslims should panic!"

Minutes later, Gilles Bernheim, rabbi of one of the largest congregations in France, brought another explosion of applause.

"I want to tell my friend, the mufti of Marseilles, that Jews who, for many generations, have made efforts to integrate in the republic and to respect the values of the country that welcomed us, will always be on the side of our Muslim brothers who are respectful of the values of the French republic."

Echoing a call made by numerous Jewish leaders over the past week, Bernheim also told the protesters, "Next Sunday, with no hesitation, it is the duty of all of us, not only of the ones that are already convinced and are here today, to vote for the incumbent

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Two more die from Tunisia blast

Two more German women died Monday of burns suffered in an April 11 explosion at a synagogue in Tunisia, raising the death toll to 18.

Among the dead in the suspected terror attack were 13 German tourists.

In another development, the Tunisian government is encouraging Jews to participate in the annual Lag B'Omer celebration on the island of Jerba, site of the attack.

The government wants to show its support for the Jewish community, according to Jerry Sorkin, a Philadelphia-area businessman with close ties to the Tunisian government and the Jewish community there.

### Expert sees Palestinian-IRA link

Two hundred bombs found in the Jenin refugee camp are believed identical to those used by the IRA in Northern Ireland.

According to a report in London's Sunday Telegraph, a former British explosives expert now working for the Red Cross in the refugee camp is convinced that the devices either were supplied by the IRA or made by Palestinians under direct IRA supervision.

The report comes after some experts alleged that a sniper attack on Israeli soldiers at a West Bank roadblock earlier this year showed either IRA participation or training.

### Bethlehem standoff continues

Israeli troops shot dead a Palestinian on Monday who fired at them from the courtyard of Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity. Israeli and Palestinian officials meanwhile continued efforts to end the monthlong standoff between Israeli troops and armed Palestinians holed up inside the shrine.

A senior U.S. official told The Associated Press a breakthrough may be imminent, but declined to provide details.



## Daily News Bulletin

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JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at [www.jta.org](http://www.jta.org).  
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President Jacques Chirac." Such political endorsements from Jewish religious leaders are unprecedented, but the community's highest spiritual figures issued unequivocal recommendations this week for Jews to get to the polls and vote Chirac.

David Messas, the grand rabbi of France, released a statement strongly encouraging Jews to block Le Pen "in the interest of democracy."

An official communique from Jean Kahn, president of the French Consistoire, a Jewish group, reiterated this message in urgent terms. "No ballot should go missing, no voter should abstain — the future of the Jewish community of France depends on it," he said.

UEJF President Patrick Klugman voiced similar sentiments in urging French students to mobilize against Le Pen.

"It is not the time any longer for politics or for quibbling," the student leader advised, "and I don't care today if Jacques Chirac has been good or not for the Jews and for Israel."

Despite such displays of unity, however, the Le Pen issue has managed to provoke controversy among some French Jewish leaders.

On Tuesday, the French daily Le Monde reported that Roger Cukierman, the president of CRIF, the umbrella organization for French secular Jewish institutions, told the Israeli daily Ha'aretz that Le Pen's success actually would help reduce Arab anti-Semitism. Le Pen's surprise second-place finish in first-round voting April 21 constituted "a message to the Muslims to stay quiet," Cukierman allegedly said.

Cukierman later said he had been misquoted when his words were translated into English, but several Jewish leaders, including CRIF board members, were quick to criticize him.

"Such statements can only spread discord between the communities," Rabbi Daniel Fahri, president of the Liberal Jewish Movement of France, told Le Monde.

"Faced with" Le Pen, he added, "Jews and Muslims are in the same boat."

The emergence of such solidarity should not be overlooked in a country that in the past 18 months has seen more than 500 anti-Jewish incidents — many of them committed by young Muslims of North African descent who sympathize with the Palestinian cause.

In perhaps the ultimate irony of the election, a hatemongering leader appears to have contributed to a healing process in neighborhoods where Jews and Muslims live side by side.

Since the rise of Le Pen, the frequency and intensity of anti-Jewish incidents have ebbed considerably.

The two reported incidents last week — the stoning of a school bus and an arson attack on a storage facility of a Jewish school, both in Paris suburbs — represent a substantial change from the weeks before the first round of the elections, when arson attacks and physical assaults were near-daily occurrences.

Then again, the extra police protection provided by the French government also may have played a role.

It is too soon to tell how long the relative peace will endure. What seems more certain is that Le Pen's success has awakened many French citizens to the threats such religious violence poses to the country.

Some in the Jewish community remain reluctant to embrace those who have suddenly awakened to the problem of anti-Semitism.

"Jews demonstrated all alone against anti-Semitism because a large part of the anti-racist movement did not want to hear about an anti-Semitism that did not conform to its ideology," eminent writer and philosopher Alain Finkielkraut reminded the crowd at Sunday's rally.

Many others, however, are relieved to see their fellow French citizens marching against anti-Semitism, Nazism, and hatred of all kinds.

"I could not believe my eyes when I saw that Le Pen was going to be running in the second round, but I think people have been too apathetic about what has been happening here," said Eric, a contractor. "Now, people are really getting active, and hopefully France can remove the shame by giving Le Pen less than 20 percent in the second round."

The rally, which featured many people wearing stickers that said "I Love the Republic," ended with a hearty rendition of "La Marseillaise," the French national anthem. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Berlin shul firebombed

A firebomb was thrown at a synagogue in Berlin. A day after Sunday night's attack, the president of the Berlin Jewish community, Alexander Brenner, said the community was in shock after learning of the latest incident.

In the attack, a Molotov cocktail was thrown from a neighboring property onto the lawn of the Frankeluefer Synagogue in Berlin's Kreuzberg district. The fire was doused and damage was minimal. Police reported that they have no leads.

The synagogue, completed in 1916, is not new to vandalism. In October 2000, cobblestones were thrown at the synagogue, breaking windows in the entrance.

### School fire near Paris

Police are probing whether a fire at a Jewish school in a Paris suburb was the latest in a string of anti-Semitic attacks in France.

Sunday's fire gutted two buildings at the school in the suburb of Sarcelles, which has large Jewish and Arab communities. The buildings were empty at the time of the fire, and no one was hurt.

### Marchers: Boycott France

Some 300 Jewish demonstrators in New York called Sunday for an economic boycott of France in response to a recent wave of anti-Semitic incidents there.

The demonstrators chanted "Shame on France" and carried posters saying "No French wine" and "No Vichy Now." After protesting in front of the French government tourist office, the demonstrators marched to the Israeli Consulate to show support for Israel.

### Nazis' child victims buried

Austria buried the last remains of handicapped children experimented on and then killed by the Nazis. As part of Sunday's memorial ceremony, Austrian students marched carrying the pictures of children killed in a Nazi clinic. Austrian President Thomas Klestil called the burial ceremony "very late for our country" and promised that "this dark time of our history must constantly remain in the present."

### U.S. colleges recruit Jews

Several U.S. universities are recruiting Jewish students in an effort to increase their academic rankings, according to The Wall Street Journal.

"Jewish students, by culture and ability and by the very nature of their liveliness, make a university a much more habitable place in terms of intellectual life," Vanderbilt University's president, who is Mormon, told the newspaper. The Journal reports that Jews average 1161 out of 1600 on the SAT college admissions tests, second only to Unitarians.

## NPR series about Yiddish radio prompts rash of anti-Semitic e-mail

By Peter Ephross

NEW YORK (JTA) — A radio series about the history of Yiddish radio has touched off a flurry of anti-Semitic e-mails.

National Public Radio, which is airing the 10-part "Yiddish Radio Project," has received more than 75 e-mails criticizing the series, many of them anti-Semitic, according to Jeffrey Dvorkin, NPR's ombudsman.

While the anti-Semitic messages are a minority of the total number of e-mails NPR has received about the series, the Yiddish retrospective is just the latest Jewish-related programming on NPR that has generated controversy during the 19 months of Israeli-Palestinian violence.

Many of the e-mails received employ age-old canards, including the allegation that NPR is running the series because the Jews control the media — or because the network wants to drum up sympathy for the Jews at a time when many are criticizing Israel for its military operations actions in the West Bank.

As one e-mail writer put it, "How do you say, 'Hey these guys learned all the wrong lessons from the Nazis!' In Yiddish?"

The series, which began airing on Tuesday afternoons in mid-March and is running for 10 weeks, had been in the works for a long time and had been scheduled long before Israel intensified its military reaction to Palestinian violence.

"As soon as any one compares what happens in the Middle East with this show, my alarm goes off," said Henry Sapoznik, one of the project's co-producers. "There is no doubt that that's racism and anti-Semitism."

Ironically, Jewish groups have blasted the network's Middle East programming for being too pro-Palestinian.

Some Jewish listeners have called on NPR listeners to withhold contributions to the partially member-supported network to protest the network's coverage of the Middle East.

Others, however, have complained that NPR's coverage is too pro-Israel, Dvorkin said.

Coverage of the Middle East by the network, which has 16 million listeners on its 640 stations, has generated thousands of passionate e-mails during the past year and a half.

"People feel that the survival of Israel or the future of Palestine is at stake here, and they are incredibly emotional about it," Dvorkin said. "I've been in the news business for 30 years, and I've never seen anything like it."

The network plans to continue running the series, which uses the more than 1,000 discs collected by Sapoznik to tell the story of the heyday of Yiddish radio, from 1930-1955.

Sapoznik prefers to focus on the positive, noting that many e-mails NPR has received in reaction to the series have been favorable.

"I'm more inspired and touched and moved by the mail of people who aren't Jewish" and are praising the series, he said. "That to me is far more important and meaningful." □

## Moscow Jews show support for Israel

MOSCOW (JTA) — Thousands rallied recently here in the Russian capital in support of Israel.

The April 25 rally outside a synagogue included a letter of support sent to Israel's ambassador to Russia, with 12,000 signatures.

"I believe that all those who want to put an end to terrorism, not in words but in deeds, should be here today," said Gennady Khazanov, a popular Russian humorist and Jewish community leader. "The terror going on in the Land of Israel is an easily exported thing."

Yevgeny Satanovsky, president of the Russian Jewish Congress, said support rallies also were held April 25 in other Russian cities. □

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES****Intifada strains Israeli budget, setting stage for coalition rifts***By Jessica Steinberg*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The economic cost of the Palestinian intifada is weighing heavily on ordinary Israelis — and on the unity government of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

After heated debate, the Cabinet on Sunday voted for emergency measures that would cut \$2.7 billion from the budget and raise taxes to fund the increased defense spending necessitated by the intifada.

But Sharon faces heavy opposition from within his government coalition.

Seventeen Cabinet ministers voted for the proposal, with nine against and one abstaining. The plan now goes to the Knesset for approval, though no date for debate has been scheduled.

Proposed by Finance Minister Silvan Shalom, the plan would reduce unemployment benefits, narrow welfare recipients, cut ministry budgets and raise taxes on cigarettes and fuel. There also is talk of creating a capital gains tax and tariffs on interest-bearing accounts.

"When we get to the Knesset, we'll get rid of parts of this proposal," Shlomo Benizri, the labor and social affairs minister and a member of the Shas Party, said in an interview with Israel Radio. "It won't get passed in this present form."

Nevertheless, changes are necessary to fund the additional spending necessitated by the country's prolonged battle with the Palestinians and the concurrent economic slowdown.

With a \$7 billion budget deficit, estimated economic growth of, at most, 1 percent — and perhaps even a contraction of 1.5 percent — and 10 percent of Israelis unemployed, the state needs to do something about its troubling macroeconomic figures.

The Knesset debate will come down to the demands of two government factions — the Labor Party and the fervently Orthodox parties of Shas and United Torah Judaism, which condemn many parts of the plan.

The 17 members of Shas are threatening to vote against the plan. If they do, it could be the end of the current government, precipitating a call for new elections.

For Shas, cuts to welfare spending and unemployment benefits would hurt its constituency, which is predominantly made up of Sephardic and fervently Orthodox Israelis.

The plan would cut unemployment benefits for anyone aged 18 to 21, and for those who have worked for less than a year in the 18 months before they registered with the country's employment service. Moreover, unemployed residents enrolled in Labor and Social Affairs Ministry retraining programs would only receive 70 percent of their unemployment benefits.

The Finance Ministry also is proposing a cut in child allowances, known as transfer payments, which are based on the number of children in a family. Under the plan, if at least one parent has not completed military service in the Israel Defense Force, the allowance for the third child will fall to around \$31 per month from the current level of some \$63 per month.

The child allowance cut was condemned by fervently Orthodox parties and the Israeli Arab community, who traditionally have larger families and do not enlist for military duty. Other allowances paid by the National Insurance Institute would be cut by 4 percent, with exceptions for disability allowance and pensioners with no

other income. Some skeptics say the Orthodox parties are posturing for leverage before the Knesset debate, hoping to use the situation for the benefit of their voters.

"It's just a matter of price," scoffed Yosef "Tommy" Lapid, head of the secular Shinui Party. "This is what Shas does to make money off the government. God is the Shas treasurer."

Labor also has signaled its resistance to the economic plan, but the left-leaning party is expected to toe the line, as it has throughout 14 months in Sharon's coalition government.

Labor Party leader Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, who is also the defense minister, has said Labor — which has seven ministers in the 27-member Cabinet — would vote against the plan unless the Finance Ministry drops the proposal to raise the value-added tax by one percent and freeze public sector wages for a year and a half.

Already last week, diesel fuel prices rose by 10 percent, while cigarette prices were raised a shekel per pack, or about 20 cents.

Wage cuts would include a 5 percent decrease for elected officials and a wage freeze for public sector workers, many of whom already earn more than the average Israeli salary. There also would be a 4 percent cut in government spending, but not within the defense and education ministries.

Critics said the government plan lacks an overarching vision.

"It's a pile of cuts and slashes, without a world view," said Science, Culture and Sports Minister Matan Vilnai, a Labor member whose already tight budget would be cut further.

Yet the current economic situation isn't solely due to the global slowdown and security situation, say economists, who also blame the country's long-term economic policy.

"There's no magic to create growth if the budget structure isn't changed," said Rimon Ben Shaul, chair of the economic committee of the Israeli Manufacturers Association. "We need a major change in the way we look at our economy."

The association — which represents Israel's major industries — called upon the government to cancel tax benefits for settlers and in certain development towns. On Sunday, Shalom agreed to cut 50 percent of the tax benefits for some 500 towns and villages, including all the settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The plan has elements that are headed in the right direction, but it doesn't go far enough, according to Ben-Zion Zilberfarb, a Bar-Ilan University economist and former director general of the Finance Ministry.

The government needs to cut certain populist legislation, but it also needs further budget cuts across the board, he said.

"There need to be more cuts to the budget and fewer new taxes," Zilberfarb said. "Leaving that would be a mistake."

Nevertheless, a long-delayed proposal to tax capital gains and interest-bearing accounts may finally go into effect. While a government-appointed committee won't submit any proposals until mid-May, experts predict taxes of 15 percent to 25 percent on foreign stocks and bonds.

There also could be a 25 percent tax on savings plans. The tax would be calculated on a sliding scale, based on the income of each taxpayer. But Amir Peretz, chairman of the Histadrut Labor Union and a Knesset member, said the government should rethink the cuts so that they fall less on the middle class.

"Otherwise, the public gets only beatings from the stick, and never gets to taste the carrot," Peretz said.

In the end, some kind of program will pass, Zilberfarb said.

"But instead of strengthening good elements and reducing bad elements," he added, "the opposite will happen, and that's my one worry right now." □