



# Daily News Bulletin

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## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Mideast forum planned

Secretary of State Colin Powell announced plans for a Middle East peace conference early this summer.

Details of where and when the conference would be held, and who would be invited, remain to be determined, Powell said.

Meeting in Washington on Thursday with leaders from the United Nations, Russia and the European Union, Powell spoke of the need to expedite political negotiations, work on rebuilding security cooperation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority and attend to the Palestinians' humanitarian needs.

### Congress backs Israel

Both the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives passed resolutions supporting Israel. [Page 4]

### Arafat leaves headquarters

Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat emerged Thursday from his Ramallah headquarters and immediately denounced Israelis as "terrorists, Nazis and racists."

Arafat, who had been confined to his compound since Israel's Operation Protective Wall began March 29, flashed victory signs to a crowd of supporters outside the headquarters before getting into a waiting motorcade.

After Israeli troops ended their siege, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said he could not guarantee that Arafat would be allowed to return if violence flared while he was abroad.

Sharon also said he would present a new, "serious" peace plan when he meets with President Bush at the White House next week.

### One killed at Bethlehem church

A Palestinian policeman was killed during a gun battle Thursday with Israeli troops at Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity.

The fighting took place hours after fire engulfed parts of the besieged compound during another fierce firefight.

Palestinians set the fires when they feared that Israel might attack the church, CNN reported.

In another development, a senior Vatican official arrived in Israel on Thursday to try to help end the monthlong standoff at the church. Cardinal Roger Etchegaray met with Israeli President Moshe Katsav.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### Anti-Semitic violence across Europe carries harsh echoes, sets off alarms

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — Synagogues are torched. Jewish cemeteries are desecrated. Jews are roughed up on the street.

The recent wave of anti-Semitic violence in parts of Europe has sounded alarm bells in the Jewish world, prompting some commentators to compare the situation to the run-up to the Holocaust.

"Friends in Israel — Israel! — phoned to ask if we were safe," said one mother of two in Paris. "I couldn't believe it."

The upsurge of anti-Semitism has coincided with the conflict in the Middle East and sharply intensified last month, when Israel launched a large-scale military operation in the West Bank to round up terrorists.

But the manifestations of anti-Semitism differ from country to country, and there is ample evidence that other elements are involved, too, including a re-emergence of "traditional" religious and racial prejudices against Jews.

"The prejudices are the old ones, but the phenomenon is broader," said Andras Kovacs, an expert on anti-Semitism and nationalism at Budapest's Central European University.

"Being anti-Israel has become somehow 'legitimate' today," he said. This in turn "gives a new 'legitimacy' to the old anti-Semitism."

Why this is happening, what it might portend, and to what extent the trend is linked specifically to the Middle East crisis are matters of pressing concern to individual Jews, Jewish communities and Jewish policy-makers.

So, too, is the question of how to confront the volatile new situation without plunging fruitlessly into despair, panic — or paranoia.

"Anti-Semitism, it has been said, is a light sleeper. It would be foolish, and wrong, to underestimate the threat," warned an editorial in the London Jewish Chronicle. "But there is a further danger — to magnify, rather than tackle, the problem."

The problem, in fact, exists on several fronts.

The most visible has been the headline-grabbing spate of violent attacks against synagogues, Jewish institutions and individuals, primarily in France but also in other countries, including Belgium and Germany.

To date, no one has been killed. But the Simon Wiesenthal Center went so far as to issue a travel advisory for Jews heading to France and Belgium.

The European Jewish Congress counted some 360 anti-Jewish incidents in France in the first three weeks of April alone.

According to France's Interior Ministry, more than 60 percent involved anti-Jewish graffiti or verbal abuse. But there were also a dozen attempts to set synagogues on fire or damage Jewish graves.

The attacks were topped off by the shocking success of right-wing extremist Jean-Marie Le Pen in the first round of French presidential elections last week, triggering calls from Israel for French Jews to make mass aliyah to the Jewish state.

Most of the attacks were the acts of alienated young Arab immigrants hitting out at Jews as surrogates for Israel, and were not part of an orchestrated campaign.

But the anti-Semitic violence has been coupled with a subtle ideological shift.

Widespread sympathy for the Palestinians and widespread identification of Jews and Judaism with the State of Israel and its policies have opened the door to a growing acceptance of classic anti-Semitic rhetoric in both public discourse and private

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Barghouti admits to terror

The head of the Fatah movement in the West Bank admitted that he helped plan terror attacks against Israel. Marwan Barghouti made the admission while being interrogated by the Shin Bet domestic security service after he was arrested on April 15 during Israel's military operation in the West Bank, according to the Jerusalem Post.

### Egyptian columnist dishes hate

A columnist for Egypt's official daily newspaper wrote an article repeatedly cursing Jews, denying the Holocaust and calling Hitler a "modest pupil in the world of murder and bloodshed."

Fama Abdallah Mahmoud wrote in Al-Akbar that the Holocaust is an "imaginary tale," according to a translation by the Middle East Media Research Institute.

The author then lamented, addressing Hitler, "If only you had done it, brother, if only it had really happened, so that the world could sigh in relief" and no longer have the Jews' "evil and sin."

### P.A. not rebuilding Jenin

The Palestinian Authority rejected an offer from an Arab political movement in Israel to start rebuilding the Jenin refugee camp.

P.A. officials snubbed the offer from the Islamic Movement because they want international officials to see the ruins, according to the Jerusalem Post.

### Bill bans extremists from Knesset

A Knesset committee approved a bill that would empower the Central Election Committee to ban any party or individual from running for the Knesset if they express support for the armed struggle of an enemy country or terrorist organization, engage in racist incitement or deny the existence of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.

conversation. "There is a difference between what's going on in France and Belgium and what's going on in Italy," said Francesco Spagnolo Acht, director of a Jewish music study center in Milan.

"In Italy, so far, there has not been any violence. Here, anti-Israel and anti-Semitic opinions are spread by local Italians. It is ideological, but very vocal.

"The debate over Israel/Palestine has given room to a series of anti-Semitic episodes that suggest a clear connection between traditionally left-wing anti-Zionist ideas with the more rooted Catholic anti-Semitic beliefs," he said.

"Thus, even in the national and politically moderate press, the old accusation of murdering Jesus has surfaced. Such accusations and mythologies are also being adopted by the extreme-left newspapers. The mixture is a true Molotov cocktail."

Local politics make the situation even more complex: Leftist pro-Palestinian stances are countered by pro-Israel platforms adopted by the right.

Many Italian Jews are uncomfortable to find that one of Israel's most vocal public supporters is the National Alliance, a party that grew out of the fascist movement.

In part, these trends reflect complex fallout from broader global issues.

These issues include E.U. attempts to do away with borders and revamp traditional political, social and economic relations.

But they also include worries about economic globalization, the conflict between the Third World and modernity, insecurities and anti-Americanism, particularly following the Sept. 11 attacks and the war in Afghanistan.

"Many Europeans today, especially the citizens of small, unimportant states, feel bewildered and lost," Tony Judt, director of the Remarque Institute at New York University, wrote in The New York Times. "Their countries and their institutions have lost their place in a globalizing world economy — and above all in an institutionally homogenized European Union."

In this context, Kovacs said, it has been easy for some to focus on the age-old symbol of borderless, international identity — the Jew.

"There are a lot of concrete political problems now, and all of them can be brought into connection with the Jews and Israel in a way," Kovacs said.

"For those who are anti-Semitic, this is a perfect way to legitimize this attitude," he said. "One symbol unites them — the Jew, the cosmopolitan Jew against nation state, the cosmopolitan Jew bound to America."

Another important factor, he said, is the difficulty in understanding the loyalty felt by Jewish citizens of European countries to another state, Israel.

Jewish leaders, meanwhile, are gearing up for action.

"On many occasions when there is a deterioration in the social fabric, it starts with the Jews, especially here on this continent where there has been a history of anti-Semitism," Avi Beker, secretary-general of the World Jewish Congress, said last week in Brussels.

Beker spoke during a strategy session of international Jewish leaders, who agreed to set up a Jewish information center to monitor anti-Semitism in Europe and serve as a political voice and lobby for European Jewry.

The leaders also called for holding a European-wide Jewish rally in Brussels on May 29. □

## Russian synagogues defaced

MOSCOW (JTA) — A wave of synagogue vandalism swept across Russia.

Three synagogues and a Jewish center were vandalized in April, according to the Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union.

On April 6, somebody scratched a Star of David and a swastika on the door of a synagogue in Orenburg, but police refused to record the incident as a crime.

A few days later, vandals painted the words "Throw Israel into the sea," along with a swastika, on the walls of the local Jewish welfare center.

On April 12, the words "Jews go home!" were written on the walls of the JCC in the city of Yoshkar-Ola

On April 14, the windows of the Rostov synagogue were broken. And on April 22, the words "Death to the Jews" and a swastika were scrawled on the walls of the synagogue. □



## Daily News Bulletin

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## JEWISH WORLD

### Bush firm on Palestinian state

President Bush said a Palestinian state "cannot be based on a foundation of terror or corruption." Speaking with Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar on Thursday, Bush said a Palestinian state must come "by negotiating an end to occupation" and that it should be based on democratic principles. The White House is calling on Palestinian Authority Yasser Arafat to prove he is capable of leading the Palestinian people by ending violence.

### Florida JCC scammed?

Top employees at a Florida Jewish community center may have bilked the institution of hundreds of thousands of dollars.

According to the Palm Beach Post, the State Attorney's Office is investigating a suspected credit card scam at the Jeanne Levy Jewish Community Center in West Palm Beach, allegedly involving the top executive and several others. The alleged embezzlement was first discovered by the local Jewish federation, which was suspicious after the JCC overspent its \$7 million budget.

### Rabbi may face sex charges

An Oklahoma City rabbi may face charges that include groping two girls and two young women at a Jewish day school. Rabbi Richard Marcovitz was expected to be in court Friday for a hearing to determine whether a trial is warranted on 11 criminal sex charges. He maintains that he is innocent.

A criminal investigation began in February, when police were told that Marcovitz had touched a child in an inappropriate way at the Oklahoma City Jewish Community Day School.

### Armey: Palestinians can move

The Palestinians should build their homeland in a neighboring Arab country, according to the majority leader of the U.S. House of Representatives. In an interview Wednesday night on MSNBC-TV's "Hardball" show, Rep. Dick Armey (R-Texas) said Arab states have large tracts of unsettled land that could be suitable for the Palestinians. There is no reason for Israel to give the Palestinians land in exchange for peace, he added.

### Swiss fund closes doors

A Swiss fund set up to help needy Holocaust survivors wrapped up its work. Created five years ago, the fund paid out some \$180 million to nearly 310,000 people around the world, according to officials.

The fund was established after Swiss banks were accused of having close financial ties to the Nazis and of hoarding the contents of long-dormant bank accounts opened by Holocaust victims.

## Czech Jewish leader has vision of Prague as a center for scholars

By Magnus Bennett

PRAGUE (JTA) – The chairman of Prague's Jewish community has outlined plans to re-establish the city as a world center of Jewish academic excellence.

Tomas Jelinek, one of the Czech Republic's most influential Jewish figures, is to lobby support for his idea during a visit to the United States next week.

Jelinek told JTA he had made contact with a senior rabbi in Israel with a view to establishing a center of learning in Prague.

The city in past centuries has played host to a number of distinguished scholars and teachers, such as Rabbi Loew ben Bezalel and Chief Rabbi Ezekiel Landau.

"It is still in the early stages of planning, but I believe that Prague is a place where important figures in Judaism could spend a few months studying the rich archives on Judaica in Bohemia and Moravia and giving lectures on current Jewish issues," Jelinek said. "I would like to see Prague becoming a visible place on the Jewish map."

His plan envisions Prague's Jewish community providing facilities with the backing of Czech and international Jewish organizations, which would provide stipends for scholars to study in Prague.

Jelinek said he believes the idea would benefit not only scholars interested in regional Jewish issues, both past and present, but the local Jewish population as well.

"It would be good for the Prague Jewish community because we would attract scholars and rabbis, while the Jewish world outside would benefit by being able to rediscover Jewish life here," he said.

Some scholars, he said, would find Prague an attractive place to "finish their thoughts" in their respective fields.

"Prague was a place where leading Jewish authorities such as Rabbi Loew and Rabbi Landau used to stay," he continued. "I follow the principle that if you don't have thinkers here, bring them in from abroad. In some way it helps you to inspire the local community."

The American Jewish Committee has invited Jelinek to the United States. He will visit Washington and New York during his stay.

He said he would try to win financial and moral support for his plan.

"I am looking to establish the project as soon as possible, but I need to win support for this idea from authorities in Judaism," he said. "It cannot start just as a good idea from one chairman of the Prague Jewish community. It has to be something that involves a rabbi in Israel and respected figures from the U.S.A., Britain or from France."

Jelinek also intends to press for financial support for social programs caring for Prague's 800 Holocaust survivors.

"I would like to ask those responsible for humanitarian funds in international Jewish institutions for money for social projects, so we can ensure the future funding of programs for survivors," he said.

Jelinek said the Prague Jewish community is not wealthy enough to provide full social services for all its survivors.

"We have 800 survivors, but at the moment we can only support about one-eighth of them through homes for the elderly and home help services," he argued.

Jelinek said Czech Holocaust survivors were entitled to be looked after properly because many had not received full compensation in past claims against Germany.

"I believe in the world today there are only a few thousand survivors, but we cannot be excluded from money available in humanitarian funds," he said.

"People in Eastern Europe received less compensation than people in the West; that is just a fact."

During his trip, Jelinek hopes to develop a "partnership" with a range of Jewish communal organizations in the United States.

"I believe that Jews in America can very much benefit from re-establishing contacts with Eastern European communities because many of them came from Eastern Europe and are looking for their own heritage," he said. "And Czech Jews could learn from the vitality of Jewish life in the U.S.A." □

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES****White House to press Sharon;  
warm welcome seen in Congress**

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — When Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon arrives in Washington next week, he'll get mixed advice about Israeli policy.

The White House believes an opening is at hand to end violence and move toward peace, and is expected to pressure Israel to make sacrifices.

On Thursday, Secretary of State Colin Powell announced that a Middle East peace conference would be held early this summer. Details of where, when and with whom remain to be determined.

There was no immediate reaction from Israel, though Sharon himself had recommended such a conference several weeks ago.

When he visits Congress, Sharon likely will get a hero's welcome. In anticipation of his visit, both branches of Congress passed resolutions Thursday expressing solidarity with Israel and holding the Palestinians responsible for ongoing violence.

The House bill, sponsored by House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-Texas) and Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), called on the United States to provide additional aid to Israel, and "condemns the ongoing support of terror" by Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat and other Palestinian leaders. It passed the House by a vote of 352-21.

"The United States cannot be a broker between one party that wants peace and another party that wants terrorism," DeLay said. "Every man and woman in Israel should know that they do not stand alone, because America stands with them."

The Senate passed a more mild bill, 94-2.

"A society should and must protect itself against violent terrorism," said Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), who sponsored the bill with Sen. Gordon Smith (R-Ore.). "Israel now has been under siege from a systematic and deliberate campaign of suicide and homicide terrorists."

Debate in both houses focused on equating the U.S. war on terrorism with Israel's military incursions in the West Bank. That mirrors the sentiment of the American Jewish community, which has been increasingly active in recent weeks trying to counterbalance Arab and European support for the Palestinians.

Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.) said it was important for Congress to express its views before the Israeli prime minister's meeting at the White House on Tuesday, when Bush is expected to press Sharon to seize a possible opening for peace that has emerged through diplomacy with Arab leaders.

Since Israel invaded the West Bank in late March, the White House has sent conflicting messages about whether it believes Israel should withdraw from the West Bank and Gaza immediately or should be allowed to complete its anti-terror mission.

A day after Arafat was released from his headquarters, White House officials said Thursday they saw a window of opportunity opening, and urged both parties to take actions towards peace.

"I'm optimistic we're making good progress," Bush said Thursday after speaking with European leaders.

Yet he had stern messages for both sides.

"A Palestinian state must be achieved by negotiating an end to occupation, but such a state cannot be based on a foundation of terror or corruption," Bush said.

White House officials say next week will be a "moment of truth" for Arafat. "He's been claiming he can't do anything while being held up" in his compound, an official said. "He's no longer held up."

Bush also called on Israel to end its "occupation" of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Bush "believes that beyond Israel looking at its current security needs, Israel, too, needs to look at a vision of peace tomorrow so that they can live side by side," White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said.

The issue of Israeli settlements also needs to be discussed "as part of the political dialogue," he said.

Israeli officials acknowledge that Sharon will be pressured next week to do more to develop a cease-fire, especially if Arafat has taken steps to thwart violence by the time Sharon arrives.

If Arafat has done little, however, the officials believe Israel and the United States will be debating where the two allies can go from this point.

Sharon said Wednesday that he would bring new plans for peace and security to the United States that would include a physical separation between Israel and the Palestinian territories.

An Israeli official in Washington said Sharon's goal will be to "pre-empt" the American agenda. White House officials dismissed the idea that Israel would be victimized by increasing coordination between the Bush administration and Arab states.

Much has been made of Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Abdullah's meeting with Bush last week, and the media accounts of an agreement between the two parties to have the United States pressure Israel while the Arab states work with Arafat.

A White House official said Sharon is being invited to gauge his viewpoints. Jordan's King Abdullah is expected at the White House the following day.

In Congress, subtle differences emerged between the House and Senate versions of the pro-Israel bills.

The House bill urged Arab states to work against terrorism and seeks aid from the international community in helping to "alleviate the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people."

The bill "clearly distinguishes between the side that made an historically generous offer of peace, and the side that spat on that offer and started a bloodbath instead," Lantos said. "To those who seek a neutral stance in Israel's struggle against terrorism, this resolution is not for you."

But others commented that the bill also should note Palestinian victims of Israeli "terrorism."

"The last thing we should do is give Mr. Sharon a green light to unleash his total war on the Palestinian people," Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R-Calif.) said.

The House bill's strong language led to nearly a week of delay, as the White House pressured the sponsors to postpone the legislation, claiming it would hurt U.S. efforts to negotiate with the Palestinian Authority.

But DeLay moved the bill to a vote Thursday after the Democratic Senate leadership announced it was bringing its own version to the floor despite White House objections.

The Senate bill was milder than the House's. Unlike the House bill, the Senate version does not mention Arafat by name or link him to Palestinian violence. Several senators rose to say they wished the Senate bill was as strong as the House resolution. □

(JTA correspondent Amy Sara Clark in New York contributed to this report.)