



# Daily News Bulletin

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## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Construction of fence begins

Israel officially launched construction of a West Bank fence.

Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer toured the construction site Sunday for the inauguration of the \$220 million project aimed at preventing terrorists from entering Israel. [Page 3]

### 2 Israeli soldiers killed in Gaza

Two Israelis soldiers were killed Saturday in a clash with Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

Four other Israeli soldiers were wounded and one Hamas gunman was killed in the clash. [Page 3]

### AIPAC: No 'terror state' now

A leading pro-Israel group urged President Bush not to rush to call for the creation of a Palestinian state.

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee was reacting to news reports that Bush will unveil plans this week for a Palestinian state.

The group urged the president to reject the advice of those "pressing him to endorse a 'timeline' or an 'interim state' that would lead to the creation of a Palestinian state before the Palestinian leadership rejects terrorism."

AIPAC spokeswoman Rebecca Needler said the pro-Israel lobby is "not opposed to a Palestinian state," but believes one created now under Yasser Arafat would become a "state sponsor of terror."

### Senate leader wants Arafat out

Yasser Arafat must be replaced to increase the chance of securing peace in the Middle East, the majority leader of the U.S. Senate said.

Sen. Tom Daschle (D-S.D.) said on "Fox News Sunday" that while he believes that Arafat's departure is necessary, it must happen from within the Palestinian movement.

"I don't think we can force it ourselves," Daschle said. "But I do think that it's necessary in order to reach some peaceful arrangement." He added that some Arab allies of the United States, although publicly supportive of Arafat, also worry about the policies of the Palestinian leadership.

"They'd like to see more constructive leadership," Daschle said. "Our admonition to them is 'Help us get it.'"

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### Mussolini nostalgia part of trend toward rehabilitation, revisionism

By Ruth E. Gruber

PREDAPPIO, Italy (JTA) — This sleepy little town in the wooded hills of northeast Italy has been called "a pilgrimage place for creeps."

It is here that Italy's wartime fascist dictator, Benito Mussolini, was born and buried.

Over the past few years, Predappio has become the focus of a right-wing nostalgia cult and a tourist industry centered on Mussolini, who came to power in 1922 and was executed by anti-fascist partisans in 1945.

Tens of thousands of nostalgic old fascists, young skinheads and other Mussolini followers converge on Predappio and parade through the streets on the anniversaries of Mussolini's birth and death — and on the anniversary of his 1922 fascist march on Rome.

The humble house where he was born is now a museum.

At his tomb in a marble crypt in the local cemetery, solemn-faced young honor guards in long black cloaks stand vigil. A guest book has page after page of signatures — more than 500 in the first week of June alone.

As many as 100,000 or more visitors — including foreign tourists, curious Italians and die-hard fascist believers — came to Predappio in 2000.

"On the anniversaries and so forth, buses are lined up from one end of town to the other," says a local woman who did not give her name. "On days like that, a lot of townspeople close themselves inside their houses or even leave town. They can't stand it."

Catering to the crowds, glass-fronted souvenir shops scattered along Predappio's one main street fly huge Italian flags and cash in with garish displays of memorabilia featuring Mussolini's bald pate and jutting jaw, as well as other fascist imagery.

There are Mussolini T-shirts, baseball caps, pens, calendars, portrait busts, playing cards, clocks, ash trays, key chains and a host of other keepsakes, along with right-wing books, pamphlets and posters.

"Our customers are fascists," says a saleswoman at one of the shops, which sells swastika necklaces, busts of Hitler and copies of "Mein Kampf" in addition to the Mussolini mementos.

In a sense, Predappio owes its existence to Mussolini.

Its present-day center was built in the 1920s like a shrine around the farmhouse in which Mussolini was born, and some of its most prominent buildings are examples of neo-Roman-style fascist architecture.

For most of the postwar period, however, Predappio, like much of the rest of Italy, tried to forget its fascist past.

Most of the town's 6,000 people consider themselves leftists and have consistently voted for a left-wing mayor.

Ivo Marcelli, a former Communist who has served as mayor since 1990, sees the pilgrimages, the honor guards and the schlocky souvenirs as the kitschy face of a potentially dangerous trend: a creeping nostalgia for the fascist past that flirts with rehabilitation.

"There is an attempt at revisionism on the part of some historians, an attempt at rewriting the history of the phenomenon of fascism and of the consequences of fascism in Italy, such as the war, repression and the anti-Semitic racist laws," he told JTA. "It worries me." In addition to the kitsch, there have been recent cases up and down Italy

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Palestinian terror attack foiled

Israeli soldiers foiled a terrorist attack in the northern Gaza Strip. The soldiers identified a suspicious car near the settlement of Dugit and opened fire, causing the explosives inside to detonate. The vehicle contained more than 330 pounds of explosives as well as mortar shells. It was the third large car bomb found in recent days by Israeli forces in northern Gaza.

In another development, Israeli troops arrested a Palestinian suspected of killing four people in a terrorist attack on a settlement near Hebron.

The Palestinian is suspected of taking part in an infiltration of the settlement of Dura in late April, in which four people, including a 5-year-old girl, were killed and seven others wounded.

### Palestinian VIPs implicated

A terrorist involved in a suicide bombing said Palestinian VIPs played a role in the attack.

Tanzim member Amin Amar Ziad, who confessed to involvement in a May suicide bombing in Tel Aviv, said Palestinian officials with VIP status smuggled the weapons into Israel, the Jerusalem Post reported.

### Arabs boycotting Starbucks

Five Arab states are campaigning to boycott goods from U.S. companies that are viewed as supportive of Israel.

Palestinian and Muslim groups at Egyptian universities are targeting Starbucks because of the "pro-Israeli sentiments" of its chief executive, according to The Independent, a British newspaper.

### Israel to fight mad cow disease

The Israeli Cabinet approved more than \$3 million to fight an outbreak of mad cow disease.

The government took the move Sunday after an outbreak of the disease was found earlier this month at a farm in the Golan Heights.



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of towns naming or seeking to name streets and squares after leading fascist figures. Newspapers and bookstores are full of articles and books on the issue.

Some observers say the trend reflects an attempt to re-evaluate the bedrock ideals of Italy's postwar history.

"This present rehabilitation of the man who allied himself politically and militarily with the Nazis, who persecuted Italian Jews without prompting from Hitler, who dragged Italy into a disastrous war, is not surprising," James Walston, a historian at the American University in Rome, wrote last year in the Italy Daily newspaper. "It is a reflection of serious changes in Italian society and politics."

The nostalgia and fascination with the fascist era is not brand new, nor is the effort to re-examine and reinterpret Italy's history.

In large part, they are products of the fall of communism more than a decade ago, which touched off a process of historical re-examination across Europe.

In Italy, these shifts helped trigger the so-called "Clean Hands" political corruption investigations. Launched in 1992, the investigations shattered old political parties, swept away many veteran politicians and opened the door to a reassessment of the past.

Postwar Italian democracy was built on a foundation of anti-fascism that exalted the wartime Resistance, while minimizing the extent to which many Italians had supported and fought for Mussolini's regime.

For decades, nostalgic fascist sympathizers, grouped around a small neo-fascist party, the Italian Social Movement, were relegated to the far fringes of mainstream politics.

Through the 1990s, as firsthand memory of the fascist period faded, new debates about the "true" nature of Italian fascism and its legacy arose.

At the same time, some Italians clearly chose "different" ways of remembering the fascist past.

One of these equates both fascists and partisans as patriots, each side fighting for its own legitimate vision of Italy.

Another finds its voice in more dramatic attempts to rehabilitate Mussolini and his regime.

What has reinforced such efforts recently and brought them to the fore of public discussion is the country's sharp political shift to the right, following the victory last year of Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's center-right "Freedom House" coalition.

Berlusconi's coalition partners include the National Alliance, which has its roots in neo-fascism, and the Northern League, which once aimed at separating northern Italy from the rest of the country and is known for its overt anti-immigrant policies.

Berlusconi's deputy prime minister is National Alliance leader Gianfranco Fini, who in 1994 forged his party out of the Italian Social Movement.

Since then, Fini has sought to shed the jackboot image and transform the National Alliance into a mainstream rightist force.

Among other things, he has become one of Italy's strongest supporters of Israel.

Marcelli, the mayor of Predappio, says the pilgrimages and other Mussolini nostalgia at Predappio have increased sharply since the Berlusconi government took power.

"The people who come seem to exhibit a manner that is more overbearing, and this causes me concern," he says. "They seem to feel somehow legitimized by a center-right government."

Marcelli says it is important for Italians to understand fascism and to learn about the history of the fascist period.

To this end, he would like to capitalize on Predappio's status as a magnet to create a think tank or study center in town, which would host conferences and house archives and other materials to foster serious study of fascism.

Ideally, he says, he would like to locate the center in the now-empty building that once housed the local headquarters of the fascist party.

He also wants to explore the possibility of linking Predappio with other European towns that have given birth to 20th-century dictators.

"This would be an opportunity to establish museums, documentation and study centers and exhibits in these towns, to educate people so that such things will never happen again," he says. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Zionist Congress on the Web

The World Zionist Congress will be broadcast over the Web. Major speeches delivered at this week's 34th congress in Jerusalem will be available at [www.jewish-world.org.il/congress](http://www.jewish-world.org.il/congress). Israeli President Moshe Katsav and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon are scheduled to address the congress Tuesday, and Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer is scheduled to speak Wednesday.

Some 1,200 delegates from Israel and the Diaspora are expected to attend the congress, which is the highest legislative body of the World Zionist Organization. A multimedia slide show will be posted on the Web site featuring highlights of each day's events. The site will also offer chats and forums on the resolutions taken up at the congress, which convenes every four years in Jerusalem.

### Christian brainwashing alleged

A Russian Jewish group is accusing Christian missionaries of disguising themselves as Jews in order to recruit Jews for their summer camps in Finland.

The Magen League, an anti-missionary group, charges that the children are then brainwashed into converting to Christianity. The league claims that 4,000 Jewish children are psychologically pressured in these camps each year to convert.

### 'Call Congress' day to back Israel

A coalition of U.S. Jewish women's groups is asking women to call members of the U.S. Congress to support Israel.

The coalition is setting aside June 26 as a national call-in day for women to thank lawmakers for their support of Israel and express concern over rising acts of anti-Semitism worldwide.

### Canadian Christians, Jews ally

Jewish and Christian groups in Canada are working jointly to support Israel. B'nai Brith Canada and Christians for Israel are planning 18 joint missions in the next two years to bring people to Israel as a show of solidarity with the Jewish state.

The groups completed a joint humanitarian mission to visit victims of terrorism last week.

### Crackdown on Russian neo-Nazis

Regional officials in Russia are asking a court to disband a local branch of a neo-Nazi group.

The officials in western Siberia took the action against Russian National Unity after receiving a directive from the chief Russian prosecutor calling for a crackdown on extremist groups, according to the Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union. Like other organizations in Russia, the group must register with authorities in order to operate.

## Work begins on West Bank fence amid charges it sets political border

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — As bulldozers began scooping out earth to build a security fence between Israel and the West Bank, Israeli Cabinet ministers sparred this week over the political implications of the barrier.

Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer reiterated at Sunday's weekly Cabinet meeting that the fence is aimed at preventing Palestinian terrorists from entering Israel.

But right-wing ministers were sharply critical of the fence, saying it would leave Jewish settlements on the wrong side of the barrier and would establish a de facto border.

"This is not a security fence, but an outline for a withdrawal through which a terrorist state will be established," said Cabinet minister Efraim Eitam, a member of the National Religious Party.

If Israel wants to build a fence, it should build fences around Palestinian towns and cities, Eitam added.

Science Minister Matan Vilnai, a member of the Labor Party, dismissed the claims. "The fence is not a border, but an obstacle that will prevent terrorists from slipping into Israel," Vilnai said.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said the Security Cabinet would meet in the coming days to hold further discussions about the fence.

After bulldozers worked for several days clearing land at a site near the northern West Bank, Israel officially launched construction of the fence on Sunday.

Ben-Eliezer toured the construction site for the inauguration of the \$220 million project.

"The aim is to separate only from a security point of view. Security separation, not political separation," Ben-Eliezer told reporters.

The first section of fence will run about 75 miles, from northeast of Tel Aviv to southeast of Haifa. A nearly 10-mile-long barrier in the Jerusalem area has also been approved by the government.

Ditches, patrol paths and electronic surveillance devices are also planned.

According to the director general of Israel's Defense Ministry, Amos Yaron, the fence is not following the border that existed before the 1967 Six-Day War. Instead, he said, the fence would be part of a 3- to 9-mile-wide "seam" or buffer straddling the border.

During Sunday's Cabinet meeting, Sharon also described the fence as part of the government's overall plan to establish buffer zones.

Discussing his meeting at the White House last week with President Bush, Sharon also said at the Cabinet session that conditions are not ripe for the creation of a provisional Palestinian state.

Sharon's remarks followed media reports that he would support Bush's call for a provisional Palestinian state, with full statehood dependent on the implementation of large-scale democratic reforms in the Palestinian Authority.

Bush is expected to make a major statement in the coming days on how to get the Israelis and Palestinians back to the negotiating table.

The Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported Sunday that while Sharon had informed Bush he could not publicly support the idea of an interim state at this time because of the wave of terrorist attacks, he was open to the idea.

According to the report, Sharon's outline for resumption of political talks includes implementation of security reforms in the Palestinian Authority within 30 days, and the creation of an interim state for a year, after which elections would be held.

However, Sharon made backing for any of the steps conditional on a complete halt to Palestinian terrorist attacks.

Over the weekend, two Israeli soldiers were killed in a clash with Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. The soldiers were identified as Staff Sgt. Hezki Guttman, 22, of Beit El and Sgt. Alexei Gladkov, 20, of Beersheba.

Four other Israeli soldiers were wounded and one Hamas gunman was killed in Saturday's clash.

## Organization set up by war widow helps Israeli families deal with loss

By Max Heuer

NEW YORK (JTA) — Everything changed for Pnina Cohen during the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

Like thousands of other Israeli soldiers since 1948, Cohen's husband was killed while serving in the Israeli army.

At the tender age of 25, Pnina was forced to deal with her own grief while supporting her young family emotionally and financially.

"When my husband was killed, my son was only 4 months old," she says. "I had to work as well. The government couldn't cover all our needs."

Cohen decided to do something about it: She founded the Israel Defense Forces Widows and Orphans Organization.

Cohen, 54, spoke to JTA recently with the occasional help of a translator. She understands, she says, the daunting task facing Israelis widowed or orphaned in the ongoing Palestinian intifada.

Cohen has dedicated her life to helping Israeli families affected by wars and terror attacks, sometimes working 12-hour days talking with widows, "listening to their problems and trying to find some solution."

Cohen was on a two-week tour of the United States with the Israel Humanitarian Fund, a U.S.-based group that funds social service projects in Israel.

Since 1995, the IHF has given between \$5,000 and \$50,000 in annual aid to Cohen's group. Other funding comes from private donations in Israel.

With stops in New York City, Florida, and Los Angeles, Cohen planned to tell her story and promote her organization alongside Michal Dayan, a 21-year-old whose father was killed in Lebanon in 1985.

The trip to the United States comes at a "difficult time" in Israel because of the Palestinian violence, Cohen says.

"Last year, 45 wives joined our organization, and many small children," she says. "We need a lot of money to support them with education and emotional support and whatever else they may need."

In 1973, the Israeli government provided Cohen and her family with some 40 percent of what her husband had earned. Though she was working full time as a nurse, she took on the role of advocate immediately.

During a brief meeting in 1973 with then-Prime Minister Golda Meir, Cohen pressed for increased monetary aid to widows and orphans. In 1978, she began to work toward creating the group.

After lobbying the Israeli Knesset repeatedly, Cohen founded her organization in 1991.

She runs the organization herself, with help from three secretaries.

Today, the group is contacted directly by the government after a soldier is killed in the line of duty, and helps provide for the family's needs.

"It is a different time because of the organization," Cohen says. "Now we can support our family, and support the needs the government cannot support."

The Israeli government provides pensions for widows under the Fallen Soldiers Families Law, as well as employment assistance

and national health insurance. Cohen's group has helped win new government pension reform, housing grants and wedding expenses for orphans.

The group also helps widows and orphans celebrate Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, and provides overseas summer camp opportunities, high school tutoring and university scholarships for children who have lost a parent in the service of the state.

The organization also sponsors trips for widows around Israel and occasionally to Europe, as well as holiday events and gatherings. The organization has helped the widows cope with loneliness by creating its own community, Cohen says.

Today the organization provides aid to 3,500 widows and 4,700 orphans. The group defines an orphan as a child who has lost one parent.

Among the children the group helped is Dayan.

In 1992, when Dayan was 12, the group paid for her to travel to Canada for orthopedic surgery for a rare medical problem.

Cohen's organization also funded a similar trip six years later, flying Dayan back to Canada for another six-month procedure.

Now a college student in Israel, Dayan receives a scholarship from Cohen's group.

"When you're little, I don't think you understand" the value of the organization "until you need the help," Dayan, now 21, told JTA. "Pnina was always there for us." □

## Canadian Jews win court case over rights to menorah imagery

By Bill Gladstone

TORONTO (JTA) — Thirty months after Canada's trademark registrar legally protected a stylized menorah used by a Christian group that proselytizes Jews, a federal court judge has reversed the decision.

Officials of the Canadian Jewish Congress, which had sought a judicial review of the matter after the registrar gave the Chosen People Ministries exclusive right to a menorah design in November 1999, expressed satisfaction with the recent ruling.

The congress said the ministries' claim to its menorah design as an "official mark" was "scandalous, offensive to Canadians and deceptive."

"In our view, the menorah is a universal Jewish symbol, and it is one that should not be claimed by any organization in particular, and certainly not an organization created for the express purpose of converting Jews to Christianity," said Manuel Prutschi, national director of community relations for the congress.

"Official mark" status grants extraordinary protections even broader than those of a trademark. It usually is given to authorities who fulfill a public duty and are under some measure of government control.

The ruling "ensures that no single organization can claim the menorah as its exclusive property and that the menorah's use most certainly cannot be denied to synagogues, Jewish organizations and Jewish persons," said Jonathan Kroft, national community relations vice chair at the congress.

Chosen People Ministries is a nonprofit, messianic organization based in New York that specifically targets Jews for conversion.

It originally was known as the American Board of Missions to the Jews. □