



# Daily News Bulletin

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85th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Suicide bomb in northern Israel

An Israeli policeman was killed and at least two people injured when a suicide bomber struck near a bus stop Wednesday in northern Israel.

The blast went off during afternoon rush hour on a highway outside the Israeli Arab town of Umm el-Fahm, which is several miles from Afula.

It was the first suicide attack since Aug. 4, when a bomber blew himself up on a bus traveling from Haifa to Safed, killing himself and nine Israelis.

### Terror claims two Israelis

One Israeli was killed and another wounded when Palestinian gunmen ambushed their car Wednesday in the West Bank.

The gunmen opened fire near the settlement of Mevo Dotan, causing the car to overturn. The Al-Aksa Brigade, which is the military wing of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, claimed responsibility.

In another incident, the scorched body of an Israeli apparently slain by terrorists was found Wednesday in eastern Jerusalem. The body of David Buhbut, a 67-year-old resident of Ma'aleh Adumim, was found near the village of Azariya. Family members identified the charred victim by his clothing and other personal belongings.

### Papon freed from prison

France was accused of turning its back on Holocaust victims after Nazi-era war criminal Maurice Papon was released from a French prison.

The 92-year-old Nazi collaborator was freed Wednesday after an appeals court ruled he was too old and sick to serve out his 10-year sentence.

The decision to free Papon "seemed impossible," said Michel Slitinsky, who was 17 in 1942, when he narrowly escaped a Papon-ordered roundup of Jews from Bordeaux. [Page 3]

### Palestinian killed near Jenin

Israeli soldiers in the northern West Bank shot and killed a Palestinian after his car tried to run over the soldiers Tuesday night.

A second Palestinian in the car was wounded, and an assault rifle was found inside the vehicle. Elsewhere in the West Bank, Israeli soldiers arrested seven Palestinians during raids Tuesday night.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Small steps forward as Israel engages in corridor diplomacy

By Rachel Pomerance

NEW YORK (JTA) — For diplomatic stargazers, it's the ultimate constellation.

Every year, the first two weeks of the United Nations' three-month General Assembly draws high-ranking diplomats of the 190 member-states for the general debate, where members make special addresses.

But the action is on the sidelines: Heads of state huddle in so-called corridor conversation and bilateral meetings.

For Israel, it's an opportunity to make its case and gauge current world opinion from allies and foes alike.

And it's the premier time for the organized Jewish community to lobby the international community on Israel's behalf.

One week into diplomatic meetings with a barrage of countries, Jewish groups report a newfound understanding of Israel's security needs, widespread criticism of Yasser Arafat and his policies, and little steps toward breaking the diplomatic deadlock on the Israeli-Palestinian front.

Converging around the anniversary of the Sept. 11 terror attacks, the United Nations seems to realize this is a time of tenuousness.

The effect of last year's attacks has led to a concerted effort against all forms of terror as a universal danger.

In fact, the Security Council reaffirmed the U.N. resolution passed in the wake of the Sept. 11 attack on its anniversary, stating the U.N. obligation to fight terror.

Now, there is a sense among observers that with the threat of war against Iraq ahead and a battery of attacks still buffeting the Middle East, the United Nations no longer has the luxury for polemics.

"Last year, more countries seemed focused on sort of scoring debating points by chastising Israel for its alleged behavior, its alleged intransigence," said David Harris, executive director of the American Jewish Committee.

Now "there seems to be a recognition that this is less a time for polemics and more a time for policy innovations, that we're at a crucial time."

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres conveyed the same message at his diplomatic meetings this week and before the U.N. General Assembly on Wednesday.

Indicating that a breakthrough with the Palestinians was near, Peres told the Russian, Chinese and Spanish foreign ministers on Sunday, "We must be very cautious not to miss this opportunity."

Still, Peres criticized Tuesday a Palestinian proposal for a cease-fire in two phases.

Peres said the proposal is not worthy of consideration because in the first phase, the killing of noncivilians would be permitted. Palestinians refer to civilians as those living in Israel, but they regard Israeli soldiers and settlers as combatants.

The Palestinian offer specified no timelines for the cease-fire and made no demands on Israel, according to an Israeli official.

In meeting with his counterparts this week, Peres said Israelis realize the necessity of making concessions for peace — the question comes down to the integrity of the Palestinians.

To that end, Peres said Palestinians must appoint a prime minister, accelerate reform of its government and security system and crack down on corruption.

In his speech to the General Assembly, Peres also drew parallels between Israel and

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Syria terror link debated in D.C.

U.S. lawmakers debated whether sanctions would halt Syrian support of terrorism. While proponents and opponents of the Syria Accountability Act agreed about the threat Syria poses to Middle East stability, speakers addressing the House International Relations Committee's Middle East panel on Wednesday were sharply divided over whether sanctions would do anything to change the policies of Syrian President Bashar Assad. Reps. Richard Armev (R-Texas) and Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.), the legislation's sponsors, spoke of the need to move beyond diplomatic pressure that they considered unsuccessful. Rep. Darrell Issa (R-Calif.) and others argued that the bill would tie the Bush administration's hands.

### Israel: U.S. targeting Saddam

Israeli officials reportedly believe that if the United States moves against Iraq, it will be to assassinate Saddam Hussein and members of his family. According to an assessment prepared for the prime minister and foreign minister, the purpose of the action is to bring about a regime change without causing the entire country to collapse, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported.

### Firm to build Jerusalem fence

Israeli defense contractor Elbit will build an electronic security fence around Jerusalem. The first phase of the fence will be 3 miles long and cost \$5 million to build, Israel Radio reported.

### Report: Mossad in secret talks

The incoming head of Israel's Mossad intelligence agency reportedly paid a secret visit to the United States. According to the British journal Foreign Report, Meir Dagan recently traveled to Washington for talks on possible Israeli involvement in any military operation in Iraq and to share intelligence information.

the world in its quest for freedom and war on terror.

Israel "offered the Palestinians a comprehensive solution without the terror, a solution that was close to their national aspirations.

"We related to their desire to be free, to be equal, independent. We agreed that they would have their land in accordance with United Nations' resolutions. Terror postponed their destiny. Terror postponed our willingness to end control of their lives."

But Peres was optimistic. He called the debate occurring among the Palestinians the "profound" symbol of the dawn of democracy, and spoke of separating politically into two states with a coordinated economy.

Along with meetings with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell and U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, Peres met with members of the "Quartet" — Russia, the United States, the United Nations and the European Union — on Tuesday.

In that meeting, the Quartet stated that it "deplored and condemned the morally repugnant violence and terror, which must end." It did not specify whether it meant Israel or Palestinian violence, or both.

The group also agreed to intensify efforts to achieve a "final Israeli-Palestinian settlement based on their common vision, as inter alia expressed by President Bush, of two states, Israel and an independent, viable and democratic Palestine, living side by side in peace and security."

The Quartet also outlined a process, which it would monitor, under which Israel would withdraw to the pre-intifada lines and a Palestinian state would emerge — with provisional borders by 2003 and a permanent-status solution by 2005.

"Despite the public appearance, this is not a static moment," Harris told JTA midway through more than 60 diplomatic meetings to address, among other issues, Israel's quest for peace and rising anti-Semitism.

The schedule includes meetings with the following Arab countries: Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Mauritania, Qatar and Tunisia.

Harris also joined the E.U.'s top diplomat, Javier Solana, at a private dinner at the Hotel Sofitel that lasted more than two hours, and met with key Muslim countries, including Turkey, Malaysia and Indonesia.

In a separate 80-minute meeting that "would have lasted longer, but for the onset of Yom Kippur," the Saudi foreign minister presented a very detailed vision for peace, Harris said, but declined to reveal any details.

In general, he said of his meetings with foreign leaders, there are fewer references now to the once-popular condemnation of Israel's "excessive use of force," Harris said.

But the term du jour is "spiral of violence" — an analysis he calls "profoundly unfair" because it "suggests this kind of cold symmetry between the arsonist and the fireman." Still, the "traditional defenders of the Palestinians are having trouble on two counts."

First, they cannot fully explain Arafat's rejection of the proposal made at Camp David in the summer of 2000, and second they cannot justify suicide bombings.

One moderate Arab foreign minister "said to us eyeball to eyeball, 'Arafat made a terrible mistake two years ago. If I were Arafat, I would have accepted the Clinton-Barak proposal as presented,'" Harris said.

Perhaps at the heart of the shift in tone is the "growing awareness that terrorism is terrorism, and that if suicide bombers can succeed in New York or Tel Aviv, they can succeed anywhere," Harris said.

For that reason, there was a "much better understanding this year of the danger posed by suicide bombers to Israel" and the recognition of Israel's security needs, even on the part of Arab nations, he said.

While Iraq is the chief topic of concern at the United Nations, Jewish leaders on the scene at the United Nations all related a growing disenchantment with the Palestinian leadership. "I think that they see that Arafat is not the answer," said Daniel Mariaschin, executive vice president of B'nai B'rith International, which holds some 20 diplomatic meetings.

Since Bush's June 24 speech calling for Palestinian reform, countries see that "the old formula cannot work anymore," Mariaschin said.

"I think they realize the ball really now is squarely in the Palestinian court," he said. □



## Daily News Bulletin

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## JEWISH WORLD

### Slovakia to aid Shoah victims

The Slovak government approved the creation of a fund to compensate Holocaust victims. The state plans to contribute \$19 million to the fund, a Slovak official, Pal Csaky, said Wednesday.

The fund will compensate Holocaust victims whose property was confiscated, cover some of the needs of elderly members of the Jewish community and finance cultural projects, he added.

### Ritter to Israel: Oppose attack

Israel should oppose an American attack on Iraq, a former chief U.N. weapons inspector said.

Scott Ritter told the Israeli daily Ha'aretz that an American strike on Baghdad would be a disaster for Israel. He said it would make Israel vulnerable to an Iraqi attack, undermine regional stability, further anti-U.S. sentiment in the Arab public and increase terrorism against Israel.

### Campus Watch unveiled

The Middle East Forum launched a program Wednesday to monitor campus academic work and activism on the Middle East. The Philadelphia-based think tank plans to survey more than 250 universities across North America, spotlighting campus hot-spots or ones believed to have distorted Middle East studies programs. The project's Web site, [www.campus-watch.org](http://www.campus-watch.org), provides first-hand accounts from students and faculty on campuses and contains background information on universities and professors.

### ADL leaders plan D.C. meetings

Officials from the Anti-Defamation League plan to meet Thursday with Bush administration officials and terrorism experts.

About 20 ADL officials are expected to attend the meetings in Washington, where they will meet with William Burns, the assistant secretary of state; Dale Watson, the executive assistant director of the counterterrorism division of the FBI; and James Woolsey, the former head of the CIA.

### Survey: 6.1 million U.S. Jews

There are some 6.1 million Jews in the United States, according to a newly released survey. The total included unaffiliated Jews, according to the study's sponsor, the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies. Researchers admitted the number of Jews they reported could be misleading.

With the exception of Jews, who were counted on the basis of identity, the survey reported its totals based on religious affiliation. The largest religious group in the United States remains the Catholic Church, with more than 62 million adherents, the study found.

## Jewish groups blast French court after Nazi-era war criminal is freed

By Mitchell Danow

NEW YORK (JTA) — France was accused this week of turning its back on Holocaust victims after a Nazi-era war criminal was released from a French prison.

Maurice Papon was freed Wednesday after an appeals court ruled he was too old and sick to serve out his 10-year sentence.

The decision to free the 92-year-old Nazi collaborator "seemed impossible," said Michel Slitinsky, who was 17 in 1942, when he narrowly escaped a Papon-ordered roundup of Jews from Bordeaux.

Slitinsky, whose father was arrested in that roundup and died in Auschwitz, told The Associated Press he feared the court's decision to release Papon would encourage the extreme right in France.

The Anti-Defamation League also lashed out at the court's decision.

"The excessive leniency of the French court demonstrates a misguided compassion that Maurice Papon does not deserve," said the ADL's national director, Abraham Foxman.

"Papon has never expressed regret for sending Jews to their deaths, and has repeatedly thumbed his nose at the French judicial system."

Papon began serving the sentence in October 1999 after he was found guilty of helping deport some 1,500 Jews to Nazi death camps during World War II, when he was supervisor of Bordeaux's Service for Jewish Questions and the second-ranking official in the area for the pro-Nazi Vichy regime.

Nearly all of the Jews deported from Bordeaux died in the Auschwitz gas chambers.

Last year, Papon wrote in a letter to France's Justice Minister that he felt neither "regrets nor remorse" for his wartime acts.

Papon had triple coronary bypass surgery several years ago and had a pacemaker implanted in January 1999.

Walking with a slight limp, he emerged Wednesday from a small door at Paris' Sante prison. He smiled briefly at his lawyer before getting into a waiting car, which sped off as a crowd yelled "Murderer" and "Papon in jail."

Along with the ADL, other Jewish groups blasted the decision to free Papon.

The Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem said the ruling was in "blatant disregard of the suffering he perpetrated on countless Jewish victims."

The Jerusalem office of the Simon Wiesenthal Center likewise denounced the decision, calling Papon an "arrogant, unrepentant Nazi collaborator who had absolutely no empathy whatsoever for the hundreds of innocent people he sent to death camps."

According to his lawyer, Jean-Marc Varaut, Papon was as surprised as anyone at his sudden freedom.

Now that he is free, Papon plans to "rest, rebuild his health and spend time with family and friends," Varaut, who is one of France's most prominent lawyers, told reporters.

After the liberation, Papon went on to an illustrious postwar career, serving as police chief of Paris between 1958 and 1967 and as budget minister in the French Cabinet during the 1970s.

Papon's previous position in the French establishment ensured his release, Nazi-hunter Serge Klarsfeld said.

"It's to do with the establishment. The fact he could have died in jail was something they could not contemplate," Klarsfeld, a key figure in pushing for Papon's sentencing, told Reuters Wednesday.

Legal action against Papon began in 1981 after a newspaper article detailed his past.

But proceedings against him were repeatedly obstructed by French officials reluctant to see a trial dredge up embarrassing memories of France's collaboration with the Nazi occupiers.

His trial, which began in October 1997 and was delayed several times by Papon's health problems before ending in April 1998, was one of the longest in French postwar history. □

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES****Israel, U.S. seek to defuse tension from Lebanese water-use scheme***By Gil Sedan*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — In the parched Middle East, playing with water is playing with fire.

With Lebanon moving forward with plans to divert a major source of Israel's water supply, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon warned that the project could become a *casus belli*.

Lebanese President Emile Lahoud replied that the decision to tap the Wazzani River was "final and irreversible." Hezbollah threatened that "the hand of Israel would be cut off" if it tried to interfere in the project.

American experts who toured the southern Lebanon waterworks on Monday hoped to keep the water crisis from reaching a boil. Lebanon insisted that the American team was just technical, and that any dispute over the water would have to be decided by the United Nations.

The Americans, for their part, said they did not intend to mediate between the two sides, but only to gather facts and urge both countries to keep the situation in check.

On Tuesday, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres met with Colin Powell, the U.S. secretary of state, and other members of the "Quartet" — the European Union, United Nations and Russia — to discuss the issue. Powell reportedly told Peres that the United States takes the issue very seriously.

With good reason. The dispute comes as the Americans have been working hard to prevent the Palestinians, Syrians or Hezbollah from opening a second front with Israel as a means of inflaming the region and blocking momentum toward an attack on Iraq.

Israel is sensitive to Washington's interest in downplaying the issue — yet feels it can not tolerate the Lebanese move, both for its practical implications and for the precedent it sets.

In Washington last week, Peres discussed the crisis with Vice President Dick Cheney, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice and Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage.

"We do not want a flare-up," Peres said, "but we will not give up water."

Israel also sent Noah Kinarti, a veteran expert on water issues, to Washington to try to present Israel's case to the Bush administration. There seemed to be no differences on the issue among Sharon, Peres and Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, all of whom forcefully condemned the Lebanese project.

Lebanon recently finished laying a pipeline to carry pumped water from the Wazzani River to several villages in southern Lebanon. According to the Lebanese, the project should supply the needs of only five to six villages. Israel believes the project is much bigger, and is geared to serve about 60 towns and villages.

The Wazzani is a tributary of the Hatzbani River, which is one of three key sources of the Jordan River. That flows into the Sea of Galilee, Israel's main water reservoir.

The Lebanese project could divert some millions of cubic meters from the lake, which already has suffered major water loss in recent years due to drought.

On Tuesday, Ben-Eliezer estimated that the Wazzani provides up to 10 percent of Israel's water. While it is not a matter of life and death for Israel — which provides some 50 million cubic

meters of water to Jordan every year under a peace agreement — the diversion would be not only a blow but a worrying precedent.

The current crisis is not the first one over Lebanese plans to divert the Wazzani. In March 2001, Lebanon laid a water pipe from the Wazzani to a nearby village. Israel also issued a harsh warning, but calmed down after the Lebanese government said it was only a 4-inch-wide pipe for local use.

Then, in August 2001, a Lebanese farmer placed a small pump near the Israeli border which he used to water his fields. After warnings, Israel ultimately swallowed that pill as well.

However, the new efforts — which involve a 20-inch-wide pipe — are seen as a serious attempt to divert the Wazzani. They also are seen as part of a pattern of provocations by Hezbollah, with the blessing of Syria, to ignite the region ahead of a possible American attack on Iraq.

The U.N. resolution that mandated the Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon in May 2000 also obligated the Lebanese government to take control of the region afterward. The Lebanese government has declined to assert its authority in the south, however, essentially leaving Hezbollah free to do as it pleases, under Syrian sponsorship.

For its part, Hezbollah, which sought international legitimacy as a resistance movement against Israeli occupation, has been searching for a *raison d'être* since the Israeli withdrawal. Perhaps to that end, Hezbollah has been trying to provoke Israel into a military confrontation along the border.

Its provocations have intensified since the Palestinian intifada began two years ago, and have focused on the Shabaa Farms region near the border with Syria. Hezbollah says the area is Lebanese territory, a claim that Israel — and the United Nations — dismiss.

Hezbollah often fires anti-aircraft rockets — sending shrapnel falling on Galilee communities — and has caused several casualties among Israeli soldiers deployed along the border.

Most ominously, Hezbollah — with Syrian and Iranian aid — has deployed long-range missiles along the border that can hit Haifa and other Israeli population centers.

So far Israel has restrained itself, but in recent weeks Israeli leaders have been issuing stiff warnings over the water project.

Israeli experts say this is the most serious Lebanese attempt to divert a major source of Israeli water. If Lebanon goes ahead with the plans to pump from the Wazzani, Sharon told the Cabinet last week, it would be "the type of thing that Israel cannot abide."

On Tuesday, Ben-Eliezer sounded a similar note, saying that "Israel can not tolerate the diversion" project, which he called "a violation of every agreement we have signed in the past."

Lebanon says it is entitled under international law to take the Wazzani water. The problem, Lebanese officials said, is that Israel does not want to admit that its occupation of southern Lebanon has ended.

Dan Zaslavsky, a former Israeli water commissioner, said that from a technical standpoint the current dispute could be resolved easily: Lebanon could divert the needed water from the Litani River, which spills into the Mediterranean Sea.

In addition, Zaslavsky told Israel Radio, the amount Israel uses could be made up for through desalination projects.

Failing that, he said, Israel could resolve the whole matter with just a "few tank shells" at the pipe.

Ben-Eliezer was placing his faith in a less martial course. "I trust the Americans to stop it," he said Tuesday. □