



# Daily News Bulletin

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## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### 12 killed in army raid

At least 12 Palestinians were killed and dozens wounded during a clash with Israeli soldiers in Gaza City on Sunday. In what was described as the deepest military incursion into Gaza City in two years, Israeli troops targeted Palestinian weapons factories.

During the operation, the soldiers came under heavy fire from Palestinian gunmen. Those killed included members of the Palestinian security forces and various militias, according to The Associated Press. [Page 3]

### Powell renews call to end terror

The creation of a Palestinian state is possible within two years if the Palestinians "clamp down on terrorism," U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell said.

"A Palestinian state, when it's created, must be a real state, not a phony state that's diced into a thousand different pieces," Powell said Sunday at the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. He also called on Israel to stop building settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

### Total closure ahead of election

Israel imposed a total closure on the West Bank and Gaza Strip on Sunday until after Tuesday's Israeli elections.

The measure is among the security steps being taken following warnings that Palestinian terrorists plan attacks on Election Day. [Page 3]

### Booby-trapped donkey blows up

A booby-trapped donkey blew up near an Israeli bus in the West Bank on Sunday, but no one was hurt.

The explosion occurred near a village in the Bethlehem area on a road leading to settlements south of Jerusalem. Israeli military officials believe terrorists waited for a bus to drive by before detonating the explosives by remote control.

### More swastikas on Brooklyn cars

Swastikas were found Saturday on at least 10 cars in Brooklyn.

The vandalism took place about a mile from where swastikas were spray-painted on more than 20 cars earlier this month. Police are investigating whether the same individuals carried out the two attacks.

## As inquiry continues, French rabbi denies rumor that he stabbed himself

By Philip Carmel

PARIS (JTA) — The investigation into the recent stabbing of a Paris rabbi has taken an unusual turn, with allegations in the media that the rabbi may have stabbed himself.

Rabbi Gabriel Farhi, who was injured in the stomach in the Jan. 3 incident, strongly denied rumors that his wounds were self-inflicted. He accused police of treating him like the guilty party, rather than as the victim of an anti-Semitic attack.

"From the first minute, I was not Rabbi Gabriel Farhi but a suspect," Farhi told a Jan. 22 news conference.

"The investigation has been handled with the view that my injuries were self-inflicted.

"I am sure that instructions were given to the police officers to change my status as a victim into the guilty party," he added.

Farhi, who runs a Paris synagogue of the French Movement for Liberal Judaism, was taken to a hospital and treated for stomach injuries after what he told investigators had been a stabbing by a masked man.

According to his testimony, Farhi said he had been alone in his synagogue when a man in a motorcycle helmet appeared at the front door.

The man shouted "Allahu Akbar" — "God is great" in Arabic — and stabbed him with a knife, Farhi said.

The incident, followed three days later by an attack on the rabbi's car in the parking lot of his Paris home, was widely condemned by senior French politicians, including President Jacques Chirac and Paris Mayor Bertrand Delanoë.

The attack, coming as anti-Semitic attacks appeared to be declining after a wave of incidents in early 2002, also shocked France's 500,000-strong Jewish community.

Many of those attacks were carried out by youths of North African origin and were considered linked to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Farhi was well known for his attempts to foster dialogue between France's Jewish and Muslim communities, as well as his support for Mideast peace.

His views sometimes proved controversial within the Jewish community, but they had brought the liberal movement and its founder, Farhi's father Rabbi Daniel Farhi, widespread respect among French political and religious leaders.

Four former prime ministers attended a special prayer service at the movement's main synagogue a few days after the attack on Farhi.

The service was particularly notable because it was the first public appearance by former Prime Minister Lionel Jospin since his election defeat last April.

Even as politicians expressed outrage at the attacks, however, rumors were circulating that the police investigation was centering on Rabbi Farhi himself.

The suspicions did not reach the public sphere until more than a week after the incident, as some major French media decided to hold the story — fearing accusations that they were promoting conspiracy theories or that they were soft on anti-Semitism.

The story finally broke in the center-left weekly *Marianne*, which had been the first national publication to raise the issue of Islamic anti-Semitism in France shortly after the Palestinian intifada began in September 2000.

*Marianne* also had been highly critical of Jospin's failure to take tougher steps against anti-Semitism.

According to the magazine, a doctor from the Paris fire department who was one

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Israel working on 'road map'

A special team working from the Prime Minister's Office is drawing up an Israeli version of a "road map" for Middle East peace. The document will serve as Israel's response to the diplomatic initiative being championed by members of the Quartet — the United States, United Nations, European Union and Russia. The peace plan will also provide Jerusalem's interpretation of a Mideast policy speech made last June by President Bush, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

The document could also serve as a basis for a future unity government that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon may try to form with the Labor Party if he wins this week's elections, the paper said.

### Palestinian boy killed in Gaza

A Palestinian boy was killed by gunfire in southern Gaza on Sunday, according to Palestinian sources. The boy's younger brother was wounded in the incident, the sources added.

Israeli army officials said there were no troop movements in the area at the time, and added that they were checking the report.

### Israeli army: Intifada peaked

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has peaked, according to an Israeli military assessment. Senior military officials also believe that an American-led strike against Iraq will also result in renewed efforts to implement reform in the Palestinian Authority and increased pressure on Yasser Arafat to halt Palestinian terror attacks, Ha'aretz reported Sunday.

At the same time, the sources believe there is growing awareness among Palestinian officials that the violence will not lead to political concessions on Israel's part, the paper said. Just the same, according to the report, Israeli officials say Arafat has blocked efforts by other Palestinian officials to seek an end to the violence.

of the first people at the scene after the Jan. 3 attack jotted down in his notebook that Farhi's wound was very light and "hardly compatible with the description" of the incident.

It "could correspond to one that was self-inflicted," the doctor reportedly wrote.

After Farhi was discharged from the hospital that evening, police investigators "remarked that the tear on Farhi's coat did not correspond to the placement of a knife," the report continued.

The rumors have shaken French Jewry.

"You can imagine what a destructive effect this affair could have on the Jewish community," one community leader told the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

"For two years, we have been screaming about the attacks against us and the rise of anti-Semitism in France. If, God forbid, it turns out that the stabbing was staged, not just Rabbi Farhi is in trouble, all the Jews are in trouble. Who will take us seriously?"

"And that is without even mentioning the enormous shame caused by the thought that four former prime ministers took the trouble to support the rabbi and the Jewish community," the source continued. "What will we do now? Apologize to them?"

Farhi's lawyer, Michel Zaoui, rejected the innuendos.

"If my client mutilated himself or tried to commit suicide, the hospital wouldn't have sent him home three hours after examining him," Zaoui said.

The newly elected head of France's Reform movement also rejected the idea that Farhi staged the incident.

"It's enough to look at what has happened in France and other countries in the world over the last two years" — a reference to the wave of anti-Israel and anti-Semitic feeling since the intifada began — "to understand how we reached this pass," Francis Lentschner told Ha'aretz about the new reports.

So far, police haven't found any witnesses to the incident. Even the discovery of a death-threat letter addressed to Farhi has failed to take the heat off the rabbi.

According to Marianne, the letter, which did not bear a stamp and threatened to "skin Rabbi Farhi alive and avenge the blood of our Palestinian brothers," was discovered by Farhi himself and presented to police only after the incident.

One of the more noticeable features of the case has been the surprising reticence of Jewish communal leaders to speak out publicly about the incident.

Following the initial reactions the weekend of the attack, a senior community source warned JTA "to be careful and not jump to conclusions," without elaborating.

Another unusually silent participant has been France's interior minister, Nicolas Sarkozy, who has said only that police will do everything necessary to get to the bottom of the affair. Sarkozy was advised by senior police officers not to speak out about the affair, JTA has learned.

Meanwhile, the investigation has been transferred to a more senior branch of the police, a move that Farhi says confirms his suspicions that he is being treated like a suspect. Anti-Semitism and self-mutilation are still among the possible theories, but police also have not dismissed a possibility that Farhi himself raised when he first reported the incident.

Farhi said his attacker had spoken unaccented French, and suggested that he may have been a Jewish right-wing extremist. That theory gained some credence last week with the discovery of a second anonymous letter, expressing "regret the job wasn't finished." The letter was handwritten — in French and Hebrew. □

### Danish scouts play Nazi

NEW YORK (JTA) — Danish boy scouts played a game in which children pretending to be Jews ran from adults playing Nazis. Parents of about 160 scouts aged 11-14 expressed outrage after learning of the game, in which the scouts wore yellow Star of David armbands, The Associated Press reported.

The game turned a schoolyard in a town 160 miles southwest of Copenhagen into a mock concentration camp, replete with swastikas on school windows and a sign with the infamous inscription "Arbeit macht frei" — "Work makes you free" — that stood at the entrance to Auschwitz.

A member of the local Christian FDF scout chapter, which organized the game, told a Danish newspaper that it "may have crossed the line." □



## Daily News Bulletin

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## JEWISH WORLD

### Poll: U.S. Jews lose peace hopes

American Jews have grown more pessimistic about the chances of Israeli-Palestinian peace and more suspicious about Arabs generally, a new survey finds. The American Jewish Committee survey said 49 percent of American Jews are less optimistic about the chances of a lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians, up from 42 percent a year ago.

Distrust of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat and the Palestinians in general has increased as well: 82 percent say the Palestinians hope not just for the West Bank and Gaza Strip but for the destruction of Israel, up from 73 percent a year ago. Still, support for a Palestinian state remains almost evenly split, with 49 percent in favor and 47 percent opposed.

### German Jewish leader: Back U.S.

The leader of Germany's Jewish community criticized the German government for opposing the U.S. stance on Iraq. Paul Spiegel compared the U.S. campaign to oust Saddam Hussein to the Allied effort to defeat Hitler in World War II.

"One cannot be opposed to war at all costs," he said Sunday. "The concentration camps were not liberated by marching protesters, but rather by the Red Army." Spiegel made the comments at memorial services marking the liberation of Nazi concentration camps by advancing Soviet forces in early 1945.

### Pro-Israel scholar bumped

A student-run center at Toronto's York University canceled a speech by Middle East expert Daniel Pipes, fearing violent protests. Pipes, the pro-Israel director of the Middle East Forum, was to speak at a lunch sponsored by York's Center for International and Security Studies.

University officials, who at one point had considered barring Pipes from campus, said they would look for another venue at which he could speak this week. Organizers feared riots like those by pro-Palestinian activists at Montreal's Concordia University that forced the cancellation of a speech by former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu last September.

### Italy's Jews help quake victims

Italian Jews are helping young children and teen-agers affected by a deadly earthquake that hit southern Italy last fall. The quake leveled an elementary school and wiped out almost an entire class.

The Union of Italian Jewish Communities has sent to the quake-hit area — located in a part of Italy where no Jews live — a team of 10 educators specialized in helping youngsters recover from trauma. They will work with local children through the end of February, using "play therapy" to help them overcome fears brought on by the disaster.

## Amid violence and terror warnings, some predict next government's fall

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's election campaign headed into the home stretch with ongoing violence in the Gaza Strip providing a dire reminder of the pressing issues the next government will face.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's Likud Party is maintaining its strong lead in the polls. But recent polling predictions had observers and politicians alike wondering whether Tuesday's vote will result in a political impasse that will prevent the next prime minister from carrying out any definitive policy.

Indeed, some of them are so convinced that there will be an impasse that they have already begun talking about the nation's next bout with early elections.

Meanwhile, amid continuing violence, Israel imposed a total closure Sunday on the West Bank and Gaza Strip until after Tuesday's elections.

The measure is among the security steps being taken following warnings that Palestinian terrorists plan attacks on Election Day.

Over the weekend, Israeli troops carried out two large-scale operations in the Gaza Strip in response to Palestinian rocket attacks on Israeli communities within Gaza and inside Israel.

At least 12 Palestinians were killed and dozens wounded during a clash with Israeli soldiers in Gaza City on Sunday.

In what was described as the deepest military incursion into Gaza City in two years, Israeli troops targeted Palestinian weapons factories.

During the operation, the soldiers came under heavy fire from Palestinian gunmen. Those killed included members of the Palestinian security forces and various militias, according to The Associated Press.

A day earlier, Israeli forces destroyed four bridges in northern Gaza that the army said were used by terrorists to transport arms.

That operation followed a Palestinian rocket attack last Friday on the Negev town of Sderot.

And on Sunday, Palestinians fired mortars at Jewish communities in Gaza, but the shells landed in a Palestinian area.

Shortly after the army withdrew from Gaza City earlier Sunday, Palestinians fired four rockets at Israeli communities in the Negev, but caused no injuries.

Following the Israeli military operations in Gaza, Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz said Israeli officials are discussing whether to retake control of Gaza.

"We need to keep all our options open, including the option of taking over the Strip," Mofaz told Israel Radio.

Labor Party officials assailed the defense minister's remarks, saying they provided proof of the Likud Party's plan to reoccupy all of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In a campaign that has been marked by corruption allegations, it was not immediately clear whether the weekend violence would have a significant impact on voter attitudes.

Despite politicians' vows to bring stability to the security-starved Israeli electorate, the emerging electoral math from recent polls has observers and politicians wondering how effective the government formed following Tuesday's vote can be.

Weekend polls showed Likud winning between 31 and 34 seats in the 120-member Knesset.

But Likud officials are reportedly worried that unless the Likud gets at least 35 Knesset seats, Sharon will be unable to form a stable coalition, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported.

A narrow, right-wing government could run into a brick wall on economic and diplomatic issues, leading to a need for early elections, some observers speculated.

Labor Party leader Amram Mitzna, who reiterated over the weekend his determination not to join a national unity government, also appeared to have such a scenario in mind. "If we don't succeed in these elections, we will succeed in the next ones," he said. "I, as head of the opposition, will be there, ever day, every hour, in order to vote on the government's missteps and bring about its fall as soon as possible." □

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

**Meeting in London, women rabbis find similarities cut across borders**

By Claire Levy

LONDON (JTA) — The 100 women who gathered in London for a conference on female rabbis may have come from different countries, but they found that they face many of the same challenges.

The four-day conference of the Women's Rabbinic Network, which ended Jan. 22, was the first held outside the United States, demonstrating the growing number and importance of women rabbis internationally.

Rabbi Kathleen de Magtige Middleton, the presiding rabbi at the main conference venue, the Liberal Jewish Synagogue in West London, was one of the meeting's co-chairs.

Women rabbis "come up against many challenges, struggles and opportunities that may not be shared with male colleagues," Middleton said.

For example, Middleton, who trained in London, is not allowed to practice as a rabbi in her native Holland.

A major preoccupation for female rabbis in England and the United States is equality of pay and responsibility with their male counterparts.

In Britain, for example, no woman rabbi occupies a senior leadership role, Middleton said.

"Women rabbis often feel isolated, especially in the U.K. and continental Europe," Middleton said.

"This conference is an opportunity to build bridges and to find support and inspiration from other women on the same journey," she added.

For Jackie Tabick, who in 1975 became the first woman ordained as a rabbi in England, this week's conference was a milestone.

"It has made me feel that I'm not alone any more," she said. "Eight years after the first woman was ordained in the U.S., there were 50 women rabbis. In Britain, there are 30 after 35 years."

For some of Tabick's American counterparts, the struggles of women rabbis in Europe have made them reflect on the daily difficulties of leading a congregation.

Rabbi Myra Soifer described her European counterparts as "heroic."

For Rabbi Marcia Plumb, a conference co-organizer, it's especially important that the meeting was held in England. Plumb, who was born in the United States but is based here, sees a renaissance in the British Reform and liberal worlds, sparked in part by women.

"There is an enhanced sense of drive and enthusiasm," she says, and "many of the new ideas — such as the creation of new prayers — are coming from women."

The first female rabbi was ordained in the 1890s in the United States. In Germany, women were ordained in the 1930s.

With women coming to the conference from the United States, Belarus, Israel and several European countries, the theme was building bridges between women rabbis in different countries.

Rabbi Nelly Shulman, based in Minsk, Belarus, has to travel about 5,000 miles to meet her nearest female colleagues in Germany or Hungary.

In a country that only recently emerged from what Shulman

calls "the black hole of communism," the main issue for her congregants is not whether to have a woman rabbi but how to build Jewish identity.

"People only now, after 12 years of the Reform movement" in the former Soviet Union, "have got to the point where they are shaping their identity, who they are," Shulman said.

"People don't care that I'm a woman; they're happy for anyone to be there."

For Rabbi Katalin Keleman, traditional views on community leadership in Hungary have made her gender a major stumbling block.

Jewish groups outside of the liberal community she serves do not even recognize her as a rabbi, she said.

Both Shulman and Rabbi Cathy Felix, an American, spoke of Orthodox suspicion toward the liberal movements, though the situations in Hungary and the United States clearly are different.

Another universal theme was the way women rabbis can change the culture of Judaism.

Like women in other professions, many of the rabbis try to juggle traditional roles as mother and homemaker with their working careers.

The women rabbis need to "fight society's expectations of role," Tabick said.

"Women are seen as nurturers, not as leaders."

Even on a community level, women often take behind-the-scenes roles, with men taking more prominent positions in spiritual and practical matters.

Plumb, who teaches at the Leo Baeck Center for Jewish Education, recalls a member of her community asking, "If you're here, who is doing the cooking and the shopping?"

"Well, my husband is doing the cooking and the shopping," she replied, "and that's just fine."

Plumb admits it can be hard for people to accept a woman rabbi as a leader.

But a female rabbi shows that women can represent all parts of the community, she said.

Some women rabbis work on a part-time or freelance basis, sometimes because of family commitments but sometimes to explore new models of leadership.

Plumb herself works with a team of rabbis at the Southgate Progressive Synagogue.

The model, in which several rabbis share decision-making and practical responsibilities, is unusual for British Jewry, she said.

"The style of women rabbis, and the fact that women represent equality, give the approach of inclusion and intellectual integrity that modern Jews appreciate," she says.

Despite an openness in the progressive movement, there is little uniformity for women at worship.

For example, levels of participation in services or the wearing of prayer shawls by female congregants vary from one shul to the next.

For many, the lack of uniformity is unsettling. But for Plumb this diversity is the key to an informed choice of worship.

"Rules keep people safe and I agree that people need a path, but the path can be broadened and the path will still be there. It will not disappear," she says.

"There has always been a wide range of views; why should it be different now? Modernity has shifted the boundaries and it can be frightening to have more avenues, but Judaism can still have diversity." □