



# Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 81, No. 20

Thursday, January 30, 2003

86th Year

## Knesset breakdown

PARTY	New	Old
Likud	37	19
Labor	19	25
Shinui	15	6
Shas	11	17
National Union	7	7
Meretz	6	10
Natl. Religious Party	5	5
United Torah Judaism	5	5
Hadash – Ta'al	4	4
One Nation	4	2
Balad	3	1
United Arab List	2	5
Yisrael Ba'Aliyah	2	4

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Bush: Expand faith-based program

President Bush called for an expansion of federal funding of faith-based initiatives. In his State of the Union address Tuesday night, Bush asked Congress to pass legislation allowing religious organizations to receive federal funds to provide community services, such as drug rehabilitation and homeless shelters.

Regarding the Middle East, Bush said, "We continue to seek peace between a secure Israel and a democratic Palestine." [Page 4]

### Sharon calls for unity

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon called for national unity in the face of Palestinian terrorism. In his victory speech Wednesday morning, Sharon called "to all the Zionist parties" to join the "widest possible government." "We are all brothers. We are all Jews. We have one fate," Sharon said. His efforts to form a broad coalition government may be thwarted by the Labor Party, whose leader, Amram Mitzna, has vowed to remain in the opposition. [Page 1]

## ISRAEL VOTES 2003

### Even a sharp politician like Sharon may find national unity out of reach

By Leslie Susser

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Ariel Sharon is one of the savviest politicians Israel has produced.

It was Sharon who brought disparate right-wing parties together to form the Likud Party in 1973. It was also Sharon who, two years ago, persuaded a battered and bruised Labor Party to join a national unity government after Sharon won the premiership from the Labor incumbent, Ehud Barak.

But even Sharon will be hard-pressed to put together the broad-based government he would like, despite the unprecedented scope of Tuesday's victory for the Likud and the Israeli right.

Labor is refusing to join a Sharon coalition, and the third-place Shinui Party has set stringent conditions for joining. That could leave Sharon facing his "nightmare scenario": a narrow coalition with the far-right and Orthodox parties.

Not easily deterred, Sharon will do all he can to entice Labor and Shinui into his government. His success could decide whether a new peace process can be launched, the kind of economic plan the country adopts, whether changes will be made in the religious-secular status quo — and even how long the government will last.

Final results showed the Likud winning 37 seats, Labor 19, Shinui 15, Shas 11, National Union seven, Meretz six, United Torah Judaism five, National Religious Party five, One Nation four, Yisrael Ba'Aliyah two and the combined Arab parties nine.

The left's crushing defeat evoked opposing reactions from its leaders. Meretz's Yossi Sarid resigned, whereas Labor's Amram Mitzna said he was determined to fight on.

"We will remind Sharon and the Israeli public day in and day out that there is an alternative," he declared. "Politics is a marathon, and we are only in the beginning kilometers."

For Shinui leader Yosef "Tommy" Lapid, the red line for his secular-rights party is whether the government includes fervently Orthodox parties.

Even without Labor and Shinui, Sharon still could form a stable coalition in the 120-member Knesset, but it would be a narrow government of the Likud, the far-right and the Orthodox parties.

Pundits agree that such a government couldn't move toward peace with the Palestinians or implement much-needed economic reforms.

Sharon also believes a narrow coalition would deny him the flexibility to maintain excellent ties with Washington and to move forward on the Palestinian track. Israel is expected to come under increased pressure to make diplomatic progress with the Palestinians after an anticipated American attack on Iraq.

There are personal considerations, too: There is bad blood between Sharon and National Union leader Avigdor Lieberman, who would become a major player in a right-wing coalition.

Sharon was incensed when Lieberman torpedoed his attempt to set up a narrow government last October.

"We are not like gum, for Sharon to chew and then spit out," Lieberman declared in the Knesset, referring to Sharon's oft-stated preference for a national unity government with Labor.

If Sharon is forced into a narrow coalition, some pundits believe he will make sure

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### 2 Israelis wounded in ambush

An Israeli father and son were wounded in a West Bank shooting attack Wednesday.

Two terrorists fired on their car near the settlement of Ofra, seriously wounding the 8-year-old boy in the chest and moderately wounding his father. The gunmen escaped in a waiting car.

### Katsav to meet with parties

Israel's president will begin meeting with representatives from political parties next Monday to determine who will form the next government. The decision is a formality, as Moshe Katsav is certain to give the responsibility to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, whose Likud Party scored a decisive victory in Tuesday's vote.

### Arafat offer called 'deception'

Yasser Arafat offered to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and resume negotiations "as soon as possible." "We respect democracy and this Israeli choice" of Sharon in Tuesday's elections, Arafat told Israel Channel 10 Television on Wednesday.

Asked if he would be willing to sit down with Sharon, Arafat responded, "Tonight!" Ra'anana Gissin, an aide to Sharon, dismissed the offer as "duplicity and deception." Sharon has refused to meet with Arafat, saying he is responsible for Palestinian terrorism.

### Pope asked to help Israeli captive

Israel's Ashkenazic chief rabbi appealed to the pope to intervene in the case of an Israeli being held in Lebanon.

Writing before the pope holds an audience with Lebanon's prime minister, Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau asked the pope to press for humanitarian assistance for Elhanan Tannenbaum, according to the Jerusalem Post. Tannenbaum was kidnapped by Hezbollah while on business in Europe in October 2000.

it doesn't last, precipitating yet another general election. A coalition with Labor might force Sharon to adopt more conciliatory policies toward the Palestinians than he would like. On the other hand, it would give him flexibility toward the Americans, better standing in Europe and the ability to make concessions vis-a-vis the Palestinians, while deflecting international pressure to negotiate under fire.

Indeed, in his victory speech, Sharon made a passionate appeal for a unity government with Labor, quoting the late Labor Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on the common destiny of the Jewish people.

Parties shouldn't let "narrow political considerations" override the national interest, he said. He also recommended that "things said in the passion of elections" — such as Mitzna's pledge not to enter a coalition with Likud — not become "an obstacle before national unity."

Aides suggest Sharon will work hard to entice Labor to join the government: He would include the establishment of a Palestinian state in government guidelines, offer Labor key ministries — including Foreign Affairs and Finance — and even consider the country's first all-secular coalition.

Shinui leader Lapid, in fact, called on Labor to reverse course and join a secular coalition. As veteran columnist Nachum Barnea wrote in Yediot Achronot: "Shakespeare's tragic hero, Richard III, cried in his distress: 'A horse, a horse. My kingdom for a horse.' Sharon is not that generous, but he needs the horse."

It's no accident that Sharon has appointed his former bureau chief, Uri Shani, to head the Likud's negotiating team: Shani has close personal contacts with veteran Labor figures, especially Shimon Peres.

But Shani faces a tough road: Mitzna believes one of the main reasons for Labor's electoral debacle was its long sojourn in Sharon's last national unity government. As part of the Likud-led administration, Labor's identity was blurred and it shared blame for the Likud's mistakes, Mitzna contends.

The only way to rebuild the party and make it a real alternative is by challenging the Likud from the opposition, Mitzna insists. Moreover, Labor leaders don't trust Sharon's peace talk, seeing it as a ploy to interest them in coalition-building.

Even if he can't win over Labor as a whole, Sharon still hopes to attract individual Labor leaders — including former party heads Peres and Benjamin Ben-Eliezer — with ministerial and policy offers.

If he succeeds, the impact on Israeli political life would be dramatic: It could lead to a split in Labor, with one faction joining Sharon in government and the other establishing a new social democratic grouping with Meretz.

So far, Ben-Eliezer and Peres say they are solidly behind Mitzna, and will not be drawn into a coalition with Sharon. But external events — such as war in Iraq or Mitzna's failure to assert his leadership in the opposition — could change things. □

*(Leslie Susser is the diplomatic correspondent for the Jerusalem Report. JTA Correspondent Naomi Segal in Jerusalem contributed to this report.)*

## Israeli officer refuses order

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An Israeli army intelligence officer recently was relieved of his post after refusing on moral grounds to provide information for an air strike in the West Bank.

The Israeli daily Ma'ariv reported this week that the affair involved an aerial attack on a Palestinian office in the West Bank that was approved as part of a series of retaliatory operations ordered by the political leadership following the Jan. 5 double suicide bombing in Tel Aviv that killed 23 people.

The officer, a lieutenant, was asked to verify whether the office was occupied and to pass on the information when it was, the paper said. According to the officer's comrades in the unit, the request was unusual because the lieutenant was being asked to find out if there would be any people in the office, not whether a specific individual would be there.

The officer took this to mean that random people would be harmed by the strike, and he conveyed to his commanding officer that he consider the order illegal. It later emerged that the lieutenant deliberately held back intelligence information at his disposal, which led to the operation's ultimate cancellation. □



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## JEWISH WORLD

### Russian record on racism scored

Russian President Vladimir Putin's pledges not to tolerate extremism have gone unfulfilled, according to a human rights group. In its report Tuesday on Russia's human rights record for 2002, the Moscow Helsinki Group questioned the Russian government's pledge to crack down on violence and ethnic and religious discrimination.

The group added that recent anti-extremism legislation is flawed and undermined by selective enforcement. The group's executive director, Tatyana Lokshina, said the number of racist attacks rose in 2002, but police refuses to acknowledge the problem.

### Deadline for Belgian restitution

Belgian Holocaust survivors and their heirs have until March 19 to file claims for property seized during the Nazi era. Forms to apply for property restitution are available at [www.premier.fgov.be](http://www.premier.fgov.be).

### U.S. charities accused of fraud

Two U.S. charities are accused of funneling money to Ariel Sharon's 1999 campaign for the Likud Party leadership. The Washington Post reports that more than \$1 million was funneled to Sharon's campaign from the American and Israeli Research and Friendship Foundation Inc. and the College for National Studies Inc.

A tax-exempt charity's promotion of a candidate in a domestic political race is a violation of U.S. law, but it's unclear whether U.S. charities are allowed to participate in other countries' elections.

### Paris school rejects boycott

A Paris university at the center of calls to boycott Israeli academics reversed itself and voted to implement cooperation agreements with Israeli universities. In a motion presented Tuesday to the administrative council at the University of Paris' Pierre and Marie Curie campus, the university said it "affirms its opposition" to boycotts of any universities or academics.

On Dec. 16, the university had called on the European Union to end its cooperation agreement with Israeli universities. Following widespread protests by leading political figures and Jewish student groups earlier this month, the university changed course and instead called for the European Union to include Palestinian universities in its cooperation accords.

### Faith groups form partnership

The American Jewish Committee will work with the largest Catholic theology school in the United States to improve Catholic-Jewish relations.

The association with the Chicago-based Joseph Cardinal Bernardin Center for Theology and Ministry will involve the exchange of research and analysis.

## ISRAEL VOTES 2003

### In Arab areas, decent turnout, but little hope for real change

By Gil Sedan

UMM EL-FAHM, Israel (JTA)— On the surface, Tuesday seemed like any other Election Day in Israel's Arab communities: The streets were covered with posters advertising the various Arab lists, and cars waving party colors of red, yellow or green were circulating, urging residents to vote.

But there was one significant difference from the last elections in February 2001: This time, people were voting.

Israeli Arabs largely boycotted the 2001 vote to protest the police killing of 13 Arabs rioting in solidarity with the Palestinian intifada, and what they felt was then-Prime Minister Ehud Barak's cavalier attitude toward the country's 1.2 million Arabs.

The Islamic Movement and the radical Sons of the Village organization called for another boycott this year to avoid conferring legitimacy on the Jewish state.

But even though the Likud Party's sizable lead meant Arabs would have little impact on the choice of prime minister, Arab voters this time decided to register their preferences.

A poll conducted by the Yaffa Institute in Nazareth showed that 73.6 percent of Arab voters would cast ballots, only a slight drop from the 75 percent participation rate in May 1999 elections and far better than the 17 percent turnout in 2001. Arabs make up about 12 percent of the Israeli electorate.

Earlier in the campaign, analysts had predicted a modest 60 percent to 65 percent voter turnout, because of growing disenchantment with the political establishment and the performance of Arab legislators.

The trend was strengthened following the Central Election Committee's decision to prevent Ahmed Tibi and Azmi Beshara from running in the elections. However, when the Supreme Court overturned the CEC ruling it changed the mood among Arab voters, who then wanted to demonstrate their power.

This trend was further strengthened by calls from a Cairo meeting of various Palestinian political factions and terrorist groups, urging Arabs to vote in order to influence Israeli policy.

Polling stations in Umm el-Fahm, near the border with the West Bank, and Tirah, near Israel's coastal plain, remained relatively empty until the afternoon. But analysts attributed that to Arab voters' habit of sleeping late on the extra day off, and voting late in the day. Unlike previous elections — when Arab voters felt they could tip the scales in favor of the left — a Likud victory was considered a foregone conclusion this time.

Consequently, the main competition for Arab votes was among the various Arab parties, with Jewish parties largely abandoning the field.

In Umm el-Fahm, for example, there were no signs of left-wing Jewish parties such as Labor or Meretz. In Tirah, Labor activists had hung a huge poster of party leader Amram Mitzna, with his name written in Arabic. But Labor's popularity among Arab voters has plummeted.

"I will not vote, because I think these elections only serve the Jews," said Ibrahim Mansour, the owner of a shoestore in downtown Tirah. His is a refrain frequently heard in Arab areas, where residents complain that neither left-wing nor right-wing governments attend to the problems of Israel's 1.2 million Arab citizens.

"But had I voted, I would have voted Sharon," Mansour continued, referring to the incumbent prime minister, Likud Party head Ariel Sharon.

"Who made peace with Egypt? Menachem Begin. Who returned Hebron to the Palestinians? Netanyahu," he explained, citing two former prime ministers from the Likud Party. "Labor is all talk and no action."

However, Arabs who were voting for the Arab parties often did so despite — not because of — their parliamentary performance.

The Arab public largely has been disappointed by their Knesset representatives, accusing them of spending too much time on the Palestinian cause and ignoring voters' local concerns. □

## Jewish groups consider lawsuits if faith-based initiatives proceed

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Some Jewish groups may sue the Bush administration over faith-based initiatives that they say would violate the separation of church and state.

Faith-based initiatives have been a cornerstone of President Bush's domestic policy.

He campaigned on it, and in his State of the Union address Tuesday, announced two new social service initiatives that would involve religious institutions — one to treat substance abusers and another for mentoring at-risk youth.

Any legal action would likely center around proposals by several U.S. government agencies that would give federal funding to churches and other religious groups for social services programming. Several Jewish groups have contacted the agencies, seeking changes to the proposals.

But if the proposals move forward and become regulations, these groups say, they are considering legal action against the government agencies that carry out the initiatives.

"Some discussion is going on, but everyone is convinced these will end up in court," said Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

Marc Stern, co-director of the American Jewish Congress' legal department, said his organization is looking into legal actions and has contacted a New York law firm about options.

Opponents of the provisions must wait until the comment period is over, and the final regulations are released before challenging them.

Stern said that while the proposals on the face of it seem fine, the details could be problematic.

"In drug rehabilitation programs, there is no plausible way of separating what the government funds and religious instruction," Stern said. "In most cases, what you're dealing with is creating an atmosphere to transform someone's life."

He said in the mentoring programs that have already been tried in Florida — under the auspices of the president's brother, Gov. Jeb Bush — an evangelical group was hired to coordinate the program and seek potential mentors in churches.

"To make a church group the group with central authority for mentoring is to tilt the playing field at the outset," Stern said.

The White House tried hard in the last Congress to pass its faith-based plan, which called for tax incentives for charitable donations and an increase in social service funding.

But the bill went nowhere. In his State of the Union, Bush called on Congress to pass the legislation, and White House officials say they are hopeful that it will be taken up this term.

But despite inaction in Congress, or perhaps because of it, the Bush administration has been moving forward on its own, with a series of executive orders that change the rules for the disbursement of funds it controls through federal agencies.

"The president made very clear that he continues to work in Congress and he's going to do all he can through his powers as chief executive," said Jim Towey, director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.

The president signed an executive order in December, directing "all federal agencies to follow the principle of equal treatment in awarding social service grants."

"It's all about discretionary funding and who is eligible to receive direct funding from the government," said Michael Lieberman, Washington counsel of the Anti-Defamation League.

"What they're doing now is going through the regulations and making faith-based organizations eligible," he said of the administration.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development has proposed a rule that would allow federal building aid to go to the construction of churches and other religious buildings, specifically for social service centers within those institutions.

The Anti-Defamation League wrote to HUD Secretary Mel Martinez this week, saying the new regulations will "inevitably result in very broad and unconstitutional entanglements between government and religion to an extent never seen before."

The Department of Health and Human Services has proposed similar initiatives for funding of drug addiction and homeless assistance programs.

Some Jewish groups have expressed concern that the federal aid in these service programs could go to programs run by religious organizations that discriminate in hiring based on religion.

Certain religious organizations are exempted from nondiscrimination laws in hiring, but some have argued that those exemptions should not apply to positions that are substantially funded by federal dollars.

Jewish groups are also responding to the proposed provisions coming out of the Departments of Education, Agriculture and Labor.

After Bush's executive order in December, the Federal Emergency Management Agency — soon to be incorporated into the new Department of Homeland Security — changed its policy on providing aid to faith-based social service agencies, allowing religious groups to receive disaster aid for soup kitchens and other social services on their premises.

That policy change came after an appeal by the Seattle Hebrew Academy, a religious school that was denied aid after an earthquake damaged its building.

The White House says these new regulations remove obstacles from getting social services to the community, but some Jewish groups say those are not obstacles but safeguards against federal funds going to religious groups.

Stern says there is a legal precedent for requiring that buildings erected with federal funds by religious organizations be used for nonreligious purposes.

In 1971, the Supreme Court ruled that grants for nonreligious facilities in church-sponsored higher education institutions were constitutional.

But it rejected a provision that gave the schools the right to do whatever it wanted with the buildings after 20 years.

Not everyone in the Jewish community is opposed to the proposed regulations.

Nathan Diament, director of the Orthodox Union's Institute for Public Affairs, said he believes the policies are moving in the right direction, but says that safeguards and provisions need to be included that will ensure that the funds will not be used for religious purposes.

"It's discriminatory to say that no religious organizations can even think about competing for these grants," he said. "There are a history of programs that Jewish organizations do run and could run utilizing these grant funds and that would be a very fine thing for the community." □