



# Daily News Bulletin

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86th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Peres: Israel has nukes

Shimon Peres confirmed that Israel has nuclear weapons. In an address in Jerusalem on Thursday to a delegation from the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, the former prime minister briefly referred to his efforts in the 1950s to convince Israeli officials to develop nuclear weapons. Israel succeeded in becoming one of five or six countries in the world with a "nuclear option," Peres said, breaking Israel's long-standing policy of ambiguity about its nuclear capabilities.

In an address to the group later Thursday, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said American Jewish groups must focus on improving Israel's image on college campuses.

Both Jewish and non-Jewish students lack accurate information about Israeli and Jewish history, he said.

"Massive allocations" must be made to Jewish education, Sharon said.

And with the status of Israel's capital sure to be put on the table if peace negotiations with the Palestinians resume, that education must stress Jerusalem's centrality to Jewish life, he added.

### Israel presses U.N. on terror

Israel's ambassador to the United Nations told the Security Council's Counter Terrorism Committee there is no justification for terror.

In what was Dan Gillerman's first speech before the Security Council, he told the U.N. body Thursday it must pressure and shame states that support terror.

### Quartet wants 'road map' offered

The "road map" for an Israeli-Palestinian peace accord should be presented to the two sides as soon as possible, diplomats said. Diplomats from the so-called Quartet — the United States, European Union, United Nations and Russia — also called Thursday for an Israeli-Palestinian cease-fire.

The diplomats issued the statement following a meeting in London aimed at finding ways to move diplomacy forward.

They set no date for publication of the road map, a document the quartet approved in December. On Wednesday, U.S. State Department official William Burns met Palestinian Cabinet ministers in London to discuss the road map.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### Release of five Iranian Jews clouded by concerns over future

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — This week's release from prison of five Iranian Jews resulted not from a change of heart by the regime in Tehran, observers say, but because of a political and economic calculation that requires a burnished national image.

And clouding the relief of their relatives and advocates is concern that these releases will never be permanent, that they may be rearrested at any time, or be subjected to other forms of harassment, at the whim of the authorities.

At the same time, U.S.-based advocates for the Jews are reminding the community that another 11 Iranian Jewish men remain unaccounted for after they disappeared while allegedly trying to cross Iran's border illegally in the early 1990s.

The quintet released Wednesday after four years in prison were merchant Dani (Hamid) Tefileen, 29, who had been sentenced to 13 years; university English instructor Asher Zadmehr, 51, also sentenced to 13 years; Hebrew teacher Naser Levy Hayim, 48, sentenced to 11 years; perfume merchant Ramin Farzam, 38, sentenced to 10 years; and shopkeeper Farhad Saleh, 33, who had received an eight-year sentence.

An array of factors seems to have ratcheted up the pressure on Iran to release the five, who had been imprisoned with eight others on charges of spying for Israel.

The "Iranian 13," as they came to be known, became a cause celebre in the Jewish community and was taken up by international diplomats after the 13 were arrested and imprisoned in January and March 1999.

Three were subsequently found innocent of the espionage charges and released. The other 10 were sentenced in July 2000 to jail terms of four to 13 years.

Israel has steadfastly denied that the men were its spies.

The ongoing skirmishes between the hard-line clerics who run the country and their more moderate rivals likely played a role, as did pressure from the European Union, a major trading partner with Iran, which has cited human rights abuses as hindering expanded trade between the two, says Patrick Clawson, deputy director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a think tank.

The release came on the heels of the hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Islamic holy sites in Mecca, a traditional time for rulers to demonstrate magnanimity, Clawson noted.

"I'm sure the Iranians will try to take credit for this in their negotiations" with the European Union, Clawson said. "But that's quite unwarranted; they made these people do hard time. It's only magnanimous if you compare it to what the hard-line judiciary could have done."

Numerous Iranian officials had threatened the Jews with execution, a penalty that Tehran has reportedly meted out to 17 Iranian Jews accused of espionage since the 1979 Islamic revolution. While pressure from the Europeans and the United Nations over human rights may have played a role, so, too, might have Washington's saber-rattling against Iraq, North Korea and the third member of President Bush's "axis of evil," Iran.

"I think Iran, after several years of not paying attention to international pressure, is now taking public steps to improve its image abroad because they may not want to be a target of the war on terrorism the U.S. has launched," said Pooya Dayanim, spokesman for the Los Angeles-based Council of Iranian American Jewish Organizations.

At the same time, Dayanim said, "This is not taking place in a vacuum; this is a little piece of a much larger picture."

He noted, for example, that last week Iran lifted the death sentence on a leading

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Meetings held on loan guarantees

Israeli officials are meeting in Washington with the Bush administration about the details of a military aid and loan guarantee package. Dov Weisglass, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's bureau chief, met with Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage and economic officials Thursday, a day after meeting with U.S. National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice.

Weisglass told reporters the dialogue between the two countries is nearing an end and he expects the aid request to be submitted "in a very timely manner."

### Israel: Proof P.A. backs terror

Documents found recently in the Gaza offices of the Palestinian Preventive Security Service provide new proof that the Palestinian Authority is financing terror, Israeli officials said.

Photocopies of checks and other documents that were found show the transfer of funds from Palestinian security officials to terrorists groups, Israel's Foreign Ministry said Thursday.

### Effort to honor Israel's 55th

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon asked a former president of B'nai B'rith International to head a foundation preparing a massive educational effort in honor of Israel's 55th birthday. Richard Heidemann and his wife, Cheryl, were asked to chair The Israel Forever Foundation, which is preparing educational days, speakers and other activities for communities throughout the United States for a year-long program known as Israel@55.

"This is all about Israel, the centrality of Israel in Jewish life and the rich contribution of the Jewish people to humankind," Heidemann told JTA. The opening event will be a May 19 gala in Washington that will be broadcast to Israel and, from there, to all the countries with which Israel has diplomatic relations, Heidemann said.



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former dissident who'd publicly called for separation of mosque and state.

However, the Jewish release has not yet been announced by Iranian media, which some suspect means it is for foreign consumption only and to avoid riling domestic hard-liners.

Regardless of the speculation, "it's hard to assess what motivates the Iranians in general," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, which had lobbied on behalf of the Iranian Jews.

Likewise, U.S. advocates seem to have struggled for a sense as to when it was wise to publicly assail Iran in street demonstrations for its perceived show trial and forced confessions and when to settle for behind-the-scenes diplomacy.

"They follow everything we say closely and don't want to appear to be succumbing to pressure," said Hoenlein, adding that his organization will now push the issue of the missing 11, whom witnesses have reportedly spotted on several occasions inside Iranian prisons.

"That's why we admonished people about what public comments they made, and why people should still be circumspect about what they say."

Of late, advocates had opted for diplomacy.

More moderate Iranian officials, Hoenlein said, "recognized it was an injustice that cost Iran heavily in its international image, but they were looking for a way out."

The other five were released at various intervals, raising hopes that the last five might also gain their freedom.

They were released earlier this year for what has been called a "vacation," only to be re-arrested this past weekend.

Then came Wednesday's re-release.

It is still unclear whether the Iranians view the releases as permanent or parole — and whether their relatives could join them if the Jews would be permitted to emigrate, or what persecution the family might face if they remained behind.

All of which underscores the precarious existence of the 20,000 to 25,000 Jews who remain in Iran, down from a peak of some 100,000 at the time of the revolution.

"At any moment, they may rearrest these people" if they see or read any critical statement by advocates, Dayanim said.

He said the Iranian authorities have made it clear that they can "use any excuse, any criticism that you make, and put these people back in jail. Which is why I have not criticized the government.

"I think the steps that they've taken are positive," he said. □

## Book on Jews both anti-Semitic and racist, Czech lawsuit says

By Magnus Bennett

PRAGUE (JTA) — A Czech academic is being taken to court over a book on Jews that critics say is potentially more dangerous to today's Jews than "Mein Kampf."

"Taboos in Social Sciences," by the Czech psychologist Petr Bakalar, includes the theory that Jews who left Europe before the Holocaust were more intelligent than those who stayed behind.

The chapter "Judaism as a Group Evolutionary Strategy" also refers to differences in intelligence among racial and religious groups and the influence of Jews in Hollywood, the U.S. media and the academic world.

Czech Jewish leaders expressed concern that the book may be just an excuse to present anti-Semitic ideas under the guise of scholarship.

"Bakalar is taking the book into areas and raising questions which are quite scandalous," said the chairman of the Prague Jewish community, Tomas Jelinek, who made the comparison to "Mein Kampf," Hitler's autobiography. "He talks, for instance, about racism and refers to an advertisement which appeared in 2001 in our Jewish monthly looking for a deputy of Jewish origin for the rabbinate office."

A Prague-based sociologist, Tomas Kamin, is taking Bakalar to court, arguing that the book is both anti-Semitic and racist. Kamin said the author simply ignores facts that do not fit in with his own theories. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Palestinian professor arrested

FBI agents arrested a Palestinian professor accused of having terrorist ties.

Sami Al-Arian, a tenured computer engineer professor at the University of South Florida, was led in handcuffs by authorities to FBI headquarters in Tampa after his arrest early Thursday, according to The Associated Press.

In a news conference Thursday, Attorney General John Ashcroft described Al-Arian as the North American leader of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which the U.S. government calls a Palestinian terrorist group. Along with Al-Arian, the FBI arrested three other people in the United States on terror-related charges. "The Palestinian Islamic Jihad is one of the most violent terrorist organizations in the world," Ashcroft said. It is "responsible for the murder of over 100 people in Israel."

### Britain warns against Israel travel

Britain's Foreign Office advised its citizens to avoid all non-essential travel to Israel. Wednesday's advisory also cautioned British citizens already in Israel to "maintain a high level of vigilance and consider whether your presence and that of your dependants is essential."

In addition, British citizens were warned to leave Iraq immediately because of "increasing regional tension and the risk of terrorist action," and they were also advised to leave Kuwait unless their presence there is essential.

### UJC garners \$6 million for elderly

The United Jewish Communities has garnered nearly \$6 million in U.S. funds for programs that serve the elderly. The money will be used for Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities, areas where large populations of senior citizens have resided for a long period of time.

The program allows the elderly to receive federal services while remaining in their communities. The money will be distributed to Jewish federations in Albuquerque, N.M.; Atlanta; Baltimore; Chicago; Columbus, Ohio; Detroit; southeast Florida; Las Vegas, Nev.; Los Angeles; Minneapolis; Pittsburgh; Philadelphia; and Washington.

### Racist incidents rise in U.K.

There were 350 anti-Semitic incidents in the United Kingdom in 2002, up from 310 a year before, according to a Jewish security organization. The Community Security Trust noted a huge increase last spring, when Israel mounted a major counterterrorism offensive in the West Bank. The 94 incidents in April and May 2002 "were a direct consequence of tensions in the Middle East," a trust spokesman said.

## U.S. deports Holocaust denier; groups seek second deportation

By Bill Gladstone

TORONTO (JTA)— More than two years after Holocaust denier Ernst Zundel left Canada vowing never to return, he has once again landed on Canada's doorstep.

On Wednesday, the United States deported Zundel to Canada for missing an immigration hearing.

Zundel previously lived in Toronto for more than 40 years. But he failed repeatedly to gain Canadian citizenship, in part because Canadian intelligence officials considered him a threat to national security.

Zundel had been living near Knoxville, Tenn., until he was arrested Feb. 5.

Because he has lived outside of Canada for more than two years, he has now lost his permanent residency status.

The 63-year-old German citizen — who is now being held in an Ontario jail — has applied for asylum as a refugee, claiming he will be persecuted if he is sent back to his native Germany.

Jewish officials, who had lobbied the government not to allow him back into Canada, are now pressing Canadian authorities to deport him to Germany, where he faces a possible jail term of five years or more for his Holocaust denial.

"He left Canada voluntarily and basically turned his back on the country," said Keith Landy, national president of the Canadian Jewish Congress.

"He is a hatemonger and Holocaust denier, and there is no obligation on Canada's part to let him in.

"He's a citizen of Germany, and that's where he should be sent," Landy said.

Under Canadian refugee law, federal officials are not obliged to hear every refugee claim.

Some observers have suggested that Zundel is ineligible for a refugee hearing and could be deported to Germany within days.

But others, including Toronto immigration lawyer Sergio Karas, paint a more negative scenario by suggesting that the case could drag on for years at public expense.

Immigration Minister Denis Coderre would not comment on the case because of privacy concerns, but he expressed disdain for people who attempt to make a "mockery" of Canada's refugee system.

"I'm totally dedicated to make sure that the legitimate people who are seeking our generosity will be facilitated," Coderre said. But "those who are trying the system and who give a bad reputation to our system should be careful."

In January 2001, a Canadian human rights tribunal ruled that Zundel broke the law through his operation of a California-based Web site that vilified and promoted hatred against Jews.

But Zundel, who had already left the country in anticipation of the ruling, ignored the tribunal's order to remove all anti-Semitic material from his site.

Within hours of his forced return to Canada, the Canadian Human Rights Commission and the Canadian Jewish Congress served papers on him ordering that he show cause as to why he shouldn't be held in contempt of court for not complying with the tribunal's ruling.

Last year, after the tribunal reached its verdict, Zundel told a Canadian reporter that he had no intention of complying with it.

"You're talking to the new Ernst Zundel," he said at the time. "They used to accuse me of Holocaust denial. Well, now I'm in Canada denial. I have put Canada behind me."

Zundel has been married for three years to an American citizen, Ingrid Rimland Zundel, who operates his Web site and sends out daily e-mail messages to his supporters.

In her "Z-gram" of Feb. 16, Ingrid Zundel speculated that his arrest was prompted by "old-fashioned talmudic revenge."

Zundel, who has penned numerous books and treatises applauding Hitler and denying the Holocaust, was convicted in the 1980s of "knowingly publishing false news," a charge that Canada's Supreme Court struck down in 1992 before he served any jail time. □

## AROUND THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

**In Kazakhstan, Jews and Muslims pledge to fight against intolerance***By Lev Krichevsky*

ALMATY, Kazakhstan (JTA) — A recent meeting here between Jewish officials and the leaders of six Muslim nations is being hailed by participants as an important step in interfaith relations — and as a sign that the countries may be willing to serve as a bulwark against Islamic fundamentalism.

Differences over an anti-terrorism document adopted at the conference highlight the differing views held by the forum's Jewish and Muslim participants.

But Jewish participants said the fact that the conference took place was more important than the wording of the declaration.

"This conference is a tribute to the role of Kazakhstan" in promoting religious tolerance, Mortimer Zuckerman, the chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, told the participants at the forum, which was held last week.

The conference, which was hosted by the president of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, and was praised by most local media, adopted a declaration that stresses the importance of interfaith dialogue in the international community and rejects the abuse of religion by terrorist groups.

The accord also affirmed the right of every individual to freely practice religion and called on the international community to join efforts to promote tolerance and fight extremism and terrorism.

Among those who attended the International Conference on Peace and Accord were the presidents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, as well as top officials representing Afghanistan, Azerbaijan and Turkey.

Alongside Muslim politicians were Jewish leaders representing the Conference of Presidents and the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress, headed by local industrialist and financier Alexander Mashkevich.

The Muslim countries agreed to establish a permanent group focusing on peace and stability.

"We are all open countries, nations of laws, sharing a common fate and an understanding that politics and religion no longer mix," Nazarbayev said.

The final document of the conference did not mention Islam or Judaism, nor did it contain any references to the situations concerning Iraq or Israel.

A draft of the declaration prepared by the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress contained a condemnation of suicide bombings that some in the Muslim world view as justified. However, a member of the group that met to discuss the declaration told JTA that all of the Muslim participants came out against this text.

Instead, the declaration condemned terrorism "in all its forms and manifestations irrespective of motivation."

A Kazakh Foreign Ministry official said it is expected that as many as 50 nations may join the group to promote peace.

Jewish leaders also met with a group of imams after the conference, making this the second international Jewish-Muslim gathering in Almaty in the last four months.

"We have had many attempts to have a dialogue with leaders of Islam in many countries, but without much success," Rabbi Reuven Hammer, president of the Conservative movement's International Rabbinical Assembly, told the imams.

Kazakhstan's leader since independence in 1991, Nazarbayev has long been pressing for market reforms and closer cooperation with the United States and its allies.

More recently, Nazarbayev has emerged as a major proponent of peace, security and religious harmony on regional and global levels.

These efforts have already earned him praise from Pope John Paul II and U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

Unlike many of its neighbors in Central Asia, Kazakhstan which is home to some 100 ethnic and religious groups, including sizeable Christian and Jewish minorities, has been spared the ethnic clashes that followed the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Moshe Kimche, Israel's ambassador to Kazakhstan, says the country is very different from many other multiethnic societies.

"I was impressed how much the coexistence of various religious and ethnic groups is taken here for granted. To me, it doesn't resemble other parts of the world," he said.

But critics of the Kazakh leader's authoritarian style say that by attracting international attention to his interfaith initiatives, Nazarbayev is trying to divert criticism from internal issues, including his tough treatment of political dissent and independent media.

One American Jewish leader attending the meeting gave Nazarbayev a mixed review.

"As generous as this government has been to the Jewish community, as supportive as this government has been of the U.S.-led efforts against terrorism, this is not what we view as a democratic government," said Robert Meth, the chairman of NCSJ: Advocates on Behalf of Jews in Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic States and Eurasia.

But the Jewish leaders said that although Kazakhstan's record on human rights is not spotless, it is arguably much better than any of its neighbors.

They also believe their visit to the area is important to the United States, Israel and Kazakh Jewry.

"It is important to us to be in this area which is crucial for geopolitical, strategic reasons," said Malcolm Hoenlein, the executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents.

"We can show the West that supporting a moderate Muslim state, which has good relations with Israel and the United States, can be pivotal in the fight against terrorism." □

**New world Jewry body sought**

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's president called for the establishment of a consultative body of Diaspora and Israeli Jews that will sit alongside the Knesset.

Addressing the annual mission of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations on Thursday, Moshe Katsav repeated a call he made in his address at the opening of the 16th Knesset earlier this week.

The body could discuss issues of concern to world Jewry, such as conversion, anti-Semitism and the proper relationship between the Jewish state and Diaspora Jews. "I believe we need cooperation between the house of representatives in Israel and world Jewry. We must discuss issues that have a direct impact on world Jewry," Katsav said. "It would be very useful for the unity of Jews around the world."

Katsav also told JTA that Diaspora Jews are wise to worry about the resurgence of anti-Semitism around the world. □