



# Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 81, No. 71

Monday, April 14, 2003

86th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Sharon: Opportunity for peace

The war in Iraq has created a new opportunity to make peace with the Palestinians, Israel's prime minister said.

In a wide-ranging interview published Sunday in the daily Ha'aretz, Ariel Sharon said he believed the U.S.-led overthrow of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein had sent a "shock" through the region that created new opportunities.

He said he is prepared to take advantage of the opportunity by making painful concessions, indicating that he is willing to remove some West Bank settlements as part of the process. He was not more specific, however.

Hawks in Sharon's government criticized his comments.

### Israel lowers state of alert

Israel lowered its state of alert against a possible attack from Iraq.

Citizens were told Sunday that they do not need to carry their gas masks or keep a sealed room in their homes. However, anti-missile systems will remain in place for now, the Defense Ministry said.

The decision means that 12,000 reserve soldiers called up at the start of the war, many for manning air defense units, will be able to go home.

"The decision was taken due to the fact that the missile threat from western Iraq no longer exists, as far as we can tell," Israel's defense minister, Shaul Mofaz, said. [Page 1]

### Iraqis defend Baghdad Jews

Iraqi Muslims helped repel looters from the cultural center of Baghdad's Jewish community on Saturday.

Security guards and neighbors turned away looters who tried several times to break into the community center and a synagogue, Agence France Presse reported.

Some 50 Jews live in Baghdad, according to reports.

Because of the Passover holiday, the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Thursday, April 17 and Friday, April 18.

## WAR IN IRAQ

### After Saddam falls, Israelis breathe sigh of relief — but just a small one

By Matthew Gutman

TEL AVIV (JTA) — With the U.S.-led war in Iraq mostly over, many Israelis breathed a sigh of relief late last week — but only a slight one, since they weren't so worried to begin with.

"I was never afraid of the Scuds anyway," says Moshe Gadassi, a 26-year-old law student soaking up the spring afternoon sun on the Tel Aviv boardwalk.

The threat of attack by Iraqi weapons of mass destruction bothered Gadassi as little as the hope of a "New Middle East," which some predict in the post-Saddam era, excites him.

"Nothing will change here," he said. "It's great that Saddam fell, but until people here start seeing concrete economic changes, all of America's brave efforts won't mean much for us."

Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz on Sunday lowered Israel's state of alert, releasing the 12,000 reservists called up when the war began and telling Israelis that they no longer needed to carry their gas masks at all times or maintain a sealed room in their homes.

But Israel's Arrow anti-missile missiles and their crews remain glued to their radar consoles, and the Israel Defense Force continues to patrol the skies around the clock. According to IDF sources, maintaining a state of high alert during the war cost Israel hundreds of millions of dollars.

Yet it seems that few Israelis even took the high alert seriously. Aside from a few high-ranking officers — and Mofaz, who made a point of being seen with the strap of his plastic gas mask slung over his shoulder — Israelis long ago unilaterally declared an end to the threat, declining to carry their gas masks with them.

Schoolchildren who a few weeks ago proudly flaunted their gas mask kits like honor badges were rarely seen in recent days carrying the cardboard boxes with black lettering.

Israeli officials have predicted that Saddam's overthrow will send shock waves through the Middle East, showing Arab countries that terrorism will be defeated and opening new opportunities to make Arab-Israeli peace.

On the street, however, few Israelis expected radical changes in their part of the world.

"Do you really think the Arabs are going to change?" asked Eli Binar, 53, selling sweet almonds from a shopping cart on the boardwalk. "No way. I fought in four wars; I think I know the Arabs. They might make peace with America, but never with us."

In a voice harsh from cigarette smoke, Binar gave a brief lecture on Islamic fundamentalism and Muslim anti-Semitism.

"It's part of their culture," he said. "And because of that we are going to be in this mess with the Arabs for as long as we live."

While people like Gadassi and Binar forecast a dim future, there are a few bright, though hazy, signs on Israel's horizon. One of the greatest boons for Israel could be the proposed reopening of the oil pipeline that used to run from Haifa through Jordan to Mosul, Iraq, and that served the British fleet harbored off Haifa until 1948.

According to Infrastructure Minister Yossef Paritzky, the pipeline would have to be widened to operate today, but could reduce energy prices in Israel by as much as 20 percent.

With such a deal, "Haifa could turn into another Rotterdam," Paritzky said.

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Sharon aide to U.S. for talks

A senior aide to Israel's prime minister was due in Washington on Sunday ahead of talks on the "road map" toward Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Military and Foreign Ministry officials were accompanying Dov Weisglass, who is chief of the Prime Minister's Office.

According to reports, Weisglass will present some 15 reservations, including a demand that the Palestinians give up the "right of return" for refugees in exchange for Israeli acceptance of the road map.

### Palestinians still rally for Saddam

Palestinians continue to stage anti-American and anti-British demonstrations, carrying photographs of Saddam Hussein and hoisting Iraqi flags over the weekend.

Thousands of protesters gathered in Nablus, Ramallah and different parts of the Gaza Strip. Some Palestinians have denounced the former Iraqi leader as a "traitor" for failing to kill many American and British soldiers in Baghdad, according to the Jerusalem Post.

Meanwhile, many Palestinians expressed fear that the collapse of Saddam's regime would deny them financial aid for the intifada.

### Jerusalem Sephardi rabbi dies

Jerusalem's long-time chief Sephardi rabbi, Shalom Mashash, died Saturday night at the age of 90.

Mashash served for many years as head of the rabbinical court in Casablanca, Morocco.

After retiring, he immigrated to Israel to serve as Jerusalem's chief Sephardi rabbi, a post he held for 25 years.

Mashash clashed with the then-chief Sephardi rabbi of Israel, Ovadia Yosef, about preserving the customs of Moroccan Jews in Israel, Ha'aretz reported.



## Daily News Bulletin

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JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at [www.jta.org](http://www.jta.org).

"Tankers from all over the world would come to take oil or make use of Haifa's top-of-the-line refineries."

One Israeli source with strong ties to Jordan says Jordan is eager to reactivate the pipeline — provided that Israel renews peace talks with the Palestinians.

"That's a sine qua non for Jordan," the source said. "King Abdullah cannot be seen as pandering to Israel, serving it cheap oil, while the Palestinian problem is forgotten."

Jordan's foreign minister, Marwan Muasher, has denied that Amman is engaged in talks with Israel over the pipeline. But he didn't reject the idea altogether, something Paritzky saw as "very positive."

Over 60 percent of the Jordanian population is Palestinian, and anti-Israel sentiment there rages almost uncontrolled. Still, Jordan could profit handsomely from the deal, the Israeli source says.

Jordan took a huge gamble in supporting the U.S.-led war against Iraq, which ignited pro-Iraq sentiment in the street. A pipeline deal could partially serve to compensate Jordan for its pro-U.S. stance, as would a quick infusion of foreign aid, the source said.

For Israel, the pipeline deal wouldn't exactly be a panacea, energy expert Amit Mor says. All told it would bring Israel only about \$70 million per year, a small fraction of the country's GDP.

When the cost of rehabilitating and widening the pipeline are factored in, energy prices in Israel would decrease only by about 5 percent, Mor estimates.

But such deals are over the head of many Israelis. Some, like Dely Asherov, proprietor of Dely's Restaurant in Tel Aviv, think of a possible post-war benefit in different terms.

"The end of Saddam Hussein is good for the digestion," she said, dashing around to fill customers' plates with Arabic salad. The end of the war "could reduce our defense expenditures and boost the economy, which is the thing that people most want," she said.

Asherov was especially enthused by a business article in the daily Ma'ariv newspaper, which said that Israeli investors were in discussions with American officials about the post-war rebuilding of Iraq.

According to the article, construction firms, telecommunication companies, engineers and electronics firms all are angling for a piece of what is expected to be a \$100 billion pie.

"Think what that could do for us. These are all the things that Israel has expertise in" said Asherov, her eyes saucer-like.

But most Israelis think there is still a lot of unfinished business in the neighborhood.

Before Israel enters an economic renaissance, "America will have to deal with that Assad bastard," she said, referring to Syrian President Bashar Assad. Syria continues to support the Hezbollah terror group on Israel's northern border, and hosts offices of terror groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

"He's got some chutzpah," Asherov said of Assad, "and if he doesn't play by the rules, he'll be next." □

## Weapons discovered in Arab factory

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli police discovered a submachine gun and other weapons in a factory in an Arab town in northern Israel. Police searched the factory in Baka al-Garbiyah, near the West Bank, after an intelligence tip, Israel Radio reported.

The factory owner denied any involvement. Police believe the weapons may have been stored by a worker, the report said. □

## Israel to get huge mall?

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel may soon get a mega-mall, featuring several elements modeled after the Mall of America in Minneapolis.

Real estate mogul David Azrieli is planning to build the Mall of Israel, which will include a cinema complex, ice skating rink and a roller coaster, in addition to stores.

Azrieli told the Globes newspaper that the mall will be built somewhere between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### French arrest 3 for swastika flags

French police arrested three men during an anti-war demonstration in Paris on Saturday after they were identified carrying placards depicting swastikas on Israeli flags.

The men were held in police detention and are to be charged with incitement to racial hatred.

The arrests follow new guidelines from Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy, who said earlier in the week that police would have "zero tolerance" for anti-Semitic activities at protests against the war in Iraq.

### Ambassador to return to Brussels

Israel will return its ambassador to Belgium after Belgian legislators amended laws that would have allowed Israel's prime minister to be put on trial for alleged war crimes.

Yehudi Kenar will return to Belgium four months after he was recalled in protest of a controversial law seeking to prosecute war criminals and perpetrators of genocide from around the world.

The law had enabled Palestinians to sue Ariel Sharon over his alleged involvement in the slaughter of Palestinians by Lebanese Christian militias at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in 1982.

Last month, however, Belgium's House of Representatives passed several amendments that limit the law to cases where the perpetrators are from undemocratic countries where they will not have a serious trial.

### Swiss remove book cover

A Swiss prosecutor has ordered the seizure of the controversial cover of a book about Swiss actions in World War II by a former U.S. undersecretary of state.

"Imperfect Justice," by Stuart Eizenstat, describes the struggle of Holocaust survivors to reclaim assets held by Swiss banks. The book's cover depicts the Swiss flag obscured by a swastika made of gold bars.

The ruling does not apply to the book itself, which can continue to be sold, minus the cover.

### Canadian Jews vs. Al-Jazeera

The two largest Jewish organizations in Canada reportedly have come out against a plan to offer Al-Jazeera on Canadian cable TV.

The Canadian Cable Television Association is considering adding the Qatar-based TV network to its package of "ethnic" offerings.

The Canadian Jewish Congress and B'nai B'rith Canada said they oppose Al-Jazeera's inclusion because the station is anti-Semitic, the Toronto Globe and Mail reported.

Arab groups in Canada have vowed to push for the channel's inclusion, saying "it would broaden the horizon of the Canadian public" regarding the Middle East.

## FBI calls July 4 attack terrorism, but not part of Islamic conspiracy

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — The shooting deaths of two Israeli-Americans at Los Angeles International Airport last year was an act of terrorism, but the Egyptian-born killer had no links to Islamic extremist groups, according to a final FBI report on the case.

The FBI released its findings about the July 4 shooting rampage at an El Al ticket counter by Hesham Mohamed Hadayet, which claimed the lives of Ya'acov (Jacob) Aminov, 46, a jewelry importer, and Victoria Hen, 25, a ticket agent.

Hadayet, who was standing in the El Al passenger line, opened fire with a .45-caliber handgun, killing Hen and Aminov. He was shot and killed by an El Al security guard within seconds.

After waffling for months over Hadayet's motives and whether to classify the attack as terrorism — to the frustration of the victims' families and Israeli officials — the FBI in its report concludes that the Egyptian immigrant methodically planned the killings to express his anger over Israeli treatment of Palestinians.

A devout Muslim, Hadayet had "told people close to him that he believed in violent jihad and also believed in targeting innocent civilians," Los Angeles FBI spokesman Matthew McLaughlin said April 11.

"It appears clear, with El Al being a government-owned Israeli airline, that he was launching an attack against that government," McLaughlin added.

In the weeks before the shooting, which occurred on Hadayet's 41st birthday, he had closed several bank accounts, bought guns and sent his family on vacation to Egypt.

The FBI concluded that Hadayet had acted as a loner.

"There was absolutely no indication that he had an affiliation with any terrorist organization or person," McLaughlin said.

Moshe Bachar, the brother of Aminov's widow, Anat, said he welcomed the FBI's concluding report but it wouldn't change anything for his sister, and "won't bring her husband back."

Bachar added that Anat Aminov, mother of five children ranging in age from 2 to 10, finds herself in difficult financial circumstances. He hopes that government assistance now will be forthcoming, he said.

Members of the Hen family could not be reached for comment.

Attorneys for the Aminov and Hen families have filed claims totaling \$58 million against the City of Los Angeles, charging insufficient security at the airport, late police response and inadequate medical care. □

## Czech Jews blocked on return of government-held properties

By Pavla Kozakova

PRAGUE (JTA) — Czech Jewish leaders are considering legal action against the Czech government after it withheld two pieces of real estate due to be returned to Jewish hands under restitution laws.

The government recently approved the return of 16 state-owned properties confiscated by the Nazis or the former Communist regime, but exempted two others currently owned by the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.

The government accepted arguments from the ministries that the properties — tennis courts and an administrative building — were required to conduct their business.

Tomas Kraus, executive director of the Czech Federation of Jewish Communities, said such properties "hardly qualify" as exceptions enshrined in the law, passed in 2000, on mitigation of losses sustained by Jews in the former Czechoslovakia.

Exceptions referred to cases such as national parks, nuclear power plants or a military airport, he argued. Kraus suggested that the process of restitution had been complicated by vested political interests. □

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

**Tension rises between activists, army after third recent casualty**

By Matthew Gutman

TEL AVIV (JTA) — The bad blood between the Israeli army and a group of international pro-Palestinian activists continues to grow as more members of the group are injured in Israeli anti-terror operations.

A British activist was shot in the head Friday as a group of foreign and Palestinian protesters approached a unit of Israeli tanks posted near the Rafah refugee camp in the Gaza Strip.

The incident ignited a crossfire of words and accusations between the army and the International Solidarity Movement.

Thomas Hurndall, 21, from England, suffered a head injury that left him brain dead. He was the third casualty from the International Solidarity Movement in a month.

The ISM is a movement of international activists working for "Palestinian freedom and an end to Israeli occupation," according to its mission statement, sometimes through illegal protests and rallies.

Though members of the group call themselves peace activists, they work only to protect Palestinians from Israeli anti-terror actions, making no attempt to protect Israelis from Palestinian violence.

Hurndall was shot when a sniper on an Israeli tank allegedly fired on a group of protestors marching toward them in an effort to thwart an Israel Defense Force incursion into Rafah. This Palestinian city, which straddles the Gaza-Egyptian border, is one of the main zones for arms smuggling into Palestinian areas.

The IDF said a tank fired only one round in the area that day. It had targeted and killed a Palestinian sniper who was hiding in the upper stories of a nearby apartment building, firing at a column of armored vehicles, military sources said.

Still, Hurndall's shooting is a disturbing addition to a string of recent bloody confrontations between the IDF and the ISM.

Only a few hundred yards from where Friday's incident took place, American activist Rachel Corrie, 23, was killed several weeks ago when she tried to prevent a bulldozer from demolishing a terrorist's home.

Witnesses said the bulldozer crushed Corrie, a student from Olympia, Washington, and immediately backed up. The army, which characterized the death as an accident, said the driver didn't see Corrie.

Last week, Bryan Avery, 24, of Albuquerque, was shot in the face while walking with a fellow activist in the West Bank city of Jenin.

The IDF said it was not aware that Israeli soldiers had shot Avery, but said soldiers had been targeting Palestinian gunmen in the area.

"This goes beyond the pale," ISM leader Tom Wallace said. "It was a sniper" that shot Hurndall, "and we know from experience they don't miss.

"The photograph clearly shows that he was wearing a bright orange vest, that he was clearly not a combatant," he continued. "This man was going to pick up a child."

Wallace said he considers the shooting a criminal act.

According to ISM activists and an AP photographer, Hurndall ran to scoop a child out of harm's way when he was shot in the

back of the head.

While the IDF has expressed sorrow at the chain of injuries, it claims ISM activists increasingly cross the line of neutrality.

One example occurred on March 27, when IDF forces launched a manhunt for a top Islamic Jihad terrorist in Jenin.

Intelligence information led the IDF to believe that Shadi Sukia was being hidden in a Jenin compound that holds a bank, a Red Cross office and the ISM office.

After combing the entire building and finding nothing, the soldiers asked two ISM activists if they could search their offices.

ISM coordinator Susan Barclay refused. The soldiers insisted, forcing their way in.

The intelligence information proved correct: Sukia had taken shelter with the ISM. Both he and Barclay were arrested.

Wallace claims that Barclay found Sukia wet and shivering outside the ISM office, "and asked the boy to come in."

According to the IDF, Sukia is no boy.

"He is a grown man, one of the highest-ranking members of the Islamic Jihad in Jenin, responsible for recruiting several suicide bombers, planning bombings himself, laying mines and sniping," an IDF official said.

Wallace, however, said, "All told they gave him a change of clothes and a blanket and a hot cup of tea." ISM activists had no way of knowing the young man's political affiliations or criminal history when they cared for him, he added.

Nonsense, the IDF responded.

"Many of the ISM activists are nothing short of provocateurs," the IDF source said. "They try to incite the Palestinians. They're almost spoiling for a fight."

A photograph taken several weeks before Corrie's death, for example, shows her with her head covered like a religious Moslem woman, burning a mock American flag in the Gaza Strip.

The IDF source intimated that Corrie's death, though regrettable, was preventable.

"That day they were running amok around the soldiers, not letting them do anything. Even when the armored units pulled back, they chased them," the source said.

Some of ISM's tactics are daring, Wallace admitted.

"ISM'ers often break curfew, just to show how ridiculous it is, and because curfews are illegal according to international law," Wallace told JTA.

The IDF source said the army maintains close relations with many humanitarian organizations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, but has yet to find a modus vivendi with the ISM.

"If the ISM'ers in Jenin had nothing to hide, why prevent the soldiers from coming in" when they were looking for Sukia? the IDF source asked. "If the guy looked so innocent, why not let him come out and prove it?" □

**Miller receives Jerusalem Prize**

NEW YORK (JTA) — Playwright Arthur Miller is receiving this year's Jerusalem Prize. The award will be given during the Jerusalem International Book Fair from June 23-27.

The jury cited Miller, who wrote "Death of a Salesman," for his "creative works over the years and his efforts on behalf of the common good, for standing alongside the small, gray individual and placing him in the center" of his plays. □