



# Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 81, No. 89

Wednesday, May 14, 2003

86th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Israel concert postponed

A Washington concert to mark Israel's 55th birthday has been postponed from next week until December.

Organizers denied that cancellation of the May 19 event was due to poor ticket sales, saying it was postponed because of the sensitive nature of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's visit to Washington the following day.

The new event, slated for Dec. 18, is timed as a Chanukah celebration, and tickets already sold will be honored for the new date. People also can request a refund.

### Sharon: Settlements not on table

Dismantling Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is "not an issue on the horizon," Ariel Sharon said.

In an interview with the Jerusalem Post, the Israeli prime minister also said comments he made recently suggesting that the settlements of Beit El and Shilo would be dismantled were misinterpreted. Sharon also denied that the United States is pressuring Israel to freeze settlements as part of the "road map" to peace.

### Israel arrests Islamists

Israeli police arrested 15 leaders of the Islamic Movement for allegedly aiding Hamas. They are suspected of illegally channeling millions of dollars to terrorist organizations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, including money that went to the families of suicide bombers.

Thirteen of the suspects were detained in overnight raids, and the final two were arrested Tuesday.

### Speaker: Anti-Semitism alarming

Anti-Semitism has reached its highest level since World War II, a speaker at an international conference on the topic said.

"A new generation of haters has been brought up and is ready to act," Rabbi Marvin Hier of the Simon Wiesenthal Center said on Monday, opening an international conference in Paris.

Outside the conference, demonstrators protested that a list of 4,000 Web sites that promote terrorism, hatred or Holocaust denial excluded radical Zionist groups.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### Powell visit lacked fireworks, but set stage for key Bush-Sharon talks

By Leslie Susser

JERUSALEM (JTA) — With a new strategic balance in the Middle East and pressure building to implement a U.S.-backed peace plan, next week's meeting between Ariel Sharon and George Bush could be their most important to date.

Neither Israelis nor Palestinians came away entirely pleased from U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell's visit to the region over the weekend.

The visit made clear that the United States is determined to keep pressing for Israeli-Palestinian peace, and that President Bush himself intends to be personally involved.

But Palestinians had expected Powell to produce more sweeping Israeli concessions, while Israel was left wondering if the United States will indeed force the Palestinians to undertake a serious crackdown on terror.

Analysts believe the moment of truth will come May 20, when the Israeli prime minister meets Bush at the White House.

U.S. officials say Bush is set to take up the sensitive issue of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and, in general, may seek greater Israeli flexibility on the "road map" to peace.

In dealing with Iraq, Syria and Islamic terrorism, the United States is taking care of the main strategic threats to Israel, these officials argue — and it's now time for Israel to be more forthcoming on peacemaking with the Palestinians.

The question is whether Bush will take that position, influenced by neoconservatives, who argue that Israel must fall in line with America's grand vision of a new, more stable Middle East — or whether he will be swayed by the Republican right wing, which supports Israel and its settlement activity and which Israeli settlers are trying to mobilize on their behalf. Indeed, the way the president leans in the meeting with Sharon could decide the road map's fate.

Sharon has yet to accept the U.S.-backed road map, saying only that Israel backs the diplomatic vision Bush laid out in a policy speech last June 24.

The road map was to be the mechanism to implement the June 24 vision, but Israel contends that the plan differs from the Bush speech in important respects.

Sharon has placed two tough demands in the way of the plan: that the Palestinians not only stop the violence but disarm and dismantle the terrorist organizations, as they have pledged repeatedly to do; and that from the start they waive their demand that millions of Palestinian refugees and their descendants from Israel's 1948 War of Independence be allowed to return to their former homes inside Israel.

Some argue that Sharon is using a familiar technique before his White House visit — striking a tough pose for his domestic audience, only to magnanimously "concede" certain issues when he meets with Bush.

Though Powell managed to set up a meeting between Sharon and the new Palestinian Authority prime minister, Mahmoud Abbas, he made little headway on substance.

In the wake of the Powell visit, Israel did make a number of goodwill gestures — releasing 180 Palestinian prisoners, allowing more Palestinian laborers and businessmen to work in Israel and easing some restrictions on Palestinian movement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Shortly afterward, however, a full closure was reimposed on the territories because

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### E.U. official: Israel, follow 'map'

Israel should be pressed to endorse the "road map," an official with the European Union said.

Putting the road map into place "would create hope that would create a determination by everybody to move forward," Javier Solana, the E.U.'s foreign policy chief, said Monday in Amman.

Israel has many objections to the peace plan, among them concerns that the Palestinian Authority will not take concrete steps to fight terrorism and dismantle terrorist groups.

The Palestinians have endorsed the plan, which calls for a Palestinian state by 2005.

### General strike resumes

Israeli public sector workers renewed a general strike Tuesday after negotiations between Treasury and trade union officials on an emergency economic plan broke down.

Seaports, trains and government offices were shut down.

Schools opened an hour late and hospitals operated on a Sabbath schedule.

There also were disruptions at Ben-Gurion Airport. Work stoppages by baggage-handlers Monday prompted the pilot of a Czech airlines flight to take off without boarding outgoing passengers and with the luggage of those who had just disembarked still in the cargo hold.

### El Al to fly on Shabbat?

The privatization of Israel's national airline could lead to El Al flying on the Sabbath.

El Al's stock will be sold on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange by the end of the month, according to a decision that was made Tuesday by the Knesset Finance Committee.

El Al's new management would be able to decide whether the airline would fly on Shabbat.

of warnings that terrorists planned to carry out attacks in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

Sharon made clear to Powell that there would be no Israeli troop withdrawal until there were real signs that the Palestinians were cracking down on terror.

Sharon also explained to Powell why Israel insists that the Palestinians disarm and dismantle terror groups like Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Al-Aksa Brigades.

If Abbas merely negotiates a cease-fire with these groups, Sharon says, they will use the lull to regroup — and launch new terror against Israel in the future.

Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom explained Israel's insistence that the Palestinians waive the "right of return."

The road map asks Israel to commit to a Palestinian state without the issue of the right of return being resolved, he argued. This had not been the case in the Oslo peace process, where the Palestinians were to be rewarded with statehood only after the refugee issue was resolved, Shalom said.

If they get their state first, Shalom asked, what incentive would the Palestinians have to waive their demand — whose implementation would mean the demographic destruction of the Jewish state?

In his public statements, at least, Powell seemed to back the Israeli position on terror. The United States must "see rapid, decisive action by the Palestinians to disarm and dismantle the terrorist infrastructure," Powell declared at a news conference in Jerusalem. "Without such action, our best efforts will fail."

Privately, though, he expressed doubts that Abbas could forcibly dismantle the terrorist groups. Israeli officials fear that if Abbas negotiates a cease-fire with the groups that holds for any length of time, the Americans will demand a major Israeli troop withdrawal in response.

Powell did not address the right of return issue directly. However, given his frequent statement that there's enough agreement between the parties to make a start on the peace plan — without letting more contentious issues bog them down now — his perspective seems clear.

Powell made a concerted effort to please his Israeli hosts and the Israeli public. His demand for Palestinian action against terror was not counterbalanced by overt pressure on Israel to freeze settlement activity in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The American seriousness on the road map can be gauged by the fact that Powell left behind David Satterfield, one of his top aides on Mideast issues, to set up a mechanism for monitoring the plan's implementation.

Satterfield made it clear that the Americans — not the European Union, United Nations or Russia, the other parties that helped draft the road map — would take the lead in monitoring compliance on security and settlements. In addition, two senior Bush administration officials — Stephen Hadley, deputy national security adviser, and the National Security Council's Middle East director, Elliott Abrams — met extensively with Sharon while in Israel last week.

The envoys emphasized the intensity of the White House focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but also heard a great deal about Sharon's needs.

Some say careful attention to language will be key to deciphering the outcome of next week's crucial meeting in the White House. In recent days, including during Powell's trip, talk shifted from immediate implementation of the road map to calls for small steps that would build confidence on the ground.

While Bush may indeed pressure Sharon to do more, analysts say he is not likely to seek Sharon's direct endorsement of the plan, instead encouraging more practical steps on the ground.

That would give the United States the progress it seeks and create an environment in which the new Palestinian Authority prime minister potentially could thrive.

Sharon, for his part, would get credit for taking steps that please the United States, without expending political capital by directly supporting the road map.

Still, such formulas can't work forever. Eventually Sharon will have to vote yes or no on the plan, said David Makovsky, senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "The administration will understand anything that deals with security realities," he said. "But actions that are not seen as security-related but as ideological or political will not be seen in the same friendly light." □

(Leslie Susser is the diplomatic correspondent for the Jerusalem Report. JTA Staff Writer Matthew E. Berger in Washington contributed to this report.)



## Daily News Bulletin

Norman H. Lipoff, *President*

Mark J. Joffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*

Lisa Hostein, *Editor*

Michael S. Arnold, *Managing Editor*

Lenore A. Silverstein, *Finance and Administration Director*

Paula Simmonds, *Marketing and Development Director*

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).

## JEWISH WORLD

### Austrian Jew blasts chancellor

The chancellor of Austria is anti-Jewish, the leader of Austria's Jewish community said.

Ariel Muzicant said that Wolfgang Schussel's comment this week that he would not pay for security for the country's Jewish community was anti-Semitic, as was a disparaging reference to security guards as cut-rate Mossad agents. Muzicant said he did not hear the comments directly, but heard about them from reliable sources.

Muzicant said in comments published Wednesday that Schussel is giving him "the feeling that his goal is the liquidation of the community."

### N.J. pressed to end poet job

A Jewish coalition is calling for the elimination of New Jersey's poet laureate post.

The coalition, which includes Nobel Peace Prize winner Elie Wiesel, U.S. Jewish groups and New Jersey rabbis, wants the position eliminated in order to oust the current holder, Amiri Baraka. Baraka made headlines last year when he read a poem that said Israel was responsible for the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center.

### Britain to shuffle ambassadors

Britain reportedly is planning to replace a controversial ambassador to Israel.

The current ambassador, Sherard Cowper-Coles, who was appointed in 2001, is expected to be transferred to Saudi Arabia, the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* reported. Cowper-Coles has made several statements seen as anti-Israel. He is due to be replaced in Israel by Simon MacDonald, currently private secretary to British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, the report said.

### French leader honored

French Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy was awarded the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Prize for Tolerance.

The award, given Monday at a conference on anti-Semitism held by the organization at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, honored Sarkozy's efforts to tackle anti-Semitism in France. Other recipients of the award at the conference included Israel's minister for Diaspora affairs, Natan Sharansky.

### Denier loses some Web privileges

A U.S.-based Internet service provider has pulled the plug on Holocaust denier Ernst Zundel's Web site. Qwest Communications made the move after being warned by the Canadian Human Rights Commission that the site contains hateful material and violates Canadian law. Zundel remains in a Canadian prison as a federal judge reviews a government order declaring him a threat to national security.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Where Bush sees free trade zone, analysts see only a 'Trojan carrot'

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The White House's proposed Middle East free trade zone is meant to help Arab and Muslim nations develop economically, while improving the U.S. image in the region.

But many experts say it's a hollow gesture that actually will bring little benefit to the countries involved.

President Bush introduced the plan last week, calling for a free trade zone — which would include Israel — within a decade, and offering tools for Arab countries to modernize and benefit from international trade.

"The Arab world has a great cultural tradition, but is largely missing out on the economic progress of our time," Bush said in a May 9 commencement address at the University of South Carolina. "Across the globe, free markets and trade have helped defeat poverty and taught men and women the habits of liberty."

Bush proposes helping Middle Eastern nations join the World Trade Organization, create bilateral treaties and trade agreements and generate capital and jobs.

As part of the plan, the United States would work with countries in the region to improve the transparency of their finances, improve education and reform their judicial systems. To that end, Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor is helping organize a forum on judicial reform, to be held in Bahrain.

Bush's announcement is seen as another gesture to reshape the image of the United States in the Arab world, which has been damaged by U.S. support for Israel and the U.S.-led war against Iraq.

It follows on the heels of the Middle East Partnership Initiative, announced late last year, which uses American funds to expand economic, political and educational opportunities in Arab states as a means of promoting democracy.

Some believe that a free trade zone could help make the Middle East, which lags behind other regions of the world in most economic criteria, more competitive.

For example, companies might be interested in transferring their textile and apparel operations from Asia to the Middle East if the regions were comparable in terms of skill level and stability, said Harold Luks, an international trade consultant in Washington.

The plan "has the opportunity to strengthen relations with the United States and help expose these countries to greater American investment and trade," Luks said. But he cautioned that the program should have modest objectives.

While the vision seems promising — and conforms to the U.S. perception that the region needs structural reforms far broader than a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict — analysts say it suffers from political and logistical problems.

Politically, they say, it's too small a gesture, with a goal too far in the future, to win the United States much support in the Middle East.

Plus, analysts say, eliminating trade barriers for Middle Eastern countries will do little if there isn't much in those countries to trade.

Jon Alterman, director of the Middle East program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, described the free trade zone plan as a "Trojan carrot."

"It's a useful component in a much broader and active plan" to revitalize the Middle East economically and politically, he said, "but we don't see the active plan."

Two of the countries expected to benefit from the proposal — Egypt and Jordan — already have trade arrangements with the United States and Israel.

And it may be unrealistic to believe that many other states will be able to meet — or are interested in meeting — WTO standards, such as transparency and open access to markets.

Jordan, for example, needed to make vast reforms before it could sign a free trade agreement with the United States, which was signed in 1997 and passed by the U.S. Senate in 2000.

"Trade obstacles in the Middle East often exist for a reason," Alterman said. "Either the government makes a significant amount from the tariffs, or middlemen make money clearing away obstacles, which gets filtered back to the government." □

*As Israel celebrates its 55th anniversary, JTA has asked prominent Israelis from across the political spectrum to discuss the challenges facing the Jewish state. This is the last in the series.*

## CHALLENGES AT 55

### Israelis must know their past, and not apologize for the present

By Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

EFRAT, Israel (JTA) — As is the case for a mature adult, the first challenge for Israel as it turns 55 is to “know thyself” — to have a clear sense of who we are by knowing what we stand for, the values and ideals by which and for which we live and, if necessary, for which we are prepared to die.

We must define the unique mission that establishes our place in the community of nations.

Since we Jews are the People of the Book, who entered the stage of history neither by massive pyramids nor the threatening sword but rather by the force of moral principles such as “Thou shalt not murder” and “Thou shalt not steal,” we must see to it that the ethical teachings of our national literature remain the basis of education for both our children and our adults.

Knowing who you are means being aware of the past, the matrix that formed you, as well as having a vision for your future, the goal to which you are heading.

After all, we are a people whose annual cycle of national celebrations begins with Passover, the festival of freedom, which forces us to re-experience our suffering as slaves in Egypt and therefore to love the stranger and aid the downtrodden.

Our New Year is a serious time of personal introspection and re-evaluation; our solemn Day of Awe teaches us the need for individual responsibility, and for forgiveness and acceptance of each other.

Jewish history and festivals must inform the texture of our society.

Hundreds of years before the Romans were exalting “*arma virumque cano*” — “of armaments and strength do I sing” — our ancient prophets were envisioning an age when “nation will not lift up sword against nation and humanity will not learn war anymore.”

And when there is a proud society that has a clear understanding of its fundamental values and overarching goals, each individual need not feel threatened by expressions of different political viewpoints or variations of religious observance.

People can talk to each other without shouting at each other, sensitive voices can prevail over ringing cell phones, the culture of debate can supplant the turbulence of argument.

If our time-honored and multifaceted Jewish culture can truly become the music of our Israeli civilization, we shall have created a shared medium of communication that can allow for wide differences of expression — religious as well as secular, Sephardi as well as Ashkenazi, land-intoxicated as well as technology-crazed, socialist as well as capitalist.

We can begin to learn from each other, instead of always jostling against each other.

At age 55, we also can afford to stop apologizing for our right to be, for the legitimacy of our existence.

There are presently 21 Arab states in the Middle East. One Jewish state, with clearly defined and secure borders on land where

Jews have lived in an unbroken chain for more than 4,000 years, certainly is what we deserve from the community of nations.

The corollary of this recognition is our right to defend ourselves against those who would destroy us.

When the Arab nations promote the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside the Jewish state, that is legitimate — as long as it is a nonterrorist democracy committed to living next to us in peace.

But when the Arab nations add their request for a “right of return” — which means the right of 3 or 4 million descendants of Palestinian refugees from Israel’s 1948 War of Independence to resettle in their ancestral homes inside Israel — that is tantamount to the destruction of the Jewish state, and dare not be countenanced.

We have every right to demand of our neighbors, as well as of the world community, zero tolerance for terrorism, zero tolerance for suicide bombers and zero tolerance for anti-Semitic incitement.

We must shout from the rooftops our basic abhorrence of “occupation,” our unalterable belief that every people has the right to be free.

But, at the same time, if an enemy attacks us — forcing us to choose between being “occupiers” or “occupied” — we have no choice but to act as occupiers in self-defense.

Even then, however, we must be as humane as possible toward the unfortunates on the other side who are captives of their malevolent and corrupt leaders.

Finally, at age 55, we have the right to take pride in our accomplishments, to remember that despite the 21,500 members of the Israel Defense Force killed in six wars, we have risen from the ashes of Auschwitz to forge a strong and proud nation.

We have revived and revitalized our ancient Hebrew language and created a united people out of a rainbow of Jews from different countries, diverse ethnic communities and virtually every spectrum of the color line.

We have established first-rate universities and centers of Torah learning.

We have built state-of-the-art hospitals, developed the economy and grown from 600,000 Jews in 1948 to 5.5 million today.

The greatest optimist in 1948 never, ever could have imagined what Israel and God have accomplished in these 55 years. □

*(Rabbi Shlomo Riskin is chief rabbi of Efrat.)*

## Hezbollah game targets Israel

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Hezbollah is selling a video game that pits guerrillas in the Shi’ite terrorist group against Israeli soldiers.

Hezbollah’s game, called Special Force, uses video and special effects to simulate Hezbollah strikes against the Israeli army during its 18-year occupation of southern Lebanon, the Israeli daily Ha’aretz reports.

The game shows a Hezbollah fighter armed with a knife, handgun, hand grenades and Kalashnikov assault rifle fighting Israelis in fortified positions protected by land mines, a Merkava tank and an Apache helicopter.

The 3-D game, with the slogan “fight, resist, destroy your enemy in the game of force and victory,” is available in several languages and is selling in Lebanon for the equivalent of \$6.60. Sales have been brisk, Ha’aretz says. □