



# Daily News Bulletin

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## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### **Palestinian cease-fire announced**

Palestinian terror groups agreed to a three-month cease-fire on attacks against Israel.

"The two movements decided to suspend military operations against the Zionist enemy for three months, starting today," Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantissi said in a statement read Sunday to The Associated Press that included his group as well as Islamic Jihad.

For their part, Israeli leaders said they are skeptical of the cease-fire. [Page 3]

### **Israel withdrawing troops**

Israeli army troops began withdrawing from part of the northern Gaza Strip on Sunday night. Details were finalized at a meeting of senior Israeli and Palestinian security officials at the Erez Crossing into the Gaza Strip earlier in the day.

The two sides are expected to hold further discussions later in the week on the transfer of security responsibility to the Palestinians in the West Bank town of Bethlehem. [Page 3]

### **Rice meets Israeli, P.A. leaders**

Condoleezza Rice held weekend talks with Israeli and Palestinian leaders. At a meeting in Jerusalem on Sunday, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon briefed President Bush's national security adviser on the details of an agreement for the transfer of security responsibility in the Gaza Strip, Army Radio reported. [Page 3]

### **U.S. lawmakers blast E. U. official**

U.S. legislators criticized a European Union official for downplaying anti-Semitism in Europe.

Members of the House of Representatives' International Relations Committee blasted Javier Solana, the E.U.'s foreign policy chief, after a closed-door meeting last week in which he reportedly dismissed worries of anti-Semitism.

"I was stunned to hear him say, more or less, that there has not been a rise in anti-Semitism in Europe. And so I said, 'Oh, it must be another Europe.' And other members couldn't believe it either," said Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.), according to Reuters. Solana also said Europe would maintain ties with Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, despite the U.S. and Israeli argument that shoring up Arafat impedes progress toward peace.

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

### **With Iraq war over, pressure rising against Iran about nuclear weapons**

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — Conspiracy theorists and opponents of President Bush may suggest that Washington's decision to ratchet up the rhetoric against Iran this month is meant to further the fog of war, distract Americans from the domestic economy and keep the public rallied around the administration.

But pro-Israel advocates say that nothing negates the threat to Israel and others posed by Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons and Tehran's active undermining of U.S. policy in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Middle East.

And in contrast to the state of affairs before the recent Iraq war, when America seemed to be standing against the world, now the mullahs who control Iran are facing mounting international pressure — particularly from the U.N. nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency — and from the European Union and Russia.

Observers say the increasingly united front abroad — coupled with daily demonstrations by ordinary Iranians demanding more freedom — ultimately benefits Israel: The noose may be closing around a regime the Jewish state sees as more dangerous than Iraq.

"Every day Iran calls for the extermination of Israel and they have weapons aimed at Israel, so this is not a hypothetical," says Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. "So, of course, anything done to minimize the danger Iran represents is good for Israel."

But Hoenlein and others say it's not only in Israel's interest for Iran to be reined in or undergo a regime change: A nuclear Iran also may threaten its Arab neighbors, spark an arms race in the region and perhaps one day even threaten targets in the West.

At the same time, Iranian support for extremist Palestinians and groups like Hezbollah torpedoes any aspiration for peace that Palestinian or Arab moderates may hold, analysts say.

"This is an Israeli issue and it's not an Israeli issue," says Matthew Levitt, a terrorism expert at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "Iran is the most frenetic sponsor of terrorism in the world and works most actively to undermine the peace process, which is why this effort is being led primarily by the Americans and the Europeans — and not on Israel's behalf."

Iran reportedly initiated its nuclear program back in 1957, under the Shah of Iran and with the assistance of the United States.

The program was shelved after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, but it was restarted in the 1990s with the help of countries like Russia and Pakistan.

With Washington-Tehran relations hostile, the United States opted for a policy of containment with barely any dialogue. In contrast, Europe chose engagement, believing relations with Iran would allow it to engage in "constructive criticism."

While it may seem that Iran and its pursuit of nuclear weapons suddenly appeared on Washington's radar screen only recently, both the Administration and the IAEA were talking about them well before the war in Iraq.

In August, the Iranian exile group National Council of Resistance accused Iran of trying to produce weapons-grade uranium, a charge later supported by satellite pictures taken by the U.S.-based Institute for Science and International Security.

IAEA officials confirmed the production potential on a February visit to Iraq. "The U.S. will focus on stopping Iran getting nuclear weapons," U.S. Undersecretary of State

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Israel cuts ties with BBC

Israel cut off ties with the British Broadcasting Company to protest its broadcast of a program on nonconventional weapons said to be in Israel. The boycott decision was in response to the rebroadcast of the program, which Israel claimed was biased and disregarded the threats the country faces.

Under the decision made by a forum with representation from the Prime Minister's Office, the Foreign Ministry and Government Press Office, Israel said government offices would not cooperate with BBC producers and reporters, that Israeli officials would not give interviews to the British network and that BBC employees would face difficulties obtaining press cards and visas in Israel, the daily Ha'aretz reported.

### Fatwa issued against Jews in Iraq

A religious edict was issued against Jews who buy any property in Iraq. Ayatollah Kazem Al-Husseini Al-Haieri said that any Jew who buys real estate in Iraq should be killed.

The fatwa, as it is called in Arabic, was reportedly issued after several Iraqis came to the Shi'ite cleric saying Jews from abroad had made inquiries regarding Iraqi property in recent weeks.

### Sabbath protests continue

Fervently Orthodox protesters staged violent protests on a major Jerusalem thoroughfare Saturday for the second week in a row.

Demonstrators threw rocks at police and drivers as part of efforts to close the road to traffic on Shabbat.

One police officer was injured in the head. The protest erupted despite an agreement reached last week between Jerusalem police and local rabbis and community leader to position fervently Orthodox monitors to prevent the demonstrations from turning violent, the Jerusalem Post reported.

John Bolton told Israeli officials in mid-March. The IAEA this month pressed Iran to sign a more restrictive protocol of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty.

The NPT allowed countries to develop nuclear materials as long as they were declared and inspections were permitted of nuclear facilities, with advanced notice.

The treaty was beefed up after 1991, when the first Gulf War revealed Iraq's secret nuclear program, humiliating the IAEA.

The new NPT protocol allows for more intrusive surprise inspections of any facility within a ratifying nation's territory. Iran refuses to ratify the new protocol.

On top of this, there has been mounting tension between America and Iran over Iran's role in allegedly roiling the waters in neighboring Afghanistan; supporting the uprising of fellow Shi'ites in Iraq and attacks on U.S. troops stationed there; providing sanctuary to Al-Qaida operatives; and funneling arms, cash and other support to Palestinian terrorist groups.

President Bush recently said he would "not tolerate construction of a nuclear weapon" by Iran. Analysts took this as a bit of saber-rattling to compel Iran to accept inspections, since the consensus in Washington seems to be that force is a last resort.

Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin — who recently reassured Hoenlein and other U.S. Jewish leaders of his opposition to a nuclear Iran, but whose country has helped Iran build a controversial nuclear power plant — also appealed to Iran to cooperate with the IAEA.

The European Union, Iran's largest trading partner, has not suspended trade talks with Tehran but recently endorsed coercive measures "and, as appropriate, the use of force" against any government found to be lying to the IAEA about its nuclear intentions.

"Just as there are more people here who think some carrot needs to go with the stick, on the European side there's a recognition that their policy also failed and that there needs to be more stick with the carrot," said Scott Lasensky, a fellow with the Council on Foreign Relations.

"For Israel and supporters of Israel, this growing convergence between the Americans and Europeans is only a positive development," Lasensky said. "A more cohesive coalition gives the Iranians fewer opportunities to exploit the differences and makes the stick of containment more credible."

Earlier this month, the IAEA criticized Iran for possibly using civilian nuclear facilities to make weapons.

If Iran continues to resist the IAEA, the U.N. Security Council may step in this fall. The council is empowered to slap sanctions on Iran or authorize the use of force.

However, Iran-watchers note that there is broad consensus within Iran — which historically has viewed itself as a regional power — that nuclear weapons are a point of national pride and that the country must be nuclear for self-defense purposes from nuclear-armed neighbors Russia, Pakistan and, it is believed, Israel.

That, and the fact that an Iranian nuke reportedly is so far along in development, leads some observers to suggest that the Bush Administration should focus its efforts more on who pushes the buttons in Iran by supporting pro-democracy forces.

Observers say that a nuclear Iran with the same radical leadership would be able to remove any diplomatic leverage against it, enabling it to resist any sort of international pressure to reform domestically or stop supporting terrorism.

But the worst-case scenario is that Iran could use its nuclear weapons for offensive, not purely defensive, purposes.

"When you determine the threat a country represents, you try to determine its intent and capability," says Rebecca Dinar, spokeswoman for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the pro-Israel lobby that long has pressed Congress to take a hard line against Iran.

"Not every nuclear country poses a threat. But Iran has made its intentions clear," Dinar said.

"Iranian officials have stated on numerous occasions that they would like to 'blow Israel into the sea.' And that's what makes its growing capability so threatening."

Indeed, former Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani, who still wields considerable influence in Iran, was quoted in December 2001 saying that "a single atomic bomb has the power to completely destroy Israel, while an Israeli counterstrike can only cause partial damage to the Islamic world." □



## Daily News Bulletin

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## JEWISH WORLD

### Pakistan to recognize Israel?

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf urged his country to consider recognizing Israel.

Such a move "should be seriously thought over. The media should have an open debate on this," Musharraf said in an interview aired Sunday over the private Geo Television channel. "I have been saying, 'Should we be more Catholic than the pope or more Palestinian than the Palestinians themselves?'"

### Oxford apologizes for professor

Oxford University apologized for the behavior of a professor who reportedly refused to consider an Israeli candidate for an internship.

In an e-mail to Amit Duvshani, Professor Andrew Wilkie of the university's School of Molecular Medicine reportedly accused Israel of "gross infringements of the Palestinians' human rights," the daily Ha'aretz reported.

The university issued a statement that it does not tolerate any action that discriminates.

### A rabbi for 'crypto-Jews'

Portugal's "crypto-Jewish" community is welcoming a full-time rabbi. Rabbi Elisha Salas of Chile was sent to Portugal by the Jerusalem-based Amishav organization, which seeks to return "lost Jews" to Judaism.

Ancestors of the crypto-Jews were forcibly converted to Catholicism during the Inquisition. Salas will be based out of the city of Belmonte, where some 150 crypto-Jews formally converted to Judaism in the early 1990s.

### Survey: Many Italian teens racist

Nearly one-quarter of Italian teen-agers harbor anti-Semitic views, a new survey said.

More than 50 percent of Italian teens aged 14-18 held negative views of Muslims, according to the survey, sponsored by the Union of Italian Jewish Communities. More than one-third of respondents harbor generally racist attitudes, the survey said. The highest levels of racism were seen among teen-agers who lived in northern Italy, are deeply religious or are right wing.

### Observant woman is funniest

An Orthodox Jewish woman won a Jewish comedy contest in New York.

Joan Weiner, who wears a sheitl, or wig, worn by some married Orthodox women to promote modesty in accordance with Jewish law, won the June 23 competition sponsored by the New York Jewish Week.

"I'm a feminist. I believe in a woman's right to choose her own jewelry," Wiener quipped during the fifth annual contest.

## Amid more skepticism than hope, Israeli-Palestinian cease-fire declared

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA)—Three Palestinian terror groups have agreed to a cease-fire on attacks against Israel.

But whether the moratorium on violence will hold for long is anybody's guess.

The cease-fire announced Sunday by Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Fatah was accompanied by a redeployment of Israeli troops from parts of the Gaza Strip under a deal to transfer security responsibility to the Palestinians.

The steps were the fruit of heavy American pressure on both Israel and the Palestinians to stop violence and resuscitate the political process through the U.S.-backed "road map" peace plan.

But despite the steps forward, there was plenty of caution and skepticism among all parties involved.

U.S. officials stressed that much work remains to be done; some Israeli ministers called the cease-fire a ruse by Palestinian terrorist organizations to regroup; and some Palestinians warned Israel against steps that would end the truce.

The official declaration by Hamas and Islamic Jihad of a three-month moratorium on attacks against Israel followed speculation that the military, political and financial pressure on the groups was growing too hard to bear.

On Sunday, senior Hamas official Abdel Aziz Rantissi, who was the target of a failed Israeli assassination attempt earlier this month, said Hamas and Islamic Jihad had decided to suspend military operations "against the Zionist enemy for three months," starting Sunday.

Later Sunday, Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction joined the cease-fire, declaring a six-month suspension in attacks against Israel.

The cease-fire declaration by Hamas and Islamic Jihad was qualified — among the demands raised was that Israel halt "targeted killings" of suspected Palestinian terrorists and release Palestinian prisoners.

Israeli opinion on the cease-fire was divided.

Among the critics was Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom, who called the cease-fire declaration a "ticking bomb" in the long term.

"The main issue is to dismantle the infrastructures of terror," he said on Channel One.

The United States called the truce a step in the right direction. But a White House spokesperson stressed that the road map called on the parties to dismantle the terrorist infrastructure.

As the Palestinian cease-fire was issued, Israeli troops began redeploying from Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip, the first part of a deal to transfer security responsibility to the Palestinians.

Worked out by senior Israeli and Palestinian security officials, the plan calls for Israel to dismantle military checkpoints and cease incursions into the Palestinian areas in exchange for Palestinians assuming security responsibility and acting to prevent terrorist movement and rocket attacks from the area.

At a meeting Sunday, the parties also worked out details for travel arrangements on the main north-south Gaza Strip highway.

No agreement was reached yet on the transfer of security responsibility to the Palestinians in the West Bank city of Bethlehem.

The latest developments topped off a visit to the region by Bush's national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, the latest of a string of senior administration officials dispatched to the region. Rice met Sunday with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who briefed her on the plan to transfer security responsibility to the Palestinians. She also met with the Israeli foreign and defense ministers.

On Saturday, Rice met with Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas, who was formally invited to the White House. Abbas reportedly did not accept immediately. He has previously said he will not visit the United States until Israel's siege on Arafat is lifted. □

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

## Love it or hate it: streams split over high court's gays ruling

By Joe Berkofsky

NEW YORK (JTA) — For Rabbi Denise Eger, founder of the largely gay Congregation Kol Ami in West Hollywood, Calif., it was “a Shehecheyanu kind of day.”

Eger cited the Jewish prayer of thanksgiving on June 26, the day the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Lawrence v. Texas*, threw out state laws criminalizing gay and lesbian sex.

The ruling was a victory not only for gay and lesbian rights but for all Jews and Americans, Eger said.

“This is the gay version of *Brown v. the Board of Education*,” added Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum of one of the nation’s largest gay synagogues, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah in New York City, referring to a famous high court ruling against segregated schools.

“This is really a historic day. It’s a moment that’s one step farther out of Egypt and one step closer to the Promised Land.”

The June 26 landmark ruling barring states from policing private sexual behavior gave many gay and lesbian Jewish leaders an extra reason to celebrate Gay Pride Week in their congregations.

But some on the political right did not embrace the decision.

“What happened is the harbinger of challenges to laws that are designed to promote a vision of sexual morality,” warned David Zweibel, executive vice president of Agudath Israel of America, a fervently Orthodox group. “No matter what the court may say about the legality of consensual homosexual conduct, it doesn’t speak to the more important question of morality,” he said. “For those of us who take our guidance from the eternal source of morality, the Bible, we recognize that this type of conduct is sinful and therefore inappropriate.”

While those reactions reflected polar extremes in the Jewish community, many across the political and religious spectrum offered a more complex glimpse into the decision’s impact.

Perhaps nowhere is the ruling more relevant than in the Conservative movement, where some questioned the ruling’s effect on the debate raging over ordaining gay and lesbian rabbinical students and performing gay and lesbian commitment ceremonies.

Rabbi Joel Meyers, executive vice president of the Rabbinical Assembly, the movement’s rabbinical union, said Conservatives have long backed rights to privacy and welcomed gays and lesbians in congregational life — but that gay and lesbian ordination and unions remain issues for the movement to tackle on a theological basis.

“Individuals in their private homes are entitled to freedoms without interference from police,” Meyers said, “though halachically our position is that homosexuality is not normative.”

The movement’s religious standards body, the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, is to take up questions on gays and lesbians later this year.

Meyers said the panel does not act in response to “public pressure,” but he added, “I don’t believe halachic decisions are taking place in vacuums either. The rabbinate clearly understands where society is, what the pressure points are.”

But Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson, dean of the University of Judaism’s Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies in Los Angeles — who long has called to liberalize the movement’s standards on gays and lesbians — predicted the Supreme Court decision would not

influence the law committee directly. “This is not an issue of moral condemnation, this is an issue of how we understand the Torah,” he said.

To the left of that stance lie the more liberal streams, such as the Reform and Reconstructionist movements, which have approved the ordination of gay and lesbian rabbis and commitment ceremonies. The Reform movement’s Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati this year accepted the nation’s first transgendered student, a woman now living as a man.

For these movements, the court case was not so much a theological breakthrough as a social turning point.

The ruling “represents a significant leap forward in the protection of the equal rights of gay and lesbian Americans and in the right to privacy for all,” said Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Reform Religious Action Center in Washington.

For gay and lesbian rabbis, the court’s 6-3 ruling reversing its own 17-year-old decision upholding Georgia’s anti-sodomy laws signified a historic moment for gays, lesbians and Jews.

Kleinbaum, for example, said she was “horrified” that the court had cited *Leviticus* and its prohibition of homosexuality in the 1986 Georgia case, *Bowers v. Hardwick*.

“The court had used the language of the religious right to discriminate, and as a progressive religious person I had to object,” she said.

“All people are created in the image of God — *kiddush hashem* — and there’s no conditional clause saying, ‘only straight people,’ ” she said.

Kleinbaum also hoped the ruling would usher in full civil marriage rights for gays and lesbians — something Agudath Israel and one dissenting voice on the bench, Justice Antonin Scalia, warned against.

The religious commitment ceremonies she performs currently “have no legal benefits for the couple,” such as tax breaks or health benefits.

But Agudath Israel’s Zweibel felt otherwise.

“Stripping government of the right to legislate on the basis of community morals and standards could well lead down the road to invalidating other laws that reflect society’s abhorrence of other promiscuous behavior, such as prostitution, adultery, bigamy and incest,” he said.

Despite such misgivings, many gay and lesbian rabbis hailed the decision.

Rabbi Camille Angel of Congregation Sha’ar Zahav in San Francisco, a largely gay and lesbian synagogue, called the ruling “one of the greatest decisions in my lifetime.”

“I can no longer be treated as a second-class citizen,” she said.

The mood at Sha’ar Zahav was “ecstatic,” she said.

Ironically, Angel said many congregants have grown somewhat complacent about gay and lesbian rights because they live in San Francisco, one of the nation’s gay and lesbian centers, and the synagogue’s contingent at the annual Gay Pride march has dwindled.

“We forget we’re living in a bubble,” she said. With the new ruling, she added, “it’s burst.”

Rabbi Joshua Lesser of Congregation Bet Haverim, a largely gay and lesbian synagogue in Atlanta, said the court also rendered a “big crack” in the notion that gays and lesbians are “less significant” because “of the people we choose to be with.”

It also signaled “a significant break” in the country’s Judeo-Christian ethic, he added. □