



# Daily News Bulletin

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86th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Israel kills Hamas member

Israeli troops killed senior Hamas member Jihad Abu Swerah in a raid in Gaza, which also wounded three soldiers.

A gun battle erupted when Israeli forces tried to arrest him in the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip, Israeli media reports said. The assault involved helicopters, tanks and ground troops.

### Arafat uses human shields

Women and children are setting up camp around Yasser Arafat's compound in Ramallah to shield him from any Israeli action.

The Palestinian Authority president has vowed to use the gun he carries with him to fend off any Israeli effort to exile or kill him. The moves at Arafat's compound come in the wake of Israel's decision last week in principle to exile the Palestinian leader.

### Arafat: Truce possible

Under heavy military and diplomatic pressure, Yasser Arafat said he is organizing a cease-fire on attacks against Israelis.

In interviews Wednesday with Israeli television and Al-Jazeera, the Palestinian Authority president said Islamic Jihad already has agreed to a cease-fire with Israel, and Hamas officials are discussing the move.

But Israeli officials say they want to see concrete anti-terrorist actions by P.A. forces, not another cease-fire that would allow terrorists to regroup and rearm.

A senior P.A. official said that Hamas spiritual leader Sheik Ahmed Yassin, whom Israel targeted in a Gaza strike earlier this month, said Hamas would suspend its attacks on Israelis if Israel halted its military strikes.

### More U.N. action on Israel

The U.N. General Assembly will hold an emergency meeting Friday to discuss Israel's decision to "remove" Yasser Arafat.

The move, sponsored by Arab member states, follows the failure of the Syrian-sponsored resolution in the U.N. Security Council that would have demanded that Israel desist from removing the Palestinian Authority president. The United States vetoed that resolution because it did not include a condemnation of Palestinian terrorist attacks.

## 5763: STRENGTH AMID STRIFE

### Attacks, elections and peace process all part of balance in tumultuous year

By Leslie Susser

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The year 5763 saw the first signs that almost three years of Israeli-Palestinian bloodletting could be coming to an end with the renewal of a fragile peace process.

Both Israel and the Palestinians accepted an American-initiated peace plan known as the "road map," and Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas pledged to end Palestinian terrorism.

At first, Abbas seemed to be succeeding.

On June 29, 2003, Palestinian terrorist groups — including the Islamic fundamentalist groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad — declared a three-month cease-fire.

But Abbas failed to take any action to dismantle the terrorist militias, as the road map obliged him to do, terrorist attacks ensued and Israel resumed its policy of targeted killings against terrorist leaders.

Seven weeks after it had been declared, the cease-fire collapsed, leaving the region mired in violence and casting grave doubt on the future of any peace process.

In nearly three years of relentless Palestinian terrorism and Israeli response since the Palestinian intifada was launched, more than 850 Israelis and 2,000 Palestinians had died. The Israeli economy had plummeted, and economic life among Palestinians had come to a virtual standstill.

Yet despite the terrorism, international pressure and economic hardship, the government of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon stood firm and made little political concessions to the Palestinians.

On the contrary, intense Israeli military pressure, including reoccupation of Palestinian cities in the West Bank, the emergence of a new, more pragmatic Palestinian leadership and a resolute, hands-on American approach after a victorious war in Iraq all contributed to some major changes in Palestinian policy.

That change constituted a willingness to consider ending terror in order to achieve Palestinian goals through international — especially American — pressure on Israel.

The new Palestinian policy was based on acceptance of the road map, which outlined a series of steps for Israel and the Palestinians to take on the way to a two-state solution in line with the vision outlined by President Bush on June 24, 2002.

In the summer of 2002, U.S. State Department officials drafted a step-by-step plan for achieving the vision. They invited representatives of the European Union, the United Nations and Russia to join the United States as a diplomatic "Quartet" to finalize the document and lend it greater international credibility.

The Palestinians accepted the road map immediately, while the Israelis expressed reservations and belatedly agreed to the plan in late May.

Less than a month earlier, P.A. President Yasser Arafat had bowed to international pressure and appointed Abbas as the new P.A. prime minister.

After Israel's acceptance of the plan, which Sharon pushed through Israel's Cabinet over strong right-wing opposition, Sharon adopted an unprecedentedly conciliatory tone toward the Palestinians.

"It's not right for Israel to rule over 3.5 million Palestinians," he declared. Two days later, he used the word "occupation" for the first time to describe the presence of Israeli forces in parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

On May 29, Sharon — who had refused to meet with Arafat because of his ties to

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Weisglass goes to Washington

A top adviser to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is going to Washington to discuss loan guarantees. Dov Weisglass, Sharon's bureau chief, and Amos Yaron, director-general of the Defense Ministry, will meet Monday with Condoleezza Rice, President Bush's national security adviser.

### Movement on prisoner-swap deal

Israel's point man on negotiations with Hezbollah for a prisoner-exchange deal is in Germany for talks.

The trip by Maj. Gen. Ilan Biran, reported in Thursday's Jerusalem Post, is raising expectations that a deal could be finalized soon for the return from Lebanon of kidnapped businessman Elhanan Tannenbaum and the remains of three abducted Israeli soldiers who are believed dead: Benny Avraham, Omar Souad and Adi Avitan.

The deal currently being discussed would not include getting new information on missing Israeli airman Ron Arad, Israeli television reports said.

### Saudis mull nukes

Saudi Arabia is considering obtaining nuclear weapons. The Guardian of London reported that the Saudis are considering acquiring some type of nuclear capability amid geopolitical upheaval in the Middle East. It is not clear whether they have made any decision on the matter.

### Bush: Security comes first

President Bush said that Israeli security and fighting terrorism are the first steps to restoring the peace process. Speaking with Jordan's King Abdullah at Camp David on Thursday, Bush said he hoped a Palestinian Authority leadership would "commit itself 100 percent to fighting off terror." He also said that P.A. president Yasser Arafat "failed as a leader."



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terrorism — underlined the changed diplomatic climate by meeting with Abbas.

Abbas and Sharon met again on June 4, this time with Bush and Jordan's King Abdullah, at a summit at the Red Sea port of Aqaba that was designed to kick-start the peace process.

Abbas declared an end to the armed uprising against Israel, renounced terrorism against Israelis "wherever they might be" and acknowledged "Jewish suffering through the ages."

The process survived more violence in the immediate aftermath of the summit, and on June 29, Palestinian terrorist groups announced a unilateral cease-fire. But they called it a "hudna" — an Islamic term indicating a temporary suspension of hostilities for the purposes of rearming.

Israel withdrew troops from the Gaza Strip and Bethlehem and waited for the Palestinians to fulfill their road map obligations by dismantling terrorist groups.

But the Palestinian leadership refused to act, instead focusing on Israel's obligation to dismantle illegal West Bank settlement outposts and — a demand not in the road map — calling for the release of thousands of Palestinians from Israeli jails.

They also complained about a security fence Israel was building to keep terrorists from the West Bank out of Israel proper.

Meanwhile, Abbas' popularity among Palestinians remained low, and his failure to act against terrorists increasingly concerned Israel and the United States.

After the collapse of the cease-fire, Abbas resigned on Sept. 6 after just 100 days in office, charging that he had been undercut by the United States, Israel and Arafat.

Arafat then tapped Ahmed Karia, speaker of the Palestinian legislative council, to replace Abbas.

Israel, however, viewed the turn of events warily, blaming Arafat for the ongoing violence and the failure to take the process forward.

Calling him an "obstacle" that must be "removed," the Israeli government decided in principle on Sept. 11 to expel Arafat, sparking a wave of Palestinian protest.

In contrast with the political tumult on the Palestinian side, Sharon commanded a strong position among Israelis, despite a string of corruption scandals.

Sharon led the Likud Party to a landslide victory in early elections called for Jan. 28, winning 38 seats in the 120-member Knesset. The main opposition party, Labor, won only 19. The secular Shinui emerged as Israel's third-largest party with 15 seats, ahead of the fervently Orthodox Shas Party with 11.

For its part, the main opposition party, Labor, suffered a disastrous year. The party's chairman, Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, prompted the early elections by bolting Sharon's unity government in October 2002, ostensibly over budget cuts.

But in party primaries on Nov. 19, Ben-Eliezer lost the leadership to the popular but uncharismatic mayor of Haifa, Amram Mitzna, a neophyte in national politics. After Labor's election debacle and bitter party infighting, Mitzna resigned on May 4.

Shimon Peres, at age 80, a former prime minister and party leader, took over again as Labor's temporary chairman.

The economy remained depressed in 5763, though the relative quiet of the cease-fire helped spark a minor upturn in the summer as Israelis, less concerned for their safety, flocked to stores and American Jewish tourists began returning to Israel.

Earlier, Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took steps to boost international confidence in Israel by slashing nearly \$2.5 billion from the national budget of \$67.5 billion.

However, the cuts deepened unemployment, which reached nearly 11 percent with a record 300,000 Israelis out of work. They also hit poorer Israelis who relied on government welfare to boost their incomes.

Among them was single-mother Vicki Knafo, 38, who sparked a protest by single mothers against welfare cuts by walking 125 miles in July from her home in Mitzpe Ramon to Jerusalem, where she set up a protest camp outside the Finance Ministry.

The standoff between Netanyahu and demonstrators raised fundamental questions about the nature in the state. Netanyahu claimed that he was weaning poor Israelis from a culture of handouts to one of work. His critics argued that he was destroying Israel's welfare state and widening already large gaps between Israel's rich and poor. □

*(Leslie Susser is the diplomatic correspondent for the Jerusalem Report.)*

## JEWISH WORLD

### France gets tough on Islamists

France will close radical mosques and expel their imams, French Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy said.

In an interview with the daily *Le Figaro* on Thursday, Sarkozy — who is popular among Jews for his hard line against anti-Semitic violence — said he would deal only with elected representatives of France's Muslims, not with radical elements of the community. France has an estimated 6 million Muslims.

"Mosques where extremism is preached will be closed, and imams who make radical speeches will be expelled," Sarkozy said.

### Italians meet in Israel

In a show of solidarity with the Jewish state, an Italian Jewish group is flying to Israel to hold its board meeting there. Members of the board of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities will spend Shabbat in Jerusalem and hold a board meeting there on Sunday.

Presidents of Jewish communities from around Italy were slated to join them for the four-day trip. The Italian union's president, Amos Luzzatto, said just one topic will be on the board's agenda, "Israel and us."

Italy has about 35,000 Jews, most of them in Rome and Milan.

### Berlusconi: Sorry about Mussolini

The Italian prime minister apologized to Jewish leaders for recent remarks about Mussolini and said he supports Israel.

Silvio Berlusconi met with Jewish leaders in Rome's main synagogue on Wednesday to apologize for saying that Italy's former fascist dictator Benito Mussolini "never killed anyone."

Berlusconi will be in New York next week to receive the Distinguished Statesman Award of the Anti-Defamation League, which will present him with the honor of a "Salute to Italy" dinner.

### Canada freezes Hamas funds

Canada's government has ordered banks to freeze funds connected to five Hamas-linked charities.

Financial institutions were ordered to report back to federal officials by Oct. 15 on whether they had found any accounts connected with the five groups. Canada declared Hamas as a terrorist group last fall.

### Knesset speaker talks to Latvia

The speaker of Israel's Knesset, Reuven Rivlin, told Latvia's parliament that dialogue with terrorists is useless. "Those who show understanding for tyranny and terrorism" provide "backing for terrorism," he said. Rivlin also paid tribute to Latvia's Jews at a memorial ceremony for Latvian Jews massacred at the Rombolla Forest during the Holocaust.

### 10 YEARS AFTER OSLO

## The only effective way: Carry out Oslo to the end

By Yossi Beilin

TEL AVIV (JTA) — The Oslo Agreement was the first agreement ever signed between the Israeli government and the PLO, intended to put an end to the national struggle that is the heart of the larger Arab-Israeli conflict.

The Oslo Agreement was the natural continuation of the framework agreements signed at the 1978 Camp David summit between Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, which also provided the basis for the 1991 Madrid Conference.

But the talks I initiated in Oslo contained two unique elements: For the first time, the Palestinian partner was clearly identified as the PLO; and the idea was proposed to transfer to Palestinian control most of the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area even before elections were held for the Palestinian Authority's legislative council and leadership.

The Oslo process was intended to save the Zionist enterprise before Israel would control an area where the majority of residents would be Palestinian.

Anyone who believes that Israel must be a Jewish and democratic state must support the establishment of a border between Israel and the Palestinian side. — preferably by consent rather than by unilateral measures.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin understood this and gave his support to the Oslo process. He faced opposition from a right-wing camp that presented itself as nationalist but didn't propose any solution that would guarantee Israel a Jewish and democratic future.

Even today, when Israel is led by its most right-wing government ever and the U.S. administration also is more conservative, the "road map" peace plan is being presented as the only game in town — when in fact it's nothing more than artificial respiration to keep the Oslo process alive through 2005.

The interim measures did not accomplish their goal — that is, a final peace agreement — because of efforts by elements on both sides.

On the Palestinian side, extremist religious groups understood peace with Israel would be the end of the road, and they acted to undermine the process through violence.

On the Israeli side, it was the rightists — in particular, extremist settlers — who did whatever they could to foil a final-status settlement that would divide the Land of Israel.

Attempts to attribute the past three years of violence to the Oslo Agreement are characteristic of people who did not believe in the agreement in the first place.

I am not saying that the Oslo Agreement was free of flaws. But those flaws were not the result of an innocent belief that the interim period would build such confidence between Israelis and Palestinians that it would be easy to reach a final status settlement.

In my opinion, there were two flaws in the Oslo Agreement and its implementation:

First, the fact that no reference was made to the freezing of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip — the Palestinians accepted Rabin's personal commitment to halt the construction of new settlements — created an opening that a subsequent right-wing government used to build new settlements, though it clearly was not the original intent of the agreement.

Second, Israel did not give sufficient importance to incitement in Palestinian media, thinking it was a trend that would pass when the final-status agreement was signed. This incitement played a significant role in the Palestinians' return to violence in 2000.

Both sides blame the other for the process' failure, though the Palestinians' choice of violence means they have the greater share of blame.

But our future does not lie in reciprocal blaming. If we want to secure the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, we must do it before there is a Palestinian majority under Israeli control. If the Palestinians want a state with a secular and pragmatic leadership, they must do it before Hamas conquers the hearts of the people.

We have no time. The only effective way to do this is to complete the Oslo process and reach the final-status agreement as quickly as possible. □

*The author was minister of justice in Ehud Barak's government and one of the architects of the Oslo Agreements.*

## Dean-Lieberman dustup reflects focus of Israel as political issue

By Ron Kampeas

WASHINGTON (JTA)—Political bloodletting in the lead-up to the Democratic presidential primaries was inevitable with so many candidates vying for attention.

And the Middle East — a minefield of sensitivity and scrutiny — was a likely forum for it to start.

The Howard Dean-Joseph Lieberman dustup may have died down since last week, but expect more of the same, say veteran Democrats and political analysts.

"You're seeing the beginnings of the gloves coming off on the Democratic side — nine people are vying for a majority of 4,600 delegates," said Mark Wrighton, an expert on Democratic Party politics at the University of New Hampshire.

"They will be competing on the edges for those delegates and will have to distinguish each other on a number of topics — the Mideast is one."

Lieberman seized his opportunity when a reporter overheard Dean's comment to a supporter at a Santa Fe, N.M. rally.

"I don't find it convenient to blame people. Nobody should have violence, ever. But they do, and it's not our place to take sides," Dean said.

Lieberman was soon chiding Dean at a debate.

"Howard Dean's statements break a 50-year record in which presidents, Republican and Democratic, members of Congress of both parties, have supported our relationship with Israel, based on shared values," he said.

Attacking Dean on Israel made sense for Lieberman, Wrighton said, because it's an issue with which the Jewish senator from Connecticut is comfortable.

"Lieberman has to differentiate himself, and he has experience here, and it's an issue that is dear to one of his constituencies," he said.

Another factor was Dean's front-runner status: Any perceived slip becomes irresistible fodder for the other candidates in the Democratic race.

Peter Fenn, a leading Democratic strategist in Washington, said the scrutiny of Dean's Middle East thinking is unlikely to disappear anytime soon.

"It happens with every phenom — the power of the microscope gets turned up," Fenn said.

Other candidates also weighed in on the debate, while some in Congress criticized Dean's calls for an "even-handed" approach to the Middle East.

"If the President were to make a remark such as this it would throw an already volatile region into even more turmoil," said Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.), who probably has had the most contentious relationship with Dean.

Supporters in Congress of another candidate, Rep. Richard Gephardt of Missouri — who likely will face a tough challenge from Dean in the Iowa caucuses in February — wrote Dean a letter saying: "We believe it is wrong to say the U.S. should 'not take sides' in the Israeli-Palestinian dispute."

They wrote, "In these difficult times, we must reaffirm our unyielding commitment to Israel's survival and raise our voices against all forms of terrorism and incitement."

For his part, Dean said, "I've learned that 'even-handed' is a sensitive word in certain communities."

He added, "perhaps I should have used a different euphemism"

Speaking to a CNN interviewer last week, he accused his political rivals of "demagoguery" and said, "What Joe and others are doing on Israel is despicable," singling out Lieberman.

"The mistakes that the governor made last week were only mistakes of words, not of conscience," Dean's spokesman, Eric Schmelzer, told JTA.

"This party has always been united, and Dean would never allow for a split to occur, especially when there's no split there."

Using the Middle East as a blunt rhetorical instrument in presidential primaries is not new, said Hyman Bookbinder, a longtime liaison between the Jewish community and political parties.

He recalled a 1984 battle between Democratic candidates Walter Mondale and Gary Hart over how and when the United States should move its embassy to Jerusalem.

Such efforts to score political points were dangerous to the consensus of political support for Israel, Bookbinder said, because they create perceptions of differences where none really exist.

"You can overdo this," he said. "There are bigger issues involved."

Another problem for Democrats is that the likeliest benefactors of the infighting are Republicans, said Steve Rabinowitz, a Democratic consultant.

"It's policy righteousness, but it's political amateurishness," Rabinowitz said.

But it's not just politics, according to Wrighton. Shining a light on a candidate's approach to the most sensitive issues helps voters make choices.

"The Mideast is always going to be a topic, given the role that presidents have to play in the process."

Fenn said complaints that Dean misspoke missed the point: nuance and speech are important.

"The Middle East is a tinderbox. He's not a candidate for governor, not for state legislature — it's real important for him to get it right," said Fenn, who supports Lieberman.

"The Dean team should counsel him to come to grips with his use of language."

Dean has acknowledged as much, and his supporters say he will be more careful about language.

"Answering a question in the backyard is not a way to explain Israel policy," said Steve Grossman, a former president of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the pro-Israel lobby, who is a close adviser to Dean.

"There will be no light" between Israel and the United States in a Dean administration, he said.

However brutish the debate, such exchanges can prove useful in clarifying positions and educating the candidates.

Dean's willingness to learn is a positive outcome, and suggests he'll pay better attention to nuance, said the national director of the Anti-Defamation League, Abraham Foxman, who wrote Dean asking for a clarification.

"When I first met Gov. Bush, we discussed a lot of issues and he said, 'I hadn't thought about that,'" Foxman recalled. "It's a learning curve. Dean's sensitivity, and his understanding that this caused a lot of anxiety, is what's important." □