

IN THE NEWS

Settlers rally in Tel Aviv square

At least 100,000 people attended a pro-settler rally in Tel Aviv.

Sunday night's demonstration at Rabin Square was organized by groups opposed to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's policy of settlement withdrawal as part of a disengagement plan from the Palestinians.

Some 15 Knesset members from Sharon's Likud Party attended the rally, despite reported pressure from the prime minister not to participate.

Dean clarifies Hamas remarks

Howard Dean repudiated a 1998 interview in which he said Hamas might prove more moderate if it took power in the Palestinian areas.

The Democratic presidential candidate said last Friday that he now believes Hamas "is an unrepentant terrorist organization."

Dean's campaign released the statement after NBC News aired segments from 1998 Canadian television appearances in which the former Vermont governor said that if Hamas took power "they may actually have to be more responsible and start negotiations" with Israel.

Since then, Dean said in his statement last Friday, "it has become crystal clear that Hamas is an unrepentant terrorist organization and the Palestinian Authority must live up to its obligations to the United States and Israel and dismantle Hamas and other terrorist groups."

Clark promises Mideast peace

Gen. Wesley Clark promised to bring peace between Israelis and Palestinians if he is elected president.

Speaking last Friday at a pancake breakfast in Hanover, N.H., Clark also accused President Bush of showing a lack of leadership in mediating between Israelis and Palestinians.

WORLD REPORT

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Despite threat of violence, students return to Israel programs

By RACHEL POMERANCE

NEW YORK (JTA) — When the University of Pennsylvania changed its Israel travel-abroad policy, it was a bittersweet victory for David Rendsburg.

The Penn senior might have spent his junior year in Israel were it not for the university administration, which until last month wouldn't guarantee that it would give credit for study in Israel because of a U.S. State Department advisory against travel to the Jewish state.

But starting next fall, students will be able to study in Israel by filing a petition that includes a statement of support from an academic adviser and a waiver, signed by both the student and his or her guardian, releasing the university from responsibility for the student's safety.

The shift came after students affiliated with Pennpac, a pro-Israel campus group, launched a letter-writing campaign urging a policy review and bombarded the provost with 400 letters in the last two weeks of the fall semester.

"I wish it came two years ago, when I still could have qualified for study abroad," said Rendsburg, who created a Web site for the campaign.

More than three years into the Palestinian intifada, American undergraduates have adjusted to violence in Israel and the ongoing conflict in Iraq, officials at Israeli universities say.

In some cases, the unrest even has piqued students' interest in the region.

Taken together, these varying factors have caused American enrollment in Israeli

university programs to climb.

But the numbers are only about half of what they were before the Palestinian intifada, said Amy Sugin, director of the American Friends of Hebrew University's office of academic affairs.

Many universities restricted study in Israel when the State Department issued a travel advisory after the intifada was launched in September 2000.

For example, Penn, which once was among the most prolific providers to Hebrew University — sending about 20 students a year — sent none the past two years, Sugin said.

Academic policies remain a serious stumbling block for American students hoping to receive academic credit for study in the Jewish state and the Israeli universities hoping to attract them.

Some activists are aiming to change that fact.

Ross Neihaus, president of UCLA's Bruins for Israel, said some students are planning a campaign to protest the University of California's cancellation of its Israel programs.

The state university system, which sent 64 students to Israel as recently as 1999, asked students on the program to leave Israel during the 2001-02 academic year, and none have gone through the system since that move.

A university spokesman said the step was taken because of fear for the students' safety. Rabbi Chaim Seidler-Feller, director of UCLA's Hillel, plans to take up the issue with administrators.

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**FOCUS
ON
ISSUES**

■ *Students return to Israel programs despite violence and bureaucracy*

Continued from page 1

In October, the heads of three major Jewish academic groups issued a statement to their members and the media.

"We wish to express our alarm at the policies of North American universities that seek to dissuade, discourage, prevent or even prohibit students who decide to study in Israel from doing so," said the statement from the National Association of Professors of Hebrew, the Association for Jewish Studies and the American Academy for Jewish Research.

The groups argued that decreased study in Israel was harming Jewish studies programs in North America.

They also called on universities in the United States to "review their policies on study in Israel in order to remove obstacles created by administrative decisions."

Lawrence Schiffman, a former president of the Association for Jewish Studies and a co-author of the statement, said it was difficult to gauge the statement's impact, but he said he hopes activists will use it as a tool for protesting university policy.

Policies on Israel study differ from university to university, with some schools providing full sponsorship or limited recognition, such as a waiver to attend a non-approved program or credits that don't count toward a student's grade-point average.

Other universities have dropped partnerships with Israeli universities that provided financial aid and credit trans-

fers, giving students no guarantees that credits will be accepted.

Still, Israeli universities are reporting an upswing in North American undergraduate enrollment and new enthusiasm by students eager to study in the Jewish state.

Tel Aviv University has seen an increase in enrollment to about 100 Americans this year, up from roughly 75 last year and 50 the year before, said Ami Dviri, director of the university's office of academic affairs.

Yeshiva University boasts record numbers for its program, in which students typically spend their first year of college in an affiliated yeshiva program in Israel.

"We have the biggest group we've had in the history of the program," said John Fisher, director of Y.U.'s enrollment management.

The university now has 675 students in Israel, up from 580 the previous year.

Students' eagerness to be in Israel simply "won out this year" over parental concern, he said.

At a recent orientation in New York for American undergraduates heading to Hebrew University, students buzzed with excitement about taking a semester abroad.

Their questions almost made it seem as if the students were headed to summer camp, not a violence-stricken country. Students and parents asked if dorm rooms had refrigerators, how many rolls of film to pack and whether they should bring items like water filters.

Ira Glasser, 20, a junior at SUNY Binghamton, said his parents were worried about security, but study abroad "is something that I really pushed for."

At Hebrew University, enrollment has increased nearly 30 percent, to about 150 American undergraduates this year.

But policies at U.S. universities still are having a "significant" impact, Sugin said.

Enrollment in a Hebrew U. pre-university program has dipped only by about 18 percent since the intifada began, while the semester-abroad program, where stu-

dents enroll through their universities, has dropped by nearly half, Sugin said.

Like Rendsburg, many students blame university policies for thwarting their Israel study plans.

Sarah Bier, a junior at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, was prohibited from studying in Israel — despite the fact that her international relations degree required her to study in the country where her second language is spoken.

Bier said she was advised to drop out of school and reapply — without assurance that she could graduate on time.

Instead, she opted not to study in Israel and changed her major.

Bier said administrative headaches mean that fewer Jewish undergraduates are studying in Israel nowadays, but those who do go are more passionate.

"You get the cream of the crop who are either Jewishly connected or advocates of Israel programming on campus," she said.

Some students say the process still isn't so difficult.

The University of Maryland has postponed its study program in Israel, but students simply enroll on their own and credits are "pretty easily transferrable," said sophomore Aaron Wolf, 19, who plans to study in Israel next year.

But students can run into other vexing issues when university partnerships are severed.

"Most — if not all — of our program returnees have been able to successfully transfer their TAU credits to their home school," said Tel Aviv University's Dviri. "The problem is usually either with students who are deterred by their school's policy threat or with students who heavily rely on financial aid and are unable to transfer it to TAU due to their school's policy on study abroad in Israel."

Dviri noted that several efforts are under way, by both students and administrators, to ease university policies on Israel study.

But, he said, "I don't think anything significant" will happen until the State Department retracts or downgrades its travel advisory.

Students' eagerness to be in Israel simply 'won out this year' over parental concern.

John Fisher

Yeshiva University

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Israeli settlers stage mass rally in Tel Aviv

By DINA KRAFT

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Israeli settlers packed Tel Aviv's Rabin Square on Sunday to send a strong message to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon: Do not dismantle Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza.

But whether Sunday night's rally of an estimated 100,000 people has any effect on Sharon remains to be seen.

The father of the settlement movement, Sharon recently announced a plan to dismantle some Jewish towns in the West Bank and Gaza as part of a plan to unilaterally disengage from the Palestinians if progress in peace negotiations is not made in the next several months.

Sharon also pledged to remove illegal settler outposts in the near future to fulfill Israel's commitments under the U.S.-sponsored "road map" peace plan.

Police helicopters buzzed overhead and Israeli flags flapped in the wind as demonstrators hoisted signs at the rally reading "To divide our land is to defy God" and "Settlers are the real security fence."

A large blue-and-white banner unfurled across the podium read "Israel will not bend."

Several speakers sat underneath the banner, including government ministers. A few Knesset members from Sharon's Likud Party attended the rally, despite pressure from the prime minister not to.

Settlers, who were bused in from the West Bank and Gaza Strip for the rally, say it is their biblical birthright to settle in the disputed territories, which they claim as part of the Land of Israel.

The international community, including the U.S. government, agrees with the Palestinians that the settlements are a major stumbling block to peace efforts.

Effi Eitam, the head of the National Religious Party and Sharon's housing minister, vowed to pull his party out of the government should Sharon follow through on his plan to dismantle settlements.

"There is no capitulation in the battlefield," Eitam said. "Capitulation is defeatist, and our red line is made from the blood of those who have been killed."

Yet the prime minister's resolve in carrying out his plans appears to be strong.

"Things are decided not by demonstrators but by the government, my government, which adopted the road map," Sharon told reporters in Jerusalem.

"Although my government will make every effort to implement the road map, if we do not succeed we will have to take unilateral steps of disengagement under which we would have to relocate some Jewish communities and redeploy our armed forces in order to provide more security for the State of Israel."

Spirits were defiant but festive at the rally, which was held in the same square where Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated in 1995. The square is the site of frequent left-wing gatherings.

The rally included loudspeakers blasting an unofficial anthem of the Israeli left, "The Song of Peace," which Rabin sang shortly before he was shot.

Psalm-reading booths were set up on street corners, young men wearing large knitted yarmulkes tapped out a steady

rhythm in a drum circle and teenagers danced to Israeli folk tunes.

"We came to protest the plans of Ariel Sharon, who wants to evacuate Jews from their homes. These settlements are important historically and for our security," said Yiska Wurtzman, a 40-year-old math teacher from the settlement of Maon, near Hebron. She came to the rally with her seven children, ages 3 to 18.

Young mothers pushed strollers, their husbands walking nearby, many of them with guns slung across their backs.

Packs of young boys dashed across the square wrapped in Israeli flags. Many of the young people sported the sticker, "Kahane was right" — a reference to the slain ultranationalist rabbi, Meir Kahane, who advocated transfer of the Palestinians to Arab countries.

"We came here so they won't evacuate settlements. It's our home, it's our country," said Batya Siegen, 15, from one of the largest Jewish cities in the West Bank, Ma'aleh Adumim, a suburb of Jerusalem.

Many Tel Aviv residents hurried past the rally, a sign of the disconnect between the settlers and the residents of Israel's largest metropolitan area.

But Yechiam Baruchi, a Tel Aviv accountant, said he had come to support the demonstrators.

"I'm here to identify with the protest against dismantling the settlements in the Land of Israel because I think if we fold, it will be considered a victory to terrorism. The settlers are safeguarding peace," he said. "If we return to the borders of 1967, we won't have a chance of survival."

To quiet critics, Dean chooses Fuerth as policy adviser

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — For a presidential campaign eager to dispel questions about a candidate's commitment to Israel, hiring Leon Fuerth could be just what the doctor ordered.

Last week, Howard Dean's campaign named Fuerth chairman of Dean's foreign policy team.

Fuerth served as Al Gore's national security adviser both when Gore was a senator and when he was vice president. He also has eight years of experience as a principal in White House planning meetings with Cabinet officials during the Clinton administration. Fuerth would have been the leading candidate to become national security adviser had Gore won the presidency in 2000.

Fuerth's appointment is expected to go a long way toward

counterbalancing the negative reception Dean has had among some Jews because of his missteps.

"Those in the pro-Israel community who know Leon Fuerth and the role he played with Vice President Gore will be pleased," said David Harris, executive director of the American Jewish Committee. "He has a long record of involvement and there have been any number of encounters that demonstrate his understanding of the region and his support for a robust U.S.-Israel relationship."

The primary value of the new hire is the foreign policy gravitas Fuerth brings to a campaign trying to quiet concerns about Dean's international-affairs savvy.

Fuerth, a Jew with a pro-Israel record, also could help dispel some Jews' concerns about Dean.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Syria assails Israel

Syria blasted Israel for allegedly expanding housing in the Golan Heights.

In a letter to the U.N. Security Council, which the council then made official by circulating this week on its stationery, Syria accused Israel of authorizing nine new settlements and expanding existing housing in the "occupied Syrian Golan."

"This provocative decision by Israel comes just a few weeks after the initiative launched by Syria to restart peace talks, the letter says, calling Israeli towns on the Golan a "stumbling block" to peace.

Ambassador Arye Mekel, Israel's deputy permanent representative to the United Nations, said the letter was "unfounded" and that the Israeli delegation was considering whether to react.

An Israeli Cabinet minister recently claimed the government had approved a plan to double the number of Israelis on the strategic plateau, but other Cabinet members denied it.

Ahmed Qurei blasts Israel's fence

The Palestinian Authority prime minister appealed to the United Nations to stop Israel's West Bank security barrier.

"From the edge of this racist separation wall, I appeal to the United States, to President George W. Bush, Europe and the United Nations" to understand that the fence "leaves not a chance for the establishment of a Palestinian state," Ahmed Qurei said Sunday.

The Palestinian leadership recently pledged to declare statehood unilaterally or call for a binational state if Israel proceeds with its unilateral construction of the fence.

Suicide bombing foiled

A would-be suicide bomber was wounded when he set off his explosives after being confronted by Israeli troops. Security sources said the terrorist who blew himself up Sunday outside Karnei Shomron, a Jewish town in the West Bank, was believed to have been en route to Israel to carry out an attack.

In a separate West Bank incident, troops shot dead an 18-year-old Palestinian after coming under a barrage of rocks in a village outside Nablus. An army spokesman said the man had been preparing to throw a Molotov cocktail.

Syria accused of arming Hezbollah

Israel says Syrian planes that brought earthquake relief supplies to Iran returned with weapons for Hezbollah. Israeli officials told reporters last Friday that Syrian planes carried missiles and weapons for Hezbollah after dropping off supplies at Bam, the site of a devastating Dec. 26 earthquake. The weapons then were placed on trucks and taken to Lebanon.

Iranian Foreign Ministry officials called the allegation a "baseless and sheer lie." Israeli officials also said U.S. intelligence knew about the Syrian operation. Syrian officials had no immediate comment.

Israelis aided Mars images

Israeli scientists devised technology that helped NASA beam images from the surface of Mars. Three Israeli graduates of the Technion — Israel Institute of Technology formulated coding that has become the world standard for the type of video image compression used to send the Mars images back to Earth.

Guillermo Sapiro, Gadiel Seroussi and Marcelo Weinberger helped Hewlett-Packard develop a way to speed the transmission of data from the Mars roving lander Spirit, saving millions of dollars in the process, Israeli media reported. The Israelis expanded on work two Technion professors formulated 25 years ago.

WORLD

Anti-Semitism up in Holland

Acts of anti-Semitism in the Netherlands more than doubled in 2002, according to a report released Jan. 8.

Anti-Semitic attacks, including arson, assault and graffiti, rose from 18 incidents in 2001 to 46 incidents in 2002 despite an overall drop in racist and extreme right-wing violence in the country, the Anne Frank Foundation and Leiden University said, according to Reuters.

The Center for Information and Documentation on Israel in the Netherlands said that one of its reports last year also had noted a surge in anti-Semitism in 2002, apparently connected to the Palestinian intifada.

Money from Gadhafi

Libyan Jews are preparing to make millions of dollars in compensation claims against their former government.

The Organization of Libyan Jews, in conjunction with the Israeli government, is preparing the case after Libyan leader Muammar Gadhafi said last week he would be willing to compensate former Libyan Jews for confiscated homes, buildings and communal properties, Britain's Sunday Telegraph reported. The properties are estimated to be worth more than \$100 million, the paper reported.

Ukrainian Jews blast development

Jews in Kharkov, Ukraine, are protesting a proposed commercial development near a memorial for a Holocaust-era massacre.

Kharkov's Jewish leaders have called on Jewish groups in Ukraine and abroad to support their community's fight against the proposed development, which includes a gas station, a cafe and stores on a highway near Drobitsky Yar, the site of a December 1941-January 1942 massacre when 15,000 Jews were killed.

"The Kharkov Jewish public was not informed about the planned construction. Everything was done as in good old times — in the corridors" of power, leaders of the Kharkov Association for Jewish Culture wrote in an article published last month by the Kiev-based newspaper Jewish Observer.

Poisonous anti-Semitism

Anti-Jewish slogans were written on the lawns of Tasmania's Parliament House — in poison. As the grass died, the message "Kill the Jews" could be read in letters more than three feet high.

Several swastikas also were drawn in poison. The area is next to the popular market in Tasmania's capital of Hobart. "It's a bloody disgrace," a spokesman for Tasmanian Premier Jim Bacon told JTA. "Police are looking into it." The speaker of Parliament, Michael Polley, said, "Incidents like this have no place in Tasmanian society." The letters were discovered by gardeners early this week, though horticulturists say the poison would have been put down 10 to 14 days ago. The offending area of lawn has been cultivated and relaid.

NORTH AMERICA

Not everyone loves a Jewish girl

Urban Outfitters discontinued a T-shirt that critics said stereotyped Jews.

The T-shirt, part of the clothier's line of ethnic T-shirts, bore the slogan, "Everyone loves a Jewish girl" surrounded by dollar signs, according to the Anti-Defamation League, which complained to the chain.

The ADL praised the decision to pull the shirt, which Urban Outfitters said it made out of respect for the Jewish community.