



## IN THE NEWS

## Palestinian bomber kills eight in Jerusalem

A Palestinian suicide bomber killed at least eight people aboard a Jerusalem bus.

The Al-Aksa Brigade, the terrorist wing of Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction, claimed responsibility for Sunday's blast, which gutted the No. 14 bus outside Liberty Bell Park. Israeli officials said the terrorist attack underscored the need for the West Bank security barrier, on which the International Court of Justice is to hold hearings beginning Monday.

## Judge blasts Swiss banks

The federal judge overseeing Swiss bank settlements with Holocaust victims excoriated the banks for focusing on their public image.

Judge Edward Korman of the Eastern District of New York, who is in charge of the \$1.25 billion deal to return Swiss assets to Nazi victims, accused the banks of filing "frivolous and offensive objections" in the past 18 months rather than returning the money, the New York Sun reported. The judge accused Credit Suisse and UBS of "spin and distortion" by denying they transferred Jewish money to German wartime banks or lied about it.

So far the banks have only distributed \$150 million of \$800 million earmarked for the initial group of claimants in the 2000 settlement.

## Anti-Semitic attacks rise in United Kingdom

Anti-Semitic incidents in Britain increased by 7 percent in 2003, a Jewish group said, attributing the rise to Middle East tensions. The Community Service Trust counted 375 malicious acts in 2003, including the desecration of 400 tombstones in London's East End — the biggest attack of its kind in Britain.

The group said the number was the second-highest it counted since it started recording incidents in 1984.

# WORLD REPORT

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## For visiting U.S. Jewish delegation, Jerusalem bomb hits close to home

By MICHAEL S. ARNOLD

**J**ERUSALEM (JTA) — Lt. Gen. Moshe Ya'alon was describing the Palestinian Authority's strategy of terrorism when a small commotion erupted in the corner of the room.

One of Ya'alon's aides swiftly scribbled a note and passed it to the Israeli army chief of staff, who hardly skipped a beat in his Sunday-morning speech to a visiting delegation from the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

It was only several minutes later, after Ya'alon had finished his presentation, that he told the group a Palestinian suicide bomber had detonated himself aboard a bus barely 100 yards from the group's hotel in downtown Jerusalem.

At least eight people were killed in the explosion and more than 60 were wounded. The attack took place right near the German Colony, an upscale neighborhood filled with trendy shops and beautiful homes.

The Al-Aksa Brigade, the terrorist wing of P.A. President Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, claimed responsibility for the attack, citing Israel's construction of its West Bank security barrier as the primary grievance.

Discouraged from visiting the scene in such a large group, most members of the Conference of Presidents delegation proceeded with a planned tour of the fence. But the group's leaders were whisked past Israeli security barricades to within feet of the bus.

There they saw firsthand the carnage that until now they had known only on television screens.

"When you see it on the news, you see it for

a minute and you say, 'Oh, that's horrible,'" James Tisch, the conference's chairman, told JTA. "When you see it up close, it hits home and registers much more powerfully. You understand that these were real people that were killed and injured."

As members of Israel's emergency response teams loaded the wounded onto stretchers and collected dismembered body parts and bits of raw flesh, six body bags were lined up on the ground next to the bus, out of sight of the cameras. A seventh victim died in the hospital, and an eighth was reported dead soon afterward.

The executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents, Malcolm Hoenlein, who has seen the aftermath of other suicide bombings, appeared visibly shaken. He said he had never been to the site of a bombing so soon after the attack.

"It's overwhelming. It's too hard to comprehend," Hoenlein said. "There were body parts right there by our feet. You can't bring the war on terror any closer to home."

The explosion came one day before the International Court of Justice at The Hague was to begin a hearing on the legality of the security fence Israel is building to keep Palestinian terrorists from crossing into Israel.

Israeli officials said the bombing lent new weight to Israel's argument that the fence is needed to block terrorists.

Israel, like the United States and several European countries, is boycotting the hearings at The Hague on the grounds that the international court has no jurisdiction in the case. The U.N. General Assembly voted in early December to send the issue of the fence

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**TERROR  
IN ISRAEL**

## ■ For Presidents Conference, Jerusalem bombing hits close to home

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to the international court.

As if to emphasize the alliance between Israel and the United States, the Palestinian bomber chose to attack a bus right outside Jerusalem's Liberty Bell Park, which was established in 1976 to honor the U.S. bicentennial and includes a replica of the liberty bell in Philadelphia.

"This is Arafat's response to The Hague," Hoenlein said. "If anything underlines the obscenity of The Hague trial, this is it. It's Israel's obligation to bring an end to this kind of outrage by building the fence."

A statement from Arafat's office said, "We will not stand idly by while Palestinian interests are harmed," — apparently a reference to the damage the bombing could cause the Palestinian case at The Hague hearings.

The Palestinian Authority also condemned the bombing and vowed to catch those responsible. Similar pledges have gone unfulfilled in the past.

The bombing also took place on the heels of a visit to the region by three high-level U.S. diplomats, who came to Israel to discuss Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plans for unilateral disengagement from the Palestinians.

Israeli sources said Sunday that Sharon had decided not to retaliate harshly against Palestinian targets after the bombing, Ha'aretz reported. But, the sources added, an anti-terror operation in Bethlehem, the bomber's hometown,

probably was inevitable in the near future.

Israeli officials said the Palestinian attacker would not have been able to infiltrate Israel from his home outside Bethlehem had the 450-mile barrier been complete.

"I hope that The Hague's 15 justices get the message," Justice Minister Yosef "Tommy" Lapid told Israel Radio on Sunday. "If there had been a fence around Jerusalem, there would not have been a terrorist attack today."

At The Hague, thousands of pro-Israel volunteers gathered ahead of Monday's court proceedings. Pro-Israel demonstrations were being planned for The Hague that included the public display of the remains of an Israeli passenger bus gutted in another terrorist attack in Jerusalem last month.

Before Sunday's attack, Israel began dismantling a 5-mile stretch of the barrier outside Baka al-Sharqiya, one of the areas where the security fence cuts into the West Bank.

Israel's Defense Ministry denied that the dismantling of the fence section was linked to The Hague hearing. Lapid called the move "good spin," but Israeli Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom voiced concern that the move could be misconstrued as an admission of guilt by Israel.

In Jerusalem, as emergency workers combed through the shell of the bus and peeled away its windshield, a pack of journalists pressed against a hastily erected security barrier some 30 yards away, straining for a better view and forming small circles around Israeli public officials.

Nir Barakat, a member of the Jerusalem City Council, was on his way to visit a local school when the bus exploded across the street from him. He told an aide to call an ambulance and ran to aid the wounded.

"Life is more important than the quality of life," Barakat said, referring to Palestinian arguments that the fence intended to thwart terrorists impedes Pales-

tinian freedom of movement and makes it difficult for farmers to reach their fields.

"I want to protest," he said. "The world has a double standard and needs to get its priorities straight. The first thing is to stop the killing."

Israeli spokesmen said the attack only reinforced the need for the security fence — though they said they doubted the bombing would sway the international court, which most Israelis believe will rule against the Jewish state.

"It's a crazy world," Jerusalem Mayor Uri Lupolianski said in an

interview. "The Hague is asking if the government of Israel has a right to build the security fence. This is a question?"

Four of the victims were identified by late Sunday as Lior Azulai, 18, a student at the Gymnasia Rehavia high school; Benayahu Yehonatan Zuckerman, 18, a student at the Experimental School in Jerusalem; Yuval Ozana, 32, of Jerusalem, and Staff Sgt. Netanel Havshush, 20, of Jerusalem.

Police found that the Palestinian bomber may have boarded the No. 14 bus after its guard — common on Israeli buses these days — disembarked.

Also Sunday, police closed Maxim's restaurant in Haifa. Police cited inadequate security after a plainclothes female police officer managed to get by Maxim's doorman with a decoy bomb hidden under her clothes over the weekend. Last October, a suicide bomber from Islamic Jihad killed 21 people at Maxim's.

U.S. Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.), a member of the Conference of Presidents delegation, said the Palestinians were "thumbing their noses at the world" by carrying out an attack the day before the hearing.

"We knew about these attacks intellectually before, but now we have a little more emotional understanding," Nadler said. "One thing that is really mind blowing is seeing this piece of flesh like uncooked meat lying on the ground, and knowing that it comes from a person." ■

*(JTA correspondent Dan Baron in Jerusalem contributed to this report.)*

The Hague is asking if the government of Israel has a right to build the security fence. This is a question?

**Uri Lupolianski**

Mayor of Jerusalem

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## THIS WEEK

## MONDAY

■ Israel's West Bank security barrier becomes the focus of worldwide attention as the International Court of Justice at The Hague begins hearings on the fence's legality. Israel, the United States and most European nations will not take part in the official proceedings, so the real drama is expected to be out on the streets, where pro-Israel demonstrators will make their case for the fence with a bombed-out bus.

■ A dozen French Catholic bishops start a four-day visit to Jewish sites in New York on a trip sponsored by the World Jewish Congress, which promotes Catholic-Jewish ties. The bishops, all due to become cardinals, will visit the Jewish Theological Seminary, Hebrew Union College, historic Lower East Side synagogues and Brooklyn Chasidic communities, among others.

■ Israeli Labor Party leader Shimon Peres begins a week of consultations in Washington with U.S. administration and congressional officials. Insiders say the Bush administration will want to know if the opposition leader will join Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's government should Sharon lose right-wing support over his plan to pull settlers out of Gaza.

## TUESDAY

■ The Senate Foreign Relations Committee hears testimony on reconsidering the "road map" peace plan amid talk that the U.S.-led initiative is dead. The committee will hear from former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and top Clinton-era Middle East envoys Dennis Ross, Martin Indyk and Robert Malley.

■ Lawyers for Carlos Telleldin open his defense in the case of the Buenos Aires AMIA bombing, which killed 85 in 1994. Telleldin, an auto mechanic, is accused of providing the van used in the bombing.

■ The House of Representatives Financial Services Committee hears testimony about Yasser Arafat's finances. Arafat's handling of the Palestinian economy has come under increased scrutiny recently, and French authorities are investigating allegations that he launders \$1 million a month through his wife, Suha, who lives in Paris.

## WEDNESDAY

■ The controversial Mel Gibson film "The Passion of the Christ" opens on 2,000 screens nationwide on the Catholic holy day of Ash Wednesday. Critics say the film portrays the Jews as responsible for Jesus' crucifixion and the movie will spur anti-Semitism. The Aramaic-and-Latin film, originally thought by many to be too obscure for a sizeable audience, has had swift advance ticket sales and may become one of the year's biggest blockbusters.

## Gay Jews line up to marry

By JOE BERKOFKY

NEW YORK (JTA) — Rabbi Yoel Kahn originally married 13 years ago, but last week he tied the knot again — to the same man.

Kahn, who leads a congregation in Sonoma, Calif., first wed his longtime partner Dan Dellm under a Jewish wedding canopy, or chupah, but on Feb. 16 they finally secured a marriage license from the City and County of San Francisco.

Kahn joined a deluge of more than 2,400 same-sex unions the city began sanctioning two weeks ago. Last Friday, a San Francisco judge refused to block the city's issuance of marriage licenses to same-sex couples, saying it was causing no immediate harm.

Kahn and Dellm also are among the many Jewish gays and lesbians who hope to have civil weddings after being allowed for years to hold Jewish ceremonies in Reconstructionist or Reform synagogues.

For many, the motivation to marry is as much about gaining equal civil and legal rights associated with marriage as it is about principle.

"I don't need the state to bless my marriage; I had a chupah and a ketubah," said Rabbi Denise Eger, of the largely gay Congregation Kol Ami in West Hollywood, Calif., speaking of the hallmarks of Jewish wedding ceremonies. But "don't deny me my equal rights as a citizen."

Kahn and Dellm waited with their 12-year-old son and hundreds of other gay and lesbian couples for hours in the rain to wed legally, because "it was important to show the world we wanted this," Kahn said in a telephone interview the following day.

Their original religious ceremony "was our first act of religious commitment and civil disobedience," Kahn added, "but we didn't expect" this move allowing gay civil unions "to happen in our lifetime."

Indeed, while waiting on line to marry, Kahn and Dellm met a gay Jewish couple from Fort Lauderdale, Fla., whose wedding Kahn officiated at after his own.

Now Kahn and many other gay and lesbian Jews hope the San Francisco gay wedding parade will spark a legal battle to

overturn the state's ban on gay civil weddings and lead the way for other states to follow.

"This is going to force the hand of history," Rabbi Camille Angel of San Francisco's Congregation Sha'ar Zahav, a Reform synagogue, told JTA.

Angel, who has officiated at more than 200 Jewish weddings for both heterosexual and gay couples, also joined the throngs heading to San Francisco City Hall, waiting five hours to wed her longtime partner, Karen Segal.

Back in 1999, Angel and Segal married at a ceremony at Congregation Rodef Sholom in New York, and they display a ketubah, or Jewish wedding contract, from that event in their home.

But the couple jumped at the chance to claim the legal rights civil marriage affords, which "heterosexuals just take for granted," Angel said.

"We're high, we're married, we have a license," Angel said. "I felt like we should have been singing Shehecheyanu," the Jewish prayer of thanksgiving said at singular occasions.

Many Jewish homosexuals say that even if they

have had Jewish commitment ceremonies or religious unions, civil marriage remains key to securing more than 1,000 ancillary state and federal rights, ranging from tax breaks to adoption benefits.

Evan Wolfson, executive director of Freedom to Marry, a New York-based coalition of groups that promote gay civil marriages, said civil marriage "is the gateway to a vast array of tangible and intangible protections that matter in every area of life."

Several liberal Jewish rabbinic groups have come out for gay civil weddings.

Two weeks ago, the Association of Humanistic Rabbis issued a statement in support of "diverse sexualities and gender identities," citing its longtime support for gay civil and religious weddings. And the Reform movement's Central Conference of American Rabbis also called for Massachusetts to uphold gay civil weddings.

Also two weeks ago, 95 Reconstructionist, Reform and Conservative rabbis in Massachusetts took out an ad in the Boston Globe saying they oppose any attempt to reverse the high court ruling. ■

'This is going to force the hand of history.'

Rabbi Camille Angel  
Reform San Francisco rabbi

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## MIDDLE EAST

### Mending fences

Israel dismantled a section of the West Bank security barrier. The Defense Ministry said the 5-mile stretch of fence torn down near Baka al-Sharqiya on Sunday was slated for removal months ago; it is not linked to the upcoming hearings on the fence at the International Court of Justice.

But Justice Minister Yosef "Tommy" Lapid told Israeli television that the move would generate "very positive media spin" ahead of the hearings at The Hague.

### Israel kills two base infiltrators

Israeli troops killed two Palestinians among four who were trying to infiltrate an army base in the Gaza Strip.

An army tank fired a number of shells at the infiltrators, who were crawling along a road in the Gush Katif settlement bloc the night of Feb. 19. One of the infiltrators was wounded and captured, and another escaped. Palestinian authorities named the two dead as belonging to the Al-Aksa Brigade.

### Wrong body to Hezbollah?

Israel may have sent Hezbollah the wrong body.

Kul Al-Arab reported that a Lebanese family expecting the body of Muhamed Biro, a drug dealer who died in an Israeli prison when he was 70, instead received the body of what appeared to be an Orthodox Jew.

Now, the paper reported, Hezbollah wants an additional 30 bodies as compensation for the mistake.

The body was transferred to Lebanon as part of an exchange of more than 400 Arab prisoners for one live Israeli citizen and three dead Israeli troops.

The Israeli army confirmed to Israeli news outlets last Friday that the case was under review, but said it had not heard of any new demands from the Lebanese terrorist group.

### 5,000 protest Gaza withdrawal

Two former Israeli chief rabbis led prayers at the Western Wall to imploring God to stop "evil plans" to evacuate settlements.

Rabbi Avraham Shapira and Rabbi Mordechai Eliahu, both chief rabbis in the 1980s who went on to advise the settler movement, led about 5,000 worshippers in prayer last Friday at the Jerusalem holy site.

They described Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's pledge to pull out of the Gaza Strip and part of the West Bank as an "evil decree."

### Army prepares for court-related clashes

The Israeli army is preparing for unrest during next week's international court on the West Bank security barrier.

The Palestinian Authority has already declared Monday, the day the International Court of Justice in The Hague hears the case, as a "day of rage."

P.A. officials say protests will be non-violent, but Israel is getting ready for clashes throughout the West Bank and Gaza. Troops are training for use in rubber-coated steel bullets and water cannons.

### Maxim shut for inadequate security

A Haifa restaurant that was the site of a suicide bombing in October was closed after police cited inadequate security.

On Sunday, Maxim was ordered closed for 30 days after a female undercover officer was able to enter the restaurant wearing a mock suicide belt. Twenty-one people were killed in an attack there on Oct. 4, 2003.

## NORTH AMERICA

### Public support for Israel wanes

American public support for Israel has declined slightly over the past year.

In its annual "favorability of nations" poll Feb. 9-12, Gallup found that 59 percent of Americans hold a favorable view of Israel to various degrees, versus 35 percent unfavorable, with 6 percent having no opinion. That's down from 64-29 one year ago with 7 percent staying neutral.

Meanwhile, 76 percent of Americans have an unfavorable view of the Palestinian Authority, 15 percent have a favorable view and 9 percent have no opinion. One year ago the ratio was 73-13, with 14 percent undecided.

### What was the question, again?

A major Canadian newspaper changed its Web site poll after readers complained it was biased against Israel.

The original question on the Globe & Mail's Web site read, "Should all financial and political aid to Israel be cut off until a just peace with the Palestinians is in place?"

The next day it was replaced with a multiple-choice question: "In order to spur parties to a peace settlement in the Middle East, would you: Cut off aid to Israel; Cut off aid to the Palestinians; Cut off aid to both; Continue the present course?"

Explaining that the original question had been posted by an unsupervised junior staffer, the paper's Web site editor, Angus Frame, assured readers that the newspaper is committed to providing balanced coverage of the Middle East.

### Group wants paper investigated

B'nai Brith Canada is calling for a probe of a Canadian newspaper for promoting anti-Semitism.

The group says the Alberta Arab News published a series of articles that included Holocaust denial and referred to Zionist control of the media.

"We are disappointed that Canadian Arab leaders have not come forward to denounce this hate-filled material," said Rochelle Wilner, the national president of B'nai Brith Canada.

## WORLD

### No shows for Dieudonne

A leading Paris venue cancelled a show by a French comic who stirred outrage when he dressed as an Orthodox Jew who gives a Nazi salute.

The Olympia theater said it could not guarantee audience safety at Dieudonne's show, which was to have taken place last Friday.

Another 10 venues across France have canceled shows. Dieudonne said the offending sketch, broadcast on television, was meant as a criticism of Israeli government policies. He faces trial for perpetuating a racist stereotype.

### Forum flap

Hezbollah and Hamas allegedly were among the speakers at a recent forum funded by Europeans.

The three-day "Dialogue with Islam," held Feb. 17-19 in Beirut, was funded in part by the Austrian Embassy in Beirut and by the Germany-based Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center is protesting what it calls the "legitimization of terrorist groups that mass murder Jews and ideologues who fan the flames of anti-Semitism and terror in Europe."

There was no immediate response from Germany or Austria.