

IN THE NEWS

Hamas hush-hush about new leader

Hamas secretly named a successor for its slain leader, Abdel Aziz Rantissi.

In a departure from its traditional public profile, Hamas said Sunday that its top council had chosen a new leader but would not name him. The group's leader in Syria, Khaled Meshaal, ordered that the group keep the name of its new leader secret.

Analysts said the terrorist group had decided that a political presence was less important than keeping its leadership alive.

Candidates thought likely to replace Rantissi were Mahmoud Zahar, who had been Rantissi's No. 2; Ismail Haniyah, a former aide to slain Hamas founder Sheik Ahmed Yassin, and Hamas' fugitive terrorist mastermind, Mohammed Deif.

Israeli is killed in suicide bombing

An Israeli border policeman was killed Saturday in a suicide bombing at the Erez crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip.

Three other Israelis were wounded in the attack that killed Sgt. Kfir Ohayon, 20, of Eilat. Hamas and the Al-Aksa Brigade, the terrorist wing of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, took joint responsibility for the attack.

Two Arab gunmen are killed in Gaza

Israeli forces killed two Gaza gunmen.

The separate incidents came within hours of Israel's assassination Saturday night of Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantissi, as terrorist groups in the Gaza Strip mounted revenge attacks.

One gunman was killed while trying to sneak into the Jewish settlement of Netzarim; the other died at the Kissufim crossing point on the boundary between Israel and Gaza. Hamas and Islamic Jihad also fired several rockets and mortar shells at Gaza settlements.

WORLD REPORT

PUBLISHED WEEKDAYS BY JTA—THE GLOBAL NEWS SERVICE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE · WWW.JTA.ORG

Israel's killing of Hamas' leader wins Sharon support at home

By DAN BARON

TEL AVIV (JTA) — The weekend airstrike on Abdel Aziz Rantissi was not just the second time Israel has killed the leader of Hamas in less than a month.

The strike also appears to have won Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon some political support as he prepares to present his plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip to the Likud Party's membership early next month.

Had Israel wanted to portray Saturday's assassination of Rantissi as retaliation, it need only have pointed to a suicide bombing at the Erez crossing on the Gaza-Israel boundary a few hours earlier.

That attack, claimed jointly by Hamas and the Al-Aksa Brigade, killed a border policeman, Kfir Ohayon, and wounded three other Israelis.

But Israeli officials said the plan to kill Rantissi had been in the works for some time.

The timing of what Israel calls a "targeted killing" also strengthened Sharon for his first meeting with government ministers since returning from Washington last week. While in the United States, Sharon received the Bush administration's backing for his controversial plan to disengage Israel from the Gaza Strip and much of the West Bank.

Several Cabinet members, including a few from Sharon's own Likud Party, had said the withdrawal plan risked inflaming Palestinian violence.

But on Sunday, two major skeptics of the plan — Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Education Minister Limor Livnat — quickly endorsed Sharon, while Foreign

Minister Silvan Shalom also looked likely to do an about-face and close ranks with the premier on the Gaza withdrawal.

"It is hard to preach to Sharon about 'getting tough on terror' the morning after the army, on his orders, killed Rantissi," a senior source in the Prime Minister's Office said.

The emerging consensus bodes well for Sharon as the May 2 referendum on the disengagement plan among the Likud's 200,000 members looms.

Even if the National Unity bloc and National Religious Party leave the government in protest, Sharon has hinted that their four seats can easily be filled — perhaps by the opposition Labor Party in a national unity government.

Rantissi, a trained pediatrician given to anti-Semitic rhetoric, had topped Israel's wanted list for years, and survived a similar airstrike on his car last June. He succeeded Hamas founder Sheik Ahmed Yassin, whom Israel killed last month, on March 24.

The airstrike that killed Rantissi also killed two of his bodyguards.

The United States declined to rebuke Israel for the killing, though it did express concern over the hostility that Rantissi's death may exacerbate.

Israel should "consider carefully the consequences of its actions," the White House said after the assassination of the Hamas chief.

"The United States is gravely concerned for regional peace and stability," spokesman Scott McClellan said in a statement. McClellan reiterated Israel's right to defend itself against Hamas and other terrorist groups,

Continued on page 2

ISRAEL STRIKES HAMAS

■ *The European Union has condemned the killing, but the U.S. has not*

Continued from page 1

but urged "all parties to exercise maximum restraint."

Most of the international community, including the European Union, condemned the assassination as a blow to diplomatic progress.

Speaking at an informal meeting of E.U. foreign ministers in Ireland on Saturday, the E.U.'s foreign policy chief, Javier Solana, said the bloc had "consistently condemned extrajudicial killings."

He added, "Israel has a right to protect its citizens from terror attacks, but actions of this type are not only unlawful, they are not conducive to lowering tension."

The Palestinians, as well as their Arab backers, went further, accusing the United States of having given Israel the go-ahead for the action.

"It is no doubt a crime," Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei told reporters in Ramallah. "Unfortunately the Israelis feel they are supported by the United States administration."

On Sunday, tens of thousands of Palestinians lined the streets of Gaza, many calling for revenge, as Rantissi's body was carried for burial.

U.S. officials denied any involvement in planning or approving the Rantissi assassination.

But some Israeli analysts agreed that,

following the White House summit last week at which Bush approved Sharon's unilateral withdrawal, Israel now believes it has a lot of latitude to act in its interests while the Palestinian Authority languishes on the diplomatic sidelines.

"The campaign of assassinations against Hamas leaders is (to a degree) linked to Israel's desire to 'purge' the Gaza Strip before evacuating it and handing over control to the Palestinian Authority," wrote Sever Plotzker in *Yediot Achronot*, an Israeli daily. "Seen from this angle, the assassinations are fused, for the first time, with an Israeli diplomatic initiative that enjoys ever-widening international support." ■

Jewish-led party does well in South Africa

By MICHAEL BELLING

CAPE TOWN (JTA) — A political party headed by one of South Africa's leading Jewish politicians has entrenched its position as the second-largest party in the country.

The governing African National Congress continued its political dominance with a landslide win in the April 14 general elections, but the Democratic Alliance, led by Tony Leon, increased its vote by almost one-third, solidifying its status as the largest opposition party.

Leon called it a mark of progress in South Africa's young democracy — established after the peaceful transition from white rule in 1994 — that his Jewishness

was not an issue in the campaign, with one or two minor exceptions.

"The Palestine issue was brought up and injected into the campaign when I spoke in Lenasia," a largely Muslim area near Johannesburg, he told JTA.

There are more than half a million Muslims in South Africa, which has a Jewish population of some 70,000.

There was also an anonymous threat by "Al-Qaida types" against his wife, Michal, who is Israeli.

Leon said appropriate security measures were taken. ■

Under South Africa's proportional representation system, the ANC received almost 70 percent of the national vote. The Democratic Alliance received 12.5 percent.

No other party polled more than 10 percent of the vote.

In the first democratic elections in 1994, the alliance received only 1.7 percent of the vote. After Leon became party leader, support grew to around 9 percent in the 1999 elections.

Two other senior Jewish politicians will return to Parliament — ANC member Ronnie Kasrils, the minister of water affairs who is outspoken in his anti-Israel views, and Ruth Rabinowitz of the Inkatha Freedom Party, with its largely Zulu power base.

Several more Jews will take seats in the nine provincial legislatures.

Jews largely backed the Democratic Alliance. The South African government's pro-Palestinian stance — it supported the

Palestinian position during the International Court of Justice hearings on the Israeli security fence — increased this support, said Mervyn Smith, the chairman of the African Jewish Congress and a former national chairman of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, the umbrella body of the country's Jewish community. ■

Michael Bagraim, current national chairman of the Board of Deputies, said Jews now felt they were really making a difference when they voted, in contrast to the situation under the old apartheid regime.

"Now you feel free. You are proud of placing your cross. It doesn't matter for which party. You are contributing to the country, making a difference and are part of the building blocks of the future," he said.

Referring to an Op-Ed piece in the Cape Times during the run-up to the elections, which included accusations that the South African Zionist Federation was fomenting loyalty to Israel at the cost of allegiance to South Africa, Bagraim said he had met recently with Deputy Foreign Minister Aziz Pahad and the ANC leader in the Western Cape, Ibrahim Rasool.

"Both assured us we are absolutely equal to any other citizen of this country and protected by the full weight of the law," Bagraim said. "Rasool went further and said he respects our allegiance as Zionists and it does not detract from our allegiance to South Africa as fully fledged citizens." ■



WORLD REPORT

Howard E. Friedman
President

Mark J. Joffe
Executive Editor and Publisher

Lisa Hostein
Editor

Michael S. Arnold
Managing Editor

Lenore A. Silverstein
Finance and Administration Director

Paula Simmonds
Marketing and Development Director

JTA WORLD REPORT is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For more information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.
© JTA. Reproduction only with permission.

Shaken, Toronto Jews seek official protection

By BILL GLADSTONE

TORONTO (JTA) — The longest sustained anti-Semitic attack in Canadian history.

That's how Bernie Farber, executive director of the Ontario branch of the Canadian Jewish Congress, sums up the recent barrage of attacks against Jewish targets here.

THIS WEEK

MONDAY

■ Jordan's King Abdullah meets with President Bush. The two leaders will discuss Bush's recognition of some Israeli claims to the West Bank and his rejection of the "right of return" of Palestinian refugees to Israel. Ethnic Palestinians are the majority in Jordan and the refugee question has riled the kingdom in the past.

THURSDAY

■ In Washington, B'nai Brith International hosts 10 ambassadors from countries about to join the European Union. Among other topics, they will discuss the specter of renewed anti-Semitism in Europe.

■ The Weizmann Institute of Science holds a Boston Global Gathering at the Four Seasons Hotel, through Sunday. Scientists from the Israeli institute will join Boston-area scientists to discuss their latest cutting-edge research.

SATURDAY

■ Holocaust deniers gather through Sunday for a "revisionist" conference in Sacramento, Calif. The "revisionist event of the year" is being sponsored by the Adelaide Institute and includes speakers from all over the world, including Israel.

SUNDAY

■ In the March for Women's Lives, tens of thousands of women are expected at the National Mall in Washington in what is being billed as the largest pro-choice event in U.S. history. Jewish co-sponsors include the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, the Reconstructionist, Reform, Conservative and Humanistic movements, the National Council of Jewish Women, and Hadassah.

■ The Jewish War Veterans of America holds a memorial service at Arlington National Cemetery to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the death of Orde Wingate, the British general who helped found and train the pre-state Zionist militias. Wingate is buried at Arlington. Several Jewish groups will be represented at the service.

■ Yom Hazikaron, Israel's memorial day for fallen soldiers, begins at night.

In response to those attacks, Jewish officials have mobilized to step up security at schools and other institutions — and to ask Ontario's provincial government to supplement the police budget to cover additional surveillance and patrolling of Jewish sites.

"Until now, the community has taken care of its own security needs, but" the financial burden "is becoming onerous and it's having a significant impact on the community," Farber said.

"We shouldn't have to bear these costs alone," he said. "This is a unique situation faced only by Jews. We pay taxes like everybody else and we're as deserving of protection as anybody else."

Toronto Jewish officials had hoped that the rash of anti-Semitic incidents in March would cease after three teenagers were arrested for desecrating the Bathurst-Lawn Cemetery.

But vandals have struck three more Jewish cemeteries in southern Ontario since then — including Toronto's 155-year-old Pape Avenue Cemetery, the oldest Jewish cemetery in the province. More anti-Semitic incidents also have been reported.

According to Farber, quick action is required to extinguish these sparks of hate.

"We need something right away," he said. "It's like a fuse burning out of control. We need to stop it hard and fast, and we can best do that with the assistance of the provincial government. We need them to be partners on this."

Earlier this month, a United Talmud Torah elementary school in Montreal was firebombed, destroying the library. Many say there never has been a more pressing need for additional security at Jewish day schools in Canada.

Yet parents already face a "maximum financial burden" as they cope with steep religious-school tuition, said Ed Morgan, chairman of the Canadian Jewish Congress' Ontario branch. Increasing police budgets would relieve the pressure on parents to shoulder the additional cost needed to protect their children, he said.

"Security is a police matter," he said. "We trust the police. We want them to do it."

Farber, Morgan and representatives of

the UJA Federation of Greater Toronto met April 15 with the province's attorney general, Michael Bryant, and its minister of community safety and correctional services, Monte Kwinter.

"Both ministers were very understanding of our situation," Morgan said. "Of course, they didn't write a check for more police resources on the spot, but they indicated that they would take the issue to their Cabinet colleagues and see what they could do to direct more resources to the problem."

Bryant also reportedly gave assurances to the Canadian Jewish Congress that anyone caught perpetrating anti-Semitic attacks would be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

For years, a Canadian Jewish Congress committee has been working quietly behind the scenes, assessing and improving the community's security needs.

The large advocacy organization B'nai Brith

Canada also has sent security and counterterrorism experts into many local schools and synagogues. B'nai Brith's security analysis should be ready soon, according to Frank Dimant, the group's national executive vice-president.

Both organizations acknowledge that much needs to be done to shield Jewish institutions from malevolent acts by homegrown anti-Semites or agents of international terrorism.

"I think we're looking at millions of dollars that have to be spent to try to provide a better security system for the community," Dimant said.

"Right now you have some synagogues that will have some security personnel in place on Saturday mornings," he said. "But what happens Saturday afternoon? What happens the rest of the week? I think there are lots of other issues that don't lend themselves to being discussed in the media at the moment. But let's just say we have a lot of homework to do."

Officials of both organizations assert that in the post-Sept. 11 world, community safety must not be compromised.

"I don't want this to become a dollar-and-cents issue," Farber said. "Whatever it costs, it's worth it." ■

'Security is a police matter. We trust the police. We want them to do it.'

Ed Morgan

Canadian Jewish Congress

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Teen terrorist in court

Israel indicted a 16-year-old Palestinian would-be suicide bomber. Prosecutors at an Israeli military court said Sunday that Hussam Abdu, whose arrest outside Nablus last month was televised internationally, had been dispatched by the Al-Aksa Brigade.

Abdu, who at first gave his age as 14, could face life in prison, but security sources said his mental retardation likely would be a mitigating factor.

The incident caused a backlash of Palestinian anger against terrorist groups using children for attacks on Israelis.

West Bank fence clash

At least 10 Palestinians were hurt in clashes with police over the West Bank security barrier.

Sunday's confrontation took place at the village of Bidu, which has seen recurrent violence as Israel presses ahead with plans to erect the fence on outlying farmland.

Police said their forces at the village northwest of Jerusalem used only tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse the crowd after it turned violent.

Sha'ath cancels Powell meeting

Palestinian Authority Foreign Minister Nabil Sha'ath canceled a visit to Washington scheduled for this week. Sha'ath was to meet with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell.

Sha'ath had planned the meeting before last week's recognition by the Bush administration of some Israeli claims to the West Bank and rejection of the "right of return" for Palestinian refugees.

N.Y.-Israel flight options expand

Israir Airlines is offering direct charter flights from Tel Aviv to New York. As of June, Israir will run flights on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday, the company said Sunday. Each flight will depart Tel Aviv around midnight and land in New York's JFK Airport.

The move will open competition for the popular direct flight, which is currently dominated by El Al and Continental Airlines.

NORTH AMERICA

Lithuania pressed on Nazis

Demonstrators rallied in New York to press Lithuania to prosecute Nazi war criminals. Organizers said some 200 people attended the rally outside the Lithuanian Embassy in New York, which was held to coincide with Sunday's commemoration of Yom Hashoah.

Lithuania has not jailed any wartime criminals, some of whom were extradited from the United States for lying about their wartime service when they immigrated to the United States. The Rambam Mesivta high school in Lawrence, N.Y., organized the rally.

Crown Heights play defended

A fringe U.S. politician took out a full-page ad in The New York Times to defend a play some have said blames Jews for the 1991 Crown Heights riots.

Lenora Fulani denied that the play, called "Crown Heights," is anti-Semitic and says she wants to bring blacks and Jews together. Fulani was involved in production of the play.

Earlier this year, the New York Sun reported that "Crown Heights," by Dan Friedman and Fred Newman, distorts the events that led to the 1991 riots and the murder of a Jewish student.

Although she never has held political office, Fulani has run for U.S. president several times.

WORLD

Pro-Israel lawmaker likely to lose seat

One of Europe's leading pro-Israel legislators is unlikely to return to the European Parliament following elections in June.

French Socialist Francois Zimeray was not chosen for a high position on the party's list at a closed-door meeting of the party's National Committee in Paris on Saturday.

The founder and head of the pro-Israel Medbridge group of European legislators, Zimeray has been heavily involved in demanding that the European Union investigate the misuse of funding it has provided to the Palestinian Authority.

Zimeray also led a recent delegation of some 170 European legislators to the Middle East.

German Jews meet on funding

German Jewish leaders are meeting ahead of talks with the federal government regarding a funding dispute.

Paul Spiegel, head of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, called Sunday's board meeting in Dusseldorf to prepare for Wednesday's talks with German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder in Berlin.

At stake is future funding for congregations in the Union for Progressive Jews in Germany, Germany's Reform movement, and the status of the Central Council as the sole umbrella organization of Jewish groups in the country.

The talks are aimed at averting the union's lawsuit on charges that the government has failed to support all streams of Judaism in keeping with the historic contract signed between the Central Council and the German government last year.

When criticism turns violent

Strong criticism of Israel has spawned anti-Semitism internationally, according to Israeli researchers.

The researchers at Tel Aviv University's Stephen Roth Institute found that there were 360 serious anti-Semitic incidents worldwide last year, up from 330 in 2002.

The annual report, issued Sunday, blamed "the link between extreme anti-Israel rhetoric and deeds directed against Jewish individuals and communities," and noted an alliance between Islamic radicals and members of extreme right- and left-wing political organizations.

The highest incidence of anti-Semitic violence was reported in France, the United Kingdom, Russia, Germany and Canada.

Mossad trial in New Zealand

Two Israelis alleged to be Mossad agents appeared in a New Zealand court last Friday.

Uri Zoshi Kelman, 30, and Eli Cara, 50, have denied the charges against them. The New Zealand Herald reported that senior government ministers believed the men were Mossad agents. The court was told that two other men were involved. Zev William Barkan, 37, has fled New Zealand, but another Israeli is believed to be in hiding in the country.

Israel's acting ambassador to New Zealand, Orna Sagiv, said Israel respects the New Zealand court system's right to try the men.

Russian cemetery defaced

Fourteen tombstones were vandalized in a Jewish cemetery in the Russian city of Pyatigorsk. The incident, which took place the night of April 15-16, was the second act of vandalism in the cemetery's four-year history.

Last June, vandals destroyed 10 tombstones in the same cemetery. Two youths later were arrested for that crime.