

## IN THE NEWS

## Five Palestinians killed in Gaza

Israeli soldiers killed five Palestinians in clashes in the Gaza Strip.

Tuesday's clashes broke out after Palestinians, including children, threw stones and firebombs at soldiers deployed at Beit Lahiya, in the northern Gaza Strip. Some Palestinians attempted to climb onto Israeli armored vehicles.

Five Israeli soldiers were hurt in the clashes.

## Abdullah cancels meeting with Bush

Jordan's king postponed a White House meeting, demanding that President Bush clarify his support for Israeli diplomatic positions.

A statement released by the Jordanian Embassy on Monday said King Abdullah's meeting would be rescheduled from Wednesday until the first week of May. Jordanian Foreign Minister Marwan Muasher remained in the United States to consult with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell.

Jordanians are concerned that President Bush's commitment last week to recognize some Israeli claims in the West Bank in exchange for Israel's pullout from Gaza and parts of the West Bank undermines the Palestinian position. Bush also rejected the Palestinian demand for a "right of return" to Israel for refugees of Israel's 1948 War of Independence.

## Money for Iraqi Jews?

Jews who fled Iraq in the 1950s reportedly will receive payments on their insurance policies.

AXA, a French insurance firm that had a Baghdad subsidiary, will pay \$130,000 in compensation to three refugees now living in Israel for their old policies on assets abandoned in Iraq.

If paid, the compensation would be the first for Jews who left Arab lands.

# WORLD REPORT

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## A hero to some peace activists, Vanunu seen as a traitor at home

By DAN BARON

**T**EL AVIV (JTA) — With his face turned away, the white-bearded vendor shuffles haplessly around his Beersheba market stall. Then something in him snaps and, cursing, he shoves the cameraman, who backs off.

The shot that opens the Israeli documentary "Who are you, Mordechai Vanunu?" shows the subject's elderly father, who changed his name in shame after Vanunu, Israel's nuclear whistle-blower, was jailed as a traitor 18 years ago.

Vanunu was due to be released Wednesday, but the documentary images bespeak the emotional turmoil gripping the country over a national security imbroglio that is far from resolved.

Hundreds of anti-nuclear activists from all over the world had flocked to Israel, ready to receive the 49-year-old Christian convert when he emerged from behind the sun-bleached walls of Shikma Prison in Ashkelon.

But the hero's welcome will be short-lived and hands-off.

Under restrictions recommended by the Shin Bet security service, Vanunu is banned from meeting foreigners — let alone realizing his dream of emigrating — for at least a year. His phone and Internet connections will be tapped and his movements monitored to ensure he stays away from border crossings and foreign diplomatic missions, the sort of surveillance usually reserved for suspected spies rather than ex-convicts.

Security officials — who still fume at Vanunu's 1986 disclosures to a British newspaper about his work at the atomic reactor

outside the southern desert town of Dimona — defend the gag measures as a national priority.

"Mordechai Vanunu has revealed state secrets about the Dimona nuclear plant. He still possesses state secrets, including some which he has not revealed," the Defense Ministry said in a statement. "Disclosure of these state secrets could seriously damage the security of the state."

Vanunu insists he has nothing to add to his Sunday Times interview, which led independent analysts to conclude that Dimona had produced at least 200 nuclear weapons, making Israel a military superpower.

Yet the Moroccan-born former atomic technician has voiced no remorse at violating the pact of secrecy he signed with the Israeli security establishment before taking the Dimona job. Indeed, he has vowed to continue campaigning against the "strategic ambiguity" Israel maintains around its non-conventional capabilities.

Now it appears that Vanunu may have a higher target — Israel's very right to exist.

"There is no need for a Jewish state," he told Shin Bet officials in a jailhouse interview leaked to the press Monday. "There should be a Palestinian state. Whoever wants to be Jewish can live anywhere."

Such remarks are a drastic departure for the Vanunu family, which in 1963 left Marakesh for Israel, where the Jewish Agency placed the Vanunus in a Beersheba transit camp.

The second of 10 children, the young Mordechai Vanunu studied hard and served

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**BEHIND  
THE  
HEADLINES**

## ■ *On the eve of his release from prison, Vanunu still seen as traitor by Israelis*

*Continued from page 1*

as a sergeant in the Combat Engineering Corps, fighting in the Yom Kippur War.

In 1976, Vanunu applied to work at Dimona and was brought in as a junior reactor technician. According to friends, he attributed his acceptance to the fact that at the time, he was politically hawkish, at one point even linked to the far-right group Kach.

But things changed when Vanunu enrolled in the philosophy program of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in nearby Beersheba. He abandoned Jewish observance, sought out Arab students, and formed a left-wing group that demonstrated on campus with calls for a Palestinian state to be founded alongside Israel — virtually heresy in the early 1980s.

Meanwhile, Vanunu worked nights at Dimona, earning citations for his dedication. But at some point, he decided to smuggle in a camera and quietly snap off two rolls of film.

The ease with which this was managed in a high-security facility has prompted some to speculate that Vanunu unwittingly was being groomed to spill nuclear secrets and thus boost Israel's deterrence even further.

Experts dismiss such conspiracy theories as atypical of a security establishment notorious for logistical oversights.

Vanunu eventually was included in 1985 layoffs from Dimona, and he spent his severance pay traveling the world. While in Australia, he discovered the Anglican faith. After converting, Vanunu regu-

larly took part in group discussions about world peace and let slip that he had once worked at Israel's main atomic reactor.

Word quickly reached the Sunday Times, which flew Vanunu to London to be grilled by nuclear experts.

But the 32-year-old drifter's loneliness got the better of him. As the Sunday Times article was being readied for publication, the Mossad dispatched American-born agent Cheryl Hanin to befriend Vanunu at a Piccadilly cafe.

A former Mossad head said the spy agency had considered killing Vanunu, but decided just to abduct him. With the Mossad leery of conducting operations on British soil, Hanin, a comely blonde posing as a tourist by the name of Cindy, offered Vanunu a romantic weekend in Italy.

When the two landed in Rome, Vanunu was set upon by three burly Mossad men and hustled back to Israel to stand trial.

The circumstances of Vanunu's arrest, and the harsh conditions of his incarceration — 12 years of which were spent in solitary confinement — have stoked the sympathy of thousands of foreign supporters who see him as a martyred pacifist, and he has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize several times. His anti-Zionist views helped attract other pools of support.

A retired American couple even legally adopted Vanunu in a failed bid to win him U.S. citizenship.

In Israel, Vanunu largely is reviled as a traitor. But his case set off deeper tremors in a country where assumptions about Sephardi Jews' hawkish tendencies still are prevalent.

"Mordechai shocked the country not just because he was traitor, but because he was the first Mizrahi traitor," said Vanunu's childhood friend Yehuda Elush. "Everyone before him was an Ashkenazi."

Legal debate is swirling over the idea of applying further sanctions to a man who already has served out his prison sentence.

"The restrictions heaped on the 'atomic convict' would not seem out of place in Stalin's Soviet Union," Israeli military expert Reuven Pedatzur said. The Associa-

tion of Civil Rights in Israel has asked the government to reconsider, and Vanunu's lawyer said he likely will challenge the measures in court.

But other security veterans insist

Vanunu poses a danger to an Israel still formally at war with 16 of its Middle East neighbors — one of which, Iran, is actively pursuing nuclear weapons.

Any new details he may have about Dimona could embarrass Israel and possibly fray a tacit understanding with the

United States that dates back to the Nixon administration: Washington won't pressure Jerusalem into signing the United Nations Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and submitting to international inspections, provided Israel doesn't carry out nuclear tests.

Israeli elder statesman Shimon Peres, who brokered the construction of the Dimona reactor with French help in the 1950s and devised Israel's ambiguity policy during 1964 talks with President Kennedy, expressed satisfaction with the restrictions imposed on Vanunu.

"Vanunu violated accepted norms and betrayed his country," Peres told Israel's Army Radio on Tuesday. "This is justice."

If, as Vanunu claims, he has nothing more to divulge about Dimona, he still might invent "revelations" to satisfy the anti-nuclear and anti-Israel lobbies — and perhaps secure lucrative interviews and lecture tours.

Others worry that Vanunu will reveal the names of his former co-workers at the plant.

Also troubling are the ample accounts of Vanunu's mental instability. His correspondents recall jailhouse letters filled with fiery denunciations against Israel and paranoid theories.

Yet for this very reason, some Israeli observers argue that Vanunu should be allowed to leave the country — and good riddance.

"I think it is a mistake to gag him," said David Kimche, a 30-year Mossad veteran and retired director general of the Foreign Ministry. "It only bolsters Vanunu's supposed credibility and, in turn, pretty much anything he may choose to concoct about Israel."

**'Vanunu violated accepted norms and betrayed his country. This is justice.'**

**Shimon Peres**

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# U.S. yet to reap benefits from Bush-Sharon summit

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Ariel Sharon already is reaping political dividends from last week's historic exchange of letters with President Bush, but the U.S. president's payoff depends a great deal on what Israel does next.

The Bush administration wants to see clear signs in coming weeks that Israel will live up to the prime minister's commitment to pull out of the Gaza Strip and a small portion of the West Bank in exchange for Bush's recognition of Israel's claim to part of the West Bank.

Bush's historic endorsement of Israel's claims — and his rejection of any "right of return" to Israel for Palestinian refugees — have boosted Sharon's political fortunes, allowing him to win over opponents in his Cabinet who had been skeptical of the withdrawal plan.

By contrast, the deal poses clear political risks for Bush, battered by increasing U.S. casualties in Iraq and seeking international support for a transition to civilian rule there.

The fallout in the Arab world was almost immediate. Jordan's King Abdullah II postponed until May a meeting scheduled this week with President Bush, and it was clear from his embassy's statement that the Bush-Sharon agreement had caught him off-guard.

Jordan wanted to "clarify the U.S. position regarding final-status issues, especially in light of recent statements by U.S. officials," the statement said. It said the king "underlined the importance of ensuring that Israel's withdrawal from Gaza will be part of the 'road map,' and not an alternative to it."

The "road map" is an internationally backed peace plan that envisions a Palestinian state.

U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell played down the significance of Abdullah's sudden change of plans.

"He has postponed his visit, but we look forward to welcoming him back in early May, and the date's being worked out now," Powell said after meeting Tuesday with Jordanian Foreign Minister Marwan Muasher.

The Sharon-Bush summit won't help the transfer of power in Iraq, said Feisel Istrabadi, a constitutional adviser to the U.S.-supported governing council.

"From the perspective of American

policy and helping us in Iraq, I think it was the wrong thing to do at the wrong time," Istrabadi told PBS' "One-on-One" show. Israeli-Palestinian tensions dog the United States' good intentions in Iraq and elsewhere, Istrabadi said.

"It is the major bone of contention between the broad masses — I'm not talking about the radicals, but the broad masses of the Arab and Islamic world and the United States," he said.

Administration officials said matters were worsened by Israel's assassination Saturday of Hamas' new leader, and the predictable conspiracy theories in the Arab world accusing the United States of approving the hit.

The State Department suggested that the killing of Abdel Aziz Rantissi showed a lack of sophistication.

Putting Hamas out of business is "a much more complicated question than just assassinating a leader here and there," State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said Monday. "The idea of putting them out of business really does require somebody else to take authority in these areas."

Boucher reiterated U.S. support for Israel's right to defend itself, and noted that Rantissi headed a terrorist organization. But his comments still underscored an emerging U.S.-Israel schism. A senior Israeli official described Israel's disengagement plan as a "mortal blow" to Palestinian dreams, while President Bush sees the plan as facilitating Palestinian empowerment.

The U.S. deputy secretary of state, Richard Armitage, is in the region this week, explaining that last week's deal only enhances Bush's vision of a Palestinian state as the outcome of negotiations.

"Our desire was to sit down and talk to people about moving forward, about how to make withdrawal from Gaza contribute to overall progress on the road map and toward the president's vision, that we have been engaging Arab leaders and Arab governments in those discussions," Armitage said.

That means that Washington wants to see concrete Israeli actions, and U.S. officials are not likely to be assuaged by a senior Israeli official's pledge last week to

"establish committees" to examine how to withdraw.

David Makovsky, a senior analyst at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, said the administration would remain quiet until a May 2 referendum in Sharon's Likud party on the plan; after that, it will want results.

"This is a president with over 100,000 troops in Iraq, and he will want to see Israeli action after the Likud referendum," Makovsky said.

A letter to Rice from Dov Weisglass, Sharon's bureau chief, pledges to produce within a month a list of outposts to be dismantled.

One sign that Sharon understands Bush's need for immediate results was the Israeli commitment to dismantle 28 outposts and remove about 240 settlers within the next few weeks. Televised pictures of Israeli soldiers removing settlers from their homes on rocky West Bank hills would help make Bush's case that his words produce action.

Israeli officials also have promised swift action in easing restrictions on Palestinians' movement.

Despite such positive signs, there were other hints of U.S.-Israel differences over the new package. Some items in the Weisglass letter already are producing sharply divergent interpretations in Washington and Jerusalem.

One of them is that Americans see "restrictions on settlement growth" as a freeze, while Israeli officials are looking for opportunities to build within settlements they now believe they have a license to keep.

Sharon has sympathy for Bush's political needs ahead of what is likely to be a close election in November. He snubbed presumptive Democratic nominee Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) during his visit. Also, his remarks at the White House news conference last week were taken as a strong endorsement of Bush, which could help Bush's prospects among Jewish voters, who play a crucial role in swing states.

"In all these years, I have never met a leader as committed as you are, Mr. President, to the struggle for freedom and the need to confront terrorism wherever it exists," Sharon said at the news conference. ■

The deal with Sharon poses clear political risks for Bush.

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## NORTH AMERICA

### Saudi Arabian sentenced for killing Jew

A U.S. court sentenced a student from Saudi Arabia to 60 years in jail for killing his Jewish friend.

Monday's sentencing in Houston was a plea bargain. In a statement, Mohammed Ali Alayed, 23, apologized for the August 2003 killing of Ariel Sellouk but did not explain why he did it.

### Bill Clinton: Onus on Israel

Bill Clinton urged Israel to make a deal with the Palestinians. At a New York seminar held Monday on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict sponsored by Tel Aviv University and other groups, the former U.S. president said it's "always quite comfortable to look at the faults of your adversaries," but as the main power broker in the region, Israel needs to do what it can to reach a peace agreement with the Palestinians.

Clinton praised Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip but said it is "only good if it works to re-engage the Arabs and the Israelis." He added, "It's no good making a deal with the United States; we don't live in the Middle East."

### Reform rejects proposed FEC changes

Proposed changes to the definition of what constitutes a political committee could silence religious activists, the Reform movement says.

The proposed Federal Election Commission changes, aimed at tightening laws limiting fund raising for "soft money" campaigns that target issues instead of candidates, are too broad, said Rabbi David Saperstein, director of Reform's Religious Action Center.

The new rules would restrict funding for communications that "promote, support, oppose or attack" a policy position of a federal candidate.

### Joint Independence Day celebration

Forty-five Jewish and Israeli organizations will celebrate Israel's Independence Day together later this month.

Participating groups, including the Jewish National Fund, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the Anti-Defamation League and alumni of birthright israel, will commemorate Israel's Remembrance Day and its 56th Independence Day celebrations April 26 in New York.

Organized by a group called Dor Chadash, the event drew more than 800 people from 30 organizations last year.

Ticket sales will benefit the Bnai Zion Hospital Children's Emergency Room in Israel.

### Kosher only for killers?

Virginia allegedly transferred a Jewish prisoner to maximum-security facilities in order to accommodate her request for kosher meals.

Mitzi Ann Hamilton, serving five years for fraud and forgery, is suing the state for sexual discrimination because it placed her at a maximum-security facility alongside violent criminals. Hamilton alleges that the state says the maximum-security prison was the only place she could get "common fare" meals for prisoners with religious requests.

The state accommodates religious dietary needs for all its male prisoners, Hamilton alleges.

Additionally, Hamilton, who was imprisoned last year, says the "common fare" diet of tomatoes, beans, sardines and lettuce does not meet kosher standards. State authorities would not comment. The Associated Press reported Monday.

## WORLD

### E.U. to aid Gaza withdrawal

The European Union's foreign policy chief said his organization would like to aid Israel's withdrawal from settlements in Gaza.

Javier Solana, who met Tuesday with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell in Washington, said the European Union is willing to cooperate, but that the withdrawal should not prejudice a negotiated settlement between Israelis and Palestinians.

### Civil rights leaders heading to Berlin

A contingent of civil rights leaders will attend the European anti-Semitism conference in Berlin next week.

Representatives from the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights are joining a U.S. delegation and American Jewish leaders for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe conference on April 28-29, and are expected to advise European countries on tools to combat hate crimes.

### Diplomats to speak on E.U. expansion

Ambassadors of the European Union's new member countries will discuss relations with the United States and the Jewish world. At least 10 ambassadors to the United States of the E.U. countries are expected at Thursday's panel discussion in Washington, sponsored by B'nai B'rith International.

They are expected to discuss the political repercussions of E.U. expansion, growing anti-Semitism in Europe and relations with the United States.

### Swiss boycott ceremony in Israel

Switzerland boycotted a ceremony honoring a Swiss citizen who saved Jews during World War II.

The country's ambassador to Israel was ordered to stay away from the ceremony honoring Paul Grueninger because it was held in Pisgat Ze'ev, a Jerusalem neighborhood that came into Israeli hands during the 1967 Six-Day War.

Grueninger is a former Swiss police commander who provided more than 3,600 Jewish refugees fleeing the Nazis with false papers enabling them to seek refuge in neutral Switzerland. As a result of his actions, Grueninger lost his post as a commander and was treated as a criminal even many years after the war. He was forced to end his life in poverty. The Swiss Parliament rehabilitated Grueninger in 1997 after international heavy pressure.

### Reprieve for Slovak Jewish museum

Bratislava's Jewish Museum appears to have won a temporary reprieve from possible eviction. Municipal authorities in the Slovak capital extended the museum's lease this week until the end of 2004. A staff member at the museum, which is a branch of the state-run Slovak National Museum, said international pressure appears to have played a role in the decision.

## MIDDLE EAST

### Well, it isn't Ken or Barbie

An Israeli company is creating bobble-head dolls of famous Israeli personalities. Rosh-Gadol, the company that makes the caricature-type toys, originally conceived of the Ariel Sharon prototype during the 2003 Israeli election.

An expanded repertoire of handmade and painted ceramic dolls is set to include other prime ministers, war heroes and Zionist visionaries. The dolls, which come with biographies, are available at rosh-gadol.com.