

## IN THE NEWS

## U.S., Israel: Plan still on

U.S. and Israeli officials said they would move forward with a plan for Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

Sunday's Likud Party referendum rejecting the pullout "adds some complications," Israel's ambassador to the United States, Daniel Ayalon, said Monday at an Anti-Defamation League conference in Washington.

But "this is not the final result," he said. William Burns, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, said the Bush administration "will be consulting closely with the Israeli government in the days ahead on how to move forward."

## Kerry stresses his Mideast credentials

Sen. John Kerry pledged to support Israel if elected president and said he'd get involved personally to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Speaking Monday at the Anti-Defamation League's national leadership conference in Washington, Kerry (D-Mass.) stressed his credentials on the Middle East, noting a strong pro-Israel voting record and his personal experiences traveling in the region.

"I'm proud that my commitment to a secure Jewish state has been unwavering. Not even by one vote or one letter or one resolution has it wavered," he said.

Kerry criticized President Bush for not enlisting the Arab world in an effort to empower new Palestinian leaders.

## Sharon survives no-confidence measure

Ariel Sharon easily survived a no-confidence vote in the Israeli Parliament.

The motion, submitted Monday by Meretz and Arab parties, was rejected in a 62-46 vote.

The motion came a day after members of the Israeli prime minister's Likud Party rejected his plan to withdraw from Gaza.

# WORLD REPORT

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## Humiliating defeat in his own party leaves Sharon facing tough choices

By LESLIE SUSSER

**J**ERUSALEM (JTA)—Bruised after a humiliating defeat in his own party, Ariel Sharon is considering dramatic moves to regain the political upper hand.

But pundits are divided over whether the Israeli prime minister has the strength to extricate himself from the political quicksand in which he seems to be sinking.

On the one hand, the Bush administration insists that Sharon ignore the clear Likud Party message and deliver on his promise to pull Israeli troops out of the Gaza Strip, evacuating Jewish settlements in Gaza and the northern West Bank.

Sharon, too, still believes his unilateral disengagement plan from the Palestinians is the best strategy for Israel right now. But his opponents within Likud say Sharon should abide by the party's rejection of the plan by a 3-2 margin in a referendum Sunday.

Whatever he decides, Sharon will face major political difficulties.

In a carefully worded statement, Sharon said he deeply regretted the outcome of the Likud vote but hinted that he intended to press ahead.

"The Israeli people did not elect me to sit with my arms folded for four years," he declared. "I was elected to find a way to bring this nation peace and quiet . . . and I will continue to lead Israel according to my understanding, my conscience and my public duty."

Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Sharon's main political backer on disengagement, was more explicit, saying flatly that

the plan would not be dropped because of the Likud vote.

Disengagement from the Palestinians is the only way to solve Israel's security, economic and demographic problems, Olmert said. The challenge is to find a way to proceed with the plan without causing a split in the party, he said.

The dilemma for Sharon is acute. He has a number of options, all of them difficult.

He could drop or alter the plan, in line with the Likud vote, or he could try circumvent the party by getting the plan approved as is in the Cabinet and Knesset.

If the prime minister fails to muster a majority in the present government, Sharon could try to form a new coalition with the opposition Labor Party — which supports disengagement — ejecting the right-wing National Religious Party and National Union bloc that oppose it.

Sharon also could call a nationwide referendum. Current polls show he would win a comfortable majority. But none of these alternatives would be easy to pull off.

If Sharon drops the plan, he will run into trouble with the Bush administration, which took a political risk to bolster Sharon by recognizing some Israeli claims in the West Bank and rejecting a "right of return" to Israel for Palestinian refugees.

Conversely, to get the plan approved in the Cabinet, key Likud ministers like Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Education Minister Limor Livnat and Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom would have to support it.

All three reluctantly announced support for the plan but did nothing to help Sharon

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win the party vote. Now they say they'll abide by the Likud membership's rejection of the plan.

Sharon's chances of getting the ministers' support seem slight, especially since their maneuvering was part of a succession struggle in which they succeeded in weakening Sharon, pundits say.

Sharon confidants have been intimating that the prime minister has something more dramatic in mind. But even if he decides to break up his present coalition and bring in Labor to replace the right-wing parties, it may not be easy to persuade Labor to join.

Until Attorney General Menachem Mazuz decides whether or not to indict Sharon on corruption charges, Labor is wary of entering Sharon's coalition. Moreover, given Sharon's predicament, Labor now sees a chance for new elections in which it could make gains at Likud's expense.

Indeed, Labor leader Shimon Peres has called for new elections, saying Labor should run on the disengagement ticket. Likud has shown itself incapable of pushing through the potentially historic plan, and Sharon should accept responsibility for its failure, Peres said.

Labor Knesset member Eitan Cabel has proposed a bill to dissolve the current Knesset. If it passes, it could lead to early elections within 60 days.

As for a national referendum, that would require complicated legislation. Labor's Isaac Herzog has proposed a referendum bill, but getting it through could take time: Former Prime Minister Ehud Barak's at-

tempt to legislate a referendum took two years, and it was never completed.

Given these obstacles, Sharon could precipitate elections himself, a move that might even lead to a split in Likud. Pundits talk about a strong centrist bloc — composed of Likud, Labor and Shinui — running together on a disengagement ticket.

According to this scenario, the pragmatists in Likud would follow Sharon while the right-wing ideological core, including the settler-oriented "Jewish Leadership" group led by Moshe Feiglin, would break away.

The formation of a strong, secular, centrist grouping, including Labor and Likud, is what pundits for years have called the "big bang" of Israeli politics.

Sharon's defeat Sunday also leaves Israel's foreign policy in tatters: Ties with the United States are strained, the Europeans are highly critical and the chances of a political settlement being imposed from the outside are higher. The Palestinian Authority's prime minister, Ahmed Qurei, said he hoped Sharon's defeat would lead

Israel back to the negotiating table.

Sharon's fear is that the international community now will see both Israel and the Palestinians as rejectionists, and will try to impose a peace deal on them.

Given the far-reaching implications, how did Sharon lose a vote that, if successful, would have given him enormous political power?

For one thing, he underestimated the settlers' influence on the Likud's rank-and-file membership.

The settlers mounted a huge, energetic and costly campaign, sending young people all over the country to influence the voters. By contrast, Sharon's side, which feared violating funding rules, mounted almost no campaign whatsoever.

Sharon confidants boast that no one is as good as Sharon when under pressure. They also claim he has a Houdini-like capacity to emerge intact from seemingly impossible situations.

That may be, but Sharon will need all his skills over the coming weeks. He cannot afford any more mistakes. This time, his political survival is at stake. ■

**Sharon's defeat hurts Israel's foreign policy.**

## 'Terminator' talks tolerance in Israel

By DINA KRAFT

JERUSALEM (JTA) — "The Terminator" has a new mission: to terminate intolerance in the Holy Land.

The action-movie-hero-turned-California-governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, came to Jerusalem this week to break ground for Israel's new Museum of Tolerance, a \$200 million project of the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

"Am Yisrael Chai," Schwarzenegger proclaimed to a cheering crowd in Jerusalem at a groundbreaking ceremony on Sunday for the new museum.

The California governor also laid a wreath at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial and met with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

"I was born in Austria," Schwarzenegger said, "a place where intolerance and ignorance led to tragedy and heartache."

"Because of this I want to do what I can to promote tolerance around the world," he said.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center's Museum of Tolerance in Jerusalem is scheduled to be completed by 2007.

Organizers hope the Jerusalem museum will become a major tourist attraction and an educational center where Israelis and visitors will be able to learn about human dignity and responsibility.

Schwarzenegger spoke of the museum as an example of Israel going forward into a better future and moving beyond current daily strife and terrorism. "We look past the suicide bombers, the terrorists, past the blood," he said. "We look ahead to the time people can live side by side."

The museum grounds, adjacent to Jerusalem's Independence Park, will include a theater complex, international conference center, library, gallery, lecture hall and gardens. It is located just steps from the Old City and downtown Jerusalem.

Israeli President Moshe Katsav, Israeli Cabinet ministers and the U.S. ambassador to Israel, Daniel Kurtzer, all attended the ceremony Sunday. ■



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# New campaign finance rules worry Jews

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — When is a political committee not a political committee?

That's one of the questions many Jewish groups want to examine as the U.S. government attempts to define more clearly what constitutes support for a political candidate.

The result could complicate matters for Jewish advocacy groups.

A wide range of national Jewish organizations — led by the Reform movement and the National Council of Jewish Women — have joined hundreds of other groups in protesting rule changes to campaign finance laws that could go into effect as soon as May 13.

That's the deadline for comment on the rule changes, introduced March 11 by the Federal Election Commission, that would expand the definition of a political committee. Any group affected by the change would have to subject its fund raising to severely restrictive tax laws.

It's not at all certain whether the six-member FEC will pass the change. Two commissioners strongly support it, two strongly oppose it and two appear to be undecided.

Of central concern to Jewish groups is language that would redefine as a political committee any organization that spends money on material that "promotes, supports, attacks or opposes any clearly defined candidate for federal office."

"How could a religious organization advocate, on either side, on an issue of profound moral significance without addressing the appropriate legislation's sponsors and opponents, who are so often candidates for federal office?" Rabbi David Saperstein, the director of the Reform movement's Religious Action Center, asked in testimony last month before the FEC.

Another concern is a change that would allow groups that encourage voter registration to maintain non-political status only if "information concerning likely party or candidate preference has not been used to determine which individuals to encourage to register to vote."

Most synagogue congregations are known to favor one party or the other, Saperstein said.

"Fully aware of these 'likely' voting preferences, religious groups could be

deterred from registering even their own congregations to vote," he testified.

Reclassification as a political committee would invite Internal Revenue Service scrutiny of nonprofits and profoundly inhibit fund raising, nonprofit groups say.

"These rules impose a de facto gag that will impoverish the debate on public policy, diminish civic engagement and force many nonprofits to choose between the lesser of two evils," Nan Aron, president of the Alliance for Justice, said in testimony.

Among the hundreds of groups that signed the alliance's letter to the FEC were Hadassah, the National Council of Jewish Women and the Conservative movement's Rabbinical Assembly.

"We feel very strongly that this proposed legislation would have a very chilling effect on our missions, which includes trying to influence public policy," said Sammie Moshenberg, the National Council of Jewish Women's Washington representative.

The proposed changes arise from last year's Supreme Court ruling on the 2002 McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform law restricting unlimited "soft money." The court upheld many of the law's restrictions on virtually unlimited contributions to political parties, but it threw out restrictions on advocacy against a candidate and voter-registration drives as too broad and restrictive of free-speech rights.

A proliferation of groups arose since then, operating within the letter of the law and the Supreme Court ruling by campaigning hard against a candidate — but abjuring any hint of a formal relationship with an opponent's party.

Those groups already have produced attack ads targeting President Bush and his Democratic opponent, Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry.

The two commissioners proposing the change are concerned that the "527s" — named for their tax code classification — are making an end run around the soft money restrictions.

Opponents of the rule change say it's no coincidence that the lead commissioner proposing the change, Michael Toner, is a former Republican National Committee chief counsel and a member of Bush's

transition team, and that the other commissioner promoting the changes is Scott Thomas, a Reagan appointee.

Republicans, with a wealthier base, are much better at raising money with the new \$2,000-per-donor limit. Democrats traditionally have relied to a greater extent on advocacy groups.

The vast majority of negative campaigning has targeted Bush. MoveOn.org, which has produced some of the most effective anti-Bush ads and is credited in part with keeping Bush's approval ratings under 50 percent, is a 527.

The attack ads already have hit the air.

Jewish groups testifying against the rule changes before the commission are careful to note their own concerns about the 527s, and they distinguish themselves sharply from those groups. Most nonprofits — including many of the Jewish groups opposing the changes — are classified under 501 (c) in the tax code.

Saperstein also observed that the rule changes would have obstructed the Reform movement's support for Bush on a number of issues in recent years.

Some of the groups leading the effort to restrict 527s say Toner and Thomas are going too far, accusing the two of using a mallet to swat a fly.

"Rather than focusing this rulemaking on the precise issues presented by the ongoing violations of the law, the Commission has instead chosen to broadly overreach by proposing new rules that extend far beyond what is necessary to deal with the immediate problem," said a submission from the Center for Responsive Politics, which leads efforts to shut down the 527s. "This rulemaking threatens to broadly sweep into 'political committee' status a whole range of non-profit groups that have not been, and cannot be, subject to this regulation."

The drafters of the original law, Sens. John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Russ Feingold (D-Wis.), also are unhappy with the proposed changes, saying their breadth is fueling those who oppose any changes to the rules at all.

"We believe it is ill-advised for the FEC to undertake a rulemaking that would affect entities other than those organized under section 527 of the tax code," the senators wrote in a recent letter to their colleagues.

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## NORTH AMERICA

### U.S. to Arabs: Speak out

The United States wants Arab governments to respond to anti-Semitism in Arab media.

When incitement appears in the Arab world, often "there is a total absence of some kind of response from the government," William Burns, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, said Monday at an Anti-Defamation League conference in Washington.

### Rice to address ADL

Condoleezza Rice will address the Anti-Defamation League's national leadership conference.

President Bush's national security adviser will address the conference Tuesday in Washington, a day after John Kerry, the presumptive Democratic nominee, spoke.

### Charges remain against pie-thrower

A U.S. judge declined to drop disorderly conduct charges against a Rutgers student who threw a pie in Natan Sharansky's face.

Abe Greenhouse appealed to have the charges dropped, but Judge Mark Epstein said April 30 that Greenhouse was not engaging in peaceful protest when he threw the pie in the Israeli Cabinet minister's face last September. Sharansky was delivering a lecture as part of the Israel Inspires campaign, organized by Rutgers' Hillel, and Greenhouse attacked him to demonstrate displeasure with Israeli policies toward the Palestinians.

### Reform movement backs wage hike

The Reform movement is backing a new bill that would increase the U.S. minimum wage.

The Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism has thrown its support behind the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2004, which would raise the minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$7 an hour over the next two years.

### The kids need fresh Jewish air

The Reconstructionist movement's camp received a \$1 million donation.

The money for Camp JRF comes from Aaron Ziegelman, founder and president of a New York-based direct-lending firm. The donation will go to help the camp find a permanent home.

### Hate-crime hoax in L.A.?

Prosecutors accused a faculty member at a Los Angeles-area college of a hate-crime hoax.

The Los Angeles County district attorney's office recently charged Kerri Dunn, 39, a visiting assistant professor of psychology at Claremont McKenna College, with filing a false police report. She may also face federal charges of making false statements to the FBI.

Dunn reported in early March that while she was speaking at a campus forum on racial intolerance, her car was vandalized and spray-painted with racist and anti-Semitic graffiti. A week later, Claremont police announced that two eyewitnesses said Dunn had vandalized her own car. Dunn has declined comment, but her lawyer issued a news release stating that his client maintains her innocence.

### A kosher meat and greet

Diners feasted on quail, cow udder, venison, goat, bison and other exotic meats at a special Orthodox Union dinner. After a daylong conference in New York on how to recognize various species of animals and make them kosher, diners met Sunday at Manhattan's Levana restaurant for a meal of hard-to-get kosher meats.

## MIDDLE EAST

### Soldiers kill four Palestinians

Four Palestinians were killed in an army strike in Nablus.

Two missiles were launched at their vehicle in the center of the West Bank city. Among the dead militants were two senior commanders of the Al-Aksa Brigade, a terrorist group linked to Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement.

The four were accused of sending children carrying bombs to a West Bank roadblock and attempting to send suicide bombers to Jerusalem on Jewish holidays, Israeli officials said.

### Peres calls for new elections

Ariel Sharon said he would not resign after his Likud Party rejected his plan for unilateral Israeli withdrawal from Gaza.

But Labor Party head Shimon Peres, leader of the opposition, called for new elections after Likud members decisively rejected the prime minister's plan in a referendum Sunday.

### Israeli soldier jailed

An Israeli army officer was jailed for causing the death of a Palestinian during October 2002 riots.

Capt. Zvi Kuretsky was sentenced Monday to six months in jail for his role in causing the death of the 16-year-old Palestinian while dispersing the riots.

### Good fences make good neighbors?

An Egyptian court rejected the establishment of an Egyptian-Israeli friendship association.

The judge said Arabs do not need "false friendship," The Associated Press reported.

He went on to say relations with Israel should be left to Egypt's government.

## WORLD

### E.U. condemns Gaza killing

The European Union condemned Sunday's killing in Gaza of an Israeli mother and her four daughters.

"The killing of children does not serve any legitimate cause and degrades any purpose which it purports to advance," Irish Foreign Minister Brian Cowen said, speaking for the union.

Tali Hatuel, who was eight months pregnant, was driving with her four daughters down the main road that connects the Gush Katif settlement bloc and a main Gaza border crossing when her station wagon came under fire from Palestinian gunmen in a nearby car.

### Australia calls Jihad terrorist

Australia listed Islamic Jihad as a terrorist group.

As a result of Monday's move, Islamic Jihad is not allowed to raise funds in Australia, and those working for the organization can be prosecuted. The United States already considers Islamic Jihad a terrorist group.

### Hate monitor assaulted in Russia

An anti-racism activist was attacked in the Russian city of Vorezh by what is believed to be a group of skinheads.

Alexei Kozlov, monitor for the Moscow Bureau on Human Rights and the European Commission's project against anti-Semitism and xenophobia in Russia, received minor injuries in last week's attack. He said the attack was a result of his activism in the city, which is known for its high level of racially motivated attacks.

Police are investigating the incident.