

## IN THE NEWS

**Case closed  
on Ariel Sharon**

Israel's attorney general dropped a bribery case against Ariel Sharon.

Menachem Mazuz announced Tuesday that the Israeli prime minister would not be indicted in a bribery probe. The bribery scandal centers on a real-estate magnate friend of the Sharons who hired Sharon's son to serve as an adviser for a Greek island resort deal in the 1990s.

The magnate, David Appel, already has been indicted on charges of trying to bribe Sharon, then Israel's foreign minister, to help clinch the deal. [Story, Pg. 2]

**U.S. rips Israeli  
fence building**

The route of Israel's West Bank security barrier is a problem, the State Department spokesman said. Richard Boucher said U.S. officials had discussed with Israeli officials recent reports that Israel is appropriating land east of the Ariel settlement.

"Our position has been clear: The fence is a problem," Boucher said Tuesday. "It's a problem to the extent that it prejudges final borders, that it confiscates Palestinian property or that it imposes further hardship on the Palestinian people."

**Hate crimes bill  
passes in Senate**

Jewish groups praised the U.S. Senate for expanding its definition of hate crimes.

The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act, which passed the Senate on Tuesday as part of the Defense Department Authorization bill, would expand the definition of hate crimes to include crimes targeting sexual orientation, disability or gender.

Current federal hate crime laws apply only to race, religion or national origin. The language has passed the Senate in previous years, but has been stripped out of the bill's final form. The move was praised by the Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism.



# WORLD REPORT

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## Are rabbinic rules on sex abuse working? California case is a test

By JOE BERKOFSKY

**N**EW YORK (JTA) — A lengthy battle over how the Reform movement should handle a charge of sexual misconduct against a California rabbi is coming to a head.

On June 20, the board of trustees of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the movement's rabbinical arm, is expected to decide whether to uphold its earlier reprimand of Rabbi Michael Mayersohn or to censure him, a more serious step, which the conference's Committee on Ethics and Appeals initially had recommended.

The issue stems from a May 2002 complaint by Chavah Hogue of Huntington Beach, Calif., who alleged that Mayersohn tried to seduce her during a closed-door marital counseling session while he was the rabbi at Temple Beth David in Westminster, Calif.

Mayersohn, who has since left his congregation and now is a full-time pastoral counselor, vehemently denies the charge.

The California case returns the spotlight to rabbinic ethics policies in the wake of several high-profile cases of sexual abuse in the Jewish community, as well as the well-publicized scandals of sexual abuse by Catholic clergy.

It also comes nearly eight years after a groundbreaking JTA series heightened awareness of the issue in the Jewish community.

Perhaps the most prominent Jewish scandal in recent years involved Rabbi Baruch Lanner, an Orthodox day school principal in New Jersey, who was convicted and jailed in 2002 for sexually abusing teenage girls and

women and physically abusing boys as an official of the National Conference of Synagogue Youth.

A report for the youth group's parent organization, the Orthodox Union, found that Lanner's superiors did not act forcefully enough to intervene after receiving complaints about his behavior.

"The Lanner case and what happened with the Catholic priesthood raised the awareness of the public, and gave the public the sense that we should not ignore it if a member of the clergy is doing something wrong," said Rabbi Joel Meyers, executive vice president of the Conservative movement's Rabbinical Assembly.

Hogue, 44, who was raised in an Anglo-Catholic home, said she discovered Jewish roots in her family and joined the Reform congregation in 1999, changing her name to Chavah from Lori and converting along with her daughter in a Conservative ceremony a year after joining the Reform temple. Her husband did not convert.

In a telephone interview with JTA, Hogue alleged that Mayersohn began "hitting on me" some eight months after she joined the temple, trying to kiss her, hug her or touch her inappropriately.

Hogue was experiencing marital problems involving interfaith issues, and at the rabbi's suggestion began attending pastoral counseling sessions alone with him, she said. After asking about her sex life in their first session, the rabbi "groped me and kissed me and tried to convince me to have sex with him" in a second meeting, she said. Hogue refused.

In May 2002, Hogue filed a formal sexual

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**FOCUS  
ON  
ISSUES**

## ■ Are rabbinic guidelines on sex abuse working? California case shines light

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misconduct complaint to the Central Conference of American Rabbis' Committee on Ethics and Appeals, which handles such charges. Her complaint against Mayersohn alleged "sexual boundary violations."

Mayersohn, 52, has flatly denied all of the allegations to Reform movement officials, and he reiterated his denials to JTA.

"There was absolutely nothing inappropriate about our relationship and there was nothing, from my end, that was sexual about it," he said. "Nothing that she alleges happened in those meetings happened. Unfortunately, like all rabbis who meet with people behind closed doors, I am vulnerable to people's fabrications."

The rabbi also maintained that it was Hogue who initiated the pastoral counseling sessions, which he said he conducted with many congregants.

Though Mayerson said he sometimes touched congregants in public in a "warm, friendly" manner, Hogue "confused" his gestures for something else.

She "mistook my rabbinic concerns for her well interest" for "romantic or sexual interest," he said.

He also told the ethics panel that he took pre-emptive action against Hogue's "misperceptions," notifying the temple board and the Central Conference of American Rabbis of her assertions soon after their counseling sessions.

After the three-member ethics committee's investigating team looked into the

case, the panel in June 2003 said in a report to Gold that Hogue's charge "cannot be clearly confirmed or denied," but that it was "troubling to dismiss her experience here as having been entirely imagined."

Though the panel could not prove Mayersohn was guilty of any ethical lapse, it maintained that "there is an indication of a rabbi in need of some kind of support and/or training."

The panel found there was sufficient evidence Mayersohn had "exercised poor judgment" in his dealings with Hogue and in August voted to censure him. That was less than the gravest possible penalties — expulsion or suspension — but more serious than the lightest form of punishment, a letter of reprimand.

By being censured, Mayersohn was required to undergo psychological evaluation, therapy and counseling for teshuvah, or repentance.

If a censured rabbi fails to fulfill such orders or additional problems surface, the Central Conference of American Rabbis could recommend that they be removed from some or all of their professional duties.

In a letter notifying Hogue of the censure, the ethics panel's chairwoman, Rabbi Rosalind Gold of Reston, Va., said Mayersohn had the right to appeal to the rabbinic conference's board of trustees.

Yet the full board overturns such decisions only "when the proper process of adjudication has not been followed; I do not believe there is any ground for such an appeal in this case," she wrote at the time.

Mayersohn stepped down from his pulpit that same month, after giving his temple a required six-month notification. He said the action against him and his leaving "have nothing to do with each other," but that after 13 years in the pulpit, he wanted to be a full-time pastoral counselor.

Mayersohn also appealed the censure, a move that forestalled any of its requirements, and in January 2004, Gold wrote

Hogue that the Central Conference of American Rabbis' board had reduced the penalty to a reprimand.

Ultimately, neither Mayersohn nor Hogue was happy with how the seven-month investigation was handled.

"I understand the difficulty of their task, but I do believe either flaws in the system or mistakes in the process have resulted in injury to me," Mayersohn said.

For her part, Hogue said, "They were dragging their feet and taking as long as possible to conduct this case."

The Central Conference of American Rabbis was "falling down in their sacred duty to protect those who come to them for help."

**Chavah Hogue**

Sexual abuse complainant

Gold, Central Conference of American Rabbis President Rabbi Janet Marder and other conference members declined to discuss the case with JTA, citing confidentiality policies.

Ultimately, Hogue maintains the Central Conference of American Rabbis was "falling down in their sacred duty to protect those who come to them for help."

"I felt they were not giving my case the importance it deserved," she said.

Rabbi Paul Menitoff, the group's executive vice president, defended the way the rabbinic conference handles complaints about members.

"Anybody who looks at our process and how it has been implemented over the years would be hard-pressed to say it's not serious," Menitoff said.

In a typical year, the rabbinic conference fields five to six complaints of rabbinic sexual misconduct, he said, and the charges are found worthy of some action "more often than not."

But he and other officials would not discuss the details of those cases.

Rabbi Arthur Gross Schaefer, a professor of law at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles who advocated for tougher Reform ethics rules and who helped shape the current guidelines in the mid-1990s, said the movement was among the first streams to get tough on rabbinic sexual misbehavior.

Now Schaefer hopes the movement will mandate more classes on sexual misconduct issues for rabbis and seminary students to prevent further abuse. ■

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# Ariel Sharon is cleared of bribery charges

By DAN BARON

JERUSALEM (JTA) — As a general, Ariel Sharon proved adept at avoiding land mines. As prime minister, he has done the same in the political arena.

Sharon's latest successful circumvention came Tuesday, when Israel's attorney general announced that there was not enough evidence to press charges against Sharon on allegations of bribery.

Menachem Mazuz's decision to drop the long-running case against the prime minister came as no surprise, as media reports in recent weeks had predicted the decision.

"The evidence in this case does not meet the requirement of suggesting a reasonable chance of conviction — not even close," Mazuz, in his first major public appearance since taking office in January, told reporters in Jerusalem after a nationally televised news conference.

Mazuz reportedly called the prime minister shortly before the news conference to inform him of the decision, and Sharon replied, "Thank you very much," according to sources.

Sharon consistently had denied allegations that he took a bribe from real estate magnate David Appel, a Sharon friend who employed Sharon's son Gilad in the 1990s to serve as an adviser in his bid to win development rights for a lucrative Greek island resort.

Appel has been charged with trying to secure the help of Sharon, then Israel's

foreign minister, by paying Gilad Sharon hundreds of thousands of dollars to serve as Appel's adviser on the development project.

The Greek island affair, which became public last year, compounded two other funding scandals dogging the prime minister and drew calls from the Israeli opposition for Sharon's resignation.

Sharon still faces the possibility of charges in another case, also involving Sharon's family.

That case involves a \$1.5 million loan Sharon's sons took from Cyril Kern, a family friend and businessman in South Africa, to cover illegal campaign contributions in Sharon's 1999 bid for the Likud Party leadership.

An indictment recommendation by Mazuz in the Appel case would have made Sharon the first sitting prime minister to face criminal charges in Israel's history. In March, then-state prosecutor Edna Arbel recommended that the prime minister be indicted.

But Mazuz was unequivocal in clearing Sharon.

"It should be remembered that for more than two years, the police listened in to Appel's two phone lines, recording thousands of conversations. Nonethe-

less, these wiretaps yielded no evidence, either direct or indirect, for substantiating the suspicion that Sharon was bribed by Appel," Mazuz said. "It is a deafening silence."

Mazuz also closed the case against Gilad Sharon. Though the Greek island project never panned out, Mazuz took the trouble to note Gilad's "professionalism" as an adviser for

Appel, a post that earned him more than \$20,000 per month.

Sharon's political detractors cried foul after Mazuz's announcement.

"What does the attorney-general expect — for the tainted money to be put on his desk so he can touch it himself?" asked Yossi Sarid, a lawmaker from the liberal Meretz party.

Sarid vowed to petition the High Court of Justice to overturn Mazuz's decision.

But with the main opposition Labor Party negotiating with Sharon's Likud on a possible national unity coalition to push through Sharon's Gaza withdrawal plan, Sarid's bid was unlikely to enjoy broad support from Sharon's political opponents on the left.

"I see this as the end of the affair," Justice Minister Yosef "Tommy" Lapid said after the announcement. "Now that the case has been closed thus, the time has come for Labor to join the government." ■

Sharon still faces the possibility of charges in another case, also involving his family.

## 'Who is a Jew' issue at center of Israeli adoption dispute

By DAN BARON

TEL AVIV (JTA) — King Solomon himself might have been vexed by this battle over an Israeli baby claimed by two sets of parents.

The plaintiffs in Tel Aviv District Court are a young couple that regretted giving up their child for adoption. The defenders are the adoptive parents, who have no intention of returning the 13-month-old boy.

A gag order may be keeping the characters' names from publication, but media leaks have put them squarely on Israel's center stage, and the case involves the sensitive issue of Jewish identity.

On Monday, the attorney for the plaintiffs revealed that the baby is not technically Jewish, which could retroactively invalidate the adoption. According to Israel's 1981 adoption law, children may be adopted only by guardians of the same religion.

"Many questions arise from this case," said Dean Adani, at-

torney for the plaintiffs. "We spoke with religious authorities who have told us that the way the social services allow couples to adopt children of a different religion is against the law and is something that needs to be changed."

But the biological mother, a Christian who emigrated from Romania with her Jewish husband under Israel's Law of Return, may herself have sealed the child's fate by requesting, upon giving him up for adoption, that he be raised as a Jew.

Israeli media on Tuesday said the boy was circumcised and his adoptive parents are religiously observant. That prompted Israel's chief rabbi, Yona Metzger, to suggest that a de-facto conversion may have taken place and the boy may therefore belong to the adoptive parents. But if the conversion process had not been completed, the biological mother could regain custody of the child if she regretted giving it up for adoption, Metzger said.

Court officials said the child's religious status was being investigated. ■

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## MIDDLE EAST

### Farewell to Syrian intransigence?

Syria reportedly plans to abandon the anti-Israel policy known as the "three no's."

The Persian Gulf newspaper Al-Watan on Tuesday cited sources in Syria's ruling Ba'ath Party saying that Damascus was drawing up a new policy whereby it would be willing to recognize the Jewish state if it relinquishes lands conquered in the 1967 Six-Day War.

Syria until now has clung to the "no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with Israel," resolutions reached by Arab heads of state at a Khartoum conference three months after the 1967 conference.

### Turkish prime minister blasts Israel

Turkey's prime minister said Israeli policies are fanning anti-Semitism.

Turkey agrees with Israel "on most issues, but we think differently on one or two matters," Recep Tayyip Erdogan told Turkish lawmakers. "We don't have a problem with the Israeli people, but unfortunately, the Israeli administration's current actions are increasing anti-Semitism in the world." Israeli officials rejected the criticism. Turkey's allegation is "inappropriate and only reinforces those wishing to harm the Jewish people," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

### Mega-attack thwarted in Israel

An Israeli official said Israel thwarted a "mega-terror attack" that Hamas planned to carry out.

Maj. Gen. Aharon Ze'evi-Farkash told a Knesset committee Tuesday that Hamas planned to stage six bombings on the same day two weeks ago, but the terrorists were arrested at the Karni crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip. Meanwhile, a Palestinian was killed Tuesday after throwing rocks at Israeli soldiers in the West Bank.

### Israeli overflights criticized

The United Nations called on the Israeli air force to stop flying over Lebanon.

"Regrettably, Israeli air violations of the Blue Line are continuing to take place," U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan's personal representative for southern Lebanon, Staffan De Mistura, said in a statement Tuesday, referring to the border between the two countries. "The persistent Israeli overflights contribute to the raising of tension."

Israeli officials say missions over Lebanon are necessary to keep a watch on Hezbollah, as well as on troop formations in nearby Syria.

### Gaza car bombing stopped

Israeli troops thwarted a Gaza Strip car bombing. Soldiers spotted a suspicious Palestinian car approaching the Netzarim settlement Tuesday and opened fire, detonating explosives inside.

It was not immediately clear if the driver managed to bolt the vehicle before the blast.

The Al-Aksa Brigade and the Islamic Jihad claimed joint responsibility for the planned attack.

### Peres talks to Qurei

Israeli opposition leader Shimon Peres held talks with the Palestinian Authority prime minister.

Citing Palestinian sources, Israel Radio said Tuesday that Peres and Ahmed Qurei had discussed reviving a 2002 understanding on new peace negotiations.

Peres confirmed on the radio that he had spoken to Qurei by phone but did not give further details.

## NORTH AMERICA

### Israel-China deals worry Washington

Defense cooperation between Israel and China is worrying, a U.S. study said.

The report released Tuesday by the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission said Israel was second only to Russia in supplying Beijing with advanced military technology.

The commission's vice chairman, Dick D'Amato, told Reuters that while Washington had made "strenuous" efforts to restrain Israel from selling to China, "there's still not the level of cooperation and assurance that has relieved our concerns. We're very worried about this relationship."

### Former camp guard deported to Ukraine

A U.S. judge ruled that a former concentration camp guard could be deported.

The judge ruled Monday that Jakiw Palij could be deported to his native Ukraine based on his service as a guard at the Trawniki forced-labor camp and because he concealed that service when he applied to immigrate to the United States in 1949. Palij, 80, has been living in New York City.

The case against Palij was brought by the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations.

### U.S. Jewish extremist to face trial

A U.S. judge voided a plea bargain that had been reached with a Jewish extremist.

On Monday, the judge said Jewish Defense League member Earl Kugel had breached the plea bargain reached in a case in which he is accused of plotting to bomb a Los Angeles-area mosque and the offices of Rep. Darrell Issa (R-Calif.). Kugel's co-defendant in the case, former JDL leader Irv Rubin, committed suicide in jail.

The judge said Kugel's trial would begin in November.

## WORLD

### Polish synagogue desecrated

Vandals desecrated a Polish synagogue in the historic Jewish section of Krakow. Police late Monday night found anti-Semitic slogans and swastikas at the Tempel Synagogue in Kazimierz.

### German law protested

Holocaust memorial directors in Israel and Germany protested a proposed German law they say equates suffering under the Nazis with Communist-inflicted pain.

Avner Shalev, chairman of the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem, wrote an open letter to Angela Merkel, leader of the conservative Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union.

The letter urged Merkel to reconsider the motion regarding funding of memorials for victims of both regimes, which members of her party submitted. The proposed law is to be discussed Thursday in the German Bundestag.

### WZO addresses anti-Semitism

The annual conference of the World Zionist Organization is focused on anti-Semitism.

Opening the annual Zionist General Council at Israel's Mount Herzl on Tuesday night, Israeli President Moshe Katsav compared the tenor of Theodor Herzl's time to today's. The anti-Semitism of the Dreyfus affair, which prompted the Zionist founder to dream of an independent Jewish state, is still rampant, Katsav said, according to Jewish Agency for Israel spokesman Michael Jankelowitz.