



## IN THE NEWS

## House endorses Bush assurances

A U.S. House of Representatives' resolution endorsing President Bush's diplomatic assurances to Israel passed Wednesday by a 407-9 vote.

The bipartisan resolution endorses Bush's recognition of some Israeli land claims in the West Bank and rejection of any Palestinian refugee "right of return" to Israel.

It omits direct mention of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's quid pro quo for the assurances — withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. [Story, Pg. 3]

## Arafat gets reform deadline

Egypt gave Yasser Arafat two months to prepare Palestinian Authority security forces to take over the Gaza Strip once Israel withdraws.

Egyptian intelligence chief Omar Suleiman delivered the ultimatum in a meeting with the P.A. president in Ramallah on Wednesday, pledging that if the reform requirement is met, Cairo will send advisers to Gaza to further bolster P.A. control there.

Suleiman later was due to ask Israeli officials to halt military operations in the Gaza Strip as a confidence-building measure, but media quoted Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon as rejecting a cease-fire as long as Palestinian terrorism continues.

## Major attack stopped in Israel

Israeli officials said Wednesday that a major suicide bombing planned for Jerusalem was averted.

Acting on intelligence reports, Israeli soldiers and Shin Bet agents stopped three Palestinians north of Jerusalem.

The three told them they were waiting for a fourth man who was expected to deliver them a suicide bomb belt. That man later was arrested with a 22-pound bomb near the West Bank city of Nablus.

# WORLD REPORT

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## Police try to adapt to the fight against organized crime in Israel

By GIL SEDAN

**J**ERUSALEM (JTA) — It's said of Hebrew poet Chaim Nachman Bialik that when he heard that a Jewish burglar had been caught in Tel Aviv, he said, "Finally, we have one of our own."

Now, in the Jewish state Bialik could only dream of, it seems there are too many of them.

"I would not speak of organized crime, but rather of crime organizations," said Moshe Levin, former commander of the Israel Police International Crime Unit.

Crime in Israel hasn't yet permeated the political establishment, as it has in places like Italy and Russia, Levin said. But over the past three and a half years, while the Israel Police has focused on terrorists, old-fashioned criminals have been having their way in the Jewish state.

Last year, police filed 464,854 criminal cases, an increase of 4.5 percent from 2002. Police say it's the quality of crimes, not necessarily the quantity, that is most alarming.

Crime in Israel is controlled by a number of organized criminal gangs, according to police, with several families at the center of things.

Recently, police said, the two most prominent of those families, the Rosensteins and Abarjils, engaged in a bloody duel of mutual killing, probably related to control of casinos in Israel.

That invited a police crackdown, but not before 20 people were killed in the gang war, at least nine of them innocent bystanders.

After years of neglect, the Israel Police finally is waking up to the bitter reality: It's

time to take off the gloves in the fight against crime.

Inspector General Shlomo Aharonishky targeted organized crime and juvenile delinquency as the police's prime challenges this year.

Earlier this month, police announced that they had arrested nine alleged senior gangsters, all members of the Ohanina family.

Among the detainees were Rafi and Moshe Ohanina, the putative heads of the family, who are suspected of committing at least two murders and making several more attempts.

An older brother, Hanania, 42, served 12 years in jail for importing heroine to Israel from Holland. He was gunned down by criminals last year.

"It is the first time that heads of the organization are behind bars, and we have solid evidence against them," said Menashe Arbiv, a high-level police commander.

Police said the arrests marked a high point in the offensive against organized crime. The offensive grew out of the sense that police were failing to cope with rising crime due to the preoccupation with Palestinian terrorism, severe budget cuts and reductions in police manpower.

"Since Dec. 12 of last year, thousands have been detained as part of the police fight against organized crime," Tzachi Hanegbi, Israel's minister of internal security, recently told the Knesset Interior Committee. "The entire system is recruited for this battle, which it perceives as an essential battle for the soul of democracy in Israel."

But despite occasional police success

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BEHIND  
THE  
HEADLINES

## ■ Police try to adapt to the fight against organized crime in Israel

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stories, crime is prospering in Israel.

Israeli mafia bosses control illegal casinos throughout Israel and in places like Romania and Bulgaria, where they operate almost freely. Trafficking in drugs, weapons and prostitutes also brings in big money.

In the last few months, police have shut down some 1,700 illegal casinos and 1,400 brothels and confiscated large amounts of arms.

But the outlook isn't rosy.

"All attempts to eradicate illegal gambling in Israel have failed," Levin said. "All closed institutions are like a drop in an ocean of illegal gambling."

■  
The trade in women is just as perplexing. Women, mostly from the former Soviet Union, are smuggled into Israel through Egypt's Sinai Desert.

Many are lured under the pretext of work opportunities in Israel, but they often end up in local brothels with little chance to escape.

Even the recent breakthrough with the arrests of the Ohaninas came as a result of some good luck.

Yaron Senker, who allegedly worked with the Ohanina family, reportedly was on his way to a wedding hall in Rishon Le-Zion three months ago in a booby-trapped car. The car, loaded with explosives, was to blow up near the hall, where the Abarjils, bitter rivals of the Ohaninas, were celebrating.

But as Senker left Kfar Saba, he got into a traffic accident and the bombing

mission had to be aborted.

"Hundreds of innocent people who came to celebrate at the wedding could have died," Arbib said.

Senker revealed details of the plot shortly after he was arrested in another case earlier this month. He decided to turn state's witness against his former employers, he said.

In any case, the local crime lords are believed to have little connection to organized-crime rivalries outside the country. In the past, gangs in Russia tried to reach out to Israeli ones, but police thwarted those attempts, according to Levin.

Nevertheless, police said, local criminals have imported professional killers from Russia. Several weeks ago police arrested four "tourists" from Belarus

suspected of having been hired by the Ohanina family to assassinate rivals, among them Ezra Gavriely, father of Knesset member Inbal Gavriely.

"One needs a strong national unit to deal with organized crime, and then there is a good chance to succeed in the fight against crime," Levin said, adding that the police's present approach allows for too

many loopholes that smart criminals use to their advantage.

Hanegbi recently appointed Moshe Karadi, 44, to be the police's next inspector general. Hanegbi, who passed over a number of experienced veterans, said he made the choice to bring some new blood and new thinking into police work.

Many would say the police need it. ■

**T**rafficking in drugs, weapons and prostitutes brings in big money.

## Report: Slight rise in terror attacks

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Sixteen Americans were killed in terrorist attacks in Israel and in Palestinian areas last year, a revised State Department report shows.

The 2003 Patterns of Global Terrorism report was re-released Tuesday after State Department officials conceded that the original report, released two months ago, had omitted several significant attacks.

The first report omitted the Aug. 12 suicide bombing of a shopping mall in the West Bank settlement of Ariel, which killed two people and injured 10 others. It also omitted several smaller attacks.

The first report ended its chronology on Nov. 11, leaving out subsequent attacks.

Overall, the report found that 200 people had been killed in terrorist attacks in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip last year, down from more than 350 in 2002.

"Israeli counterterrorism measures appear to have reduced the frequency of attacks," the report says. "Continuing attacks, however, show that the groups remained potent."

The report notes Israel's arrest of several Jewish extremists, including some planning to detonate a bomb near a girls' school in eastern Jerusalem.

The report calls Palestinian Authority

security services "fragmented and ineffective," and says some senior P.A. officials may be helping terrorist groups.

The report also says there's no evidence of an Al-Qaida presence in Palestinian areas, despite Israeli arrests of individuals claiming to be linked to the terrorist group responsible for the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks in Washington and New York.

The report identifies Iran as the most active state sponsor of terrorism. It calls Iran's record on Al-Qaida "mixed," and notes that Iran funds, houses, trains and arms several Palestinian terror groups.

"During 2003, Iran maintained a high-profile role in encouraging anti-Israeli activity, both rhetorically and operationally," the report said. "Supreme Leader Khamenei praised Palestinian resistance operations, and President Khatami reiterated Iran's support for the 'wronged people of Palestine and their struggles.'" ■

The amended report contradicts the original report concerning terrorist trends throughout the world. The new report counted 208 terrorist incidents last year, three more than the year before. The original report claimed a decrease to 190 incidents, which the U.S. deputy secretary of state, Richard Armitage, hailed as a sign that America was "prevailing in the fight" against terrorism. ■

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# House backs Bush pledge on Israel

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A vote in Congress overwhelmingly backing President Bush's diplomatic assurances to Ariel Sharon suggests bipartisan and Jewish unity — but a closer reading reveals some fissures between Democrats and Republicans, and among pro-Israel lobbyists.

The resolution passed the U.S. House of Representatives on Wednesday by a 407-9 vote. As Bush did, the resolution recognizes "new realities on the ground, including already existing major Israeli population centers" in the West Bank, and rejects any Palestinian refugee "right of return" to Israel.

The vote is a clear turning point: Congress has strengthened Israel's hand immeasurably in any future U.S.-brokered talks with the Palestinians by recognizing the historic shift in U.S. foreign policy outlined in Bush's April 14 speech.

"It lays the foundation of American policy with regard to the future of Middle East peace on these critical core issues," said Josh Block, a spokesman for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, who noted the rarity of bipartisanship in a highly charged political season.

Missing, however, is any explicit reference to the price the Israeli prime minister paid for the historic assurances: a pledge to withdraw from the Gaza Strip.

The omission reflects differences over the Palestinians' role in the process, between those who favor drawing the Palestinians back into talks and those happy to shut them out.

Americans for Peace Now said that leaving out the Gaza withdrawal — and the Palestinians — meant the dovish group could not support the resolution.

The resolution "fails to endorse the most important aspects of Prime Minister Sharon's disengagement proposal," said Debra DeLee, APN's president. "It fails to back the evacuation of Israeli settlers, which is a central reason why President Bush offered his political assurances to Sharon."

Also opposing the resolution was Tikun, another dovish group, which supports Israel's withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The resolution's language was the result of negotiations between the offices of Reps. Tom DeLay (R-Texas), the House

majority leader, and Steny Hoyer (D-Md.), the minority whip.

DeLay's views are close to those of Sharon, who has done his best to sideline the current Palestinian Authority leadership in planning the withdrawal, and to those of right-wing Israelis who oppose a withdrawal.

Hoyer is closer to those in the pro-Israel community who — like the Bush administration — favor a Gaza withdrawal and hope it will help produce a more responsible Palestinian leadership willing to crack down on terrorism.

A Senate version of the resolution, also touted by leaders of both parties, does mention the Gaza withdrawal, reflecting greater cooperation between Bush and Senate Republicans. It also refers to Israel's pledge to limit settlement growth and to the temporary nature of the West Bank security barrier.

It was unclear when majority leader Sen. Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) and minority leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.) would propose the resolution.

Capitol Hill sources said Hoyer persuaded Democrats to back the House resolution by noting his influence on the resolution's final language, such as repeated references to eventual Palestinian statehood.

The differences were reflected in the speeches representatives from each side gave in endorsing the bill. Democrats emphasized the withdrawal from Gaza and the opportunities it presented; Republicans emphasized the Palestinian failure to assume responsibility for controlling terrorism.

"When Prime Minister Sharon announced withdrawal from Gaza, and from some parts of the West Bank, I viewed it as a fresh, new opportunity for peace in the Middle East, which is in the national interest of our country, and in the international interest of the world," said Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), the minority leader.

DeLay, for his part, didn't even mention Gaza.

"The people of Israel are at war, and it

is our responsibility to help them win it," he said. "As long as the Palestinian Authority refuses to take the necessary steps to end terrorism within its ranks, we must stand with Israel."

Supporters of the Gaza withdrawal said its omission from the text was odd, given that Sharon has staked his political career on the move.

"I don't know what exactly they were thinking by not endorsing the Gaza withdrawal. Why punt on this and ignore it?"

said M. J. Rosenberg, director of policy analysis for the Israel Policy Forum, a group that backs U.S.-sponsored peace initiatives in the region. "Sharon surely would have wanted this endorsement by Congress of this withdrawal."

Notably, in a statement thanking Congress for the resolution, Israeli Ambassador Daniel Ayalon explicitly referred to the planned pullout.

"By strongly endorsing the principles set forth in President Bush's April 14 letter, in response to Prime Minister Sharon's proposed disengagement plan, the U.S. Congress took an important step in promoting peace and stability in our region," he said.

Despite the omission in the House bill, Rosenberg said, Israel Policy Forum backed the resolution because it helps map a way out of the current impasse between.

"It's not perfect, but it's a start," Rosenberg said, comparing it to other resolutions that he said have shown outright hostility to the Palestinians.

'The people of Israel are at war, and it is our responsibility to help them win it.'

Tom DeLay (R-Texas)

House majority leader

## Singer editor dies

NEW YORK (JTA) — Elizabeth Shub, an editor who translated some of Isaac Bashevis Singer's children's books into English, died last Friday in New York.

Shub was credited with suggesting to Singer in the 1960s that he write children's books. Shub, who was 89, was born to Poland and came to the United States as a child with her family. Her father, known as Shmuel Niger, was a literary critic for *The Day*, a Yiddish newspaper.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

## MIDDLE EAST

**Sharon: Arafat to stay in compound**

Yasser Arafat will not be able to leave his Ramallah compound "for the next 45 years," Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said. Sharon made his comments regarding the Palestinian Authority president Wednesday.

Egyptian mediators reportedly are raising the issue of Arafat's freedom of movement in meetings on security arrangements for Gaza after an Israeli withdrawal.

**Netanyahu: Clinton, you're wrong**

Benjamin Netanyahu denied a claim in President Clinton's autobiography that he had agreed to withdraw from all of the Golan Heights for peace with Syria.

"In no situation, in no talks, did I agree to withdraw from the Golan Heights," the Israeli finance minister told Israeli Army Radio. Netanyahu, who served as Israel's prime minister from 1996-1999, responded to an assertion in Clinton's "My Life," which hit bookstores Tuesday.

**U.N. reports Middle East deaths**

More than 3,400 Palestinians and 940 Israelis have been killed since the intifada broke out in September 2000, a U.N. official said. U.N. official Kieran Prendergast gave the numbers to the U.N. Security Council on Wednesday. During this same period, 33,770 Palestinians and 6,008 Israelis were wounded, according to the report.

**Shalom praises Annan**

Israel welcomed Kofi Annan's condemnation of anti-Semitism at a U.N. conference.

The U.N. secretary-general on Monday noted the "alarming resurgence" of anti-Semitism in the world and called on the U.N. General Assembly to adopt a resolution saying the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should never justify the targeting of Jews.

**Two Palestinians killed**

Israeli forces killed two Palestinians in counterterrorist operations. Troops seeking to arrest the Islamic Jihad chief in Nablus on Wednesday shot dead his bodyguard when he reached for a gun, military sources said. In the Gaza Strip village of Beit Hanoun, the army said its forces fired at two gunmen while searching for Palestinian rocket crews. Witnesses said one of the men was killed.

**Hebron exhibit probed**

Israeli military police questioned four former soldiers who put on a photo exhibition about army service in Hebron.

The army said Wednesday it is investigating allegations raised by the Tel Aviv exhibition, titled "Breaking the Silence: Soldiers Tell About Hebron," with a view to prosecuting any soldiers found to have carried out violence or vandalism against Palestinians.

But organizers accused the military of trying to scare the four recently discharged soldiers into abandoning the project. The exhibition is made up of photographs taken in the flashpoint West Bank city, including some of Palestinians being detained by Israeli troops and of settlers attacking Arab property.

**Israel-South Korea defense ties?**

Israel Aircraft Industries is participating in a joint bid to sell airborne warning and control systems to South Korea.

The company wants to sell the Phalcon systems for \$1.7 billion, the Israeli newspaper Globes reported. U.S. defense giant Boeing and Thales of France have filed rival bids.

## WORLD

**Jewish Agency to aid withdrawal**

The Jewish Agency for Israel will aid a Gaza Strip withdrawal by planning new communities in Israel.

One sticking point in Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to evacuate some 7,500 Israelis from settlements in the Gaza Strip is the question of where to resettle them. The Jewish Agency Executive, made up of representatives of Zionist political parties and Diaspora Jewish communities, decided Wednesday to be involved in "new communities and expanding existing communities in the Negev, Galilee and Gilboa funded by the Government of Israel."

But the executive voted not to be involved in any other aspects of the withdrawal plan.

**Palestinian released in Hungary**

A Palestinian suspected of plotting to blow up a Jewish site in Budapest was released Tuesday. Hungarian police said the suspect, who was arrested shortly before Israeli President Moshe Katsav arrived in April to inaugurate Hungary's new Holocaust museum, no longer could be held without additional evidence.

**New AMIA theory blasted**

Argentina's main Jewish umbrella group criticized a new theory about a deadly attack on a Jewish center in Buenos Aires.

The DAIA group said it's no coincidence that a theory downplaying the involvement of Argentines in the July 1994 bombing at the AMIA center, in which 85 people were killed, is being released as a local man is on trial for his alleged role in the attack.

**Terror trial in Britain nearing verdict**

A London jury is considering its verdict in the trial of relatives of a British would-be suicide bomber.

The widow, brother and sister of Omar Sharif, who attempted to blow himself up at Mike's Bar in Tel Aviv in April 2003, deny charges that they had information about a pending terrorist act but failed to disclose it, or that they incited an act of terrorism. Sharif fled the scene of the bombing when his explosive belt failed to detonate; fellow Briton Asif Hanif blew himself up, killing three people and injuring more than 50.

Days later, Sharif's body was found in the sea off Tel Aviv.

**Neo-Nazi arrested**

Police in northern France arrested members of a neo-Nazi cell suspected of attacking mosques and a synagogue.

The arrests Wednesday follow an attack on a mosque last Friday near Valenciennes in which shots were fired and swastikas painted on the building.

A few days earlier, swastikas were scrawled on another mosque in the nearby city of Lens. Nazi slogans also were painted on the Valenciennes synagogue last month.

## NORTH AMERICA

**Tolerant tots**

The Anti-Defamation League has made a list of multicultural children's books available on the Internet.

More than 400 books were selected by the ADL's education staff from A World of Difference, an institute for diversity and anti-bias training. Ed Alster, ADL's director of education, says he thinks the books will be useful. "Reading multicultural literature has the potential to foster children's understanding and respect for their own and others' cultural groups and to develop empathy," he said.