

IN THE NEWS
U.N. to follow up on anti-Semitism

The organizer of a June U.N. conference on anti-Semitism said there will be a follow-up.

Shashi Tharoor, U.N. undersecretary general for communications and public information, told the governing board of the World Jewish Congress this week that there would be more attention to anti-Semitism at the United Nations.

Tharoor added that he is considering staging a photo exhibition in the U.N. lobby next year to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi death camps, said Elan Steinberg, the WJC's executive vice president.

Senate to take on world court ruling

The U.S. Senate is expected to denounce the International Court of Justice's ruling against Israel.

A resolution was introduced Tuesday expressing anger at the world court's ruling earlier this month that Israel's West Bank security barrier is illegal.

In a letter to colleagues, Sens. Gordon Smith (R-Ore.) and Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) called the court ruling a "blatant attempt to manipulate the United Nations system for political purposes."

Berger under fire for taking documents

A top Jewish official in the Clinton White House removed classified documents last year from the National Archives while preparing to testify before the Sept. 11 commission.

Samuel "Sandy" Berger, who served as national security adviser in President Clinton's second term, apologized and called the incident accidental.

Berger returned the anti-terrorism documents in his possession within a week of learning that they were missing, his lawyers said. Berger stepped down Tuesday as an informal adviser to presidential candidate John Kerry.

WORLD REPORT

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Chaos erupts in Gaza as reformists jockey with Arafat for control of P.A.

By GIL SEDAN

JERUSALEM (JTA) — It is the worst internal crisis for the Palestinian Authority since its birth 10 years ago.

For Yasser Arafat, it's another fight for his political life as the P.A. president faces a direct threat to his longtime, authoritarian rule of the Palestinians.

But this time the stakes are higher, and they go beyond Arafat: At stake is the survival of the Palestinian Authority.

The authority is facing complete anarchy.

The chaos was set off over the weekend when several dozen armed men, members of Arafat's own Fatah faction, committed what clearly was an act of rebellion against their leader: They ambushed the motorcade of the P.A. police chief in Gaza, longtime Arafat ally Ghazi Jabali, and kidnapped him.

The rebels refused to release Jabali until Arafat agreed to fire him for corruption.

Arafat eventually agreed, and Jabali was freed.

Kidnappings continued throughout the weekend, as well as a series of other incidents that threatened to deprive Arafat of his hold on the increasingly chaotic Gaza Strip, which Israeli troops and settlers are due to leave in 2005.

Another P.A. official was kidnapped, along with five French volunteers. All eventually were freed following Arafat's intervention.

Two senior officials, Rashid abu Shbak, head of the P.A. preventive security force, and Amin al-Hindi, head of the P.A.'s general intelligence service, handed in their resignations over the weekend, protesting what

they said was "the absence of reforms and the continuation of a state of anarchy in the Gaza Strip."

But Arafat's dismissal of Jabali — seemingly a sign of an agreement to institute reforms — turned out to be deceptive.

Over the weekend, Arafat fired reformer Abdel Razek Al-Majaideh from his post as director of general security for the West Bank and Gaza Strip because Majaideh had called for political reform.

Arafat replaced him with Mousa Arafat, a nephew who commands the much-reviled Palestinian military intelligence service and is widely accused of corruption.

The appointment fueled reformists' anger. Riots ensued, with masked vigilantes from Arafat's own Fatah faction clashing with Mousa Arafat loyalists in Gaza. Some 3,000 demonstrators took to the streets Saturday night to demand the reversal of Mousa Arafat's appointment.

Early Sunday, members of the Al-Aksa Brigades, the terrorist wing of Fatah — which used to be close to the P.A. leader — released prisoners held inside Mousa Arafat's headquarters in the city of Khan Younis, in southern Gaza, and set the command post on fire.

On Monday, Arafat was forced to rehire Majaideh and put him above his nephew.

In the meantime, P.A. Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei handed in his resignation, but Arafat refused to accept it.

The P.A. Cabinet set a meeting for Monday to try to stabilize the situation. Qurei said he would renege on his resignation only

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NEWS ANALYSIS

■ Chaos in Gaza raises questions for Arafat and his power in the P.A.

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if Arafat gave him some real power.

On Tuesday, Qurei agreed to stay on as prime minister for the time being, but he refused to withdraw his letter of resignation.

"The crisis goes on," senior P.A. negotiator Saeb Erekat told The Associated Press.

The demonstrations, violence and political chaos reflect deep frustration among Palestinians and some P.A. officials over widespread corruption in the Palestinian Authority, mass unemployment, a state of lawlessness in Palestinian cities and little hope that anything would change in the near future.

For Arafat, it's a moment of truth. Not unlike his decision to leave Beirut in 1982 following the Israeli siege, Arafat now must choose between bowing to reformists' pressure in Gaza — which could mean giving up his authoritarian rule — and holding his ground, which could lead to all-out confrontation with his opponents in the Gaza Strip.

Compounding the internal crisis, Arafat also needs to take into account his worsening reputation abroad.

Just last week, Terje Roed-Larsen, the U.N. special coordinator for the Middle East peace process and a long-time Arafat backer, assailed him for doing nothing to stop Palestinian terrorism.

"The P.A., despite consistent promises by its leadership, has made no progress on its core obligation to take immediate action on the ground to end violence and

combat terror and to reform and reorganize the Palestinian Authority," Roed-Larsen said in a speech at the United Nations. "All those who yearn for peace have already and repeatedly argued that President Arafat, in public and in private, take immediate action to restore this diminished credibility."

Though other parts of Roed-Larsen's speech were harshly critical of Israel's failure to uproot illegal settlement outposts, he was declared "persona non grata" in the Palestinian territories.

"Terje Roed-Larsen's statement is not objective. As of today he is an unwelcome person in Palestinian territories," Nabil Abu Rudeineh, a senior Arafat adviser, told Reuters.

The Palestinian ambassador to the United Nations, Nasser Al-Kidwa, called Roed-Larsen a "cheerleader" for Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Arafat's support is sinking fast, and nowhere faster than at home.

"President Arafat is responsible for this situation," said Sufian abu-Zaidah, a senior Fatah leader. "We've had enough and we insist on real reforms. We are fed up with this method of administration."

Abu-Zaidah expressed the widespread notion that Palestinians are willing to accept Arafat as a national symbol but are sick and tired of having him be a national tyrant.

More than any other single figure, the man behind the unrest in Gaza seems to be Mohammad Dahlan.

More than two years ago, Dahlan resigned his post as P.A. minister of internal security and since then has maintained a stance of passive opposition to Arafat.

Dahlan, 43, is considered Arafat's strongest rival in the Palestinian Authority, and the unrest in Gaza is part of jockeying within the Palestinian Authority for control of Gaza once the Israelis leave.

Despite his strong position in Gaza, Dahlan himself faces strong opposition.

Because the Israelis and Americans appear to favor him to keep the peace in

Gaza once Israel withdraws, many Palestinians find him suspect.

Dahlan has not been vocal during this latest crisis, but he sees the impending Israeli withdrawal as an opportunity to restore his control of law and order in the strip.

At a recent speech in Gaza, Dahlan said Palestinians either could build a model for administration in Gaza, or embrace "chaos and destruction."

The battleground now is divided between Gaza and the West Bank. Kidnappings, arrests, release of prisoners and mass demonstrations are becoming commonplace in Gaza, while

the political battleground is Ramallah, where Arafat rules from the ruins of his compound.

It is Arafat vs. Dahlan, the old guard from Tunisia vs. the younger generation of intifada activists, chaos vs. reform.

Palestinians are well aware that last weekend's unrest only fortifies the Israeli argument that there is no real partner on the Palestinian side.

"When someone like Ariel Sharon beats us in the information campaign, this means we have really failed, and we need to do some real soul-searching," legislator Kadura Fares said.

Last week, Israel's Foreign Ministry discussed several possible scenarios that could follow Arafat's death.

The ministry's report noted that whether Arafat dies from natural causes or as a result of Israeli military actions, a flare-up of violence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip likely would follow.

Palestinians probably would demand to bury Arafat on Jerusalem's Temple Mount, but the advisory recommended that Arafat instead be given a site in the nearby Arab suburb of Abu Dis.

The ministry report triggered an angry reaction from Arafat, who saw it as an indirect threat on his life.

Not surprisingly, the ministry predicted that Arafat's death would be followed by a state of anarchy.

Judging by last weekend's events, anarchy already has set in as Arafat fights — once again — for his political life. ■

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Kadura Fares

Palestinian legislator



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House approves Israel aid, but rifts appear

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — As the U.S. House of Representatives continues to refine its positions on the Middle East, support for Israel remains strong — but divisions are beginning to show.

On July 15, the House passed its annual foreign aid appropriations bill, giving Israel \$2.2 billion in military aid and \$360 million in economic aid.

House members shot down a proposal to change some of Egypt's annual aid from military assistance to economic aid and a measure to cut aid to the Palestinians because of continuing terrorist attacks.

At the same time, 45 legislators voted against a bill denouncing the International Court of Justice's July 9 ruling against Israel's West Bank security barrier, the largest nay vote on a pro-Israel congressional measure in recent years.

In an election year in which pro-Israel sentiment has become a major campaign theme for Republicans, the votes gave House members additional opportunities to voice their support for the Jewish state and one of its more significant — but controversial — efforts to stop terrorist attacks.

Unlike previous pro-Israel resolutions in Congress, the votes came with little advance warning and little lobbying from Jewish organizations.

Because some of the provisions went further than the standard expressions of support for the Jewish state, they encountered more opposition.

The ICJ legislation, which passed 361-45 with 13 members voting merely "present," condemns the U.N. court for its non-binding opinion last week, which called the fence "illegal" and ordered Israel to dismantle it.

The House bill deplors the misuse of the ICJ "to infringe upon Israel's right to self-defense." It also lays out an expansive rationale for the fence, which at points juts past Israel's pre-1967 boundary into the West Bank.

The bill urges all countries to join the United States in preventing exploitation of the ICJ ruling, a slap at a Palestinian-sponsored resolution currently under consideration in the United Nations.

"It is appalling to see how the United Nations forced this recent judgment by the International Court of Justice," said Rep.

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.). "Not only did the issue of the non-binding opinion last week state that Israel should remove its security fence, but the judges placed into question Israel's right to defend herself."

Republicans highlighted the fact that 20 percent of Democrats did not vote for the ICJ bill. Sources said Democratic leaders were not happy with the bill's language, and didn't try as hard as usual to get party members on board.

Several members of the Democratic caucus believe the bill went too far by almost endorsing the controversial fence, and Democratic leaders' efforts to tone down the language didn't win support from some party members.

"I have personally witnessed the very severe hardships it imposes on Palestinian life," Rep. Lois Capps (D-Calif.) said of the fence. "A fence on the Green Line is one thing. That makes sense strategically and demographically. But a separation barrier that winds its way through the West Bank, appropriating Palestinian land in its wake, is not acceptable."

Lawmakers rejected an amendment to the foreign aid bill that would have converted \$570 million in military aid to Egypt to economic aid. Sponsored by Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), the legislation faced opposition from several staunch pro-Israel advocates, including Reps. Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.) and Howard Berman (D-Calif.).

Lantos suggested that Egypt doesn't need the military aid because it doesn't face a military threat from its neighbors, but does need economic assistance.

"The biggest threat to Egyptian stability is its bloated military budget, which undermines economic and educational development and democratization," Lantos said. "In fact, if we enhance our support for economic and social projects in Egypt, our credibility with the Egyptian people will soar."

But many lawmakers disagreed, arguing that while Egypt's record is suspect — its government-sponsored media is often fiercely anti-Semitic, and it has breached its peace treaty with Israel by refusing to

keep an ambassador there since the Palestinian intifada began — its recent willingness to help stabilize the Gaza Strip after an Israeli withdrawal makes it the wrong time to chastise Egypt.

Republicans handed out a letter from Secretary of State Colin Powell, suggesting that the U.S.-Egyptian relationship depended on military assistance to Egypt.

"A transfer of funds from the military assistance account to the economic assistance account will damage the credibility of our bilateral relations at a very sensitive moment in the region, one that has

witnessed Egyptian engagement in and support of our regional objectives," Powell wrote.

The amendment failed, 131-287.

A separate amendment, suggesting that U.S. aid to the Palestinians be suspended until the Palestinian Authority ends support of terrorism, was withdrawn. The measure was sponsored by Rep. C.L. "Butch" Otter (R-Idaho).

The spending bill does not specifically designate an amount to go to the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The president's budget request earmarked \$75 million for the Palestinian areas, to be administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development.

The overall spending bill, which included the Israel aid, passed the House 365-41. The Senate is not expected to take up the bill until after its summer recess.

The House also approved another measure July 15 that called on the Bush administration to push for Israel to be granted full involvement in the Western European regional grouping at the United Nations. Arab states for years have prevented Israel from joining the Asian group, its natural place.

Israel won partial membership in the European group a few years ago, but can't participate as a group member in U.N. offices outside New York.

The bill, which passed unanimously, also called on President Bush and others to "seek an immediate end to the persistent and deplorable inequality experienced by Israel in the United Nations." ■

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NEWS IN BRIEF

WORLD

AMIA bombing evidence found

Key evidence in the 1994 bombing of the AMIA Jewish center in Argentina was recovered.

Argentine President Nestor Kirchner told Argentine and U.S. Jewish leaders Monday that 45 tapes of telephone conversations involving Carlos Telleldin, a car mechanic accused in the case, have been recovered.

Telleldin is accused of providing the van used to carry out the attack. The meeting came a day after the 10th anniversary of the July 18, 1994, bombing, which left 85 people dead and 300 wounded.

Two arrested in Australian attack

Police in Perth, Australia, arrested two men following racial attacks in many parts of the city.

The Perth Hebrew Congregation, spiritual home to 1,500 of the city's 9,000 Jews, was defaced with giant swastikas and had posters plastered on its walls.

Damon Paul Blaxall, 28, allegedly a member of the Australian National Movement, was charged with criminal damage and racial vilification. Shannon Mark Post, 24, has been charged with criminal damage.

The charge against Blaxall is the first under the state's racial vilification laws, passed 14 years ago.

Chirac denies anti-Sharon report

French President Jacques Chirac denied that he rescinded an invitation to Ariel Sharon to visit Paris.

On Monday, it was reported that Chirac had sent a letter to Sharon after the Israeli prime minister called on French Jews to move to Israel because of anti-Semitism in France.

Sharon's statement incensed French officials. In a statement late Monday, Chirac's office denied that a formal letter had been sent, saying instead that "a possible visit to Paris by the Israeli prime minister, for which no date had been fixed, will not be examined until the explanations demanded have been furnished."

MIDDLE EAST

Two Israelis killed on border

Two Israeli soldiers patrolling the border with Lebanon were killed by Hezbollah fire.

Tuesday's clash occurred when members of the Shiite terrorist group shot into Israel, drawing return fire from Israeli troops.

At least one Hezbollah man also was killed. Israel has been on high alert since Hezbollah vowed to avenge the assassination of one of its top militiamen in Beirut on Monday.

A Lebanese group claimed responsibility for the killing, though Hezbollah blamed it on Israel.

The Israeli army had warned Monday that Hezbollah could use the assassination as a pretext to attack Israel.

Qurei back in

The Palestinian Authority prime minister put his resignation on hold.

On Tuesday, Ahmed Qurei said he would stay at his job but could eventually quit to protest his lack of power.

Qurei tendered his resignation over the weekend after Gaza Strip gunmen took to the streets to protest P.A. President Yasser Arafat's appointment of a relative to a top security role.

The appointment later was rescinded. Arafat and his Cabinet had called on Qurei to withdraw his resignation.

Gaza terror chief hunted

Israeli helicopter gunships hit the home of a Gaza Strip terrorist chief for a second time.

Two people were wounded in the Tuesday morning airstrike in Gaza City, which followed a similar attack hours earlier. It was not clear if Abu Yousef Al-Quka, the homeowner, was among the casualties. Quka heads the Popular Resistance Committees, a group of Fatah movement terrorists that has spearheaded attacks on Israelis in Gaza.

In Monday's strike on Quka's home, three Palestinians were hurt.

NORTH AMERICA

Satterfield: Targeting terrorists helps

Israel's attacks on Palestinian terrorist leaders have helped reduce attacks, a senior U.S. official said.

David Satterfield, second-in-charge at the State Department's Near East desk, told the Senate on Tuesday that a number of factors were involved in reducing attacks, but that the assassinations clearly were one. "The leadership of Hamas, of Islamic Jihad, has been very severely affected by Israeli strikes," Satterfield said. U.S. officials previously had said that such targeted killings were unhelpful.

Jewish reps. spotlight Sudan killings

Two U.S. Jewish lawmakers are urging colleagues to support a resolution declaring genocide is occurring in Darfur, Sudan. Reps. Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.) and Shelley Berkley (D-Nev.) appealed to other Jewish representatives to sign on as co-sponsors of a resolution backed by the Congressional Black Caucus calling attention to the atrocities in Darfur.

"We in the Jewish community have taken pride in saying 'never again' when it comes to crimes against humanity," they wrote. The initiative was taken in conjunction with the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding. The United Nations estimates that at least 30,000 people have been killed.

U.S.: Arafat blocking investigation

The United States believes Yasser Arafat has made a political decision not to pursue the killers of three U.S. officials.

The failure to capture those who bombed a U.S. diplomatic convoy in the Gaza Strip in October 2003 has soured U.S.-Palestinian relations. "There has been no satisfactory resolution of this case," David Satterfield, the second-in-charge at the State Department's Near East desk, told the U.S. Senate on Tuesday.

Lantos defends anti-Semitism review

Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.) is angry the U.S. State Department opposes a plan for an annual review of global anti-Semitism.

Lantos wrote Monday to Secretary of State Colin Powell suggesting that the level of hostility to Jews around the world warrants an amendment to the Global Anti-Semitism Review Act, currently under debate in the House of Representatives.

The State Department says an anti-Semitism report would appear to afford special status to one group.

Nazi infiltrator honored

A Holocaust survivor who infiltrated a group of Nazis in Germany after World War II was honored with a Silver Star medal.

Michel Thomas was given the award Monday for his efforts to stop a group of former Nazi and SS officers who were committing atrocities in postwar Germany.

Earlier efforts to honor Thomas were turned down because his efforts seemed hard to believe. A detective recently verified his claims.