

IN THE NEWS
**Bush ends
Libya sanctions**

President Bush suspended sanctions against Libya.

The lifting of 18-year-old sanctions on trade, air travel and Libyan assets in the United States will go into effect Tuesday.

Israeli officials have said they are skeptical about the commitment to peaceful reform by Libya, which has been a longtime supporter of Palestinian terrorism.

Bush rewarded Libya for its decision last year to cooperate with weapons inspectors.

**Shalom: Fence
resolution might fail**

Israel believes a Palestinian effort to bring the West Bank security barrier issue to the U.N. Security Council will fail.

Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom said Monday that he does not believe the Palestinians have the nine votes necessary to force a U.S. veto of a resolution condemning the construction of the security barrier. The Palestinians hope a U.S. veto would embarrass Israel.

"It looks now like the Europeans are very much fatigued, very tired with the Palestinian efforts, and won't give them the hand," Shalom told a meeting of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations in New York.

**WJC dismisses Leibler,
Bronfman to run again**

The World Jewish Congress dismissed its senior vice president.

Isi Leibler, who had raised questions about financial irregularities at the congress, was fired from his post Monday at a meeting in New York of the WJC's steering committee.

At the meeting, Edgar Bronfman, the group's longtime president and single-largest financial supporter, also said he would run for another five-year term as president.

Bronfman had been expected to step down from the congress in 2006.

WORLD REPORT

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Right and left fight for legitimacy as Sharon plows ahead with pullout

By LESLIE SUSSER

JERUSALEM (JTA) — As Prime Minister Ariel Sharon powers ahead with plans for disengagement from the Gaza Strip, charges are flying between proponents and naysayers determined to gain monopolies on legitimacy, each side accusing the other of trampling on democratic norms.

The settlers claim Sharon does not have a popular majority for his plan and accuse him of "behaving like a dictator." Sharon retorts that the settler claims are a deliberate ploy to justify undemocratic, violent resistance.

To settle the legitimacy question and take the sting out of the settler campaign, some pundits and politicians are suggesting a national referendum on the evacuation issue.

Sharon says no. He argues that these proposals are a ruse to hold up, and ultimately sink, his plan, which also includes evacuating some West Bank settlements.

The arguments over legitimacy and the referendum proposal will almost certainly dominate public discourse in Israel in the coming months.

In a front-page editorial, Amnon Dankner, editor of the mass circulation Ma'ariv newspaper, compared the current situation with that in the months leading up to the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin nine years ago.

Dankner implied that Rabin had ridden roughshod over democratic norms and so provoked the settlers' anger and violence that led to his assassination, and that Sharon was now doing the same thing.

The Rabin government, Dankner wrote, had only achieved a majority for the Oslo

accords by "buying" the vote of right-wing Knesset member Alex Goldfarb, making him a deputy minister and providing him with the Mitsubishi sedan that came with the position.

This, wrote Dankner, was "democracy only in name, not in spirit, not true democracy." And, he continued, "it's obvious how this pushed the settlers into a corner, and how it lit the fires of incitement and murder."

Now, according to Dankner, Sharon is doing something similar: He has ignored party votes against his plan and fired right-wing ministers to secure a Cabinet majority for it.

"The prime minister," Dankner wrote, "is pushing the disengagement plan with a blunt, crude and ugly trampling of democratic values and majority decision," and, like Rabin, would be partly to blame for the consequences.

In Dankner's view, the way to avoid this would be to reinforce the legitimacy of the prime minister's policy by holding a national referendum — a vote Sharon is virtually certain to win.

Although Dankner was criticized for implying that Rabin was largely to blame for his own assassination, several pundits and politicians agreed with his call for a referendum.

The most outspoken of them was Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. He argued that the Gaza pullout plan is tearing the nation apart and that a referendum would help reduce tension and preserve unity.

He proposed expedited Knesset passage of a referendum law, which would be required to even hold a referendum. Then, should a referendum be held, he supports putting just one simple question to the voters: "Are you for or against the gradual evacuation process

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NEWS
ANALYSIS

■ Sharon moves forward on pullout, and right and left fight

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approved by the government?"

But as simple as it seems, Netanyahu's proposal highlights the complexity of the issue. He speaks of expedited passage of a referendum law, but legal experts say it could take months, if not years.

First, there is the general question of what circumstances could lead to invocation of a referendum.

Then, there is the matter of the referendum question. Sharon would never accept Netanyahu's formulation; the prime minister wants to carry out the evacuation process at once rather than in stages.

Moreover, legislators could haggle for months over whether the referendum would need a simple majority or a plurality of 60 percent or more.

Opponents of Sharon's plan could delay things further by challenging in court the legislation to create a referendum.

Sharon's allies suspect that Netanyahu's proposal is merely intended to embarrass the prime minister by putting him in a no-win situation.

If he accepts Netanyahu's proposal, passing the legislation will take so long it will sink the evacuation plan; if he doesn't, he will appear undemocratic, afraid to put his plan to the nation for approval.

Sharon confidant Ehud Olmert argues that the very raising of the referendum idea by Netanyahu implies that Sharon's evacuation plan does not have full legitimacy, and requires the people's go-ahead.

But, says Olmert, all the prime minister needs in accordance with the Israeli

system is approval from the Cabinet and the Knesset — and he is assured of the support of both.

Sharon says the referendum proposal is a transparent attempt by his opponents to gain time. His confidants go further. They say the settlers are bandying the referendum idea about, knowing full well that Sharon will reject it, in an effort to delegitimize the evacuation process and legitimize the use of force against it.

Tough right-wing statements and actions suggest swelling undercurrents of violence. Netanyahu's father, Bentzion, along with other family members, recently signed a petition describing the planned evacuation as a "crime against humanity" and urging soldiers "to listen to the voice of their national and human conscience" and refuse to carry out evacuation orders.

Netanyahu's brother-in-law, Hagi Ben Artzi, himself a settler, noted that "only the Nazis had transferred Jews," and intimated that there would be violent and even armed opposition.

Baruch Marzel, a former member of the late Rabbi Meir Kahane's now-banned Kach organization, has set up a new radical right-wing group called the Jewish National Front, dedicated to resisting evacuation.

And another former Kach member, Rabbi Yosef Dahan, has said that, if asked, he would be willing to carry out a "Pulsa da-Nura," a religious curse condemning Sharon to death. Extremists performed "Pulsa da-Nura" ceremonies against Rabin in the weeks leading up to his assassination in 1995.

In this volatile situation, settler leaders admit to playing a canny double game. On the one hand, they are trying to win the hearts and minds of mainstream Israelis just in case there is a referendum. To this end they are consciously toning down settler rhetoric.

At a huge settler demonstration in Jerusalem Sept. 12, they took pains to silence extremists and take down banners that went too far. But at the same time, they admit to turning the flames of incipient violence "on and off," and allowing the threat of civil war to hover uneasily in the air.

As the showdown over evacuation approaches, both the prime minister and the settlers are acting within brittle parameters of legitimacy and perceived legitimacy, and resorting to on-the-edge brinkmanship. In both cases, it is a dangerous game that could get out of hand. ■

(Leslie Susser is the diplomatic correspondent for the Jerusalem Report.)

Right-wing statements suggest undercurrents of violence.

Film on Jewish Communist a hit in Brazil

By **MARCUS MORAES**

RIO DE JANEIRO (JTA) — Six decades after she was given to Hitler as a gift by Brazilian dictator Getulio Vargas, Brazilians are being introduced to Olga Benario.

Based on the best seller of the same title by Fernando Morais, "Olga" has become one of the most popular films of the year in Brazil.

The 385,968 people who saw the film over its opening weekend in theaters earlier this year made it the most watched among Brazilian films in 2004; by its second week more than 1 million people had seen the movie about Benario, who died in a Nazi gas chamber in 1942.

Benario was born in a Jewish family in

Munich, Germany, in 1908, and joined the Communist Youth Organization at the age of 15.

In 1934, she was entrusted with guaranteeing the safe return of Communist leader Luis Carlos Prestes to Brazil. While posing as husband and wife, the pair fell in love.

The next year Benario and Prestes were arrested and separated from each other. As an act of personal vengeance against Prestes, Vargas had Olga, seven months pregnant, deported to a women's prison in Nazi Germany.

On Nov. 27, 1936, she gave birth to a daughter. In 1938, Benario was deported to a Nazi concentration camp and in 1942 she was killed. ■

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Jews find holiday refuge from hurricane

By URIEL HEILMAN

NEW YORK (JTA) — When Hurricane Ivan tore through coastal Alabama, Mississippi and western Florida late last week, synagogues in the South that usually are packed for Rosh Hashanah were shuttered for the holiday.

The Category 4 hurricane swept through the area, ripping the roofs off of houses, tearing the limbs from trees and causing widespread flooding, devastation and at least 52 deaths.

But synagogues in the South seem to have been spared the brunt of Ivan's fury.

Canceled services seemed to be the largest Jewish casualty of the storm. Most synagogues reported little to no structural damage and congregants seemed to have stayed out of harm's way.

"We have a lot to be thankful for," said Rabbi Donald Kunstadt, of Spring Hill Avenue Temple, Alabama's oldest synagogue, a Reform congregation founded in Mobile in 1844.

"As far as our members, everyone's healthy and OK. We had no power, but our large stained-glass windows, fortunately, were not damaged," the rabbi told JTA Monday by telephone.

Outside the immediate path of the storm, which by Saturday had made it to the Northeast in the form of severe

thunderstorms, some congregations opened their doors — and offered free seats — to Jews evacuating in the face of the hurricane.

Temple Shalom in Lafayette, La., hosted about 25 people from metropolitan New Orleans fleeing the storm, many of whom had to make last-minute arrangements to spend the holiday in congregants' homes. Some barely made it before Rosh Hashanah, enduring up to 10 hours of traffic on what normally is a two-hour drive from New Orleans to Lafayette.

"It was nice to be able to provide the service for those evacuees and give them a little comfort from the storm," said Sam Masur, president of the Reform congregation. "All went well."

Despite a curfew in New Orleans on Sept. 15, erev Rosh Hashanah, Rabbi Yossie Nemes, of the Chabad Center in Metairie, La., a New Orleans suburb, said he decided to keep his synagogue open. Thirteen people showed up for services that night, and about 70 turned out on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, significantly fewer than normal.

"It was about half of the usual crowd, but some members of other synagogues came," Nemes said, including the president of an Orthodox synagogue in town and the immediate past president of a local Conservative synagogue.

"In a way we had a unifying service,"

he said. "Our cantor didn't make it, but there was definitely high spirits, and people felt fortunate that we were spared. It was a very diverse community. Something good came out of a difficult circumstance for the community."

Making the most of a difficult situation, Kunstadt said his congregation in Mobile celebrated Rosh Hashanah a day late, on Saturday.

"We had a new year's celebration on Shabbat morning — our own abbreviated version of Rosh Hashanah, which was very nice," Kunstadt said.

The service, which included the shofar blasts, drew a crowd of about 150; the holiday services usually bring in some 400 people, he said.

B'nai Israel synagogue, a Conservative congregation in Pensacola, Fla., suffered light damage as the eye of the hurricane passed by. Many congregants had left town, and those who stayed remained hunkered down Sept. 16.

The synagogue held second-day services on Rosh Hashanah, once the storm had passed, but only eight people showed up out of a usual 200.

"Ivan was not too kind to us, so we had to do what we had to do," said Rabbi Israel Vana, the congregation's spiritual leader. "We survived it. We had a very sketchy service. But we're doing okay. We're in good spirits."

Pullout looming, some Gaza settlers mull move to kibbutzim

By DAN BARON

JERUSALEM (JTA) — For the settlers of the Gaza Strip, the left-leaning kibbutzim just over the border with Israel proper are, politically speaking, a world apart.

But as Knesset ratification of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip looms, some Gaza settlers are exploring the option of a new life in kibbutzim like Zikim, Barur Hayil or Holit — despite the cultural clashes that could ensue.

According to political sources, dozens of settler families have voiced interest in using their \$200,000-\$500,000 government compensation packages to relocate to Negev kibbutzim, a move that would minimize disruption to their work and school schedules.

The Security Cabinet approved the relocation budget on Sept. 14, and it is expected to be passed by the Knesset in November.

"We can certainly consider uniting with Gush Katif," said Uzi Dori, a spokesman for the Negev kibbutzim. "If entire groups want to apply to move to Barur Hayil or Zikim, we welcome that, too."

Yet some kibbutz veterans have reservations about any such mergers given their movement's traditionally secular and left-leaning politics, so at odds with the majority of Gaza settlers.

Since the Palestinian intifada erupted in 2000, some kibbutz activists have taken to regularly demonstrating for a Gaza withdrawal at the strip's main crossing points, drawing abuse from settler motorists.

"I do not believe it practicable to join a religious population with a non-religious one in such a small setting as a kibbutz," Avshalom Vilan, a lawmaker with the liberal Meretz Party and former secretary of the United Kibbutz Movement, told Israel Radio.

But the kibbutz movement's secretary, Gavri Bargil, struck a more conciliatory note.

"We are very committed to this disengagement process, above and beyond the political disputes," Bargil said. "The kibbutz movement is known as a key front in supporting peace, and we would like this move by the country to prove successful."

NEWS IN BRIEF

WORLD

European group wants laws against hate

Stronger legislation and prosecution are necessary to combat the resurgence in anti-Semitism in Europe, a European group said.

On Monday, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, which is part of the Council of Europe, called on its 45 member nations to "ensure that criminal law in the field of combating racism covers anti-Semitism." The commission wants governments to penalize intentional acts of public incitement to violence, hatred or discrimination; public insults and defamation; threats against a person or group; and the expression of anti-Semitic ideologies.

Madonna feels safe in Israel

Madonna, who is visiting Israel on a spiritual pilgrimage, said she feels safe in the Jewish state.

The pop icon made her remarks Sunday to an audience of Israeli dignitaries and fellow Kabbalah students at a gala benefit in Tel Aviv for a children's foundation run by the Kabbalah Center in Los Angeles. The Catholic-born Madonna has been in Israel on a five-day pilgrimage, attending services and lectures on Kabbalah and visiting the grave of a famous Kabbalist rabbi.

The pilgrimage is part of a larger gathering of some 2,000 Kabbalah students from around the world who have gathered in Tel Aviv for the period between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

Extremists win seats in Germany

Two extremist parties in former East Germany qualified for representation in state Parliaments.

On Sunday, for the first time since 1968, the extreme right-wing National Democratic Party won seats in a state Parliament.

With 9.2 percent of the vote in Saxony, the party crossed the necessary 5 percent threshold. The German People's Union won 6.1 percent in Brandenburg. Both parties run on platforms that blame crime and unemployment on foreigners.

MIDEAST

Gaza terrorists killed

An Israeli airstrike killed two Hamas gunmen in the Gaza Strip.

The two men were blown up in their car on the southern outskirts of Gaza City on Monday by what witnesses described as a missile strike by Israeli aircraft.

Israeli officials did not immediately comment on the incident.

Sderot alert system fails

A Palestinian rocket hit the southern Israeli town of Sderot, apparently undetected by a new radar system.

Three residents were treated for shock after narrowly being missed by the Kassam rocket that struck close to Sderot's employment office Monday morning.

No sirens sounded before the Hamas-made rocket landed, despite a radar system meant to detect such launches from the Gaza Strip and give Sderot residents a 20-second alert.

Security sources said that the apparent failure of the Israeli-made early warning system was being probed.

Lebanese infiltrators arrested

Three Lebanese were arrested after they tried to cross the border into northern Israel.

Israeli soldiers saw a man and his two sons Monday as they climbed over the fence near Metulla.

The father was taken into custody by security forces.

Palestinians kill 2 collaborators

Masked Palestinian gunmen killed a suspected collaborator in a public square in the West Bank city of Tulkarm.

The bound man was shot Monday before hundreds of onlookers, including schoolchildren, witnesses said. The body of a second alleged informer was found in a nearby rural area.

The Al-Aksa Brigade, a terrorist group with ties to Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's ruling Fatah movement, claimed responsibility for the killings.

The group said in a leaflet that the two men had helped Israel kill three Palestinians during the past year.

Settlers, rights group scrap

Female settlers and members of a women's human rights group scuffled at a checkpoint in the West Bank.

The fight occurred Monday near Nablus between local settler women and members of MACHSOM WATCH, an Israeli women's organization that monitors human rights at checkpoints throughout the West Bank, the Jerusalem Post reported.

One of the MACHSOM WATCH women was allegedly kicked, and her shirt was lightly torn.

The MACHSOM WATCH members filed a complaint against the settlers.

General strike in Israel

Israeli labor unions say they will strike Tuesday to protest nonpayment of municipal salaries.

The Histadrut labor federation announced the action Monday, saying it would be open ended.

Rancor has grown in Israel's public sector at a municipal-level budget crisis that has led to thousands of employees going without pay for months. On Sunday, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon ordered emergency funding of \$60 million for the municipalities.

Judenrat comment blasted

An Israeli settlement activist likened the official in charge of implementing Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's "disengagement plan" to a Nazi collaborator.

"The truth is that you are a modern version of the Judenrat," Nadia Matar, leader of the right-wing group Women in Green, wrote to Yonatan Bassi this week.

She was referring to the wartime "Jewish Council" that aided in the expulsion of Jews from Berlin in 1942.

Bassi, who heads the Disengagement Administration, has faced mounting attacks by Israelis opposed to the planned removal of settlements from the Gaza Strip and West Bank in 2005.

Matar's letter stirred up outrage across the political spectrum.

Israeli Cabinet minister resigns

An Israeli Cabinet minister resigned after a long-term illness resulted in her inability to talk.

Environment Minister Yehudit Naot resigned from her post Monday.

In January, Naot had her voice box removed after a series of daily chemotherapy treatments that followed two operations to remove malignant growths in her throat.

NORTH AMERICA

ADL helps N.Y. 'peace' school

The Anti-Defamation League is providing curriculum and training to a New York school focused on peace and diversity.

The group's A World of Difference Institute is offering teacher training, and peer leadership training to staff, students and families at the Peace and Diversity Academy in the Bronx.