

**IN THE NEWS**
**Israel hits  
Gaza mortar crews**

Israeli forces killed 14 Palestinians in a sweep for Gaza Strip mortar crews.

Tanks and troops, backed by helicopter gunships, rolled into Khan Younis on Monday after 28 mortar shells were fired from the central Gazan town at nearby Jewish settlements.

At least 13 Palestinians, identified by military sources as gunmen, were killed in the ensuing clashes.

A rock-throwing youth also was believed to be among the dead.

Two Israeli soldiers were wounded in a Hamas rocket attack on their armored vehicle.

**Giving is down  
to Jewish federations**

Private giving to North American Jewish federations declined by 12.5 percent last year, according to the Chronicle of Philanthropy's annual list of top charities.

The United Jewish Communities, the umbrella organization of local Jewish federations, was the largest Jewish charity on the list, raising nearly \$345 million from private sources in the 2003 fiscal year, and moved up to 25th place from 32nd place on the list of the Chronicle's top 400 charities involved in fund raising.

Raising more than \$192 million from private sources, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee was the next Jewish charity to rank, at 54th place.

This was the first time the JDC made the list.

**Rallying around  
withdrawal vote**

Demonstrators in Israel held a rally backing Ariel Sharon's Gaza withdrawal plan.

Monday night's rally was the first of several demonstrations, both for and against the prime minister's plan, expected to be held in the next 24 hours.

The Knesset is slated to vote on the withdrawal plan Tuesday.

# WORLD REPORT

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## Kremlin involvement seen after Russian Jewish shake-up

By LEV KRICHEVSKY

**M**OSCOW (JTA) — A leadership change in a top Russian Jewish organization is likely to dramatically change the balance of power in the Russian Jewish community — and is raising questions about the degree of Kremlin involvement in Jewish communal affairs.

Leading donors to the Russian Jewish Congress approved the choice of Vladimir Slutsker as president at an Oct. 18 closed-door meeting. He was expected to be installed Wednesday after a vote by the group's board.

A banker, enthusiast of the Jewish mystical tradition known as Kabbalah and a member of the upper house of Russia's Parliament, Slutsker, 48, will replace Yevgeny Satanovsky, who has been RJC president since 2001.

Slutsker is little known to the public. He joined the RJC leadership only this month by making a financial contribution of \$250,000, the minimum required to join the RJC's board.

Since its founding in 1996, the RJC has raised more than \$70 million from domestic donors to support various Jewish projects. The group also aspires to represent Russian Jewry on political and social issues before the government, but its role has diminished in recent years.

Though Slutsker's previous involvement in public Jewish causes is not widely known, sources in the Federation of Jewish Communities, a rival organization run by Chabad that has become the largest Jewish group in Russia, said Slutsker was one of the biggest local donors to federation projects, including construction of the group's prime facility in

Moscow, the Marina Roscha Synagogue and community center.

Slutsker was unavailable for comment this week. His appointment appears to be the result of a combination of factors.

Satanovsky has become unpopular with many RJC leaders and supporters, mostly because of his leadership style — what one critic has described to JTA as his inability to make friends.

Just a month and a half ago, Satanovsky was re-elected as RJC president despite fierce criticism by some of the group's lay leaders, who made it clear they would try to replace him.

Some critics objected to the fact that under Satanovsky, the RJC stopped supporting religious programs and saw its presence in the Russian provinces wither under pressure from state officials who favored the federation.

Most recently, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee backed out of its 2-year-old agreement to build a Jewish community center in Moscow together with the RJC and a few other partners.

In a statement released earlier this month, the JDC cited unexpected growth in project costs. But some observers believe the JDC was unhappy with Satanovsky, who oversaw the project.

For his part, Satanovsky told JTA he cared about the organization so he had agreed to help restructure it for the sake of its future.

At the same time, the selection of Slutsker could indicate that the Kremlin has managed to defeat the remaining traces of independence among Jewish community organizations in

*Continued on page 2*

**ACROSS THE  
FORMER  
SOVIET UNION**

## ■ *Some believe the Kremlin may be behind the latest changes shaking Russian Jewry*

*Continued from page 1*

Russia, although the federation steadfastly maintains that it is independent.

Since Vladimir Putin became Russia's president in 1999, he and his administration have given preferential treatment to the federation because the Kremlin wants the Jewish community to be represented by a single voice as part of its desire to control all political parties and religious communities, analysts believe.

The latest evidence of the Chabad-Putin alliance came Monday, when Putin praised the federation for its activities on behalf of Russian Jewry. In a message delivered by a Kremlin representative to delegates of the group's biannual conference, the Russian president said, "The activities of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia contributes to acquainting Russian Jews with national culture, serves the noble goals of reviving spiritual and moral values, of preserving the centuries-old traditions of mutual respect, neighborly relations and tolerance."

The federation became the Kremlin's favored Jewish entity in part because the RJC was headed by Vladimir Goussinsky, an influential Jewish media mogul who was outspoken in his criticism of Putin.

Goussinsky was later expelled from Russia on Kremlin-spearheaded charges of tax evasion.

To overcome this stigma of being linked to Goussinsky, Satanovsky lately had been trying to please the Kremlin, though he never succeeded at that, said Yevgeniya Albats, a liberal journalist and member

of the RJC leadership who was one of the most vocal opponents of Satanovsky within the group.

She was referring to the fact that under Satanovsky, the RJC — like most other local Jewish organizations — avoided criticizing the authorities over the arrest of Jewish oil tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky or over Putin's recent initiative to revamp Russia's electoral system, which was criticized by democracy advocates.

For its part, Chabad has used the Kremlin stamp of approval to help spread Judaism throughout Russia.

Slutsker is believed to be close to Vladimir Ressin, the Jewish deputy mayor of Moscow, who has sought to overcome the existing split between the RJC and the federation.

Last year, Ressin came out with an initiative to create a single Jewish religious community structure to replace the federation and the Congress of Jewish Religious Organizations and Communities, an umbrella group backed by the RJC.

Leaders of the RJC-allied group criticized the initiative, which they feared would pave the way for all Russian Jewish religious communities to come under control of the Lubavitch-run federation.

The initiative was dropped quickly.

It is believed that Slutsker would bring the two groups together, a belief given evidence Monday when Slutsker spoke to the federation.

The era of infighting within the Russian Jewish community is over, he said, addressing delegates to the biannual conference of the federation. "The main task on today's agenda is the fight against terrorism. To succeed in this fight, it is necessary that all Jewish organizations are united."

The RJC always has had poor relations with the federation, but under Satanovsky they grew especially hostile, federation spokesman Borukh Gorin said.

Gorin said he hoped the appointment of Slutsker, whom he described as a longtime personal friend, would improve relations between the two groups.

Gorin also implied Ressin was involved in picking Slutsker as the RJC leader.

"I hope that under Slutsker, RJC will pursue a policy of peace that will become even more tangible with the growth of in-

fluence of Mr. Ressin," he said.

While the reasons behind the RJC shake-up appear transparent to many, the group's prospects — and the future balance of power within Russian Jewry — remain an open question, given the fact that Slutsker himself is an unknown quantity for many in the community.

"Satanovsky lacked some basic leadership qualities, and his replacement was absolutely necessary," Albats said. "But I don't know who Slutsker is."

Another prominent Jewish community figure, who had been sharply critical of Satanovsky, said he had some doubts about Slutsker as well.

Tankred Golenpolsky, founder of the International Jewish Gazette, an independent Moscow weekly, said he was running an article headlined, "Who is Mr. Slutsker?"

Golenpolsky said he did not believe Slutsker was a pawn in a Kremlin game, though he did expect him to seek more cooperation with the federation, which Satanovsky had opposed.

"The community is one, the leaders could be different, but those who suffer from the split are not the leaders but the ordinary Jews," Golenpolsky said.

Though he doesn't know Slutsker well, he approves of the choice, Golenpolsky said.

"He is a nice person, and he has a tefillin and a tallit," Golenpolsky said, referring to the fact that Slutsker, unlike Satanovsky, is regarded as religiously observant.

Yet Slutsker's religiosity is raising even more questions as to where the RJC might head under its new president.

Slutsker is known to have two passions, Kabbalah and karate. He had been one of the most ardent followers and biggest donors to Kabbalah guru Michael Laitman, a Russian-born Israeli rabbi who has spearheaded a recent revival of Jewish mysticism among Russian Jews.

Slutsker parted ways with Laitman some time ago, reportedly over financial matters, and became a Kabbalah lecturer himself, leading a group in Moscow that is especially popular with members of the Russian business elite.

Slutsker is keen on talking about Kabbalah in public meetings, and already has indicated that as RJC president he would primarily focus on the group's religious agenda and its P.R. campaign. ■

One Russian Jewish newspaper runs an article headlined, 'Who is Mr. Slutsker?'

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# 'Progressive' Zionist students find their place

By RACHEL POMERANCE

NEW YORK (JTA) — In the crossfire of rhetoric on college campuses surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Ilene Arnsdorf feels intimidated — by her fellow Jewish students.

A 19-year-old Cornell student, Arnsdorf said the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has raised questions for her about Israeli policy.

She feels torn, she said, between the campus' pro-Israel front and its movement for Palestinian rights.

Her roommate belongs to the former, which is "so organized," Arnsdorf said, that "it's been hard to be able to stand up to her."

That's why Arnsdorf joined more than 100 students from some 40 college campuses for the Oct. 15-17 founding conference in Newark, N.J., of a new movement, The Union of Progressive Zionists.

"We came to this conference to find our place," she said.

Founded by left-wing Zionist groups such as Habonim Dror, Hashomer Hatzair, Labor Zionist Alliance and Meretz USA, the union aims to "support a two-state solution that ensures security and peace for both Palestinians and Israelis."

■  
The conference comes as the broader organized Jewish community shows fractures of its own.

In a recent meeting, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, an umbrella organization of 52 groups, erupted in emotional discussion over whether to issue a statement of support in advance of Tuesday's Knesset vote on Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip.

Ultimately, the Presidents Conference issued a statement reflecting consensus support for the plan, but stopped short of an outright endorsement.

Left-leaning and centrist member organizations complained they were hamstrung by powerful hawks. In many ways, the conversation among left-wing Jewish students mirrors that point.

"AIPAC and the right wing don't control American Jewish youth," Noah Hertz-Bunzl, a Harvard freshman, said at the progressive union's closing discussion.

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee, which for years has cultivated a sophisticated student program, seemed to be a particularly attractive punching bag for the group.

But those students may be misinformed about the pro-Israel behemoth, said a national Jewish leader.

For one, AIPAC boasts a slew of progressive student leaders, and the organization itself has backed aid to the Palestinian Authority during the Oslo peace process, Israeli concessions for peace under prime ministers Yitzhak Rabin and Ehud Barak, and current Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's Gaza withdrawal plan, the longtime Jewish professional said.

New organizations often validate their purpose by casting aspersions on the current infrastructure, the professional said.

"Does anybody really believe that progressive Zionists don't have outlets through Peace Now, through Hillel, through Hamagshamim?" he said, citing a few of the many Jewish groups on campus that welcome left-wing opinions.

At the same time, the leader embraced the new movement, saying more modes of expression strengthen an American Jewish campus community that is "radically pluralistic."

Wayne Firestone, director of the Israel on Campus Coalition, an umbrella of 26 Jewish groups with campus programs, also welcomed the new group, calling it a "clear alternative for Jewish leftist students to raise questions and promote constructive critical discussion about Israel."

Firestone told JTA there long has been a void in constructive Jewish criticism of Israel.

Since the Palestinian intifada began four years ago "there has been an understandable emphasis on protecting Israel and challenging its detractors, but that should not come at the expense of the vibrancy of support and interest in Israel among Jews with many views," said Firestone, who addressed the progressive group's opening meeting.

■  
The Union of Progressive Zionism, which drew such speakers as Israeli legislator Naomi Chazan and Palestinian Authority official Yasser Abed Rabbo at its founding conference, hopes to join the fold of mainstream American Jewish organizations.

"We want to change the American Jewish community," Hertz-Bunzl said. "The way to do that is to be a Jewish group inside other Jewish groups."

But at a time when some believe the Jewish community must show a front to the outside world, will the new movement be reviled by mainstream Jewish groups?

"Ignoring legitimate voices within the community will only lead to their departure from the community and their disillusionment from the community, and so we need to be nurturing this," Firestone said.

Morton Klein, president of the Zionist Organization of America, said there is no sense of unity today in the Jewish community, noting the controversy surrounding Israel's Gaza withdrawal.

Every group should feel free to speak its mind — but that doesn't mean he agrees with them, he said.

"My experience is that these Jewish groups who strongly criticize Israel for various policies almost never criticize the Palestinian Arabs for human rights abuses and for having created a culture that promotes hatred and murder of Jews, including suicide bombings," Klein said. "That's my problem with it."

The group's meeting had a distinctly more bohemian and grassroots feel than the well-financed assemblies of AIPAC or Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life.

In one workshop, Joseph Grindi, 23, a recent Wesleyan graduate who works for Yale Hillel, led a variation on group therapy.

Acknowledging the conflicting emotions engendered by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Grindi rolled out a sheet of butcher paper — held down on the side by Birkenstock sandals — and gave students magic markers to express their feelings on paper, then write responses to others' comments.

One student wrote, "Zionism is bad for Judaism," to which another student responded, "Zionism is part of what defines my Judaism."

Another said he felt betrayed by the left-wing community. And one asked, "How do I love my people and love the world at the same time?" ■

**'My experience is that these Jewish groups who strongly criticize Israel for various policies almost never criticize the Palestinian Arabs for human rights abuses.'**

**Morton Klein**

Zionist Organization of America

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## NORTH AMERICA

### Kerry stresses support for Israel

Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) told a Florida audience that he would make Israel safer than President Bush would.

Speaking at Florida Atlantic University amid a sea of signs reading "Jewish Americans for Kerry-Edwards" on Sunday, the Democratic presidential candidate strayed from his prepared remarks to talk about his trips to Israel and his Middle East policy.

"I will make Israel safer than George W. Bush is because I will stand up to those countries that are still supporting Hamas and Hezbollah," Kerry said.

### Rice: Arafat should go

President Bush's national security adviser said world leaders should push for Yasser Arafat to step aside once Israel withdraws from the Gaza Strip.

Condoleezza Rice told the American Israel Public Affairs Committee in Florida on Monday that foreign states that still speak to the Palestinian Authority president must tell him to step aside to allow for the formation of a Palestinian state.

"I think we are a long way from two years ago, when the president first said he would not deal with Arafat, that he was not a partner for peace," Rice said.

"I think we've come a long way in most of the world now expressing considerable frustration with him as a block to peace. The next step is, they are going to have to act."

Rice also said she believed Iran and Syria can be dealt with diplomatically.

## MIDDLE EAST

### Pullback, then peace talks?

Ariel Sharon said his plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip does not preclude future peace talks with the Palestinians.

"The disengagement plan does not come in place of negotiations," the Israeli prime minister said Monday in a Knesset address ahead of a ratification vote Tuesday on his plan for all Gaza settlements and four in the West Bank to be removed next year.

"It is a necessary step during a period in which negotiations are not possible. All is open when terror — this murderous terror — stops."

Palestinians have accused Sharon of working unilaterally to secure Israel's hold on large settlement blocs on West Bank land they want for a state.

To jeers from right-wing lawmakers opposed to territorial concessions to the Palestinians, Sharon said he decided on the Gaza pullout with Israel's security in mind, but with a heavy heart.

### Taba terrorists nabbed?

Egypt said it arrested five men for the bombing of Red Sea resorts frequented by Israelis.

According to a statement issued Monday by the Interior Ministry in Cairo, four other alleged plotters carried out the Oct. 7 blasts at Taba and Ras Al-Satan, including two who died at the scene.

At least 34 people were killed in the attacks, which Israel has blamed on Al-Qaida.

Egyptian security forces previously questioned more than a dozen Bedouin from the Sinai peninsula on suspicion that they supplied the terrorists with explosives.

### Settler indicted in shooting

An Israeli settler who killed a Palestinian driver was charged with manslaughter.

According to the indictment served Monday at Tel Aviv District Court, Yehoshua Elitzur opened fire on the taxi driven by Saal Al-Shtaya outside Nablus last month without justification.

Elitzur, a German convert to Judaism and a resident of Itamar, told police he shot Shtaya in self-defense after the Palestinian tried to run him down, but prosecutors said the shooting was unprovoked.

### Ron Arad said dead

Missing Israeli airman Ron Arad is dead, a former German intelligence chief said.

"The only question remains whether he died of a disease, a kind of injury related to his crash, or was killed. But that he is dead is clear," Bernd Schmidbauer told Germany's WDR Television in a documentary screened Monday.

The Jerusalem Post, which obtained a transcript of the interview, quoted Israeli officials as saying Schmidbauer's remarks ran counter to Israeli assessments that there is a high possibility Arad is still alive.

Germany has served as a mediator between Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah militia in efforts to recover Arad, an Israeli air force navigator who disappeared in 1986 after bailing out of his jet over Lebanon.

### Jewish Agency strategizes

The Jewish Agency for Israel approved a new strategic plan aimed at keeping the organization relevant in the 21st century.

In a unanimous vote Sunday, the agency's board of governors, currently meeting in Jerusalem, approved what it referred to as a strategy for securing the Jewish future.

As part of this strategy there will be a push to increase aliyah among young Jews from Western countries and to bring young Jews on extended visits to Israel.

There also will be a focus on building and expanding partnerships with both Jewish federations and individuals and on mobilizing Jews to volunteer for Jewish-related activities in Israel and the Diaspora.

## WORLD

### Beslan survivors to recover in Israel

Some child survivors of the school massacre in southern Russia will recuperate in Israel.

The first of 20 children who survived last month's attack, which killed nearly 350, arrived in Ashkelon on Monday.

The rest of the children are expected to arrive by early November.

### Israel dispute holds up accord

The outgoing European Commission reportedly will not sign new agreements with the European Union's neighboring countries because of a dispute with Israel over weapons of mass destruction.

The commission, the E.U.'s executive branch, was set to sign the accords in Luxembourg on Tuesday, but delays over the weapons clause mean it will be left for the new commission that is to take over this week, pending confirmation, an E.U. news Web site reported Monday.

While technical problems also exist with other countries, Israel's refusal to sign a weapons of mass destruction non-proliferation agreement is believed to be the primary cause of the delay, the site reported.