

IN THE NEWS

Suicide bomber kills 3 in Tel Aviv

A Palestinian suicide bomber killed at least three people at a Tel Aviv market.

Monday's blast took place in the middle of the bustling Carmel Market, targeting shoppers who were flocking to its produce stands.

Authorities said at least three people were killed and dozens wounded, many of them critically.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine claimed responsibility for the attack, describing the terrorist as a teenager from the Askar refugee camp outside the West Bank city of Nablus.

Israel kills 3 West Bank gunmen

Israeli troops killed three Palestinian gunmen in the West Bank.

The three Al-Aksa Brigade fugitives were shot dead in the Nablus casbah Monday after they tried to fire at approaching soldiers, military sources said.

Palestinian witnesses said three bystanders were wounded.

Top Jewish officials blast N.J. Republicans

Three top Jewish officials blasted the New Jersey Republican Party for using their comments as endorsements of President Bush.

The Republican State Committee mailed a flier last week to 60,000 Jewish households featuring a photo of Bush and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

On the reverse side were remarks praising Bush from former New York City Mayor Ed Koch; Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League; Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism; and Howard Kohr, executive director of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

Koch has campaigned for Bush in Tuesday's election, but the others expressed outrage that comments they had made unrelated to any political campaign were included in the endorsement.

WORLD REPORT

PUBLISHED WEEKDAYS BY JTA—THE GLOBAL NEWS SERVICE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE · WWW.JTA.ORG

Prospect of post-Arafat era raises hope of progress, fears of vacuum

By LESLIE SUSSER

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli officials are quietly confident that if Yasser Arafat's health forces him to leave office, new chances for Israeli-Palestinian accommodation will open up.

But they are aware of a number of pitfalls. The most serious danger is that any successor to Arafat may not have the necessary credibility to deliver on any peace commitments; and that the international community, liberated from the argument that Arafat is not a true peace partner, might pressure Israel to make concessions even without the Palestinians providing anything in return.

For now, Palestinian Authority officials say Arafat remains in control, and the true extent of his disability is unclear.

And in the immediate term, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is not contemplating any major policy changes. There is no question of retracting or postponing the planned unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and part of the West Bank just because there may now be a Palestinian partner.

Sharon says he is prepared to coordinate the withdrawal with a more moderate Palestinian leadership, as long as there is no delay in the timetable for implementation.

Sharon told the Cabinet on Sunday that if a new Palestinian leadership moved against terrorism, there would be a good chance of renewing negotiations based on the internationally backed "road map" peace plan — but these leaders would have to act, not just talk.

Since coming to power nearly four years ago, Sharon has argued that Arafat is the major obstacle to peace. Since January 2002,

when Arafat was implicated in an attempt to smuggle a huge shipment of arms into the Palestinian territories from Iran, the United States has thought along similar lines.

In a major policy statement later in 2002, President Bush urged the Palestinians to choose new leaders not "compromised by terror."

Israel and the United States developed policies designed to circumvent Arafat in the hope that other Palestinian leaders would be able to stop the violence and engage in a political process with Israel. But though confined to his headquarters in Ramallah, Arafat continued to pull the strings, preventing two prime ministers, Mahmoud Abbas and Ahmed Qurei, from developing serious peace policies.

Now Israeli officials hope that if Arafat's illness finally breaks his hold on power, men like Abbas and Qurei may be able to emerge from his shadow and take the peace process forward. If Arafat dies, or is rendered incapable of continuing in office, Israeli military intelligence chief Maj. Gen. Aharon Zeevi-Farkash told the government, the four-year-old Palestinian intifada could come to an end.

With Arafat receiving treatment in France, Abbas seems likely to emerge as the most prominent figure in a new collective leadership. He long has called for an end to the armed uprising against Israel, which he calls "a strategic mistake."

As prime minister from March to September 2003, Abbas tried to negotiate a cease-fire and take the road map forward, but he constantly was undermined by Arafat, and ultimately resigned. If Abbas again comes to the fore, he likely would try to take the road map

Continued on page 2

NEWS
ANALYSIS

■ *Life after Arafat? Israelis ponder the possibilities*

Continued from page 1

forward with European and U.S. help.

But it's not clear how far Abbas would be able to go toward a final peace deal with Israel. He is as fiercely opposed as was Arafat to waiving the demand that Palestinian refugees be allowed to return to Israel proper, a position that not even the most dovish Israeli government would accept.

And even if Abbas were ready to make concessions on this and other key issues, it's unlikely he would have the authority to carry them through.

"Abu Mazen will not be able to make the tough concessions that Arafat, with all his prestige and authority, couldn't," says Israel's former foreign minister, Shlomo Ben-

Ami, using Abbas' nom de guerre.

The Foreign Ministry recognizes the problem a successor will have in establishing anything approaching Arafat's authority. Top officials have drawn up a paper suggesting how Israel could help, without giving the impression that it is interfering in Palestinian affairs.

In general, they suggest that Israel reduce the level of its anti-terrorist activities by refraining, for example, from targeted killings of terrorists, except those on their way to launching an attack.

There even is talk of Israeli readiness to release Palestinian prisoners if Palestinian terrorism falls for a sustained period.

But it won't be easy. Arafat was able to

keep the lid on deep rifts in Palestinian society, and some Israeli experts expect a prolonged power struggle if Arafat's restraining influence evaporates.

Shaul Mishal of Tel Aviv University foresees clashes between the older generation of PLO officials from Tunis, like Abbas and Qurei, and the younger generation of men who grew up under Israeli occupation in

the West Bank and Gaza Strip, like Mohammed Dahlan, Jibril Rajoub and Marwan Barghouti.

Potentially even more divisive, he says, is the hostility between the secular Fatah movement and the Islamist Hamas movement. David Hacham, Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz's adviser on Palestinian affairs,

believes these divisions could result in a collective leadership that embraces young and old, secular and religious forces. The question is, What kind of policy vis-a-vis Israel would this leadership be likely to adopt?

In any event, Israeli officials don't expect any overnight change for the better in Palestinian attitudes even if Arafat goes. The cultivation of hatred for Israel — which intensified during the intifada — is such that no Palestinian leader will

be able to make a fundamental shift immediately.

Still, Israeli officials do anticipate two significant policy changes: Palestinian readiness to coordinate with Israel to take responsibility for Gaza and the northern West Bank and to relaunch peace negotiations based on the road map after the Israeli withdrawal from those areas is completed next summer.

But there is a downside: Should Arafat's illness prove serious enough to sideline him, the new American administration will inherit a situation in which the main reason for ignoring the Palestinian leadership will have been removed.

Israeli officials believe that could lead to American readiness to embrace a European initiative for Israeli-Palestinian re-engagement, without the Palestinians being required to meet their basic road map commitments such as dismantling terrorist groups.

The Europeans make no secret of the fact that they intend to launch a new initiative immediately after the American elections. The Israeli fear is that, with Arafat out of the picture, the Europeans may overlook ongoing Palestinian terrorism — and that the new American administration may be inclined to follow suit, putting pressure on Israel to negotiate under fire. ■

Leslie Susser is diplomatic correspondent for the Jerusalem Report.

Israeli officials don't expect any overnight change for the better in Palestinian attitudes even if Arafat goes.

Argentine court releases AMIA report

By FLORENCIA ARBISER

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — An Argentine federal court has released a massive report explaining its acquittal of five men accused of complicity in the 1994 bombing of Buenos Aires' main Jewish community center.

The 4,815-page report, released Oct. 29, formally clears the way for a probe of irregularities in the investigation into the attack on the AMIA center, which killed 85 and wounded 300.

The investigation was coordinated by federal judge Juan Jose Galeano.

But Galeano, who is to be probed for misconduct such as bribing a witness, will not be the only one looked at in the new investigation.

The report also demands the investigation of former prosecutors Eamon Mullen and Jose Barbaccia; former Internal

Affairs Minister Carlos Corach; former Intelligence Secretary Hugo Anzorreguy; seven legislators on a special commission created to follow the case; judges Gabriel Cavallo and Norberto Oyarbide; and the former president of the DAIA Jewish political umbrella group, Ruben Beraja.

Last September, the court acquitted the five Argentines after a three-year-long oral trial. The verdict reinforced allegations that the investigation had been marred by ineptitude and corruption.

Former President Carlos Menem, for example, has been implicated in media reports of hindering the AMIA investigation because of his ties to Iran.

Galeano was biased and his activity in the AMIA case "was not guided toward discovering the real truth," according to the newly released records, signed by three federal judges. ■

JTA WORLD REPORT

Howard E. Friedman

President

Mark J. Joffe

Executive Editor and Publisher

Lisa Hostein

Editor

Michael S. Arnold

Managing Editor

Lenore A. Silverstein

Finance and Administration Director

JTA WORLD REPORT is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For more information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.
© JTA. Reproduction only with permission.

In Israel, dialogue exists but atmosphere's charged

By DINA KRAFT

JERUSALEM (JTA) — "What's more important — a religious Jew adhering to Torah or a secular Jew adhering to his or her conscience?" asked a teenage girl with a red ponytail.

Her question, addressed to leaders from Peace Now and the Yesha settlers council, went straight to the heart of the Israeli dilemma as citizens here struggle to define Israel's future as both a Jewish state and a democracy.

"Sometimes a question is better than an answer," said Daniel Tropper, founder of the Geshher Foundation, which seeks to bridge the gaps between different segments of Israel's population.

On Oct. 27, Geshher hosted a day of dialogue at a Jerusalem square, bringing together religious and secular, right-wing and left-wing Israelis in an effort to find common ground at a time of discord.

The mood in Israel is raw and charged as Israelis observe the ninth anniversary of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's assassination and absorb the Oct. 26 Knesset vote backing Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's controversial plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip.

Threats from extreme right-wing Jews are intensifying against Sharon, who travels under a growing veil of security.

Vandals recently sprayed graffiti on a Jerusalem wall, reading, "We assassinated Rabin, and we'll assassinate Sharon too."

"Nine years have passed and it is as if we have learned nothing," Geula Even, an Israeli television news anchor, said in reporting the incident.

The Conservative movement introduced a new prayer for Sharon's health and well-being in the wake of what movement leaders said were calls from some fervently Orthodox rabbis to institute "death rituals" to bring about Sharon's demise.

Tensions are simmering around the Gaza withdrawal plan. Jewish settlers claim it's their biblical birthright to live in Gaza, saying that any attempt to evacuate Jews from their homes and leave the area to the Palestinians is against God's will.

Several thousand Gaza settlers flooded Jerusalem for a mass protest ahead of Tuesday's withdrawal vote in the Knesset. Schools in the Gush Katif settlement bloc were closed and busloads of schoolchildren, along with their parents, came to the

capital, waving signs and chanting anti-government slogans.

Meanwhile, the night of Oct. 25, thousands of left-wing demonstrators marched on the Knesset in a show of support for Sharon and the disengagement plan, arguing that the majority of the public favors withdrawal.

At the settler protest, Yaffa Goldschmidt, deputy principal of an elementary school in Gush Katif, was defiant. She said the community is united in its struggle against the plan, and she defended bringing children to the protest.

"Of course we brought the students here today. The government is trying to kick them out of their homes," she told Army radio.

In a statement signed by 60 other rabbis, Avraham Shapira, a former Israeli chief rabbi who remains influential in religious Zionist circles, said the withdrawal plan violates Jewish law. His statement called on Orthodox soldiers to refuse orders to evacuate settlers from their homes.

At the same time, some left-leaning soldiers are refusing to serve in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Speaking last week at a special Knesset session in memory of Rabin, Sharon slammed those who urge soldiers to disobey orders.

"To refuse is to refuse to obey the laws of Israel," Sharon said. "The army is an expression of national unity and will not be held hostage to extremists."

Delivering a conciliatory message, Sharon said, "We must respect those with different opinions," and added, "We are all brothers, we are all Jews."

Eliezer Ya'ari, executive director of the New Israel Fund, which supports civil and human rights projects in Israel, said that what connects the commemoration of Rabin's assassination and the protest over the Gaza withdrawal vote is that they both "pose a challenge to Israeli democracy."

"It's evident that Israel is getting back to the most basic questions of its existence

— of Israel as a Jewish state and as a democracy," he said.

On Oct. 27, schools across the country held discussions and ceremonies to mark the Hebrew date of Rabin's 1995 assassination by an ultra-nationalist Jew, and to discuss how political assassination affects society.

Underscoring the divide in Israeli society,

Israel Television reported that schools sponsored by the Sephardi Orthodox political party Shas did not commemorate Rabin's assassination in any way.

On Oct. 27, white tents were set up on a square near Jerusalem's central bus station for Geshher's

day of dialogue. Inside, religious and secular teenagers debated the divisive issues. Arms waved in the air, voices were raised, but a genuine discussion took place.

"It's a microcosm of what we would want society to be like. It's also a demonstration that it's possible," said Tropper, who immigrated to Israel from New York in 1969 and set up Geshher soon afterward.

Tropper mediated a panel discussion between Yariv Oppenheimer, director general of Peace Now, and Shaul Goldstein, deputy chairman of the Yesha Council.

Goldstein took issue with those who say Israel should leave Gaza because of the difficulty guarding some 7,500 Jewish settlers living amid one million Palestinians.

"We came to live in the Land of Israel. It's not easy, but it never has been," he said.

But Goldstein also rejected the use of violence to prevent the evacuation.

"Violence is forbidden," he said. "No one wants to break up Israeli society."

Moshe Mandel, 17, a Jerusalem high school student with ritual fringes hanging from under his T-shirt and a kippah pinned to his wavy hair, said that hearing the various speakers and sitting together with secular teenagers at the Geshher gathering was a form of progress.

"It would be so much better if people knew each other and were not scared of each other," Mandel said. "If we can show each other that we are not monsters but humans, then the whole situation will change." ■



NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Suicide bombing victims ID'd

The three victims of Monday's suicide bombing in Tel Aviv were identified. The victims of the attack inside the Carmel Market were Shmuel Levy, 65, of Jaffa; Tatiyana Akerman, 32, of Tel Aviv; and Lea Levin, 64, of Givatayim.

Arafat criticizes blast

Yasser Arafat, under medical treatment in France, condemned Monday's suicide bombing in Tel Aviv.

"He condemned the attack in Tel Aviv and said he condemns the killing of civilians on both sides," Arafat aide Nabil Abu Rudeineh told Reuters in Paris hours after a Palestinian teenager blew himself up in the Carmel Market, killing at least three people. Such statements rarely resonate in Israel, as the condemnations are believed to be half-hearted and many Palestinian officials count terrorists as Palestinian "civilians."

"Such attacks do not serve our cause amid such a difficult situation," Rudeineh said.

The message came amid widespread speculation that the Palestinian Authority president's mysterious stomach complaint could spell the end of his political career.

Red Sea bombs Palestinian-linked, Egypt says

Egypt said terrorists who targeted Israeli tourists at two Red Sea resorts had no connection to Al-Qaida.

Egyptian Interior Minister Habib el-Adli, delivering the results of a government inquiry into the Oct. 7 bombings at Taba and Ras Satan, said Monday there was nothing to justify "the linking of the group which carried out the attacks with (wider) organizational activity at home or abroad or with cells of the Al-Qaida organization."

Israeli officials, noting the extensive planning and synchronicity of the bombings that claimed 33 lives, said it was characteristic of Osama bin Laden's international terrorist network.

But Cairo instead blamed Israel's crackdown on the Palestinians, saying it provoked violence by local extremists.

Israelis pray against Gaza plan

About 20,000 Israelis prayed in Jerusalem to protest the government's plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank. Monday's rally in Zion Square was attended by former chief rabbis Avraham Shapira and Mordechai Eliyahu. Eliyahu called on Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to listen to the masses' prayers.

Men blew horns and trumpets to evoke the biblical conquest of Jericho and ancient Israel, denouncing Sharon's vow to abandon land they consider the biblical birthright of the Jews, Ha'aretz reported.

Taiba terror triangle

Three Israeli Arabs were charged with planning attacks on behalf of a Palestinian terrorist group.

The Tel Aviv District Court on Monday indicted the three men from the central Israeli town of Taiba, charging them with plotting to bomb the Netanya train station and the Azrieli towers in Tel Aviv.

According to prosecutors, the defendants were recruited by a Nablus-based member of the Al-Aksa Brigade, the terrorist wing of Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction.

NORTH AMERICA

Outpost count accurate?

The United States reportedly rejected as insufficient an Israeli estimate of the number of illegal West Bank outposts.

The Bush administration feels an Israeli finding that settlers have erected 23 outposts without government approval since March 2001 is far too low, Ha'aretz reported Monday.

Left-wing groups in Israel insist the real figure is several times greater.

According to the newspaper, Washington awaits the results of an Israeli Defense Ministry study into how the outposts should be dismantled in accordance with the U.S.-led "road map" peace plan.

Israeli and U.S. officials did not immediately comment.

Caught in the crossfire

Jewish officials criticized a TV commentator for suggesting that U.S. policy toward Israel is behind Al-Qaida's hatred of America.

The criticism comes after Tucker Carlson, the conservative host of CNN's "Crossfire," said on his show last Friday that Osama bin Laden made clear in his latest tape that the United States was attacked because Al Qaida leaders "disagree with American policy in the Middle East particularly, and specifically American policy toward Israel."

He added: "At some point, you have to consider the root causes of terrorism."

James Tisch, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, told the New York Sun: "Israel is a sideshow to all of this, to bin Laden."

Stanford in a stir on Israel

Jewish students at Stanford were outraged by comments critical of Israel made by a Holocaust survivor and pro-Palestinian activist.

Hedy Epstein gave a talk on campus last week titled "Surviving the Holocaust: Witnessing History Repeated," which was promoted with fliers comparing Jews in Nazi Germany to Palestinians at Israeli checkpoints, according to the Stanford Daily.

The talk was followed by a flurry of editorials in the newspaper Friday.

At an event sponsored by Jewish groups on campus, Harvard professor Ruth Wisse said Palestinian leaders, not Israel, were to blame for Palestinian woes.

"Arab rulers accused Jews of denying the Arabs land and held Israel responsible for every problem that the Arabs created," Wisse said, according to the Stanford Daily.

Hate-filled campaign in Connecticut?

Officials for a Jewish political candidate in Connecticut said the dumping of her campaign signs was a hate crime.

About 30 signs supporting challenger Gayle Slossberg, a Democrat running for state Senate near New Haven, were taken from lawns over the weekend and dumped outside a local synagogue.

Both candidates have reported their signs being stolen.

WORLD

Ceremony held at French Jewish cemetery

Some 500 people gathered for an interfaith ceremony at a French Jewish cemetery that was desecrated.

Representatives of Christian and Muslim communities gathered for the ceremony at the Jewish cemetery in Alsace, in which 92 tombstones were desecrated.

Swastikas and Nazi insignia were daubed on the tombstones at the cemetery in Brumath near Strasbourg last Friday night, the latest in a series of desecrations that have hit burial sites of all faiths across the Alsace region in eastern France.

For the first time, markings on the tombs also alluded to a number of far-right-linked organizations in the United States, including White Power, Racial Holy War and the World Church of the Creator.