

## IN THE NEWS

## P.A. official: Arafat in deep coma

Yasser Arafat is in a deep coma, a top Palestinian official said.

Speaking Tuesday at the Paris hospital where the Palestinian Authority president is being treated, Nabil Sha'ath said Arafat's organs are still functioning.

He said Arafat does not have cancer and has not been poisoned, two of the rumors that have surfaced since Arafat was taken to France from the West Bank late last month.

Sha'ath also ruled out any chance of euthanasia, saying it is against Muslim precepts and that Arafat is not in pain.

## U.S. considering envoy to Arafat funeral

The United States is considering sending a high-ranking official to Yasser Arafat's funeral.

The main consideration is how well the Palestinians would be able to secure any U.S. presence at the funeral of the Palestinian Authority president, who is in a deep coma.

U.S. officials are still angry with the Palestinians for failing to seriously pursue terrorists who attacked a U.S. convoy in the Gaza Strip a year ago, killing three Americans.

Former President Carter is being considered as a representative, but if U.S. officials are unhappy with security arrangements they may opt to send an official with a lower profile who would be a less likely target.

## Israel halts arms sales to Ivory Coast

Israel said it would suspend arms sales to the Ivory Coast after a French request.

France, which formerly ruled Ivory Coast as a colony, destroyed the African nation's air force in retaliation for the deaths of nine French peacekeepers and an American aid worker in a government airstrike on rebels.

# WORLD REPORT

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## Bush mandate, Arafat demise lay groundwork for new U.S. peace push

By RON KAMPEAS

**W**ASHINGTON (JTA) — Americans wanting a peek at President Bush's to-do list now that he has a mandate didn't get much substance at his first post-election news conference, except for this: a Palestinian state.

Bush's thrice-repeated insistence on Palestinian statehood in a short press conference otherwise brimming with vague platitudes suggests a determination that Israel's government would do well to heed.

"I think it's very important for our friends the Israelis to have a peaceful Palestinian state living on their border," Bush said in the first of his mentions in his Nov. 4 press conference.

If anyone had any doubts, he noted that he has espoused Palestinian statehood for two years, since his June 24, 2002, speech outlining the conditions for Middle East peace.

"I meant it when I said it, and I mean it now," Bush said last week.

Also significant was his agreement with British Prime Minister Tony Blair that Israeli-Palestinian peace was a centerpiece of stability in the region.

That contradicts a central doctrine of the president's first term: that the road to Jerusalem leads through Baghdad — in other words, that creating a stable democratic regime in Iraq would have a spillover effect on the Palestinians.

With a major battle underway to retake the insurgent-filled Iraqi city of Fallujah, President Bush will be seeking all the support he can get from Europeans and from neighboring Arab states.

"Our numbers are down significantly in that part of the world," said James Zogby, president of the Arab American Institute, which tracks U.S. approval ratings in the Arab world. "I fear that absent a dramatic change in how we approach the region, the problems will remain."

Blair wants a summit on the issue as soon as possible, and White House spokesmen have suggested that it will be high on the agenda when he and Bush meet in Washington later this week.

Still, Bush is by no means the second-term president unleashed that some Jewish Democratic strategists tried to raise as a bogeyman in the final days of the election campaign.

Bush's commitment to Israel's security and his friendship with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is unwavering, those close to him say. Central to it is his conviction that he cannot ask of other nations what he does

not ask of the United States: As long as the United States does not truck with terrorists, nor should Israel, is his credo.

However, that equation could change, U.S. officials make clear, with Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's departure from power.

Asked Nov. 5 how Arafat's declining health impacted U.S. peacemaking, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher dangled the prospect of a Palestinian state.

"The president is committed to his two-state vision that he enunciated two years ago, trying to achieve a democratic and peaceful Palestinian state that can live side by side with Israel," Boucher said.

The timing — a president released from

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NEWS  
ANALYSIS

## ■ *After election, and after Arafat, U.S. poised to push for Mideast peace*

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campaign concerns and a Palestinian policy released from a tyrant — is too good to pass up, suggested Stephen P. Cohen, a scholar with the Israel Policy Forum, an organization that promotes U.S. engagement in the region.

“There is not likely to be a more opportune moment for the question of whether the Palestinians can move into a more democratic process,” Cohen said. “That constitutes a very important linkage between the election of the president to a second term and the future of Israel-Palestinian relations.”

Cohen, who meets regularly with U.S., Palestinian and Israeli leaders, says the sense of opportunity is pervasive, extending to Israel’s staunchest supporters in the administration, such as Elliott Abrams, the top Middle East official on Bush’s National Security Council.

“He is one of the people who is learning to be more interested in the solution to the Arab-Israeli problem,” Cohen said of Abrams. “He won’t be an obstacle.”

■  
The linkage between the post-election and post-Arafat eras is not lost in Congress, where even the most steadfast of Israel’s supporters regret the opportunity missed in the summer of 2003 when Mahmoud Abbas — the moderate who demonstrated a willingness to deal seriously with Israel — grew tired of Arafat’s machinations and resigned as Palestinian Authority prime minister.

Pro-Israel congressmen on both sides of the aisle have said Israel and the

United States could have done more to reinforce Abbas’ political hand against Arafat through substantive gestures, such as larger prisoner releases and a settlement freeze.

Now that Abbas is assuming the post-Arafat leadership along with fellow moderate Ahmed Qurei, two of Israel’s most unflinching supporters in the U.S. House of Representatives — Middle East subcommittee chairwoman Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.), and Rep. Robert Wexler (D-Fla.), a senior member of the International Relations committee — are leading a delegation to the region this week with the goal of prod-  
ding the sides forward.

“The confluence of events creates an opportunity for the United States to bring some order where order does not exist and bring some hope where hope is limited, both to the Israelis and to the Palestinians,” Wexler told JTA before he left. “We’re going to say for the umpteenth time that the Palestinians have an opportunity to advance their aspirations and dreams, and for the first time we hope they choose a peaceful path rather than a violent one.”

■  
But Ros-Lehtinen painted a different picture to JTA in Jerusalem.

“We’ve got a lot to do in Iraq still and Afghanistan, and I don’t see President Bush nosediving into the peace process anytime soon,” she said.

Bush’s recent emphasis on Palestinian statehood was prompted in part by pre-

election remarks by Sharon’s top adviser, Dov Weisglass, who told Ha’aretz that Sharon’s plan to unilaterally leave the Gaza Strip would satisfy the Americans for now and would quash the prospect of statehood until the Palestinians have a more reliable leadership.

Bush administration officials were furious over the remarks, and Sharon quickly backtracked. Now that the election has passed, the administration is making it clear that it wants the Gaza pullout to go ahead — as a first step toward Palestinian statehood, not as an



end in itself.

“We see the Israeli disengagement plan from Gaza and from some of the settlements on the West Bank as being a step that can lead us in that direction,” said Boucher, the State Department spokesman.

If it shows signs of movement, such a step-by-step approach might help Bush forge the alliances he needs in the region to assert control in Iraq and to roll back the growing influence of Iran.

Marwan Bishara, a Palestinian analyst based in Paris, said the key to success in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was to enlist regional help and avoid the grand promises of sweeping Arab reform that characterized Bush’s first term.

“You will need a president who will not raise hopes in order to crush them,” Bishara said.

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*JTA Correspondent Dina Kraft contributed to this story from Jerusalem.*

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## Posthumous award for Holocaust novel

By PHILIP CARMEL

PARIS (JTA) — A novel published more than 60 years after its author died in the Holocaust won one of France’s top literary awards.

“Suite Francaise,” by Irene Nemirovsky, on Monday picked up the Renaudot Prize, awarded annually by a select group of authors.

Born in Kiev in 1903, Nemirovsky arrived in France in the 1930s.

She wrote the novel in 1940, which traces the lives of French war refugees fleeing the advancing German invasion.

Before she was deported to Auschwitz, Nemirovsky entrusted the tiny fragments of her book to her daughter, Diane Epstein, who agreed earlier this year to its publication.

# Episcopal Church to probe corporate investments

By RACHEL POMERANCE

NEW YORK (JTA) — Months after the U.S. Presbyterian Church voted to drop its holdings in Israel, another Protestant church has decided on a different response to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that Jewish officials hail as more balanced.

Meeting earlier this month in Boise, Idaho, the Episcopal Church's governing board voted to look into the church's corporate investments and take appropriate action with "companies that contribute to the infrastructure of Israel's ongoing occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip" — as well as "companies that have connections to organizations responsible for violence against Israel."

Jewish groups still take issue with the fact that the Episcopal Church singled out one particular conflict among many in the world, but say the move signals progress toward a balanced approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict after the actions of the Presbyterian Church USA.

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The Rev. Brian Grieves, director of the Episcopal Church's peace and justice ministries, did not say exactly what action the national church would take with companies that breach these standards.

But, he said, "We would not want our companies to be supporting the occupation or violence against Israeli civilians."

There are some 300 companies in the church's investment portfolio, Grieves said.

The Episcopal Church took into account the Presbyterian move, but was motivated to act by the "deterioration of the situation" and increased violence after the breakdown of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, Grieves told JTA.

Jewish groups said the move represents a step forward.

"This is a process that makes demands not just on Israel, but on the Palestinians," said Mark Pelavin, associate director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

"It speaks not just about occupation but about terror and it promises on its face to be open and consultative as they go," he said. "This process reflects a real understanding of our concerns."

The move comes as the Presbyterian Church USA issued guidelines Tuesday for divestment that cite the "the continued occupation of Palestinian land by Israel as the major impediment to the creation of a just peace."

The Presbyterian Church plans a "phased selective divestment" with companies that it says help support the occupation, settlements, the West Bank security fence or the harming of civilians.

The Presbyterians did not engage in dialogue with Jewish groups before passing the anti-Israel resolution at the church's General Assembly in July. There has been subsequent dialogue with Jewish groups, but it appears to have had little effect on church policy.

Yet Jewish groups say interfaith dialogue helped lead the Episcopal Church to a more balanced policy.

The "Presbyterian blindside woke us up" to the fact that mainstream Protestants have a different narrative of the conflict than Jews — and Jews need to understand that in making Israel's case, said Ethan Felson, assistant executive director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs.

"With the Presbyterians, we have the problem of walking the cat back into the bag," he said. "They're bound by a resolution that they already passed and that they've rejected rescinding."

After that experience, the JCPA, American Jewish Committee, Anti-Defamation League and Union for Reform Judaism approached the Episcopal church as a coalition of partners.

"What it means is, a dialogue pays off," said Rabbi Gary Bretton-Granatoor, director of interfaith affairs for the ADL.

■  
Episcopal Church officials didn't seem to agree, however.

"The community was glad to hear from a variety of voices on this, including the American Jewish community of course," and its own members and churches in the

Middle East, Grieves told JTA.

"But in the end, the community felt that its obligation was to implement church policy, and that's where they came out and made their decision," he said.

Bretton-Granatoor said the Episcopal Church had been headed in the same direction as the Presbyterians. He pointed to a Sept. 22 statement by the International Anglican Peace and Justice Network after a mission to Israel.

"We conclude from our experience that there is little will on behalf of the Israeli government to

recognize the rights of the Palestinians to a sovereign state to be created in the West Bank — which includes East Jerusalem — and Gaza," the network stated, while making no mention of Palestinian terrorism.

"Israel, with the complicity of the United States, seems determined to flaunt international laws, whether they are the Geneva Conventions, United Nations resolutions or the most recent decision of the International Court of Justice in declaring the separation wall illegal."

In response, the ADL wrote Grieves a letter expressing "great shock and sadness" at the network's report.

"We are concerned about the utter lack of balance in this report. There is no evidence of any understanding on the part of the writers of the role the Palestinians have played in their own sad situation."

In a letter sent Tuesday to Grieves, the coalition of Jewish groups took a more conciliatory tone.

"We appreciate the openness to dialogue that is expressed in this process and welcome the opportunity to continue the important conversations we are having about the situation in the Middle East," the Jewish groups wrote. "We all agree that our common goal is a two state solution: Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security." ■



# NEWS IN BRIEF

## MIDDLE EAST

### RIP in Ramallah?

The Palestinian Authority wants to bury Yasser Arafat at his West Bank headquarters.

Palestinian officials made the demand Tuesday as reports surfaced that the Palestinian Authority president had died at the French hospital where he has been receiving treatment for a mysterious illness.

According to the sources, the Palestinian Authority plans to hold a state funeral for Arafat in the West Bank city of Jericho and then bury him in the Ramallah compound where he was confined for much of the last three years.

Previously, the Palestinians demanded that Arafat be laid to rest on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, on a plot reserved for Arab notables.

But Israeli officials have ruled out a funeral anywhere other than the Gaza Strip, where two of Arafat's relatives lie.

"Gaza is in full control of the Palestinian Authority and we believe it is the appropriate place," Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom told CNN.

### A quiet disengagement?

Settlers in the Gaza Strip will agree to evacuation under Ariel Sharon's withdrawal plan, an Israeli official said.

"The people of Gush Katif are different" from those in the West Bank "in terms of the antagonism they create," Yonatan Bassi, head of the Disengagement Authority, told the Jerusalem Post on Tuesday.

"Their leadership is less rude, less confrontational, much quieter." Israeli security forces are bracing for confrontations if settlers resist the Israeli prime minister's plan to withdraw from Gaza and parts of the West Bank next year, but Bassi said no one in Gaza would "go against the government" when the time comes.

Nonetheless, the 56-year-old father of six said he was under 24-hour protection after receiving death threats from right-wing extremists.

### Buzz on the border

Hezbollah drones could be used for cross-border terror attacks, Israel's military chief said.

The Lebanese militia managed to launch a surveillance drone for a 10-minute flight over northern Israel on Monday, worrying the top military brass in Tel Aviv.

On Tuesday, Israel's military chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Moshe Ya'alon, told the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that the Hezbollah drone had a wingspan of 12 feet and could carry a payload of 90 pounds.

Armed with a bomb, the drone could be used for kamikaze attacks on Israeli targets, Ya'alon warned.

But Monday's drone is no longer a threat to Israel because it crashed off the Lebanese coast after its maiden flight.

### Close call for French

A Palestinian suicide bombing at a Tel Aviv market this month was intended for the French Embassy, Israeli officials believe.

The Shin Bet on Tuesday issued results of its probe into the Nov. 1 attack that killed three people at the Carmel market, saying the original target was the nearby French mission.

It was not immediately clear why the teenage terrorist from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine chose the market.

The Shin Bet said it had arrested two of the teen's handlers in the West Bank city of Nablus, adding that he managed to slip into Israel using a journalist card.

Israeli officials came in for international criticism during the intifada when they tried to restrict Palestinian access to journalist cards, saying terrorists used them to move around the country freely.

### Extremists give post-Arafat gifts

Several Israeli extremists gave gifts to drivers in Jerusalem to celebrate Yasser Arafat's impending death.

A spokesman for the outlawed Kahane movement distributed candy, flowers and wine Tuesday night to drivers after it was reported that the Palestinian Authority president was near death, the Jerusalem Post reported.

A spokesman for the group, Itamar Ben-Gvir, said members of his organization would be reading special prayers of thanksgiving in synagogues on Wednesday.

## NORTH AMERICA

### Reform Jews help Sudanese refugees

The Reform movement is giving \$80,000 to groups helping refugees in Sudan.

The Union for Reform Judaism announced it would give the money to the International Rescue Committee, CARE USA and Catholic Relief Services. The money comes from the Reform movement's Disaster Relief Fund.

Experts estimate that more than 1 million people have been misplaced by government-supported violence in Sudan.

### City clashes on divestment

The City Council of Somerville, Mass., considered a resolution to dump city holdings in Israel.

A vote was delayed until Dec. 7, and Mayor Joseph Curtatone, who spoke against the resolution at Monday night's meeting, said he would veto it, according to the Boston Globe, which noted that lawmakers could not recall another resolution that had prompted such impassioned debate.

The local Jewish Community Relations Council was "troubled" by the crowd of activists evenly split on the resolution, which urges city investors to "divest from companies involved with Israel's human rights violations and from Israel Bonds."

JCRC executive director Nancy Kaufman, who organized local leaders to speak against the move, said those in favor of the resolution enlisted the support of Israeli soldiers who refuse to serve in the army, many non-Somerville residents, and members of the Jewish community.

"It's a sad day when we as Jews are advocating for divestment in Israel," Kaufman said. This is "just the beginning of something that we're going to see more of across the country."

### Ads to show Israeli teachers

A pro-Israel advocacy group is launching a series of television advertisements focusing on efforts by Israeli teachers to teach peace in the classroom.

The Israel Project's ads, which are slated to begin Wednesday on CNN, Fox and MSNBC, feature three Israeli teachers talking about their efforts.

## WORLD

### Money for Jewish sites in Turkey

The International Fellowship of Christians and Jews donated \$500,000 for security at Jewish sites in Turkey.

The group raises funds among evangelical Christians for Jewish causes in Israel and other countries. Over the past five years it has raised more than \$100 million, which was distributed in Israel, the former Soviet Union and other countries.