


**IN THE NEWS**
**Colin Powell  
to visit Israel**

Outgoing Secretary of State Colin Powell is slated to travel to Israel.

Powell will hold talks with Israeli and Palestinian officials next Sunday and Monday, a spokesman for the U.S. State Department announced.

The talks are expected to focus on how to restart peace talks following the death of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

**Letter urges Bush  
to appoint envoy**

An envoy should be appointed to focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a group of U.S. Jews wrote to President Bush.

"We believe that Israeli and Palestinian leaders can be brought back to the negotiating table through your committed and persistent leadership in support of a negotiated two-state solution," says the letter, signed by more than 8,000 Jews.

**Israel rejects  
liberal conversions**

The Israeli government said Wednesday it would not recognize non-Orthodox conversions performed in Israel, for purposes of the Law of Return.

The state will formally present its opinion to the High Court of Justice, which is reviewing a case on the legitimacy of conversions performed inside Israel by the Reform and Conservative movements.

The state's opinion notes that Interior Minister Avraham Poraz has a dissenting position.

Poraz said he believes the more lenient conversion procedures conducted by the Reform and Conservative movements could help solve the problem of hundreds of thousands of Israeli residents, most of them immigrants from the Former Soviet Union, who do not convert because they're wary of the stringent demands under the Orthodox process.

Reform and Conservative representatives responded angrily to the state's opinion.

# WORLD REPORT

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## Optimism greets post-Arafat era, but obstacles to progress remain

By LESLIE SUSSER

**J**ERUSALEM (JTA) — The post-Arafat era has begun with high hopes in Washington, London, Jerusalem and even Ramallah — but many of the obstacles that prevented peace in Arafat's day remain, and it's not clear whether any of the major players has the single-minded determination to make peace happen.

The United States is not as actively involved as it may have to be; the Europeans, who would like to be intimately involved, don't have the necessary political clout; the Israeli leadership, insulated by strong American backing and facing a recalcitrant right wing, sees no need to hurry; and the new Palestinian leaders, hamstrung by radical, violent opponents, may not be able to make concessions beyond what the late Palestinian Authority president countenanced.

President Bush gave an inkling of the ambivalence inherent in American policy after a meeting last week in Washington with British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Bush rejected Blair's call for an international conference and a speedy transition to talks on a final peace agreement, saying the Palestinians first would have to stop terrorism against Israel. At the same time, however, Bush said he still believed the establishment of a Palestinian state is the only way to resolve the conflict.

The essence of American policy can be gleaned from those ostensibly incongruous statements: The United States will help the Palestinians achieve statehood on condi-

tion that they stop violence and carry out economic, security and political reforms. In other words, it's up to them to make the first move.

Bush also seemed to alter the time frame for Palestinian statehood. Whereas the "road map" peace plan — presented in 2002 — spoke of 2005 as the target date, Bush said he was determined to work toward a Palestinian state by the time he leaves office, in January 2009.

This reinforced the president's main message to the Palestinians: They must get their act together before the United States will be ready to help. If they're slow, there will be a price to pay in the deferral of national aspirations. The quicker they act, the quicker statehood can be achieved.

European officials believe the American role primarily should be to help the new Palestinian leadership establish its legitimacy. First, they say, the United States can help with elections for a new P.A. president by leaning on Israel to allow optimum conditions for a free election, with as few signs of occupation as possible.

The election process will have two salutary effects, the Europeans argue: bringing to power a Palestinian leader accepted by the people and creating a sense of democracy at work.

The Europeans also believe that they and the Americans can aid Palestinian democratization by helping to build institutions and train P.A. security forces. But they know that Europe alone cannot effect a breakthrough, and that the United

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ANALYSIS

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States must take the lead.

As for the Palestinians, they cannot take things forward unless the new leaders establish a stable government. So far, the signs do not augur well.

An incident Sunday in which militiamen from the PLO's mainstream Fatah movement opened fire on the mourners' tent for Arafat — when his heir apparent, Mahmoud Abbas, and Gaza strongman Mohammed Dahlan were inside — is symptomatic of a fairly widespread refusal to accept Abbas' authority. Two of Abbas' bodyguards were killed.

Though it apparently wasn't an assassination attempt, the shooting was meant to warn Abbas not to diverge from Arafat's hard line. The assailants shouted, "No Abbas, no Dahlan and no CIA," suggesting that some Palestinians see the two as American puppets capable of selling out Palestinian interests.

For his part, Abbas believes only America can deliver the goods.

On the Israeli side, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon wants to give Abbas every chance, or at least give the impression of doing so. Despite opposition from some of his closest supporters in the Cabinet, Sharon seems set to allow

eastern Jerusalem Arabs to vote in the Palestinian election, even though that part of the city was annexed by Israel in 1968 and Israeli officials have been wary of any step that could bolster Palestinian claims there.

Sharon also has the defense establishment working on contingency plans: The National Security Council is considering how Israel's planned unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and part of the West Bank can be coordinated with the Palestinians, and the Israel Defense Forces and the Defense Ministry are drafting blueprints for Palestinian security reforms as well as steps to end

the intifada.

Sharon also is contemplating gestures that could help Abbas build authority, such as releasing prisoners and withdrawing the Israeli army from Palestinian cities. On Monday, for example, after an operation that lasted several weeks, Israeli forces withdrew from the West Bank city of Jenin.

But Sharon faces constraints of his own. If he is finding it so difficult politically to withdraw from Gaza and a small part of the West Bank, Israeli pundits ask, how will he be able to withdraw from the huge amounts of territory that

a peace agreement would entail?

For now, Sharon is pleased with the way Bush's policy is shaping up, especially his apparent commitment that the United States will not pressure Israel to engage in peace talks until the Palestinians end violence.

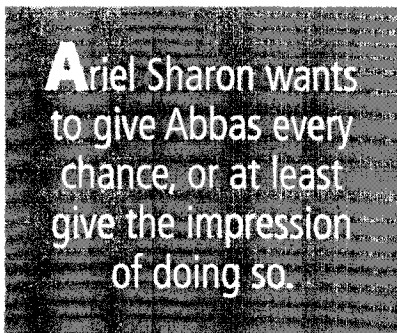
But on the center-left of Israeli politics, there's a growing sense that if the Americans don't change course and start pressuring both sides, nothing good will happen. Writing in the economic newspaper *Globes*, journalist Matti Golan was the latest to articulate the feeling that the only way the deadlock can be broken is through a more proactive American policy.

In an editorial addressed personally to President Bush, Golan called for "an imposed settlement, please." Bush, he maintains, should not be "behind Sharon," but rather should give both sides an American lead.

Bush should put a deal on the table and tell the parties that "anyone who doesn't sign, or even starts to argue, won't see a single penny, not from you nor the Europeans."

Golan concludes, "At first, Mr. Bush, there will be howls of protest. But if you hold your nerve, in the end everyone will thank you."

The belief that only America can pull the Israeli and Palestinian chestnuts out of the fire is growing in Europe, Israel and among the Palestinians. The question is: Will George Bush's Washington be ready to take on all that entails? ■



## Even in death, a controversy

By PHILIP CARMEL

PARIS (JTA) — Yasser Arafat died from a blood condition, *Le Monde* reported.

Citing French doctors close to Arafat's case, the paper reported Wednesday that Arafat died of a blood disease known as disseminated intravascular coagulation.

The disease is manifested by a complete breakdown of the blood's coagulation systems, the medical sources said.

The condition is a symptom of a disease either of cancerous or infectious origin, the paper quoted the doctors as saying.

Doctors established that Arafat was not poisoned shortly after the Palestinian leader was admitted to a French military hospital near Paris, the paper added.

Arafat died at the hospital on Nov. 11 and was buried in his presidential compound in Ramallah. Since his death, some Palestinian officials, including the Palestinian Authority's senior diplomat in Paris, Leila Shahid, have suggested he might have been poisoned.

Meanwhile, a French Jewish organization called on President Jacques Chirac to officially announce the cause of Arafat's death.

In a letter to Chirac on Wednesday, a copy of which was seen by JTA, the National Bureau for Vigilance Against Anti-Semitism said that rumors propagated by Shahid suggesting that Israel had poisoned Arafat "are spreading in our cities and sensitive housing estates." ■

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# 'Anti-Semitism' march turns to condemning Israel

By TOBY AXELROD

BERLIN (JTA) — What is anti-Semitism? Two young Muslim girls marching in Berlin's Al-Quds Day, or Jerusalem Day, parade didn't know, even though they were holding up signs opposing "occupation, racism and anti-Semitism."

Then they marched, together with some 1,000 others, through the German capital on Sunday.

The Shi'ite Islamist parade was one of several held around the world to mark the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Al-Quds Day was begun in 1979 by Iranian Ayatollah Khomeini to condemn Israel's existence.

Since then, Iran has held its annual demonstration in Tehran; Hezbollah has held military parades in Beirut; and demonstrators around the world — including in London, Berlin and Toronto — have demanded the destruction of Israel.

In Berlin this year, those demands were veiled. There were posters condemning "all forms of terrorism" and proclaiming the equal value of the three major faiths, which one day hopefully would live together in a "liberated Palestine."

To some extent, the moderate appearance of Sunday's Islamist parade was a result of the attention drawn to the event by a coalition of pro-democracy groups.

"We succeeded in getting them to be more reserved" in their slogans, said Anette Kahane, founder of the Amadeu Antonio Foundation, a watch-dog against racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism, who helped organize a pro-Israel counter-demonstration.

The pro-Israel group included many Iranian exiles who protested human rights abuses in their homeland. About 150 people stood on a street blocked off by a phalanx of green-and-white police vans.

Though there were Jewish participants in the counter-demonstration, no Jewish communal organization was involved. That was in keeping with organizers' goals, said Arne Behrensen, a member of the Berlin Alliance Against Anti-Semitism.

"We wanted to build a coalition of the left, anti-racist groups and immi-

grant organizations who see it as their own job to do something against anti-Semitism, radical Islamism and racism, and not to leave it to the Jews," Behrensen said in a telephone interview. "And we don't want to leave it to the Iranians to protest against Islamism and Al-Quds Day."

Mehdi K., holding a pre-revolution Iranian flag, said he had not seen his wife and child in Iran for three years.

"We are against terrorists, we are against people who kill," said Mehdi, 37, who is Muslim. "We stand next to the Israeli flag. For us it is the same as the German flag. Terrorists are destroying Islam."

Kahane, who is a member of Berlin's Jewish community, participated in a Nov. 7 conference to inform the public about the history and goals of Al-Quds Day.

The conference aimed to "make it so that fewer people participate in the Al-Quds demonstration," said Claudia Dantschke of the Center for Democratic Culture, a co-organizer of Sunday's counter-demonstration. She said this year's Al-Quds parade in Berlin was markedly smaller than in previous years.

Similarly, the Nov. 6 Al-Quds Day parade in London met with protests by Iranian dissidents who handed out leaflets stating that Iran, as a repressive regime, "is no friend of Palestinians or any other nation."

One left-wing British group reportedly dropped out of the Al-Quds Day march after talking to the pro-democracy groups.

In Berlin, Dantschke was not surprised that some of the Islamist marchers did not understand the words on the posters they carried. The slogans were "meant for the German public" to ensure that the Islamic group can march again next year, Dantschke said.

"The idea is to get the public on their side, through dissembling," she said.

"Al-Quds Day stands for the destruction of Israel," said Wahied Wahdat-Hagh, a lecturer and journalist in Berlin who translates Iranian publications for the Middle East Media Research Insti-

tute. "It is the anti-Semitic symbol in the national ideology of Iran."

At the Islamic march, many participants carried images of Yasser Arafat or Khomeini. There also were photos of American soldiers smiling over humiliated Iraqi prisoners of war.

"We are protesting the oppression by Israel," said Armin, a high school student who carried a sign on his backpack that said "Freedom for Jews, Freedom for Christians, Freedom for Muslims." "We want a peaceful state where all religious

groups can live together."

He was under the mistaken impression that Muslims could not vote in Israel, and seemed surprised to hear that Arabs sit in Israel's Parliament.

Salima, 11, said she didn't know what anti-Semitism or occupation meant.

"We are here because of the war in Palestine," she said.

Nadir, 17, said anti-Semitism meant that "the Israelis want the land for themselves." Asked again about the meaning of anti-Semitism, she said, "I have not heard about it."

In the background, Yavuz Ozoguz proclaimed on his loudspeaker that "we are against every form of anti-Semitism."

"We know that Israeli civilians are suffering under the situation and they have the right to complain," he said. "But peace without justice is impossible."

"We have respect for Judaism," said Ali, 23, before adding, "But a Jew is not necessarily a Jew."

"After Moses, Judaism has been turned around into something else," he said.

At a news conference after the demonstrations, Dantschke said that "hardliners are tougher to reach than the children and youth. There have to be discussions in schools. We have to build knowledge."

And Germans should not be fooled by the posters and banners of today's Al-Quds Day, she added. The demand for a "greater Palestine is just a nicer way of saying that Israel has to be destroyed."



# NEWS IN BRIEF

## MIDDLE EAST

### Report: Iran has nuclear goods

Iran bought weapons-grade uranium and a nuclear bomb blueprint on the black market, an opposition group said. The National Council of Resistance of Iran, which in the past has provided reliable information on Iran's nuclear program, said Abdul Qadeer Khan, a Pakistani scientist who has admitted to selling his country's nuclear secrets, sold the designs for a warhead in the mid-1990s and enriched uranium in 2001.

The uranium Iran obtained from Khan is not enough for a bomb, the group said, but added that Iran also is enriching uranium at a secret site, despite promises this week to the contrary to the European Union.

A State Department spokesman said the United States had yet to check the information, but noted the reliability of past reports.

Israel considers a nuclear-armed Iran to be an existential threat.

### Lebanon: Rockets against Israel are terror

A Lebanese official reportedly called Katyusha rocket fire into Israel terrorism.

Speaking Wednesday to the London-based A-Sharq Al-Awsat newspaper, Information Minister Eli Firzli said the army has set up roadblocks in southern Lebanon to prevent rockets from being fired across the border, and said that if Israel responds militarily, Lebanon will blame the terrorist group that fired the rockets.

Two Katyusha rockets were fired at Israel on Monday night.

One of the rockets fell off the Lebanese coast, and the second landed near the northern Israeli town of Shlomi. Hezbollah denied any connection to the strike, which caused no injuries and was claimed by an unknown group named for a late Hezbollah official.

The United Nations called on Lebanon to prevent attacks on Israel, as Israel warned that it holds the Lebanese government responsible for any violence from its territory.

### Harvest clash in West Bank

Israeli police arrested 15 settlers for harassing Palestinian olive pickers. Wednesday's scuffles broke out when farmers from the West Bank village of Awarta tried to harvest their olives in a grove that falls within the security perimeter of the nearby settlement of Itamar.

Settlers tried to block their access and, according to one report, stoned the Palestinians and attacked police.

## NORTH AMERICA

### Lawmakers push for UNRWA funding cut

A bipartisan group of 37 lawmakers urged the State Department not to fund the United Nations Relief and Works Agency because of its ties to terrorist organizations.

In a letter Wednesday to U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, the lawmakers noted that the head of UNRWA has acknowledged that Hamas members are on the agency's payroll.

"It is absolutely unforgivable for a United Nations organization to employ terrorists," says the letter, authored by Rep. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.).

The congressmen want all funding cut to UNRWA until the State Department can verify that members of terrorist organizations no longer are employed there, and want the Bush administration to push for changes to UNRWA's leadership.

### Ros-Lehtinen discusses Saudi anti-Semitism

The chairwoman of the U.S. House of Representatives' Middle East subcommittee discussed anti-Semitism with the U.S. envoy to Saudi Arabia. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.) met Wednesday with James Oberwetter and discussed incitement against Jews and Americans in Saudi Arabia, as well as funding for terrorist groups.

## WORLD

### Russian terror victims visiting Israel

Eighteen child survivors of the September hostage tragedy at a Russian school are spending three weeks in Israel.

Thirty-eight residents of Beslan, including the 18 survivors, are being hosted by the city of Ashkelon.

"As a nation that has so much experience in dealing with terrorism, I believe we have something to offer countries such as Russia regarding the treatment of children who are victims of terror," Ashkelon Mayor Roni Mahatzari said.

The Beslan residents are in Israel until Nov. 28.

### Israel, NATO grow closer

Israel could take part in NATO military exercises for the first time. NATO officials have asked Israel to take part in exercises, as well as anti-terror activities such as patrols in the Mediterranean, Ha'aretz reported.

Israel's inclusion is part of efforts to increase the treaty group's "Mediterranean dialogue."

The dialogue includes six Muslim nations: Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania.

### ICHEIC cuts ties with Generali fund

The commission handling Holocaust-era insurance claims has cut ties with an Israel-based fund.

The International Commission of Holocaust Era Insurance Claims severed ties earlier this month with the Generali Trust Fund, claiming it was not meeting ICHEIC's timetable and was unable to improve the quality of its work.

Mara Rudman, ICHEIC's chief operating officer, said all claims being processed by the trust fund, which was established to handle pre-war claims taken out by Italian insurance company Generali, will be processed by Generali itself.

Meeting in Washington on Tuesday, ICHEIC rolled out plans to cease operations at the end of 2005.

### Chabad launches projects in ex-USSR

Chabad-Lubavitch is launching a series of new projects in the former Soviet Union.

At a session this week during a Chabad-Lubavitch emissaries conference in New York, close to 200 emissaries to the Former Soviet Union met with New York philanthropist George Rohr to discuss numerous initiatives throughout the region.

These included creating a new Russian-language, annotated beginners' prayer book; a Russian-language scholarly edition of the Tanach; a regional Internet site for Jewish dating; and the construction or revitalizing of dozens of synagogues and community centers in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.

The projects are estimated to cost several million dollars.

### No apology for anti-Sharon sign

Spain's ambassador to Israel defended a street sign in a Spanish town attacking Ariel Sharon.

There have been fierce exchanges between Jerusalem and Madrid over the sign erected by the mayor of Oleiros, reading, "We will stop the beast! Sharon is a murderer. Stop the new Nazis."

On Wednesday, Acting Ambassador Diego Bustamante rejected Israeli charges that the municipal protest was bigoted.

"I do not see graffiti against Prime Minister Ariel Sharon as an act of anti-Semitism or racism," he told Yediot Achronot.

"Most Spaniards do not think this way, and we cannot be blamed for the stupidity of a few people in a small town."