

IN THE NEWS

Bush remembers Auschwitz liberation

President Bush issued a statement remembering the victims of Auschwitz.

"At the Auschwitz concentration camp, evil found willing servants and innocent victims," Bush said in the statement Tuesday.

"For almost five years, Auschwitz was a factory for murder where more than a million lives were taken. It is a sobering reminder of the power of evil and the need for people to oppose evil wherever it exists. It is a reminder that when we find anti-Semitism, we must come together to fight it."

Bush noted that Thursday is the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

"May God bless their memory and their families, and may we always remember," Bush said of the victims.

Palestinians widen Gaza Strip deployment

Palestinian and Israeli officials agreed to boost the number of Palestinian security men deployed around the Gaza Strip border.

Also on Tuesday, P.A. police tore down illegal buildings along the Gaza City beachfront, part of P.A. President Mahmoud Abbas' efforts to restore law and order in the Gaza Strip.

German chancellor contributes on Holocaust

Germany's chancellor discussed the country's shame and historical burden at an event marking the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. [Story, pg. 3]

Jewish 'home girl' gets an Oscar nod

Israeli-born actress Natalie Portman was nominated for an Academy Award.

Portman was nominated Tuesday for best supporting actress for her role in the movie "Closer," an examination of love and betrayal.

WORLD REPORT

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As new Bush team takes office, focus remains on Mideast peace

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — It's like a backward version of a boxing match.

Israel and the Palestinians are facing off — and the first one to stop throwing punches, walk back to his corner and hang his gloves up wins.

The referee, as always, is the United States.

Each side is eager to win the contest — but is just as wary of turning his back on his opponent.

Yasser Arafat is dead, a relative moderate favored by the United States was elected in his place this month, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has cobbled together a broad coalition that supports territorial withdrawal and Condoleezza Rice is poised to launch an intensive round of diplomacy to get both sides back to the negotiating table.

The sense of momentum comes as George Bush begins his second term as president, with a new administration around him. Rice is likely to be confirmed Wednesday as U.S. Secretary of State, and the department's top Middle East envoy is canvassing the major players this week to plot out Rice's first steps on the job.

William Burns, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, met Monday in Frankfurt with other representatives of the "Quartet" — the diplomatic ensemble of the United States, Russia, the United Nations and the European Union that drives the Middle East peace process — and was to meet with Israeli, Egyptian and Palestinian leaders later in the week.

Even before her confirmation, Rice is set to meet Wednesday with Silvan Shalom, the Israeli foreign minister, in her current capacity as President Bush's national security adviser.

Bush is expected to make support for a renewed peace effort a centerpiece of his talks with European leaders next month. He sees such a push as a way both to cultivate common ground and to nudge Europe to help control an increasingly restive Iraq.

One of Rice's first events as secretary of state will be a March conference in London to help the Palestinian Authority adjust to Israel's planned withdrawal this summer from the Gaza Strip and northern West Bank. After that, Rice will visit the region.

The timetable seems to back Rice's pledge during her confirmation hearings last week to devote "enormous effort" to the issue.

Israelis and Palestinians are eager to please Rice and her boss — and U.S. officials have made clear they're keeping score.

"What we are looking for, first and foremost, from the Palestinians is concrete steps to get the security situation under control," State Department spokesman Adam Ereli said Monday. "We've seen some steps that Abu Mazen has already taken, and we find that encouraging," he said, using the nickname of P.A. President Mahmoud Abbas.

"We are also pleased at the level of coordination that we're seeing between Israelis and Palestinians," he said.

The Palestinian Authority has deployed a few thousand troops along the Gaza Strip border to stop rockets from being launched into Is-

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NEWS
ANALYSIS

■ *As Bush 2 begins, Israelis feel new hope, old worries*

Continued from page 1

rael, and Abbas is trying to cajole terrorist groups into stopping attacks temporarily.

Israel has refrained in recent days from assassinating terrorist leaders. Palestinians say those killings were at least part of the reason for the collapse of the peace talks in 2003, the last time Abbas was in a position to negotiate, then as P.A. prime minister.

Israeli officials also are telling their U.S. and Palestinian counterparts that Sharon's planned withdrawal will be more extensive than they expect and will not include the continued Israeli control of ports and borders that previous formulations have suggested. They also say a second phase will include the Jordan Valley, a region that previous Israeli governments were loathe to give up.

The rationale is that with Saddam Hussein behind bars and the U.S. occupation of Iraq showing no signs of abating soon, Israel no longer faces a grave threat from the east. But such assurances also dovetail with Rice's insistence during her confirmation hearings that Israel's withdrawal must leave the Palestinians with a contiguous West Bank territory that borders Jordan.

"It has to have territory that makes it viable," she said. "It cannot be territory that is so broken up that it can't function as a state, and I think that that's now well understood. It has to have economic viability, and it probably needs to have economic viability in relationship to other states around it — to Jordan, to Israel and to others."

On the other hand, each side is making clear that it believes the other must prove good faith. Israeli Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the Palestinians don't deserve any reward for preventing attacks — after all, they're obligated to do so under the "road map" peace plan — and warned Abbas that Israel is ready to act against Palestinian terrorists if he fails to control them.

"With Abbas, we may have something, and we'll know," Netanyahu told Fox News Channel last week. "And of course, if they don't do the job, we'll do the job."

Palestinians qualified their intentions.

"This is not a cease-fire; this is a Palestinian tactic to avoid giving the enemy any pretext to escalate the situation during the dialogue that would foil it," Abu Qusai, a spokesman for the Al-Aksa Brigade, a terrorist group in Abbas' Fatah party, told Reuters on Sunday. "If there is any Israeli escalation, there will be a Palestinian response."

The scars of four years of terrorism and of Israeli counterincursions make it hard for either side to fully accommodate the other, said Naomi Chazan, a former Israeli legislator from the dovish Meretz Party who now is a visiting professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. That's a factor the Bush administration cannot ignore, she warned an audience last week at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

"A lack of trust is part of the conflict, emotion-driven policy is part of the conflict, the absence of the word 'reconciliation' is part of the conflict," Chazan said.

It wouldn't take a lot to precipitate a breach of trust. Palestinians are chafing at Israel's acknowledgment this week that it is considering plans to confiscate land in eastern Jerusalem owned by "absentee" Palestinians, some of whom live just miles away in the West Bank.

Palestinians remain skeptical of Sharon's plans, believing that in the best case he plans to offer them only about half of the total territory of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, according to Amjad Atallah, a former

Palestinian negotiator.

That's less than what those Palestinians who support a two-state solution are demanding, Atallah said — and the possibility of land confiscations in eastern Jerusalem only exacerbates the problem.

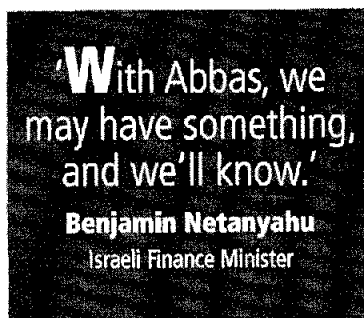
"There is an understanding that if eastern Jerusalem is not the capital of a Palestinian state, there is no Palestinian state," he said.

Atallah suggested Palestinians should prepare for a return to protest, but with a new moral understanding of what's acceptable.

"We need to bring a moral component and a legal component" to talking about an end to terrorism, Atallah said in a public appeal this week to Arab Americans to help increase their involvement in bringing peace to the region.

Palestinians and their Arab supporters must understand that ending terrorism is not just a tactical choice, he said.

"We're quiet when Palestinians violate international law," he said. "There is no unrestricted right to resist under international law. You cannot kill women and children." ■



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Syria confirms it wants missiles

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Bashar Assad confirmed that Syria is seeking to buy Russian anti-aircraft missiles, saying they are needed for self-defense.

"This is a defensive, air defense, weapon," the Syrian president told reporters Tuesday during a visit to Moscow.

"If Israel is against us buying it, it means it wants to invade our airspace.

The Israeli stance is illogical." Russia previously had denied Israeli reports that it planned to sell Syria an undisclosed number of SA-18 shoulder-fired missiles.

Israel fears the weapons could find their way into the hands of Hezbollah or Palestinian terrorist groups, all of which are backed by Damascus. ■

German leader talks of shame of Holocaust

By TOBY AXELROD

BERLIN (JTA) — German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder spoke of his shame about the Holocaust — and survivor Kurt Julius Goldstein spoke of his anger.

Before a crowd Tuesday that included elderly survivors as well as German high school students, Schroeder declared his “shame before those who were murdered — and to you, who survived the hell of the concentration camps,” adding, “We carry this burden in mourning, but also with a serious sense of responsibility.”

Tuesday’s event, a Holocaust remembrance program attended by several hundred guests at the Deutsches Theater, was one of several programs across Germany marking the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

Goldstein, who was deported to Auschwitz as a teenager and returned to live in Berlin, said he was shocked that Germany’s highest courts continue to protect the rights of neo-Nazis to demonstrate publicly — and, he said, to spread Holocaust denial.

“It is inhumane, and we suffer under it,” Goldstein told the audience at the memorial, organized by the Berlin-based International Auschwitz Committee. Goldstein is the committee’s honorary president.

His remarks came days after members of the extreme right-wing National Democratic Party of Germany used their parliamentary seats in the state of Saxony to belittle the Holocaust and declare their intention to reveal “the truth” about German history. The remarks drew outrage, and renewed calls for banning the party.

“I am worried about the growth of neo-Nazism,” Petra Rosenberg, representing Roma in Germany, told the audience. Rosenberg, whose father survived Auschwitz, said it troubled her to see the National Democratic Party “marching, getting into Parliament and threatening democracy.”

Though Schroeder did not directly address the issue, he said “right-wing extremist forces, their dumb slogans and graffiti, are certainly getting the attention of the police and the department for constitutional protection.”

“But we ourselves have to take the political lead in confronting neo-Nazis and old Nazis.”

Israel Singer, chairman of the World

Jewish Congress’ governing board, agreed. “Germany bears a particular and unforgivable responsibility” to teach about the horrors of the Holocaust, he said.

Responsibility requires action, said Singer, who recently met with European Union President Jose Manuel Barroso of Portugal to discuss creating a European-wide Holocaust curriculum using funds set aside for Holocaust education in several countries.

German politicians, Jewish groups and individuals are involved in a flurry of activity to mark Auschwitz’s liberation.

Together with Singer and a group of Auschwitz survivors, German President Horst Koehler was slated to fly to Poland for ceremonies at the camp memorial on Thursday.

In Berlin, the Simon Wiesenthal Center planned to announce Wednesday the extension to Germany of its reward program for information on Nazi-era war criminals.

Also in the German capital, the annual Obermayer German Jewish History awards are to be presented Thursday to Germans who have researched local Jew-

ish history and built contacts with Jews around the world who came from their towns and cities.

Among those at Tuesday’s event was Werner Krisch, 85, who was a prisoner for two years in Birkenau and has lived in Germany since the end of World War II. Most of the survivors he knew in Berlin have died, he said.

Krisch, whose family was deported to the Lodz Ghetto in 1940, stayed in Communist East Germany after the war. Today, he said, “the Nazi brutes are coming out again.”

“Anti-Semitism, racism of whatever kind, it

is socially acceptable. We didn’t ever dream it could occur,” Krisch told JTA. “When you see that right-wing groups are attacking or killing defenseless people, and that most judges give them mild sentences, it is a very bad tendency. A shoplifter gets worse punishment than they do.”

“Many youth today are not interested in this history,” Delia Pop, 17, one of many teens at the event, told JTA. “They say, ‘Ach, who cares, it’s not important.’ But I think it is important to learn because society is endangered.”

‘We carry this burden in mourning, but also with a serious sense of responsibility.’

Gerhard Schroeder
German Chancellor

**60 YEARS
AFTER
LIBERATION**

Muslims shun Shoah memorial

By DANIELLA PELED

LONDON (JTA) — Many organizations were expected to attend Britain’s national Holocaust Memorial Day this year — but one was expected to be conspicuously absent.

Thursday’s event, slated for London’s Westminster Hall and for primetime broadcast on BBC television, was to be attended by Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip — after they host Holocaust survivors at St. James Palace earlier in the day — as well as Prime Minister Tony Blair and more than 600 Holocaust survivors and their British army liberators.

But the Muslim Council of Britain, the U.K.’s largest representative Muslim body, was expected to boycott the high-profile occasion, claiming it fails to recognize the “creeping genocide” they claim Israel is perpetrating against the Palestinians.

While acknowledging the pain and anguish felt by British Jews, the council’s secretary-general, Iqbal Sacranie, said, “We have expressed our unwillingness to attend the ceremony because it excludes ongoing genocide and human rights abuses around the world and in the occupied territories of Palestine.”

This was the fifth year that the council refused to participate in the commemoration, but Jewish groups found it particularly callous on the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

The council’s claim that the memorial day isn’t comprehensive enough was rejected emphatically by Jewish community figures and those involved with the commemoration, which since its 2001 launch consistently has stressed the importance of also remembering atrocities elsewhere.

NEWS IN BRIEF

WORLD

Anti-Semitic letter recalled in Russia

The Russian lawmaker who initiated a letter suggesting Judaism should be banned as an extremist faith recalled the document.

Alexander Krutov, a Duma deputy and media personality long known for his anti-Semitic views, did not explain why he decided to recall the letter, which urged the prosecutor general to probe and possibly ban all Jewish institutions in Russia.

Russia's Foreign Ministry criticized the letter Tuesday, saying it had nothing to do with Russia's official policy toward Judaism.

Chirac inaugurates monument

France's president inaugurated a monument to the 76,000 Jews rounded up in France during the Holocaust.

Speaking Tuesday, Jacques Chirac described anti-Semitism as a "perversion that kills" and vowed French support for Israel.

The Wall of Names, with writing inscribed on pale stone walls, is part of a renovated Holocaust memorial in Paris' Jewish quarter that has been transformed from an archive center and expanded.

Poland to fund Jewish museum

Polish leaders agreed to contribute \$26 million to build a Jewish museum in Warsaw.

The museum is slated to be completed by 2008, Polish officials said Tuesday.

Nongovernmental donations are expected to supply the remaining \$50 million cost.

The museum will be built next to the monument that marks the site of the Warsaw Ghetto.

NORTH AMERICA

Bush pressed to protest Israeli action

Americans for Peace Now asked the Bush administration to press Israel not to seize Palestinian property in eastern Jerusalem.

Reports in recent days have suggested that Israel could use a 1950 law to confiscate property that West Bank Palestinians have been tending for years in eastern Jerusalem.

"Resolving the conflict over Jerusalem is hard enough without the Israeli government adding a new 'fact on the ground' in the form of land confiscation," said Debra DeLee, APN's president and CEO. "President Bush should not sit idly by while Palestinians are stripped of their property and the hopes of achieving a two-state solution are diminished."

Ackerman: Get tough with Hezbollah TV

A Jewish congressman wants to see tougher restrictions imposed on a Hezbollah-affiliated television station.

The State Department last month placed Al-Manar on a terrorism watch list that restricts immigration rights of its employees and associates.

But some organizations want the station placed on lists with tougher restrictions, as has been done with Hezbollah.

"Excluding its members from the United States is simply insufficient to prevent U.S. companies from doing business with Al-Manar," said the letter circulated Tuesday by Rep. Gary Ackerman (D-N.Y.).

Millions for tsunami relief

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee announced that it has raised more than \$12 million for tsunami relief.

That amount includes money collected from individual donors and federations. More than \$800,000 already has been designated for immediate relief efforts; most of the money will be given to

longer-term projects.

The JDC says it will work with Israel's Foreign Ministry and Israeli nonprofits on cooperative projects in the regions affected by the Dec. 26 undersea earthquake and resulting seismic sea waves.

Rabbi reads Isaiah at national service

An Orthodox rabbi read a biblical passage in Hebrew at the national prayer service.

President Bush's inaugural committee assigned passages from Isaiah to Rabbi Morton Yolcut at last Friday's post-inaugural service at Washington's National Cathedral.

Yolcut, a rabbi at the traditional Shaare Shamayim-Beth Judah Synagogue in Philadelphia, read the passage in Hebrew and in English.

Proposal would require genocide study

A proposal in Illinois would require students to study all acts of genocide, not just the Holocaust.

The proposal would expand a state law, passed in 1990, that mandates Holocaust study for all students in the state, the Chicago Sun-Times reported.

Several states now have Holocaust-study laws on the books.

MIDDLE EAST

Palestinian killed in Gaza

Israeli soldiers killed a Palestinian near Israel's security barrier in the Gaza Strip.

The man killed Monday south of the Karni crossing reportedly was trying to set off a bomb.

Sharon: Never again

Ariel Sharon vowed that Israel will never allow a repeat of the Holocaust.

"The Jews have one small country, blessed with talents," the Israeli prime minister said Tuesday in a meeting with Israel Air Force pilots who took part in a symbolic flight over Auschwitz last year. "We must remember that this is the only place in the world where Jews have the right and the power to defend themselves."

Speaking before Thursday's worldwide commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the death camp's liberation, Sharon said the 2003 overflight was a "warning that Israel will never allow such a thing to happen again."

'Peace train' seen

Israel may build a train line for Palestinians that would link the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Israeli sources said Tuesday that the project is being considered by Vice Prime Minister Shimon Peres, who fears Israel will be accused of choking off Gaza economically when it withdraws from the coastal strip later this year.

Under the plan, the train would run from Gaza City to Ashdod, an Israeli port where Palestinians could receive cargo, and end up in the West Bank city of Tulkarm.

It was not immediately clear how much the 100-mile line would cost, but a report in Ma'ariv said Israel expects the international community to foot half the bill.

Under the Oslo accords, the Palestinians were granted use of a road connecting the West Bank and Gaza, but this was halted when the intifada began in 2000.

A train line would be more secure than a road, since Israel could more easily ensure that Palestinian terrorists do not get off inside Israeli territory.