

IN THE NEWS
Truce to be declared at talks?

Israel and the Palestinian Authority will declare a cease-fire at their summit on Tuesday.

Officials on both sides said the decision was made Monday during meetings to finalize details for the Sharm el-Sheik talks between Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.

Each leader will announce an end to violence by his side, in accordance with the U.S.-led "road map" peace plan.

Rice names security coordinator

Condoleezza Rice tapped a U.S. general to coordinate security between Israel and the Palestinians.

Lt. Gen. William Ward will play a role, previously played by the CIA, that is seen as key to restarting peace talks.

"Gen. Ward will assist the Palestinian Authority to consolidate and expand their recent efforts on security, and encourage resumption of Israeli-Palestinian security coordination," Rice, the U.S. secretary of state, said Monday at the close of a two-day visit to Jerusalem and Ramallah.

Ward, who was commander of the NATO Stabilization Force in Bosnia, is expected to arrive in the Middle East in coming weeks.

CIA agrees to turn over Nazi files

The CIA agreed to release classified records detailing the agency's recruitment of Nazi war criminals.

The agency agreed to comply with a 1998 law requiring full access after pressure from some members of Congress.

But Sen. Mike DeWine (R-Ohio) said it's still unclear whether the CIA will turn over all the documents that it was asked for.

Historians say at least five associates of Nazi leader Adolf Eichmann worked for the CIA, and the agency tried to recruit dozens more.

WORLD REPORT

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Canadian Jews taking sides as same-sex marriage bill introduced

By BILL GLADSTONE

TORONTO (JTA) — Rabbi David Mivasair of Congregation Ahavat Olam in Vancouver has performed marriage ceremonies for several same-sex couples — provided that both are Jewish.

"If one is not Jewish, I don't do it," Mivasair said. "I don't officiate at intermarriages."

But Rabbi David Novak, a professor of Jewish studies at the University of Toronto, believes same-sex marriages are anathema.

Novak has joined an interfaith lobbying group called Enshrine Marriage Canada that is fighting a same-sex marriage bill introduced by the Canadian government this week.

"Same-sex marriage is something that the Jewish tradition regards as unacceptable," he said.

Mivasair and Novak's opposing stances reflect the divisions the issue is causing among Canadian Jews.

Mainstream Jewish groups in Canada aren't dancing a hora over the same-sex marriage bill, but more liberal Jews have embraced it.

Indeed, some of those Jews are lobbying for the initiative introduced by Prime Minister Paul Martin's government. If successful, the legislation would make same-sex marriage ceremonies legally binding in every province and territory of Canada.

Approved in principle by Canada's Supreme Court last month, the government initiative is being championed by Justice Minister Irwin Cotler, Canada's most prominent Jewish politician.

"Canada is a land built on a tradition of

tolerance and respect rooted in a charter that respects the rights of all Canadians, including minorities," Cotler told reporters Tuesday.

The legislation, which would not compel any clergy to perform same-sex marriages in violation of their faith's teachings, ultimately will be subject to a parliamentary vote later in the year.

So far, only two countries, the Netherlands and Belgium, have legalized same-sex unions.

Some 3,000 gay and lesbian couples already have been legally married in British Columbia and Ontario, where same-sex marriage was approved in principle by provincial courts.

A poll published in the National Post newspaper indicated that two-thirds of Canadians oppose the bill, and observers believe that the views of Canadian Jews likely mirror that result.

Neither of Canadian Jewry's most mainstream groups, the Canadian Jewish Congress and B'nai Brith Canada, has taken a stance on the issue.

But for Mivasair, the issue is clear.

One of the first gay couples he married was a rabbi and cantor from separate Reform congregations in California who had been together for 18 years. He has performed the ordination for many other American same-sex couples, including two Chicago men on their 30th anniversary together.

"This is real life and real people, many of whom have real relationships that far outlast the average heterosexual marriage," Mivasair said. "It feels like a very right and holy thing to do. It's based on my own think-

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■ Same-sex marriage bill divides Canadian Jews

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ing that marriage is holy. That's the highest value in marriage."

Mivasair is among a group of 25 Reform, Reconstructionist and other Jewish clergy to form the Canadian Coalition of Liberal Rabbis for Same-Sex Marriage.

The coalition's lobbying efforts are "consistent with Jewish values as a matter of tikkun olam," said the coalition's coordinator, Joanne Cohen, referring to the

Jewish concept of healing the world.

Rabbi Justin Jaron Lewis of Iyr Ha-Melech Congregation in Kingston, Ontario, supported same-sex marriage before a parliamentary commission two years ago, and has organized a panel discussion for his congregation on the film "Trembling Before G-d," which focuses on gays and lesbians in the Orthodox community.

"It's often asserted that the Torah has a prohibition against homosexuality, but it does not," Lewis said. "It has a prohibition only against one particular sexual act between men. And the Torah says nothing about sexual acts between women whatsoever."

Many Reform Jewish leaders perform same-sex marriages in their sanctuaries, but others, including those at Holy Blos-

som, Toronto's largest Reform congregation, have decided not to do so.

The Rabbinical Assembly of Ontario, representing the province's Conservative rabbis, also has a policy against same-sex marriages.

The Martin government missed a golden opportunity for compromise because it could have granted same-sex couples the right to civil unions without attempting to redefine the institution of marriage, Montreal Rabbi Reuben Poupko said.

"Governments do not have the power to change the English language," he said. "Everyone knows what marriage means. For them to presume they have the power to change the definition of an old and established institution is hubris."

"It's a very difficult issue," he added. "On the one hand, we are compelled to be as inclusive as possible. On the other

hand, we do believe that in many ways the value of the traditional family, which is the bedrock of our community, has been diminished, and that it's necessary to do whatever is possible to strengthen it. Nobody wants to be intolerant and nobody wants to be exclusionary."

Rabbi Dovid Schochet, chairman of Toronto's Vaad Harabonim, the city's Orthodox rabbinical body, calls same-sex marriage a desecration of God's name.

"I wonder why Orthodox Judaism is not more vocal in this matter," he said. "I assume that everybody thinks it doesn't affect us."

"The Orthodox are usually more reserved — not to make waves, not to be in the limelight — and they are reluctant to speak to the press," he said. "But I think they should be much more vocal. Otherwise, it gives the world a completely wrong picture of what Judaism is about. The public should know that Judaism is completely opposed to same-sex marriage."

Canada has exported the debate abroad, even as far as Israel. Two Israeli men who were married in Ontario last summer have challenged the Israeli government to recognize their union. ■

'Governments do not have the power to change the English language. Everyone knows what marriage means.'

Rabbi Reuben Poupko

Montreal

Anti-Semitic attack in Argentina

By FLORENCIA ARBISER

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — Argentine Jews have been shocked by one of the worst instances of anti-Semitic vandalism they have seen in some time, and by authorities' allegedly lackadaisical reaction to it.

On Jan. 29, swastikas and references to Auschwitz were daubed on the Israeli Center of Ramos Mejia, in the western outskirts of Buenos Aires, and pamphlets were left denying the Holocaust.

Police caught two people in the act of writing on the walls but they were quickly released. They were described as members of the middle class from Buenos Aires.

The Jewish community's DAIA political umbrella organization issued a statement calling authorities' conduct in the case "beyond bearing." They denounced the authorities' conduct as a violation of Argentine laws against discrimination

and asked that the two alleged perpetrators be punished harshly.

"We will fight against this. We are shocked; it's the biggest anti-Semitic event that ever happened here, but we will not stop until we sort this out," Eduardo Baliner, president of the Ramos Mejia center, told JTA. "We even decided not to clean the walls immediately so neighbors can see and react."

The center has 70 members, and 250 people attend its weekly activities. The center has been supportive of Israeli-Arab peace, even inviting Palestinian officials to speak.

In recent years, the center has created a theater group named for Anne Frank.

"Argentines seem to be forgetful," Baliner said. "We had 30,000 missing people" during the military government in power from 1976 to 1983, "we had bombings of the Israeli embassy and the AMIA Jewish central institution. How can we learn from our dramatic history?" ■

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**AROUND
THE JEWISH
WORLD**

Winds of change begin to blow in Middle East

By GIL SEDAN

JERUSALEM (JTA) — At first glance, Sunday's Palestinian newspapers seemed to be the same old, same old.

Al-Quds, the most popular Palestinian paper, carried the headline, "The Revolutionary Council of Fatah Begins its 25th Conference in Gaza." Next to it was a huge picture of the Fatah leadership, with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in the first row.

Next was "Abbas Stresses the Need for Unity in the Palestinian House." Further down the page were reports on Israeli plans to expand Jewish neighborhoods in eastern Jerusalem and on U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's impending visit to the region.

But looks can be misleading.

The Palestinian press is undergoing a transformation, gradually departing from its traditional role as a mouthpiece for the government as it becomes if not free, at least freer than it has been.

How thorough the change will be is anyone's guess. After years of physical and psychological intimidation under Arafat — and with a culture of journalistic self-censorship in the service of the Palestinian cause — few believe Palestinian media will even remotely approach the openness and self-criticism of its Israeli counterparts.

What change there has been is not the result of a confrontation with the political establishment, but comes at Abbas' request.

Two weeks ago, Abbas met with the heads of Palestinian Television in Gaza and asked them to refrain from the longstanding practice of heaping praise on Palestinian leaders. He asked them to try to compete with popular stations such as Al-Jazeera and highly rated Lebanese stations, which in the past 10 years have adopted Western standards of journalism, at least superficially.

Headlines like Sunday's still will be part of the scene, but they may in the future be driven by real events, not government dictates.

The directive may have been a function of Abbas' modesty, but more likely he understands that he stands to gain more from democratic measures than from an Arafat-style personality cult.

■
"Who watches Palestinian TV?" asked human rights activist Bassem Eid, executive

chairman of the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group. "It sometimes seems that the only ones who watch it are the people" in Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's "office trying to pinpoint incitement."

Eid said Palestinians prefer the Arabic programs on Israel Television because there, at least, they can speak freely.

"Since 1996 I have never been interviewed on Palestinian Television, nor on Palestinian radio," Eid said. "I was on '60 Minutes,' on Tim Sebastian's 'Hardtalk' and on Israel Television, but never in the Palestinian media."

Eid began criticizing human rights violations under Arafat's regime in 1996; he was the first to dare to do so publicly. He hopes his days as a lone voice of criticism are over.

■
Indeed, much has changed. Arafat, who died in November, no longer is around to nod his head quietly, allowing anti-Semitic sermons to be broadcast on Fridays. Neither is he there to enjoy military marches glorifying him as the ultimate leader.

The Palestinian community finally is beginning to emerge from a political pattern characteristic of most Arab regimes in which the worship of the leader sometimes competes with the worship of God.

Arafat expected the media to treat him as if he were one of the prime heroes of Arab history. Like government-controlled media elsewhere in the Arab world, Palestine

TV used to air songs hailing Arafat as one of the "great leaders of the Palestinian people." He used to compare himself to Saladin, the Arab hero who took Jerusalem from the crusaders.

Arafat, who always wore his military uniform, introduced himself as an army general and visibly enjoyed military ceremonies, seemingly compensating for his real history of military defeat.

During the recent Muslim feast of Eid al-Adhar, newspapers did not carry the kind of paid advertisements blessing the leader that were common during the Arafat era. During the election campaign,

Abbas personally asked Palestinian media to give his rivals enough time, following complaints that the official media had neglected them.

Abbas met with media representatives again after the election, asking them to steer away from the anti-Israel incitement typical of the Arafat era.

"This is the easiest way to change the atmosphere," said reserve Brig. Gen. Shalom Harari, a researcher at the International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism at the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya.

Moreover, with Abbas' new policy enjoying wide support among the Palestinian public, there is no more need for contrived worship of the leader.

"The man is much more modest than his predecessor," Harari said. "He is not a man of slogans."

Abbas "is a man of the world, who speaks other languages, a man who wears suits and does not toy around with military symbols," he added.

The Palestinian press' best days came between the 1982 Lebanon War and the beginning of the first intifada in 1987. The press prospered largely by ignoring the censorship imposed by the Israeli military government.

But once Arafat established the Palestinian Authority in 1994, the situation changed.

"Arafat virtually terrorized the journalists," said Harari, who was then the Arab affairs adviser at Israel's Defense Ministry.

After so many years, some wonder if the culture of fear, intimidation and self-censorship has become ingrained. Palestinian journalists, in transition, are confused.

The Palestinian press is still finding its footing, testing the ground and checking which way the political wind is blowing. But in general, there is an air of optimism in the air.

"This is also our window of opportunity as a democratic society," Eid said. "Let's hope we don't miss it." ■

This is also our window of opportunity as a democratic society. Let's hope we don't miss it.

Bassem Eid

Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group executive chairman

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

State breaks down Palestinian budget

The State Department published a breakdown of how it intends to disburse \$390 million in aid to the Palestinians.

Water infrastructure, at \$14 million, gets the biggest chunk of \$40 million in "available funds" — money already approved by Congress — that will be channeled through nongovernmental organizations within 90 days, a statement said Monday, the day the Bush administration proposed its budget for the fiscal year beginning this October.

The rest of the \$40 million will go to higher education, job creation, youth programs, private sector development and health care.

The remaining \$350 million in requests to Congress almost quintuples the \$75 million requests of recent years, and will go to similar but longer-term projects — with the exception of about \$50 million, which will go to Israel to build high-tech transit points between Israeli and Palestinian areas.

President Bush also requested \$2.28 billion in military aid and \$240 million in economic assistance for Israel.

Canada steps in for peace

Canada's foreign minister is touring the Middle East.

Pierre Pettigrew is scheduled to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas during a six-day tour of the Middle East this week that includes visits to Israel, the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

Pettigrew has offered Canada's assistance in building peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

Wine for relief bid fails

A bottle of wine that a Jewish group auctioned on eBay to raise money for tsunami relief failed to sell.

Bids for Thomas Jefferson's bottle of Chateau Margaux 1787, which was being auctioned by the American Jewish World Service on behalf of a donor to raise money for relief efforts, failed to meet its minimum price on the auction site. The final bid for the wine, estimated to be worth \$500,000, was \$7,700.

WORLD

Goering suicide mystery solved?

The mystery of how Hermann Goering committed suicide might be solved.

Herbert Lee Stivers, a former U.S. Army soldier, said he gave a capsule to Goering while he was guarding the former Nazi official in Nuremberg on Oct. 15, 1946, the *Los Angeles Times* reported.

Stivers, now 78, said he brought Goering the capsule, hidden in a fountain pen, at the request of two men who said it was medicine.

A military investigation conducted after Goering died concluded that he must have had the poison on him all along.

British school presses for Israeli talk

Officials at a British university ordered its student union to invite an Israeli official to take part in a student debate.

The authorities at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies said not allowing Roey Gilad, an official at the Israeli embassy in London, to take part in a debate later this month would have amounted to censorship.

The co-president of the student union says hosting an Israeli official would compromise the union's opposition to "foreign occupation, apartheid and Zionism."

The student union's Jewish society invited Gilad, but the student union told the group to rescind the request.

Pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian students have repeatedly clashed at the university.

MIDDLE EAST

Iran attacks U.S. support for Israel

Iran reacted to criticism in President Bush's State of the Union speech by attacking U.S. support for Israel.

"The United States is supporting a Zionist terrorist group," Iranian spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said Sunday in Tehran.

In his Feb. 2 speech, Bush called Iran the "world's primary state sponsor of terror."

Abbas in Hezbollah's sights?

Israel fears Hezbollah will try to assassinate Mahmoud Abbas. Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz confirmed Israeli reports Monday that the Lebanese terrorist group could target the Palestinian Authority president in a bid to harm his peace overtures.

"We are talking about warnings on the one hand, and on pieces of information that are based on intelligence information on the other," Mofaz told Israel's Army Radio.

Israel is on high alert for attacks by Palestinian terrorists under Hezbollah's command or a flare-up on the Lebanese border ahead of Tuesday's summit between Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in Egypt.

Diplomacy better on Iran

Israel's defense minister called for diplomatic pressure on Iran to come clean about its nuclear program.

"The way to act, the most acceptable way for us and the Americans, is to use the diplomatic track to bring this issue to the Security Council and issue sanctions," Shaul Mofaz told Israel Radio on Monday after meeting U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Previously, Israeli officials had hinted that the Jewish state could resort to military force to stop Iran from getting the bomb, saying "all options are open."

A million dreams of peace

A Palestinian wrote about his dreams of peace with Israel — a million times.

Yussuf Amarana of the West Bank village of Yabed recently completed a scroll on which he wrote "Yes to Peace" a million times. He told Agence France Presse on Monday that he hopes to submit it to the Guinness Book of World Records.

Yabed keeps the scroll, dozens of feet in length, rolled up in his workroom.

He said that he tried, unsuccessfully, to get Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and the late Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat to sign on.

Captain to be cleared

Testimony implicating an Israeli army captain in the killing of a Palestinian schoolgirl was found to be false.

The captain returned to duties Monday after two soldiers who had accused him of riddling the girl's body with bullets in October in the Gaza Strip were found to have lied.

But military prosecutors preparing to charge the officer with excessive force said there was no immediate plan to scrap the indictment.

The girl was shot while walking past an Israeli outpost in southern Gaza, an area off-limits to Palestinians.

Troops said they thought she was carrying a bomb or had been sent by local terrorists to draw them outside so they could be picked off by snipers.