



IN THE NEWS

Anti-Semitic incidents up in the U.S., ADL says

Anti-Semitic incidents in the United States are at their highest level in nine years, according to the Anti-Defamation League.

The group's annual Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents, released Monday, reported 1,821 incidents in 2004, up from 1,557 in 2003.

Increased activity by neo-Nazi groups and more reports of anti-Jewish harassment in schools contributed to the increase, the report said.

The audit compiles data from 44 states and Washington, using crime statistics and reports from the ADL's regional offices.

Ariel Sharon to face Israeli settlers

Ariel Sharon will meet Tuesday with Israeli settlers slated for evacuation.

The meeting in Jerusalem, announced Monday, will be the first between the Israeli prime minister and representatives of the Gush Katif settlement bloc since Sharon announced Israel's plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and northern West Bank in December 2003.

Political sources said the settlers were expected to voice opposition to the withdrawals and to demand higher rates of government compensation for relocation.

Few of the approximately 8,500 settlers slated for evacuation have agreed to go voluntarily.

Bush, Yushenko talk trade restrictions

President Bush expressed a desire to lift trade restrictions tied to Ukraine's treatment of its Jews.

Bush met Monday with Viktor Yushenko, the Ukrainian president, and said he believed the trade restrictions should be lifted, noting they were from a "different era."

First passed in 1974, the restrictions were used as leverage to force the Soviet Union to relax emigration restrictions.

Russia and other countries have sought to have the restrictions removed, citing strides in emigration and protecting religious minorities.

WORLD REPORT

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

Behind facade of progress, experts see new spasm of violence brewing

By LESLIE SUSSER

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israelis and Palestinians may appear to be on the verge of a new peace process, but Israeli army generals and seasoned observers of the Palestinian scene predict a new round of fighting, perhaps as early as next fall, after Israel completes its withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and northern West Bank.

The generals point to continued weapons smuggling and other military preparations by Palestinians in both Gaza and the West Bank, while the Palestinian watchers see signs of growing discontent and radicalization among the Palestinian public.

According to military intelligence estimates, if there is a new eruption of terrorism it will come from the West Bank and could include Kassam rockets being fired at towns and cities inside Israel proper.

Writing in the newspaper Yediot Achronot, military analyst Alex Fishman says the Israel Defense Force's central command, which is responsible for the West Bank, already is gearing up for a renewal of the intifada.

The thinking in army circles is that after the Israeli withdrawal the Palestinians will see Gaza as "liberated" but will view the West Bank, which still will have a strong Israeli military and settler presence, as "occupied," Fishman reports.

According to the army assessment, the Palestinians will have an interest in keeping the peace in Gaza to show that they can run their own affairs. But the West Bank will be an entirely different story.

With dozens of Israeli settlements and army camps still in place, the Palestinians will argue

that they are fighting to end the occupation there, just as, in their view, they did in Gaza. And they will adopt the same model — firing rockets at both military and civilian targets.

According to military intelligence, the Palestinians are making a major effort to obtain the materials they need to produce rockets in the West Bank, something that until now they have been able to do only in the Gaza Strip.

West Bank-based militias reportedly have placed large orders for weapons and explosives for the rockets from Bedouin smugglers. One of the routes to the West Bank would be from Egypt through Gaza; another would be directly from Jordan.

Moreover, army sources say, once the IDF withdraws from all West Bank cities, as it is set to do under the terms of the current lull, the Palestinians will be able to set up workshops and manufacture the rockets unhindered.

Fishman reports that the army sees the arms smuggling as a major threat and is doing all it can to block smugglers' routes. He says it has established a special unit to this end and taken steps to enhance intelligence-gathering capabilities among the Bedouin.

Appearing before the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee in late March, Military Intelligence Chief Maj. Gen. Aharon Ze'evi-Farkash confirmed that the Palestinian militias are trying to export technological know-how from Gaza to facilitate the manufacture of Kassam rockets in the West Bank.

Ze'evi-Farkash added that despite a steep decline in current terrorist operations, the militias are enhancing their capabilities for

Continued on page 2

NEWS ANALYSIS

■ *Despite seeming movement toward peace, violence may lurk*

Continued from page 1

future attacks. Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz also expressed concern.

During a visit to Washington, Mofaz said that Palestinians had smuggled Strella anti-aircraft rockets into the Gaza Strip, which he said "crosses a red line" for Israel. The Israeli fear is that if the Strellas are smuggled into the West Bank, they could be used against passenger planes taking off from Ben-Gurion Airport.

In addition, observers of the Palestinian scene report growing grassroots frustration with the way the nascent peace process is developing. Israeli academics and Western diplomats whose work takes them into the West Bank note mounting popular discontent because ending the armed struggle so far has failed to change people's everyday lives, as they had hoped it would.

Menachem Klein, a Bar-Ilan University expert on the Palestinians, see signs of growing radicalization, which he believes could erupt soon in violence. Klein notes that twice, within two weeks in March, jailed Palestinian militia leader Marwan Barghout smuggled letters out from his prison cell calling for a return to armed struggle.

Three months ago, Barghouti backed Mahmoud Abbas' candidacy for Palestinian Authority president, though Abbas' entire campaign was based on ending the armed struggle. Klein argues that Barghouti, with his sharp political sense, would not have written the new letters unless he felt there was considerable support for the views expressed.

"The fact that Barghouti is calling for

a return to the armed struggle shows that something very profound is happening on the Palestinian street," Klein says.

Klein sees another expression of Palestinian radicalization in the way the secular Fatah Party and the fundamentalist Hamas movement, once divided by a huge ideological gulf, are growing closer. He notes that Hamas leaders are even calling for a "joint political program" — which might tame Hamas, but more likely would radicalize the entire Palestinian movement.

The bottom line for Klein is that he believes there is no way Israel and the Palestinians will be able to conduct a successful peace process. In his view, the two leaders already are conducting a "dialogue of the deaf."

Abbas, he says, is only interested in negotiating a final peace deal, whereas Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon — who believes the sides are too far apart on basic issues to strike a lasting deal — insists on long-term interim arrangements instead.

There is no possible meeting point, Klein says.

"I see a great danger of a blow-up. I don't know when it will happen, but it's almost inevitable. It's in the DNA of the process," he told JTA.

Not all observers agree that the process is doomed to failure. But if there is to be any chance of success, the two sides must solve a more fundamental problem: how to synchronize the rhythm of mutual concessions even before peace negotiations begin.

For now, Israel is reluctant to hand additional West Bank cities to P.A. control until the Palestinians carry out promised security reforms, while the Palestinians are reluctant to make the reforms until Israel hands over the cities. The Palestinians also have not moved

on promises to take weapons from wanted terrorists in the cities already turned over to their control.

In an editorial, the left-leaning newspaper Ha'aretz suggests that Israel take the initiative. Israel, it says, "must, to the best of its ability, contribute to the process that Abu Mazen is having difficulty in carrying out, even if such assistance often entails security risks." Abu Mazen is Abbas' *nom de guerre*.

In the meantime, leaders on both sides see no alternative but to contemplate the possibility of failure — a state of mind, pundits warn, that could become a self-fulfilling prophecy. ■

The fact that Barghouti is calling for a return to the armed struggle shows that something very profound is happening on the Palestinian street.'

Menachem Klein
Bar-Ilan University

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.

Pressure placed on Canadian envoy

TORONTO (JTA) — A Canadian lawmaker asked his government to recall its UNESCO ambassador because of his anti-Israel and anti-Semitic comments. Jason Kenney presented four petitions in the House of Commons last week about Yvon Charbonneau, signed by about 175 residents of Quebec, Ontario and Alberta.

"The petitioners point out that Mr. Charbonneau is a man who has expressed anti-Semitic, anti-Israeli and anti-American views, and they believe that Parliament should therefore urge the Prime Minister to immediately withdraw Mr. Charbonneau's appointment as our ambassador to UNESCO and to articulate a clean and unambiguous

message that anti-Semitic, anti-Israel and anti-U.S. comments do not reflect the policies or the views of the government of Canada," Kenney said. Charbonneau once accused a prominent Montreal Jewish businessman of being an "economic terrorist" and has urged teachers to put up posters referring to the "genocidal war of the Israeli government."

In April 2002, after a month in which Palestinian terrorists killed 79 Israelis, Charbonneau gave a speech in Canada's House of Commons in which he equated Palestinian terrorism with the "terror campaign waged by Israel," and accused Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's government of "turning Israel into a rogue state." ■

Israeli court eases slightly on conversion rules

By DAN BARON

JERUSALEM (JTA) — After 22 years of living as an Israeli, Justina Hilaria Chipana can finally consider herself a full-fledged member of the Jewish state.

The 50-year-old native of Peru was one of 17 petitioners who won High Court of Justice recognition of their non-Orthodox conversions to Judaism on Thursday, in what the Conservative and Reform movements hailed as a breakthrough for efforts to introduce more religious pluralism to Israel.

Orthodox rabbis and politicians disagreed.

By a vote of 7-4, the High Court ordered the state to recognize "leaping converts" — so called because they study in Israeli institutes but then convert with Reform or Conservative rabbis abroad — as eligible to immigrate under the Law of Return.

The ruling was a small step in a decades-long controversy in Israel over who is a Jew, who can turn a non-Jew into a Jew and who can decide whether that process was done correctly.

Thursday's ruling also broadened a 1989 decision recognizing immigrants who arrive having gone through the entire non-Orthodox conversion process abroad; those immigrants are considered to be Jews and the Law of Return applies to them.

But the ruling did not endorse Reform and Conservative conversions performed in Israel, a move that effectively would end Orthodoxy's de facto hegemony in the Jewish state and could stir up a government crisis.

In response to a demand presented by the fervently Orthodox Shas party and signed by 25 legislators, the Knesset will meet in special session next week to debate the court decision. Shas Chairman Eli Yishai called the ruling an "explosives belt that has brought about a suicide attack against the Jewish people."

The Orthodox rabbinate, which controls the observance of life-cycle events in Israel — including births, weddings and funerals — also cried foul.

"There aren't two movements or three movements in Judaism. There is only one Judaism," Sephardi Chief Rabbi Shlomo Amar told Israel Radio. "Whoever doesn't go through a halachic conversion is not a Jew."

Yet with many Israelis increasingly

concerned about the lack of a unifying religious identity in the country — where some 300,000 citizens are non-Jews from the former Soviet Union — the Conservative and Reform movement remained confident that their more lenient conversions would provide a solution.

"We believe that with this precedent, it is just a matter of time until alternatives to Orthodox Judaism are fully recognized," said attorney Sharon Tal of the Israel Religious Action Center, a pro-pluralism lobby associated with the Reform movement.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the Reform movement was unsatisfied that the court didn't issue a more far-reaching decision, and plans to bring another petition in hopes of forcing the state to recognize Reform conversions performed in Israel.

The only way for the Orthodox to counter Thursday's ruling would be to have a new law passed defining their stream as the only legitimate form of Judaism in Israel. But repeated efforts at such legislation in the past failed to muster majorities for even preliminary Knesset readings.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon counts one Orthodox political party, United Torah Judaism, in his coalition, and he has been courting Shas. Still, it seems unlikely that either party would be able to apply enough pressure on the government to push through motions against the High Court ruling.

The High Court ruling is immediately binding on the government. That's a relief for Chipana and her fellow petitioners, who filed their suit in 1999.

"We are going to implement the decision in a crystal-clear manner," Interior Minister Ophir Pines-Paz of the Labor Party told Army Radio. "I think that it provides an answer for many people who are living among us and are forced to go through a very tough journey, exhausting and tiring, that causes many to lose hope."

In the United States, reaction to the decision broke along denominational lines.

"As a Conservative rabbi, I am of course delighted that the High Court in Israel has mandated the recognition of conversions performed by Conservative rabbis in

America," said Rabbi Joel Roth, a scholar of Jewish law.

"I'm very much aware that some segments of the Jewish world will continue to refuse to accept as valid conversions performed by Conservative and Reform rabbis, and the court's decision will create problems in those communities," he said. "I accept as valid any conversion that complies with halachic requirements, and conversions that do not, I do not accept."

The Orthodox Union, on the other hand, said it is "deeply concerned" by the ruling.

"The decision of the court may eventually lead to the division of the people of Israel into two camps. There will be a group of halachically valid Jews and a group of people who are Jewish only by the ruling of the Supreme Court," the union said

in a news release signed by its president, Stephen Savitsky, and executive vice president, Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb. "The consequences of this ruling will be tragic."

For the petitioners, however, the ruling was a long-overdue relief.

"I always dreamed of really belonging to the country," Chipana, who first came to Israel in 1983, told JTA. In 1993 she converted at a Reform congregation in Argentina, and filed the lawsuit in 1999. "Now perhaps it can really happen."

But should she want to marry her Israeli-born boyfriend, Yosef Ben-Moshe, she will have to go on waiting or do it abroad: The chief rabbinate in Israel remains exclusively Orthodox, and its grip on life-cycle events remains unchallenged.

That's the way the UTJ's Ravitz wants it. Asked what will happen if "leaping converts" apply for marriage licenses in Israel, he said, "I imagine they will be told to take a flying leap."

Sallai Meridor, chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel, sees the question of Orthodox control as a larger problem than the one the High Court addressed.

"The entire acrobatic phenomenon in which people are forced to marry or convert abroad does no honor to Judaism or the State of Israel," he said.

(JTA Staff Writer Joanne Palmer in New York contributed to this story.)

'We believe that with this precedent, it is just a matter of time until alternatives to Orthodox Judaism are fully recognized.'

Sharon Tal

Israel Religious Action Center

**BEHIND
THE
HEADLINES**

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Tank museum spared terror

Israel thwarted a terrorist attack planned against a military museum. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine planned to dispatch at least one suicide bomber to the Armored Corps Museum in Latrun in January, and to detonate an explosives-packed car there at the same time, the Shin Bet security service said Monday.

According to the security agency, the plot was uncovered after the ringleaders were arrested in the West Bank town of Bir Zeit.

Under interrogation, they also confessed to planning to ambush an Israeli military vehicle and kidnap its passengers.

Israel extends spousal law

Israel is extending a law that prevents Palestinian spouses of Israelis from automatically becoming Israeli citizens.

"There's no need to hide behind security arguments," Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said at a meeting of top Israeli officials, according to Ha'aretz. "There is a need for the existence of a Jewish state."

Sharon's decision extends a temporary law from 2003 that prevents Palestinians from receiving automatic citizenship under family-unification laws.

It also prevents foreign residents, including Palestinians, from automatically receiving legal resident or citizen status in Israel because they are married to Israelis.

Opponents of the law say it's racist, but backers say some Palestinians have exploited marriages to Israeli Arabs to carry out terrorist attacks in Israel, and to effect a creeping "right of return" that undermines the Jewish state's demographic balance.

Shalom to the Vatican

Israel's Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom will attend Pope John Paul II's funeral on Friday.

Israeli officials said Monday that President Moshe Katsav also may pay last respects to the late pontiff if the Vatican decides to allow both an Israeli government representative and the head of state to attend.

Court keeps Shabbat

Israel's High Court of Justice upheld Saturday as the national day of rest.

A three-justice panel on Monday rejected a petition arguing that Israel's ban on routine Jewish labor from Friday night to Saturday night was unconstitutional because it clashes with the principle of freedom of employment.

The High Court ruled that setting a day of rest protects workers from exploitation. In its ruling, the court ruled against a petitioner, the owner of a furniture business, who wanted employers and their staff to decide which day of the week to take off.

Lebanon withdrawal hailed

Israel voiced satisfaction at Syria's announcement that it would withdraw from Lebanon by the end of April.

"This is an important decision," Israel Radio quoted Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom as saying Monday.

But Shalom called not only for a full withdrawal but for Hezbollah, a Syrian-backed militia in Lebanon, to be dismantled.

Minister: Israeli schools in crisis

Education in Israel is in a crisis, Israel's deputy minister of education, culture and sport said.

"We have gone over the last 25 years into a deep crisis of the education situation in Israel," Rabbi Michael Melchior told a confer-

ence of the Jewish Funders Network on Monday in Baltimore.

Israel ranked 28th out of 29 Western countries in the most recent Trends in International Math and Science Study, a study in which it ranked first in the 1970s, Melchior said.

In the Israeli army, only 32 percent of those tested earned satisfactory scores on reading comprehension exams in 2003, down from 60 percent in the 1980s.

Melchior also said Israel has the largest gap between rich and poor students in the Western world. Melchior told JTA that the problem reflects a more violent Israeli society that is less concerned with collective problems.

NORTH AMERICA

Grant for Jewish workers

A new grant is aimed at educating Jewish foundation professionals.

The Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation donated \$300,000 to the Jewish Funders Network to create a department that will bolster professionals working for Jewish foundations, network president Mark Charendoff announced Monday at the group's conference in Baltimore.

The group also announced a new matching-grants program for donations to nonprofit programs in Israel.

The Sacta-Rashi Foundation is giving \$2 million to the Jewish Funders Network to be used to match first-time gifts of \$25,000 to \$50,000 by network members to Israeli programs.

Canadian native leader on trial for hate

The trial of a Canadian aboriginal leader charged with hate for comments defaming Jews began again Monday.

The trial of David Ahenakew, who in 2002 called Jews a "disease" and praised Hitler's efforts to "clean up the world" by "frying 6 million of those guys," is expected to last one week.

Regardless of the outcome of the trial, which was postponed twice for legal reasons, Jewish organizations repeatedly have called for Ahenakew to be stripped of his Order of Canada, the highest honor that can be bestowed on Canadians for lifetime achievement.

New center to help Jews plan future

Brandeis University is launching a research center to help the Jewish community plan its future.

The Steinhart Social Research Institute, funded by a \$12 million gift from philanthropist Michael Steinhart, is scheduled to open in September 2005.

The center will collect and organize existing population data and statistics from multiple sources, and will launch its own local and national studies of the character of American Jewry and Jewish organizations.

WORLD

Austrian rightist forms new party

Austrian right-winger Jorg Haider created a new political party.

Haider announced Monday that he would form the Union for the Future of Austria.

The creation of the new party comes after Haider's Freedom Party has suffered losses in recent elections.

Several years ago, Haider came under fire for praising Hitler's "decent employment policies" and describing Nazi Waffen SS troops as "men of character."

He later apologized for the remarks.

The Freedom Party became part of Austria's government in 2000, but Haider resigned as head of the party under international pressure.