

## IN THE NEWS

**Sharansky quits Sharon's Cabinet**

Natan Sharansky resigned from Israel's government to protest the planned withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and northern West Bank.

"In my view, the disengagement plan is a tragic mistake that will exacerbate the conflict with the Palestinians, increase terrorism and dim the prospects of forging a genuine peace," Sharansky, who held the Diaspora affairs portfolio, said Monday in an open letter to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

**Turkey reaches out**

Turkey's prime minister visited Israel in a trip seen as bolstering bilateral ties.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, an Islamist who has angered Jerusalem with his strong criticism of Israeli counterterrorism measures, landed in Tel Aviv on Sunday vowing to build on the recent atmosphere of Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation.

"Our good relations with Israel do not preclude us from making frank criticism," he told the Turkish Daily News in an interview.

**Islands paid rabbi \$1.2 million for advice**

The government of a U.S. Pacific territory is investigating why it paid \$1.2 million for ethics advice to a rabbi close to a Jewish lobbyist who is under investigation.

The burgeoning congressional investigation into Jack Abramoff's lobbying practices has reached the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, which in 1996 paid Rabbi David Lapin \$1.2 million to promote "ethics in government."

Lapin later ran a Maryland Jewish seminary founded by Abramoff. Lapin's brother, Daniel, also a rabbi and the head of Toward Tradition, a conservative interfaith group, introduced Abramoff to Rep. Tom DeLay (R-Texas) in 1994.

DeLay, now the majority leader, is under fire for his relationship with Abramoff.

# WORLD REPORT

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## As Protestant divestment drive heats up, Jews express their ire

By RACHEL POMERANCE

**N**EW YORK (JTA) — As a growing number of Protestant churches consider imposing economic sanctions against Israel, the Jewish community is threatening to abandon interfaith dialogue with mainstream Protestant groups.

"Any Protestant denomination that would consider the weapon of economic sanctions to be unilaterally and prejudicially used against the State of Israel, or those who would hold the State of Israel to a standard different from any other sovereign state, creates an environment which makes constructive dialogue almost impossible," mainstream Jewish defense groups and the three main religious streams wrote in an April 22 letter to Protestant leaders.

The letter is considered the strongest language that Jewish groups have used to date on the issue.

The letter "signals a change in the tone and the tenor of our discourse," said Ethan Felson, assistant executive director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs.

The missive comes after a flurry of recent activity by churches considering divestment some nine months after a Protestant group first made it a prominent issue.

That was last summer, when the Presbyterian Church USA passed a resolution considering a "selective, phased divestment" of companies that do business with Israel.

The resolution shocked Jewish officials, who in reaction scurried to step up interfaith relations. But it also created a point of departure for other Protestant denominations to mull divestment as a way, they believe, to promote Mideast peace.

In November 2004, the board of the Episcopal Church voted to consider corporate actions against companies that "contribute to the infrastructure of Israel's ongoing occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip," along with companies that "have connections to organizations responsible for violence against Israel."

"The emphasis of this process is not likely to be divestment," according to Maureen Shea, the church's director of government relations.

Two weeks ago, the board of the United Methodist Church voted to conduct a yearlong study to consider divestment. Last week, the United Church of Christ released resolutions it will consider at its annual conference in Atlanta in July; two suggest divestment, while one urges Israel to dismantle its West Bank security barrier.

In a move Jewish groups consider positive, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America voted last week for "constructive investment" in Israeli and Palestinian organizations that promote peace.

The Protestant pursuit of divestment is not limited to America: The Geneva-based World Council of Churches, a predominantly European consortium, passed a resolution in February encouraging churches to follow the initiative of the Presbyterian Church USA and consider divesting from Israel.

The council has member churches around the world. Many of the North American groups considering divestment are affiliated with it.

Many Jewish observers have been stunned by the swirl of activity.

"I think it's one of the stranger things I've seen," said David Elcott, U.S. director of inter-

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FOCUS  
ON  
ISSUES

## ■ Jews react strongly to Protestant divestment moves

*Continued from page 1*

religious affairs for the American Jewish Committee. "I don't understand why this issue would come up now," when Israel is taking steps for peace with the Palestinians.

Elcott said the Jewish community has been "incredibly consistent" in maintaining interfaith dialogue since the Presbyterian move.

Jewish officials cite several reasons for the divestment trend in the Protestant community:

- Protestant churches are responding to Palestinian Christians and their supporters, who believe sanctions will force Israel to make concessions and will help the Christians' standing with Palestinian Muslims.

Churches in the region have sent representatives to American churches to tell of Israel's alleged injustices against Palestinian Christians. Meanwhile, U.S. church groups that have visited the region hear a primarily anti-Israel narrative.

- Some feel Jewish groups have lagged in their maintenance of interfaith work. While Palestinian supporters are advocating their view, "we have not done a very good job of going into churches and advocating a counter point of view," said Rabbi Gary Bretton-Granatoor, director of interfaith affairs for the Anti-Defamation League.

■  
In addition, interfaith dialogue has focused on what binds the faiths, not what divides them, said Bretton-Granatoor. As a result, Protestants and Jews have not fully explored each other's views on the Middle East.

"We have never stopped thinking about Israel as the very center of our faith, but the Christians don't understand it," he said. "To them, our attachment to Israel is 19th-century colonialism."

- Many mainstream Protestant churches, which skew to the left, subscribe to a world view called "liberation theology." They aim to uplift the "weak and the downtrodden" and they believe that the Palestinians fill that role, said Rabbi Irving Greenberg, president of Jewish Life Network/Steinhardt Foundation.

Other Christian denominations have a different perspective. Evangelicals subscribe to a Christian Zionist ideology, which calls for the ingathering of Jews to Israel as a precursor of Armageddon.

Because Catholics are represented by the Vatican, they have diplomatic relations to make their case, and Catholic-Jewish relations are relatively strong. Last year, the Vatican issued a joint statement with Jewish officials calling anti-Zionism anti-Semitism.

Jewish groups aim to continue engaging the Protestant community on grass-roots and national levels and are seeking voices within the churches to oppose divestment.

A coalition of Jews and Protestants will meet May 13 in Washington, and an interfaith mission to Israel is planned for September.

"We have had our fingers crossed and we had done our work pretty well, I thought," said Mark Pelavin, associate director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. But "it appears that we're going to have to have a broader conversation, denomination by denomination."

■  
According to the JCPA's Felson, "the divestment conversation casts such a shadow that dialogue on other issues really becomes secondary."

Jewish groups are stressing their unified opposition to divestment, as indicated in the April 22 letter.

The move is, in part, a response to the Presbyterian Church USA, which several Jewish officials said excluded Jewish groups from observing national Presbyterian gatherings.

The only Jewish representative at such events has been Jewish Voice for Peace, a far-left group that supports divestment from Israel, Jewish officials said.

The Rev. Peter Pettit, a Lutheran and the director of the Institute for Jewish-Christian Understanding at Muhlenberg College, expressed gratitude for the April 22 letter.

"I appreciate the fact that the Jewish leadership felt they could write such a letter and not have it become an explosive sort of initiative," he said. "I really don't see

it as a threat," but as a "mark of maturity" in expressing the potential impact of the divestment drive.

He hopes, he said, that the Protestant community will "take seriously the perspective that the Jewish community has on the divestment issue."

Katharine Rhodes Henderson, a Presbyterian minister who is executive vice president of the Auburn Theological Seminary in New York, said it's still not clear how widespread the divestment move will become.

Henderson is one of 25 Presbyterians involved in Presbyterians Concerned for Christian-Jewish Relations, and is part of a New York City-based Presbyterian-Jewish group geared toward reconciliation.

Henderson says she and others are working on investment initiatives and discouraging other churches from divestment.

Now, "when there is movement on the ground," is precisely the time to invest, Henderson said.

"What's happening on the ground is giving people pause," she said, citing the Methodist desire to study the issue further as a signal of such reconsideration.

Even the Presbyterians have yet to take any concrete steps to divest from companies that do business with Israel.

For its part, the Jewish community is speaking with one clear voice.

"There are certain issues that are red lines for communities," said the AJCommittee's Elcott. "For us, supporting divestment is an answer to the question, 'Do you want to have a relationship with the Jews?'" ■

**The divestment conversation casts such a shadow that dialogue on other issues really becomes secondary.**

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**THIS WEEK****TUESDAY**

■ Fifty Jewish leaders from around the world conclude their first trip to the United Nations. The International Delegation of Jewish Leadership, a joint project of the U.N. Foundation and the American Jewish Committee's Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights, held a two-day conference for world Jewish leaders to meet top U.N. officials.

■ The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations will vote to confirm the nomination of its next chairman. The nominating committee will present Harold Tanner, former president of the American Jewish Committee, for the position.

■ The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum commemorates the allied victory in World War II through Thursday. Gen. Wesley Clark, former NATO commander, delivers the keynote speech Wednesday. Veterans of the liberation of Europe participate in a candle-lighting ceremony at the Capitol on Thursday.

■ The American Jewish Committee holds its 99th annual meeting. The four-day event takes place in Washington. The conference will address the boundaries of academic freedom on campus and the international perception of the Middle East conflict. John Negroponte, the first national intelligence director of the United States, addresses the group's annual dinner Thursday. On Sunday, the group honors President Clinton.

**WEDNESDAY**

■ The Israeli Embassy in Washington hosts the Fourth Annual Christian-Israel Solidarity Event. This program will feature the Rev. Pat Robertson and Israel's ambassador to the United States, Daniel Ayalon.

**THURSDAY**

■ The Knesset's Law and Constitution committee arrives in Washington to meet with U.S. lawmakers, as well as constitutional experts and Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia to discuss the possibility of a constitution for Israel.

**FRIDAY**

■ President Bush leaves for a European tour. The issue of Middle East peace will come up in his meetings with leaders.

■ Presentations by internationally known speakers — including an address by a chief rabbi of the State of Israel — are highlights of a three-day symposium at Cornell University commemorating 350 years of Jewish history in America.

**SATURDAY**

■ In Cincinnati, Hebrew Union College-University of Cincinnati Center for the Study of Ethics and Contemporary Moral Problems and Union Institute & University holds a two-day symposium on religion and poverty.

# Outrage in U.K. grows

By **DANIELLA PELED**

LONDON (JTA) — The backlash against the decision by a union of British university lecturers to sever ties with two Israeli universities began almost as soon as the controversial motion was passed.

A wave of condemnation met the decision by the 48,000-member Association of University Teachers to sever links with Haifa and Bar-Ilan universities following a resolution narrowly passed at the AUT's annual conference April 22.

Within days, a half-dozen AUT members had resigned in protest, with more expected to follow suit.

Britain's Jewish community was outraged at the move to censure Haifa because of alleged discrimination against a radical left-wing professor, and against Bar-Ilan because of the support it provides to a college in the West Bank.

They quickly mobilized, with the Board of Deputies, the representative body of Anglo Jewry, announcing the formation of a Campaign Group for Academic Freedom to coordinate activity across a range of community groups in hopes of overturning the decision.

Britain's Orthodox chief rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, said he was "most distressed" by the motion, which he called "a sad day for British universities."

"The AUT has betrayed the academic principles it supposedly represents," he said.

Opposition also came from outside the Jewish community, with British newspapers united in their condemnation.

The Times of London described the step as "a mockery of academic freedom, a biased and blinkered move that is as ill-timed as it is perverse," warning that it could provide an excuse for increased anti-Semitism.

A spokesman for Universities U.K., a higher education action group, said that the organization "condemns the resolution from AUT which is inimical to academic freedom, including the freedom of academics to collaborate with other academics."

One of the initiators of the motion — a weaker version of one that failed to pass the AUT last year — was Birmingham University lecturer Sue Blackwell, a long-time pro-Palestinian campaigner.

Blackwell told JTA she had received many messages of support for the campaign against "apartheid" Israel, adding that the motion was a reply to a 2003 boycott request supported by 60 Palestinian trade unions and nongovernmental organizations.

"We were responding to a call for solidarity with our sister Palestinian trade unions," she added.

But the motion has proved to be embarrassing not only for Blackwell's own university — which im-

mediately distanced itself from the boycott — but for her union.

It rapidly became clear that implementing the boycott could put universities in direct contravention of their equal opportunity policies.

AUT General Secretary Sally Hunt issued directions to members to take no action until further notice.

"The national executive will issue guidance to local associations on the implementation of the boycotts of the two Israeli universities in due course," she said. "Until this guidance is issued, it is stressed that members should be advised to not take any action in relation to a boycott which would place them in breach of their contract of employment."

Ronnie Fraser, a math lecturer at London's Barnet College and chair of the Academic Friends of Israel, said pro-Israel views have become increasingly unfashionable among the British intelligentsia.

Moves already are underway to collect the signatures of 25 AUT members to put forward a motion demanding that the boycott decision be overturned.

But Fraser cautioned against premature celebration. Israel and its advocates now need to organize, he said, because the subject is not going to disappear.

"The issue is not the AUT vote," he says. "The issue is the delegitimization of Israel."

**'The issue is not the AUT vote. The issue is the delegitimization of Israel.'**

**Ronnie Fraser**

Chair, Academic Friends of Israel

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## MIDDLE EAST

### Soldier, terrorist slain

An Israeli soldier and a Palestinian terrorist were killed in a West Bank clash.

The violence occurred when Israeli troops raided the village of Sida near Tulkarm on Monday, coming under fire from local gunmen.

The troops shot dead an Islamic Jihad leader wanted in connection with a Feb. 25 suicide bombing that killed five people in Tel Aviv.

The terrorist recently had "escaped" from a Palestinian Authority jail.

### U.S.: P.A. must clean up before rearming

The United States favors rearming the Palestinian Authority, but only once it has guarantees that terrorists won't get the weapons.

State Department spokesman Adam Ereli welcomed Russia's offer last week to rearm the Palestinian Authority so it can fight terrorists more effectively.

Ereli said last Friday that the United States also is working "to help the Palestinians reform their security forces, to help train and equip and build those forces for carrying out their duties."

But Ereli said the Palestinian Authority must ensure that weapons don't reach terrorists, as they have in the past.

### Down to business

Economic envoy James Wolfensohn held talks with officials from Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

"This is my first day in the job, so I did a great deal of listening," the outgoing World Bank president told reporters Sunday after discussing their plans for the Gaza Strip after Israel withdraws this summer with Palestinian Authority officials.

### Fischer takes office

American economist Stanley Fischer was sworn in as Bank of Israel governor.

"When I look at the history of the Israeli economy, I see a significant success story," Fischer said in Hebrew in his inaugural speech Sunday in Jerusalem.

A former deputy chairman of Citigroup, Fischer was tapped to head Israel's central bank in January by Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

He became an Israeli citizen last week.

## WORLD

### 'Gold Train' info published

The Claims Conference released information for Hungarian Jewish Holocaust survivors seeking to join a claim in the "Gold Train" settlement.

The U.S. government's \$25.5 million settlement will include \$21 million for needy Hungarian Jewish victims of the Nazis.

The settlement of the case of a trainload of Hungarian Jewish-owned goods, looted by the Nazis and then confiscated by U.S. troops, will not provide direct payments, but instead will fund social service programs for eligible survivors.

A federal judge will approve the final settlement by Sept. 26. Any communication about the settlement must be submitted by Aug. 1.

More information is available at <http://www.hungariangoldtrain.org>.

### Dachau liberation marked

European politicians and Holocaust survivors from around the world marked the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Dachau.

An estimated 2,500 people attended Sunday's ceremony, the Associated Press reported.

Dachau was the first concentration camp, built soon after Hitler came to power in 1933.

## NORTH AMERICA

### Columbia assembles committee

Columbia University crafted a search committee for an Israel studies chair that includes prominent Palestinian activists.

Rashid Khalidi, director of Columbia's Middle East Institute, and Lila Abu-Lughod, a professor of anthropology, are members of a committee to select Columbia's new Yosef Haim Yerushalmi chair of Israel studies.

The move comes after an uproar at the university over claims by some Jewish students that they were harassed by anti-Israel professors.

A panel that investigated the charges found the professors largely innocent.

The search committee is chaired by Michael Stanislawski, a professor of Jewish history and associate director of Columbia's Center for Israel and Jewish studies.

Other members include Dan Miron, a professor of Hebrew and comparative literature in the department of Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures; Ira Katznelson, a political science professor who chaired the committee to investigate charges of intimidation by anti-Israel faculty; and Karen Barkey, an assistant professor of sociology.

### Frist: No settlement expansion

Israel's pullout from the Gaza Strip must lead to a viable Palestinian state, the top Senate Republican said.

Sen. Bill Frist (R-Tenn.), the Senate Majority leader, in Israel this week on a fact-finding mission, told the Associated Press that Israel must make sure its withdrawal planned for this summer "does not prejudice the outcome of a two-state solution."

### Group presses black leaders on march

The Anti-Defamation League called on black leaders to distance themselves from a rally marking the 10th anniversary of the Million Man March.

The group sent a letter to 30 black leaders, including the Revs. Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton, asking them to reconsider their support for the Oct. 14-16 march in Washington.

"While its stated goal of bringing together the African-American community is laudable, the involvement of Minister Louis Farrakhan and Malik Zulu Shabazz as co-conveners of the march taints the proceeding with the baggage of anti-Semitism and hate," Abraham Foxman, the ADL's national director, said in a statement.

### Reform criticizes 2006 U.S. budget

The Reform movement slammed Congress for approving a budget that cuts social services while cutting taxes.

The proposed budget "calls for up to \$10 billion in cuts to Medicaid and other vital social service programs, such as Supplemental Security Income and the Earned Income Tax Credit, while at the same time expediting \$70 billion in tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans," Mark Pelavin, associate director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, said last Friday, a day after both houses of Congress approved the 2006 budget and sent it to President Bush for his signature.

Bush has said he will sign the budget.

### Canadian students expelled for Nazi Web site

A Toronto private school expelled three students for creating a Web site filled with Nazi imagery.

Royal St. George College, a boys' school, expelled the three 10th-graders.

The site reportedly included photos of gas chambers and textual material that Len Rudner, community relations director for the Canadian Jewish Congress, said was so shocking he couldn't repeat any of it to reporters.