

## IN THE NEWS

## Israel to evacuate 1,700 families from Gaza

The director of Israel's disengagement plan said 1,700 settler families will need to be evacuated next week.

Yonatan Bassi, head of the disengagement administration in the Prime Minister's Office, said in a conference call Tuesday with the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations that 200 families in the northern West Bank and 100 in the Gaza Strip already have left their homes voluntarily, but the others will need to be moved next week.

## Israel: Turkey cracks terror cell aimed at us

An Israeli official said Turkish authorities have cracked an Al-Qaida cell that planned to hit an Israeli tourist target.

"People, weapons, means of transport and communication equipment were nabbed there belonging to a cell linked to Al-Qaida. It intended to carry out an attack at sea and, apparently, on land in foreign tourist centers," Danny Arditi, the director of the Israeli government's Counter-Terrorism Headquarters, told Israel's Channel Two television Tuesday. Turkish officials had no comment.

## Terrorism wasn't on this soldier's mind

A chase after a religious Israeli soldier feared to be another Jewish terrorist turned out to be much ado about nothing.

Israeli police chased the soldier down Monday near the Arab city of Nazareth after he was seen boarding a bus.

But the Nazareth police chief released the soldier after saying he knew him and that he posed no threat to society, Ha'aretz reported.

Israeli Arabs have been on edge since an AWOL soldier opposed to Israel's upcoming withdrawal from the Gaza Strip killed four people on a bus in an Arab town last week.

# WORLD REPORT

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## Father and son differing over whether to stay in Gaza or go

By DINA KRAFT

**N**EVE DEKALIM, Gaza Strip (JTA) — Silvi Amar rests a hand on the cheek of her son, Assaf, reminds him about the food left in the refrigerator and walks out of her empty house.

The Amar family is leaving their two-story, white-stucco home in the Gaza Strip settlement Neve Dekalim after 20 years. They do not want to leave, but Albert Amar, Silvi's husband, is a policeman who feels he has no choice but to honor the law and leave with his wife and children before Israel's withdrawal begins next week.

The family's son Assaf, 22, a soldier in the Givati brigade who recently completed a course to become an officer, is staying behind. He looks on as movers pack up the contents of the house and carry bulging cardboard boxes to a moving van outside. His room, however, has not been touched. His computer, bed and books remain in perfect place.

"I will stay until the last day," he says, his large, murky green eyes staring straight ahead.

The family's split decision epitomizes the difficult choices faced by some of Israel's roughly 9,000 settlers in Gaza as they decide whether to follow their hearts or the rule of law.

Assaf Amar says he understands why his parents have decided they must leave, but he still cannot reconcile himself to saying good-

bye to the only home he can remember.

As a toddler, he moved with his mother and father from Beersheba to Neve Dekalim. His parents, who are modern Orthodox, say they were looking for a higher quality of life — a place where they could raise their family with religious values and a sense of genuine community.

They found all that in Neve Dekalim, the largest Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip. Here they raised their children, planted a lush garden and had a white picket fence near their house.

In his cluttered kitchen on Aug. 4, surrounded by scattered boxes, Albert Amar spoke of having to choose between duty and emotion.

"I am doing this because for the past 20 years I have been

a man of law and order. The law is the law. It hurts inside, but I need to respect democracy and the law," said Amar, a squat man with a mustache and a police cap. A revolver is attached to the pocket of his jeans.

His son Assaf sees things differently. Although he is a soldier and a newly minted officer, the planned withdrawal from Gaza feels to him like a betrayal by the establishment.

"It's very hard to reconcile," says Assaf of his connection to both the army and the Gaza settlements.

"This is where I grew up. This is where I learned my values. And it was because of

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**'This is where I learned my values. And it was because of these values I grew up and became part of the army. Now this place is about to be destroyed.'**

**Assaf Amar, 22**  
Gaza Strip resident

## ■ Gaza Strip withdrawal plan divides a father and son

*Continued from page 1*

these values I grew up and became part of the army. Now this place is about to be destroyed right in front of me. My motivation is suddenly drifting away," he says.

He finds himself confused about his future within the army. Everything suddenly feels very upside down.

In the Amars' sun-splotched garden, two Palestinian movers from Mawasi, a Palestinian village near Neve Dekalim, are at work disassembling light fixtures on a white plastic picnic table. An Israeli flag is strewn over leafy green plants in the corner of the garden.

Kamel Khaled, 38, has worked with the Amar family since 1987, when he began helping Albert Amar in a carpentry workshop on the settlement. He says he has mixed feelings about watching the family go.

"It's not easy. It's difficult to see him go," he says, referring to Assaf's father. "We've worked together for so long."

But he adds that the physical restrictions on movement for Palestinians in Gaza have made life difficult for him and his family. "The situation of roadblocks and our inability to move freely is also not good."

Khaled is looking forward to the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza.

"Then there will be freedom. I'll be able to go wherever I want," he says.

Meanwhile, as the Amar family prepares to return to Beersheba, the southern city they left so long ago for the sand dunes and sea views of Neve Dekalim, others are illegally moving into the Jewish settlement bloc of Gush Katif.

Along the sea on the edge of the Shirat

Hayam settlement, rows of makeshift tents have been set up by dozens of newcomers, most of them settlers themselves from the West Bank. Although it has been against the law for nonresidents to live in Gush Katif since the army declared it a closed military zone last month, thousands sympathetic to the pro-settler cause have snuck in.

"It's a secret," says Meir Menachem, 46, of how he and others managed to make it into Gush Katif. They hope that by fortifying the numbers of people in Gush Katif it will be more difficult to evacuate the settlements.

Menachem smuggled himself, his wife, and seven of their eleven children into Gaza from their home in the West Bank settlement Kiryat Arba. "Anyone who wants to get in just has to want it hard enough," he says.

Exactly how many infiltrators are in Gaza is not known, but anti-withdrawal activists told the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz that the number is between 3,000 and 4,000. The army disputes that claim, putting the number closer to 2,000 and says that most would-be infiltrators are stopped before they can get in. ■

## Color war rages as Gaza pullout nears

By DINA KRAFT

**JERUSALEM (JTA)** — An orange wave symbolizing Israel's anti-withdrawal movement has rolled onto the country's shores — orange T-shirts, orange ice pops, orange flags, orange ribbons, even orange-draped chupahs, or wedding canopies, and orange stretchers at funerals.

In its wake is a smaller blue ripple from those who support the government's plan to evacuate settlements in the Gaza Strip and northern West Bank, slated to begin next week — mostly in the form of blue ribbons flapping from car antennas and hanging from backpacks.

Seeing the orange "gives a sense of how many people are against" the withdrawal. "It's like a poll," says Nomi Cohen, 18, passing out orange ribbons at a busy intersection near the entrance to Jerusalem.

In Jerusalem, a right-leaning city with a large religious population, one sees mostly orange ribbons tied to car antennas and rearview mirrors. In left-leaning Tel Aviv, there appears to be a roughly even number of blue and orange ribbons.

"We need to show a contrast to orange," says Oded Muiraz, 24, a student racing among the cars near Tel Aviv's main train station distributing blue ribbons. "I think it's very important to be out here because otherwise it gives the impression that everyone is orange. If we are apathetic, it will give the impression that the minority is the majority."

According to polls, most Israelis support the government's withdrawal plan.

At first, pro-withdrawal activists were divided about which color to choose in re-

sponse to the defiant orange: Green for the "Green Line," as the 1949 armistice line that served as Israel's de facto border until 1967 is known, or blue for the country's flag?

After about a week of debate, blue — sometimes mixed with white, mirroring the colors of the flag — was chosen.

In recent years the right wing had succeeded in associating itself most strongly with the Israeli flag. But an unforeseen consequence of the anti-withdrawal camp's decision to wrap itself in orange — after the orange groves of Gaza's Jewish settlements — has been that the Israeli left has reclaimed the country's traditional blue and white.

Though the profusion of day-glo orange and royal-blue ribbons may make for a more colorful commute, underneath the color war is the serious question of where Israel is heading and whether the society can handle a move as controversial and divisive as the withdrawal.

In a bid to soothe flaring tempers and foster dialogue, Geshet, an organization that works to bridge the gap between religious and secular Israelis, launched a telephone-dialogue campaign in late July, posting a central number which so-called Oranges and Blues can call to discuss the withdrawal with each other.

Publicized under the slogan "We have to keep in touch," the venture is being advertised in Israeli newspapers and on billboards with a picture of an orange ribbon and a blue ribbon tied together.

"It is the opportunity to actually talk to someone with different opinions than yourself in a way that will help humanize the issues and open up dialogue," said Aryeh Halivni, Geshet spokesman. ■

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# Pullout official: Time will tell if move is right one

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The man handling the Israeli government's controversial plan to evacuate settlements in the Gaza Strip and northern West Bank hopes it's for the best — but he says that only time will tell.

At the least, Yonatan Bassi told the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations in a conference call Tuesday, less than a week before the evacuation is slated to begin, the government has done all it can to ensure that the process goes smoothly.

"I hope we did everything we could do in order to be prepared for the very difficult things we are facing in the coming days," said Bassi, head of the government's Disengagement Authority.

Officials are making final arrangements to evacuate settlers who do not leave voluntarily before the operation begins.

To date, 200 families have left the West Bank and another 100 have left the Gaza Strip, Bassi said. Of the remaining 1,700 families, he anticipates that 70 percent to 80 percent will leave peacefully between Aug. 15 and 17, when Israeli forces will enter the territories.

The rest will be removed by force.

"The people there are under very heavy pressure from the leadership and rabbis not to be ready to evacuate," Bassi said. "There are a lot of families that are ready to speak with us but are still afraid."

The larger problem for the Israeli Defense Forces, he said, will be dealing with the 2,000 or so anti-withdrawal activists who have entered the settlements in the past two months in hopes of spoiling the evacuation.

Anyone who refuses to leave will be taken out by four soldiers, Bassi said, two holding the person's arms and two holding his or her legs.

Bassi sounded exasperated at times by the details of his task. When asked about the process of disinterring graves in Gaza Strip ceremonies, he noted that there was only one cemetery, adding that one was certainly enough.

The disinterred will be reburied at a new cemetery in Nitzanim, inside Israel, during the fifth week of the evacuation, Bassi said. The process is being coordinated with rabbis and the families of the deceased.

More than 200 hotel rooms have been reserved in some of the country's best hotels to house settlers in the first weeks after the evacuation, Bassi said. They will be given excellent food and will be treated with the best care before they're forced to make permanent living arrangements, he said.

The Disengagement Authority has arranged for psychologists and other volunteers to assist the settlers in adjusting to their new lives.

Particular attention is being paid to adolescents because of rumors of mass suicides and other desperate measures to stop the withdrawal.

Bassi said he believes that other Israel-

is should treat the uprooted settlers as heroes.

'I hope we did everything we could do in order to be prepared for the very difficult things we are facing in the coming days.'

Yonatan Bassi

Head of Israel's Disengagement Authority

"They are the victims of the situation because Israel wants to remain a democratic state," he said in response to one questioner, who suggested that settlers were being treated poorly. "They as victims must be heroes, and we are doing a lot of effort to ensure they understand it."

But Bassi refused to say wheth-

er the withdrawal is in Israel's best political interest. Some warn that it will spark a new surge of attacks if Palestinians view it as confirmation that terrorism pays.

"Maybe in 10 years time, we'll know if it is a mistake or not," Bassi said. ■

THE  
DISENGAGEMENT  
SUMMER

## Europe to celebrate Jewish culture day

By RUTH ELLEN GRUBER

ROME (JTA) — Anxiety over terrorism and instability in Europe and the Middle East won't stop next month's European Day of Jewish Culture, an annual one-day celebration of Jewish history, art, culture and traditions that takes place in more than two dozen countries across Europe on Sept. 4.

"The European Day of Jewish Culture will take place this year in a climate of great international tensions, of serious risks of terrorist attacks, in a climate of fear," said Amos Luzzatto, president of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities.

Organizers had asked themselves if it might not be better to call off events. "If we had cancelled everything," Luzzatto said, "the terrorists would have won. We cannot allow fear to stop us."

As every year, hundreds of synagogues, Jewish cemeteries, Jewish museums and other sites of Jewish heritage will be open to the public in 26 countries, and exhibits, concerts and other special events are planned. Last year, EDJC events across the continent drew some 150,000 visitors.

This year marks the sixth annual EDJC, organized by B'nai B'rith Europe, the European Council of Jewish Communities and

the Route of Judaism in Spain.

The unifying theme is "Jewish Cuisine and Culinary Traditions."

"There will be seminars, exhibits, lectures, food tastings, art installations, banquets and other events at which Jewish culinary traditions and kashrut will take center stage," said Annie Sacerdoti, who is on the international organizing committee.

In addition, she said, organizers have launched an initiative to collect recipes from Jews around Europe, to put together a compendium of local and regional Jewish cooking traditions. They are also sponsoring a recipe contest.

Italy's culture minister, Rocco Buttiglione, a devout Roman Catholic, said initiatives such as the EDJC are an important means of promoting tolerance and combating anti-Semitism.

"Jews have lived in Rome for more than 2,000 years, longer than Christians," he told JTA. "Christianity was born out of Judaism. Jews and Jewish culture are an important component of Italian culture. It is important that everyone should be aware of this, that Jews are not 'guests' here. We cannot speak of them in terms of 'we' and 'they'." ■

(For information on EDJC, see [www.jewishheritage.org](http://www.jewishheritage.org).)

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## MIDDLE EAST

### Enlisting Allah for Sharon

A top Muslim cleric issued a religious edict ordering Palestinians not to disrupt Israel's Gaza Strip withdrawal.

"It is forbidden to obstruct Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip," Jerusalem Grand Mufti Ikrima Sabri told Reuters on Tuesday. "All should cooperate to ensure the withdrawal takes place," he said.

With the evacuation of Gaza and the northern West Bank only a week away, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas echoed Sabri's call.

"It is a requirement to ensure that the withdrawal will take place in a civilized manner so that we can show the world we deserve our freedom and independence," he said in a Gaza City speech. "Let them go, let us allow them to leave."

### P.A. vote set

The Palestinian Authority plans to hold parliamentary elections in January.

P.A. President Mahmoud Abbas, who postponed the vote scheduled for last month, announced the new target Tuesday in a speech in Gaza City.

Abbas has used the delay to overhaul his Fatah faction, which faces stiff competition in the West Bank and Gaza Strip from Hamas.

The Islamic terrorist group voiced disappointment that the elections would not take place this year, but vowed to run candidates for Parliament.

There was no immediate word on the exact date of the vote.

### Red Cross suspends Gaza operations

The Red Cross suspended its field operations in the Gaza Strip in response to violence directed at its headquarters.

The decision comes after gunmen fired bullets at the Red Cross's Khan Yunis office, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported Tuesday.

According to the group, "the ICRC is profoundly worried by the attack on its offices and the kidnapping of workers of international organizations in the Gaza Strip."

### Poll: Likudniks prefer Netanyahu

Likud Party voters would back Benjamin Netanyahu as their leader if a primary were held now, a poll suggests.

Some 47 percent of Likud voters would back the recently resigned finance minister versus 33 percent who prefer Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, according to a poll conducted Monday for Ha'aretz.

Netanyahu resigned Sunday in what he said was a protest against Israel's Gaza withdrawal, slated to begin next week.

In a three-way race that also included Uzi Landau, another withdrawal opponent, Netanyahu received 35 percent of the vote to Sharon's 29 percent and Landau's 17 percent.

The poll of 526 Likud Party members has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.27 percent, the paper said.

### Prisoner talks over?

Israel reportedly called off the last phase of prisoner-swap talks with Hezbollah.

The Saudi newspaper Al-Watan reported Tuesday that the Lebanese militia failed to deliver on a pledge made to German mediators that it would provide details on the fate of missing Israeli airman Ron Arad.

In response, Israel called off a deal for the release of a jailed Lebanese terrorist, Al-Watan reported.

The first stage of the deal was completed in January 2004, when Israel freed hundreds of Arab security prisoners in exchange for

the return of an Israeli businessman and the bodies of three Israeli soldiers held by Hezbollah.

Jerusalem had no immediate comment on the Al-Watan report.

## NORTH AMERICA

### Senator calls pope's ambassador

Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pa.) called the Vatican's embassy in Washington to express concern about Pope Benedict XVI's omission of Israel from a list of countries victimized by terrorism.

On Aug. 3, Santorum called Apostolic Nuncio Gabriel Montalvo, the pope's ambassador to Washington, and told him he was hearing concerns from the Jewish community and had his own concerns about the pope's recent comments, said Barbara Ledeen, a spokeswoman for Santorum.

Montalvo accepted the comments and said he would pass them on to the Vatican, Ledeen said.

A spokeswoman at the Apostolic Nunciature in Washington said the office does not comment on private conversations.

The pope's pronouncement on terrorism — which ignored Israel but condemned attacks in Egypt, Turkey, Iraq and Britain — has sparked a war of words between Israel and the Vatican.

### Evangelical won't apologize

An evangelical political leader defended his comments comparing stem-cell research to Nazi medical experiments.

James Dobson, who founded the group Focus on the Family, said his "recent comments are being spun like a top by the ultraliberals who don't care about unborn life."

Officials from the Anti-Defamation League and the Reform movement's Religious Action Center have issued statements calling on Dobson to repudiate his comments.

Dobson told a radio show Aug. 3 that embryonic stem-cell research may have the potential to produce positive findings, but it should be condemned the way Nazi "experiments" on concentration-camp inmates during the Holocaust were condemned.

### Messianic melee

A billboard calling the late Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson the messiah went up in Manhattan.

Newsday reported Sunday that the billboard's sponsor, a group called Jewish Women United for the Redemption, believes that publicly acknowledging the deceased Chabad leader as the messiah will hasten the onset of the messianic era, according to a spokeswoman for the group, Basha Oka Botnick.

Chabad officials repeatedly have distanced themselves from such messianic groups.

## WORLD

### Holocaust denier arrested in Amsterdam

Officials in Amsterdam arrested a Belgian Holocaust denier.

Siegfried Verbeke was arrested Aug. 4 when he arrived at the Amsterdam airport.

Germany had issued a European warrant for his arrest in July 2004 for alleged racism and xenophobia, both of which are crimes under German law. Verbeke is a co-founder of the Vlaams Blok, the extreme-right party in the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, where he runs an organization called Free Historical Research.

Convicted in Belgium in 2003 for Holocaust denial and racism, he also has a criminal record in the Netherlands, where the highest court convicted him on similar charges in 1997.

The Dutch Justice Department will decide in six weeks whether to extradite Verbeke to Germany.