

IN THE NEWS

Israelis rally against withdrawal

Tens of thousands of Israelis gathered at the Western Wall in Jerusalem to pray that the Israeli government calls off its Gaza withdrawal plan.

"Just like Sodom, the government has decided on an action that is inconsistent with morality," the liberal daily *Ha'aretz* quoted one speaker as saying at Wednesday's rally.

The demonstration went off peacefully, police said.

Another anti-withdrawal rally is slated for Thursday in Tel Aviv.

Israel departs anti-withdrawal activist

Israel will temporarily deport a Jewish citizen who also has U.S. citizenship for his activities against Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

The Justice Ministry said Wednesday that Sa'adia Hershkopf agreed to leave the country and not return for 40 days as an alternative to administrative detention.

Hershkopf, an 18-year-old resident of Kfar Chabad, was one of three activists arrested last week after a Jewish terrorist killed four Israeli Arabs.

Netanyahu: Al-Qaida is a big risk for Israel

Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel's plan to quit the Gaza Strip risked drawing Al-Qaida to its borders.

Addressing the Knesset on Wednesday after his resignation as finance minister went into effect, Netanyahu warned that next week's planned withdrawal from Gaza would make its seaport and land crossing from Egypt accessible to international terrorists.

"There is a global enemy, and they will flock here. They are already arriving — from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq," said Netanyahu, who urged lawmakers to overturn the government's withdrawal plan.

"Al-Qaida has already announced it will open a branch here, and while I think it could still take some time, they, too, will come."

WORLD REPORT

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After Shfaram attack, Israeli Arabs work to keep situation under control

By GIL SEDAN

HAIFA (JTA) — Shortly after the recent attack on Israeli Arabs by a Jewish terrorist in Shfaram, all hell threatened to break loose.

But unlike the situation in October 2000, when Israeli Arabs rioted in solidarity with the nascent Palestinian intifada — and paid the price by alienating the country's Jewish majority and ruining the Arab sector's economy — in this case the time bomb was put on hold.

Shortly after the Aug. 4 attack, Israeli police switched to their highest state of alert, concerned that heated emotions in Shfaram would spread across Galilee.

The potential for an explosion was there: Radical Islamists declared at Friday prayers that they would avenge the attack through renewed terrorism inside Israel. Sheik Ra'ed Salah, the leader of the northern branch of the Islamic Movement in Israel — who only recently was released from prison on charges of aiding Hamas — rushed to Shfaram and called for a massive demonstration in Jerusalem.

Salah linked the attack to alleged threats by Jewish zealots against Muslim shrines on Jerusalem's Temple Mount. Abed Inbatawi, spokesman for the National Follow-Up Committee, the unofficial leadership of Israel's Arabs, told reporters that Israeli Arabs might react with "a nonviolent intifada."

But Arab leaders and the Israeli political establishment have learned a lesson from the October 2000 riots: Don't play with fire. The police killing of 12 Israeli Arabs in the 2000 riots created a deep rift between the country's

1 million Arab citizens and the Jewish population, and the Arab economy was decimated by the riots, which scared Jewish customers away from Arab markets.

The government acted quickly after the initial shock of last week's attack. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon sent condolences to Shawki Khatib, the chairman of the follow-up committee, and to Ursan Yassin, the mayor of Shfaram. President Moshe Katsav and Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert paid condolence visits to the bereaved Arab families.

Sheik Ibrahim Sarsour, the head of the Islamic Movement's more moderate southern branch, was one of the first to understand that this time around the leadership should restrain the masses, rather than whipping them up as it did in 2000.

Speaking during the follow-up committee's emergency meeting, Sarsour warned against the incitement of "various elements" in Gaza that offered to carry out revenge attacks in the Israeli Arabs' name.

"I suggested that they should mind their own business," Sarsour told JTA. "They should not do things that we are opposed to, such as bombings and the like within the Green Line."

Sarsour's comments, openly coming out against Palestinian radicals — at least those who attack inside Israel proper — could mark a turning point in the role of Arab politicians in Israel. For the first time in years, an influential Arab leader did not look for immediate political gain by heating up the situation but spoke about the shared interests of Arabs and Jews in the face of extremist acts by

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fanatics from both groups.

Sarsour boasted of the Arab population's "restrained and mature reaction" that obviated the need for the Israeli police's high state of readiness.

"As Israeli Arabs, we will not tolerate vengeance, both because in principle we oppose the murder of civilians and because we are convinced that linking between the Shfaram massacre and events in the territories will only do harm," Sarsour said.

Sarsour's comments did not fall on deaf ears: They reflect a growing trend among Israel's Arab population to focus on a civil rather than a national agenda, putting the cause of full equal rights, rather than the Palestinian issue, at the top of their agenda.

The Arab street in Israel is believed to be disenchanted with Arab Knesset members' continuous involvement in Palestinian and sometimes pan-Arab affairs.

■

Also contributing to the changed mood are proposals by politicians such as Avigdor Lieberman of Israel Our Home to exchange Arab towns along Israel's border with the West Bank for Jewish settlement blocs, as part of a comprehensive peace deal with the Palestinian Authority. Such proposals would involve merely redrawing the border, not uprooting anyone.

Despite Israeli Arabs' strong support for the Palestinians — surveys show that many Israeli Arabs increasingly identify as Palestinians rather than as Israelis — the vast majority do not want to give

up their Israeli citizenship, a threat that seems more real now than in the past.

Sarsour adjusted to the changing moods. He praised "the support of many Jewish groups that embraced the bereaved," stressing the need to present a unified front to the "Kahane gangs."

But Israeli Arab demands in the wake of the attack may yet lead to a confrontation with Israel's government. They include:

- The government should define the Shfaram shooting as a terrorist attack for all intents and purposes, including granting the affected families the same rights given to victims of Palestinian terrorism.

The government already has set this in motion.

- Kahane Chai should be declared a terrorist group and should be treated accordingly.

The group is already outlawed in Israel.

- So-called time bombs among radical Jewish groups should be put behind bars.

- All incitement against the Arab population should be stopped.

- The recommendations of the Orr Commission, which was set up after the October 2000 riots, should be implemented immediately.

The commission's recommendations to ameliorate conditions in the Arab sector have not yet been fully implemented.

- A police investigation into the mob that beat the Jewish terrorist to death,

after he already had been subdued and handcuffed, should be dropped.

"Had Jews killed an Arab terrorist, they would have received a medal as heroes," Sarsour claimed.

In fact, Jews who have engaged in lynchings or attempted lynchings of Arabs have been prosecuted.

In its editorial Tuesday, the liberal daily

'I cannot serve in the army wearing the uniform and carrying the same rifle used by the person who committed the massacre in my hometown.'

Shamel Ibrahim

Druse resident

Ha'aretz wrote that "no country in which the law is properly enforced would permit an incident in which people take the law into their own hands to be ignored without investigating the circumstances and those involved, and agree in advance to withhold charges against suspects in a crime."

But Sarsour and his supporters warned that police measures against Arabs suspected in the lynching could ignite a confrontation.

The victims in the attack were Christian and Muslim Arabs, but the attack took place in Shfaram's Druse neighborhood. One outcome of the attack was negative reactions among the Druse population.

Shamel Ibrahim, 38, a Druse resident of Shfaram, announced Tuesday that he would not report for his annual reserve army service.

"I cannot serve in the army wearing the uniform and carrying the same rifle used by the person who committed the massacre in my hometown," he said. ■

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Blinded boy pushes for strong jail sentence

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An Israeli boy blinded by a Palestinian suicide bombing asked that an accomplice in the attack receive a stiff prison sentence.

"Unfortunately, I cannot look you in the eyes, but you can look into mine. Do you want to see other kids end up like me?"

Oren Almog told judges in Haifa District Court on Tuesday after they convicted

Jamal Mahajna, an Israeli Arab, of driving a Palestinian woman who blew up Haifa's Maxim restaurant two years ago. Almog, 13, lost five relatives and his eyesight in the attack.

Prosecutors want Mahajna to receive a 66-year jail term, but he has pleaded for clemency as the court recognized that he did not know of the terrorist's intentions. ■

Israeli nuke deal reports embarrass British

By DANIELLA PELED

LONDON (JTA) — New information about a secret 1950s nuclear deal between Israel and Britain has shed fresh light on the development of Israel's presumed nuclear program and might embarrass the current British government.

Revelations that the government of Prime Minister Harold Macmillan in 1958 covertly sold Israel 20 tons of heavy water — vital for producing weapons-grade plutonium — may prove awkward for Britain, which is an active participant in European efforts to pressure Iran over its nuclear ambitions.

News of the deal, kept secret from both British government ministers and the U.S. administration until official documents were obtained by the BBC last week, has spurred campaigners to lobby for further information and action on Israeli arms.

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament urged the government to "come clean" over the part it played in Israel's presumed development of nuclear weapons.

"The British government speaks out against nuclear proliferation," campaign chairwoman Kate Hudson said. "It even went to war on Iraq, ostensibly over its supposed nuclear proliferation.

"Now we know that the British government was responsible for the Israeli nuclear weapons program. This is a further shocking example of Britain's nuclear hypocrisy."

Labor legislator Jeremy Corbyn, the campaign's vice chairman, linked the issue to Britain's arms sales to Israel.

"Israel is in breach of international law in its illegal development of nuclear weapons, and Britain, as a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, should not be involved with any arms sales that could enhance Israel's nuclear capability, which is a threat to the peace of the whole region," he said.

Israel, which is not a signatory to the nonproliferation treaty, is believed to have as many as 200 warheads.

Israel officially refuses to confirm or deny the existence of any nuclear arsenal, but Labor Party head Shimon Peres confirmed to an audience of American Jewish leaders in 2003 that Israel has nuclear weapons. However, Peres was not a mem-

ber of the government at the time and so was not speaking in an official capacity.

Peres was the driving force when Israel built its Dimona nuclear reactor in the 1950s with the assistance of France, which provided four tons of heavy water, not enough to manufacture plutonium for use in weapons.

At a time when only the United States, Russia and the United Kingdom had nuclear missiles, the Eisenhower administration was against Israel developing nuclear arms and refused to supply heavy water without guarantees that it would be used only for peaceful purposes.

Documents recording the British deal reveal that Donald Cape, then an official in Britain's Foreign Office, said, "on the whole I would prefer not to mention this to the Americans."

No "peaceful use only" terms were imposed on the shipment, since British officials thought "it would be somewhat overzealous for us to insist on safeguards."

Yair Evron, a defense and international-relations expert at Tel Aviv University, said Britain's primary motive for the deal appeared to be economic, with the consignment worth nearly \$35 million in today's money.

"One can argue that the nuclear and industrial-military complex sometimes pursues its own policies without government direction," Evron said. "Similarly, one should put this in a different historical context. From the creation of the nonproliferation regime in the late 1960s, things like this became less accepted because the transfer and export of nuclear materials and technology was delegitimized."

The extent of Israel's nuclear development became known in 1986 when Mordechai Vanunu, a technician at the Dimona plant, passed secrets to a British newspaper. He served 18 years in an Israeli prison for his revelations and remains subject to restrictions imposed upon his release last year.

Ernest Rodker of the London-based Campaign to Free Vanunu said his organization had begun lobbying legislators to

press the government on the issue when Parliament reconvenes after the summer recess.

"I think it is severely embarrassing for the British government," he added. "You have a country that has pushed for a nuclear-free Middle East, and then you discover it has not only helped Israel develop nuclear power but its nuclear arsenal."

The heavy water was left over from a shipment the U.K. bought from Norway

in 1956. Though two successive 10-ton loads were shipped from a British port, it was presented as a transaction between Israel and Norway.

Israel wanted to buy more heavy water three years later, but by that time the existence of the Dimona reactor was known and British government officials decided against further involvement.

"We have been far from satisfied by the assurances so far furnished by the Israelis of the exclusively peaceful nature of their operations," Henry Hainsworth, head of the Foreign Office's atomic energy department, wrote at the time. "I should be strongly opposed to letting them have a further five tons."

"I am quite sure we should not agree to this sale," agreed Sir Hugh Stephenson, one of the most senior officials in the Foreign Office. "The Israeli project is much too live an issue for us to get mixed up in it again."

The subject was raised once more when Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion arrived in the U.K. for an official visit in June 1961.

"I saw Mr. Ben-Gurion this afternoon and told him of our concern about the Israeli nuclear reactor in the Negev," Macmillan wrote in a classified memo. "Mr. Ben-Gurion explained that its object was to train personnel in preparation for an atomic energy program in 10 or 15 years' time, aimed at providing cheap power for taking the salt out of sea water to irrigate the Negev."

But according to Macmillan's notes, Ben-Gurion said it would be impossible to accept international inspection at Dimona, as "this would mean bringing in the Russians and Arabs."

News of the deal 'is severely embarrassing for the British government.'

Ernest Rodker

Campaign to Free Vanunu

BEHIND
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NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

Nazi-looted painting case settled

The case of a Picasso painting, taken by the Nazis from its Jewish owners, has been settled out of court for \$6.5 million.

The decision came after four years of legal battles in Los Angeles and Chicago.

"Femme en blanc," painted by Picasso in 1922, was bought a few years later by Carlota and Robert Landsberg, a Jewish couple in Berlin.

In 1939, the Landsbergs sent the painting to a Paris art dealer for safekeeping.

When the Nazis overran France, they seized the painting, and it disappeared for 35 years.

The painting then was purchased in 1976 by the Chicago art collector Marilyn Alsdorf and her late husband for \$357,000.

When Alsdorf tried to sell the Picasso in 2001 through a Los Angeles dealer, the Art Loss Register in London made public the painting's Nazi-era provenance.

Following negotiations between the parties and their lawyers, attended by a representative of the U.S. Attorney's Office, it was agreed that Alsdorf would be granted clear title to the painting, now valued at between \$8 million to \$10 million.

In return, Alsdorf will pay \$6.5 million to Thomas Bennigson of Oakland, Calif., the grandson and sole heir of the original Berlin owners.

Divestment could hit city ballot

A nonbinding question on divestment from publicly held Israeli bonds could be headed for the ballot in a city near Boston this November.

Aldermen in Somerville failed to take action before Aug. 9 on putting the question on the ballot.

Now the Somerville Divestment Project has until Sept. 26 to submit signatures from 10 percent of the city's 39,665 registered voters, to be certified by the city's election commission, according to the commission chairman, Nicholas Salerno.

The commission has issued a petition form to be used by the Divestment Project, citing legal concerns over the group's signature-gathering practices.

"We are happy that the city has enforced the law and this ballot petition will be conducted fairly," said Alan Ronkin, the deputy director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Boston, who is working closely with the Somerville Coalition for Middle East Peace to head off the ballot question.

Dressing down bias on campus

Abercrombie & Fitch will partner with the Anti-Defamation League to bring anti-bias programming to U.S. college campuses.

The clothing retailer will join the ADL in promoting A Campus of Difference, a diversity training program to be launched at Washington University in St. Louis on Aug. 18 and then on several other campuses.

"We are proud to be able to bring diversity education to some of the nation's most respected institutions of higher learning through this unique partnership with Abercrombie & Fitch," said the ADL's associate national director, Caryl Stern.

Calif. Jewish school defaced

A Jewish school in California was vandalized in what is being called a hate crime.

Swastikas, cartoon characters and the word "trouble" defaced the Torah Academy in Palm Desert, Calif., on Monday, according to a media report. Local Jewish officials said it's not the first time vandals have attacked the school.

Police are investigating the incident.

WORLD

Study: Survivors more likely to commit suicide

Holocaust survivors are three times more likely to attempt suicide than other people their age, a new study suggests.

According to findings published in the recent American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry, around 24 percent of Holocaust survivors hospitalized at Israel's Abarbanel Mental Health Center have tried to kill themselves, as opposed to an 8.2 percent rate of attempted suicide among other elderly patients.

According to the Abarbanel staff and Tel Aviv University researchers who carried out the study, it overturns longstanding beliefs that Jews who survived the Nazi genocide have a stronger will to live.

The rate of suicide attempts increases as survivors age, the researchers found.

Britain wants to keep Islamist out

Britain wants to prevent a radical Islamic cleric, who has called for U.K. Muslims to wage jihad against Israel, from returning to the country.

Syrian-born Abu Bakri Mohammed, former leader of the extremist Al-Muhajiroun group, came to Britain in 1985 after being expelled from Saudi Arabia and was granted indefinite leave to remain.

The 47-year-old radical, who has described Israel as "a cancer in the heart of the Muslim world" that must be "eradicated and removed," blamed last month's terrorist attacks in London on the British public.

The British government hopes to block his return from a visit to Lebanon under new legislation announced last week that would allow the exclusion or deportation of those who preach hate or justify violence.

Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott said he hoped Bakri would stay away. "Enjoy your holiday," he said. "Make it a long one."

Orchestra plays Argentina

An orchestra with Arab and Israeli Jewish members, conducted by Daniel Barenboim, is performing in Argentina.

The orchestra will perform Mozart, Mahler and Beethoven music in concerts this week.

In addition to the 102 young musicians of the orchestra — from Israel, the Palestinian territories, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan and Spain — Barenboim is being accompanied by Marian Said, widow of professor Edward Said, who was one of the driving forces behind the project.

The orchestra's tour started in Europe and will end in the West Bank on Aug. 21.

Far-right festival a go

A far-right festival slated to take place next month in Greece may go ahead as scheduled, despite protests.

"No one can deny us our democratic right to assemble in public," Dimitris Eleftheropoulos, a spokesman for the Golden Dawn Party, said of the Sept. 16-18 festival.

Local authorities, the Turkish government and Jewish groups have protested the event.

MIDDLE EAST

Giving peace a chance

Ehud Olmert said the Gaza Strip withdrawal will be a chance for Israel to renew peace talks with the Palestinian Authority.

"The Israeli government voluntarily decided, without any outside pressure, to pull out from these territories for the sake of one thing: to lay out the foundations for the beginning of a meaningful dialogue between us and the Palestinians," Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert told foreign reporters Wednesday.

"We are prepared to carry on negotiations after the disengagement according to principles of the 'road map,'" he said, referring to the U.S.-led plan for a peaceful Palestinian state alongside Israel.