

## IN THE NEWS

## Israel foils Gaza attack

The Israeli army said it foiled a Palestinian terrorist attack planned to take place during the Gaza Strip withdrawal.

Dan Harel, the Israeli general overseeing the withdrawal, said Wednesday that security forces had discovered a bomb belt hidden in Muwassi, a Palestinian village nestled inside the main Gaza settlement bloc, Gush Katif.

The explosives are believed to belong to four suspected Islamic Jihad members recently arrested in Muwassi.

## Sharon takes responsibility

Ariel Sharon begged Gaza Strip settlers not to scuffle with Israeli security forces who come to evict them.

"I would like to appeal to everyone not to attack the police and soldiers and not to blame them or make things difficult for them," the Israeli prime minister told reporters Wednesday as the army began forced removals of Gaza settlers.

"Attack me. I am responsible for this. Attack me. Blame me," he said.

Sitting alongside Sharon, President Moshe Katsav interjected that by "attack" the prime minister meant verbal criticism.

## Envoy says: Withdrawal over soon

Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip could be over by Shabbat, Israel's consul general to New York told JTA.

Speaking Wednesday in a private session, Arye Mekel said he thinks the Israeli military could be out of Gaza by the end of the year.

Mekel also said that the emotional wounds from the withdrawal, which has seen clashes between some soldiers and settlers, would heal quickly.

"I personally believe that you will be surprised by how short-lived" the wounds will be, he said.

# WORLD REPORT

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## Tensions and passions surface as Israel evacuates the Gaza Strip

By DINA KRAFT

**N**EVESH DEKALIM, Gaza Strip (JTA) — Families pleaded with soldiers not to evict them from their homes of 20 years, yeshiva students ripped their shirts in mourning and anti-pullout activists cursed policemen as criminals as Israel evacuated Neveh Dekalim, the largest of its Gaza Strip settlements.

Smoke from burning tires and rubbish curled into the hot air as a haunting silence fell over Neveh Dekalim.

Despite the resistance here and elsewhere, Israeli officials said the withdrawal from 21 settlements in Gaza and four in the West Bank was going better than expected. By Wednesday evening, more than 60 percent of Gaza settlers had left, leading Israel Radio to report that the evacuation would be completed well ahead of the Sept. 4 deadline.

But that's not to say that all was going smoothly: In the West Bank, an Israeli settler shot dead three Palestinians on Wednesday.

Police said the man grabbed a gun from a security guard at the Shiloh settlement's industrial zone and opened fire at Palestinian workers, killing three and wounding two. The assailant was arrested and disarmed.

In southern Israel, a woman set herself on fire at a police checkpoint to protest the withdrawal. The woman, a West Bank settler in her 60s, doused herself with gasoline and lit herself on fire.

A police spokesman who described the incident as a politically motivated suicide attempt, said the woman was admitted to a hospital with 60 percent of her body burned.

In the Gaza settlement of Morag, a woman stabbed an Israeli soldier with an IV needle near a synagogue, Ha'aretz reported.

In Neveh Dekalim, meanwhile, passions and tensions ran high even as the scene remained relatively peaceful.

Some houses already were shuttered and abandoned. At others, boxes waiting for moving vans were stacked on porches and patios.

Teams of soldiers went through the neighborhoods negotiating with families to leave their homes peacefully. In calm voices, they met the frenzied pleas of families telling them that their orders were immoral and should be ignored.

Gidon Bashari, who has lived in Neveh Dekalim for 17 years, had not packed a single box. He told the soldiers who came to his door that he would leave peacefully — but not until they sat with his family and let them explain why they did not want to go.

"We are not violent people," said Bashari, a high school principal who works in the Israeli city of Ashkelon. "Our struggle is in the spirit of the nation. What you are doing is anti-democratic and against our country, and history will judge you."

Up the street from Bashari's house, Sagi Ifrach, 23, sat on the red-tiled roof of the house where he grew up, refusing to leave. Surrounded by friends singing Hatikvah, Israel's national anthem, and waving the Israeli flag, they mocked the soldiers in the garden below.

Security forces eventually climbed a ladder and convinced Ifrach to come down. Wearing an Israeli flag like a cape, Ifrach sobbed as he descended the wooden ladder.

Nearby, a little girl with long brown hair

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THE  
DISENGAGEMENT  
SUMMER

## ■ *Withdrawal from Gaza is intensely emotional for settlers*

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cried uncontrollably as she leaned against her father's leg. The family had just been evacuated.

While most families eventually agreed to leave their homes without a fight, there were scattered examples throughout the Gush Katif bloc, which includes the majority of Gaza settlements, of people who had to be physically dragged out their front doors, past gardens they had carefully planted and into dusty buses waiting to take them to hotels inside Israel.

About 50 soldiers entered the foyer of Neveh Dekalim's Yamit Yeshiva, waiting to evacuate those inside. Worshipers held a final service, breaking into tears as they took scissors and knives to rend each other's shirts in a sign of mourning.

Soon the walls turned to prayer and song as about 200 worshipers swayed arm-in-arm and sang of Jerusalem. As they prayed, some of the soldiers joined arms and swayed with them.

Scenes of intense emotion were seen throughout the day as soldiers escorted families from their homes. Many of the soldiers also wiped tears from their eyes and tried to comfort one another with hugs.

The soldiers faced intense hostility from settlers and large numbers of anti-withdrawal activists who have flooded Neveh Dekalim in recent weeks. They were bombarded with shouts of "traitor" and even "kapo," a reference to Jews who served as supervisors in Nazi concentration camps.

As a massive force of police and soldiers entered Neveh Dekalim on Wednesday morning, they were booed and hissed.

People chanted "Jews don't expel Jews," one of the anthems of the anti-Gaza pullout movement. Fingers were pointed as teenagers and middle-aged residents told the security forces that they should be ashamed of themselves and that they were committing a crime against the Jewish people.

Anti-withdrawal activists, many of them teenagers, had stayed overnight at the two main Neveh Dekalim synagogues, which face each other across a plaza.

Hundreds gathered to pray as the sun rose. On one side of the plaza, men in prayer

shawls swayed in the pinkish, early-morning light, as women prayed on the other side.

Eliana Braun, 16, from Ginot Shomron, a West Bank settlement, was among the girls who had spent the night at the Sephardi synagogue. She said she had not believed the evacuation would really take place — but that in any case, the struggle against it had been worth it.

"Now people are more connected and understand what is happening here," she said. "I don't think it will influence" Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, "but this was not meant for him. Instead it was meant to wake up the country." ■

**In Gaza settlements, distraught families pleaded with Israeli soldiers to let them stay in their homes.**

## Anti-withdrawal activists bring out the big weapon: psychological guilt

By DINA KRAFT

NEVEH DEKALIM, Gaza Strip (JTA) — The soldier with a honey-colored ponytail tucked under her hat was surrounded by weeping teenage girls asking her where her Jewish heart was — but she didn't flinch.

"How can you evacuate my grandmother? She was in the Palmach," one teary-eyed girl with dark hair and a long red skirt pleaded Tuesday, referring to the elite Jewish militia that fought to establish Israel in 1948.

Liron Ben-Dor, the 19-year-old soldier, replied calmly, "I love this country no less than you do. We are doing this so we can continue living here."

Unconvinced, the growing crowd of girls and young women continued to bombard her with the slogans and arguments that the anti-pullout movement has drilled them to repeat.

One asked her how she could carry out such a crime, referring to the ongoing evacuation of Gaza's Jewish settlements. Another told her she was being used by the Israeli government.

A third asked her, "Why do I have to defend my home from soldiers?"

The scene has been replicated countless times in the past days and weeks as the anti-withdrawal camp uses what it hopes

will be its most effective weapon: psychological guilt.

They see it differently, saying they are merely spreading the "truth" — one, they say, that was given to them by God.

The main slogans of the movement: "A Jew does not expel another Jew," and "Soldier, policeman, refuse orders."

"Shame on you" is also popular, as the activists ask soldiers and police officers how they'll live with themselves in the future after having allegedly betrayed the Jewish people.

In most cases, the police and soldiers do not engage their questioners and stare directly ahead, their eyes hidden behind reflective sunglasses.

Some appear bored by the repeated verbal abuse and even begin to yawn.

But some are stung. One soldier, visibly upset by the verbal warfare, wiped a tear from her eyes during the scuffles Tuesday in Neveh Dekalim. Her friend and fellow soldier gave her a hug.

As security forces marched up the main road in Neveh Dekalim trying to break up a crowd blocking the road, one man with a beard and a small boy on his shoulders yelled out in a booming voice, "Get out of here! Leave our homes, criminals!"

The troops kept moving forward. ■

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# Jewish interfaith group nurtures ties to Vatican

By CHANAN TIGAY

NEW YORK (JTA) — Less than two months after he was elected pope, the newly minted Benedict XVI sat down to his first audience with an official delegation of Jews.

Members of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations weren't the only ones who had attempted to score face time with the pontiff.

"Every Jewish organization tried to call the Vatican," says Rabbi Gary Bretton-Granatoor, the director of interfaith affairs at the Anti-Defamation League and an IJCIC member. "It was the Jewish version of the 'Amazing Race': Who was going to get to meet with the pope first?"

"The message we got from everybody across the board was: The pope, in the first three months, will meet only with IJCIC." Bretton-Granatoor went on to say that in the fall, depending on the pope's schedule, "any Jewish organization has the right to request a meeting."

The IJCIC group's precedence makes sense: It was created in the early 1970s so that the Holy See, which had grown frustrated that it couldn't turn to a unified Jewish address on interfaith matters, would have a consolidated Jewish partner for dialogue.

With Benedict's election and the subsequent meeting with the IJCIC, insiders at the group say, a momentous period for Catholic-Jewish relations got under way — a period that may significantly impact not just this pope's tenure but those of future popes as well.

"The positioning that relations with the Jewish people acquires during the beginning of a papal tenure can have much significance for the rest of it," says Rabbi David Rosen, the director of the American Jewish Committee's department for interreligious affairs and the IJCIC's new president.

Further, other Vatican watchers say, with the power base of the Roman Catholic Church shifting toward Latin America and Africa, the next pope — likely to be younger than the 78-year old Benedict — will not necessarily be European and therefore will be less familiar with the Holocaust and the church's historic condemnation of anti-Semitism.

"We are at a very special moment in time in terms of Catholic-Jewish relations," Rosen says.

Today the IJCIC comprises the AJCommittee, the World Jewish Congress, the ADL, and the rabbinic and synagogue bodies of the Reform and Conservative movements and modern Orthodoxy.

Over the years the IJCIC has played an important role on issues ranging from fighting the building of a convent on the grounds of Auschwitz to advocating for the opening of the Vatican's archives.

But is it really a single, unified address?

Its members say yes — and no.

"Somebody once told me that IJCIC was an appropriate acronym for an organization that does the kind of work it does — it really itches and kicks," Rosen says.

Still, IJCIC insiders say the group operates relatively smoothly on the basis of consensus. If any of its constituent groups is seriously opposed to a particular move, the IJCIC won't do it.

The body's Orthodox representatives, for example, oppose discussing matters of pure theology with the Catholic Church. As such, the IJCIC does not engage the Vatican on subjects such as their respective approaches to the unity of God.

"We're at a community table, and we have to temper our unique identities to be able to stand together," Bretton-Granatoor says.

Earlier this month, the IJCIC named Rosen as its new president — and simultaneously re-elected Rabbi Israel Singer, the chairman of the World Jewish Congress, as chairman.

Until recently the group had only one top position, chairman. In 2002, another top position was added as Singer became chairman and Rabbi Joel Meyers became chairman of the board. Although the two-tiered leadership was initially intended as a one-time move, the IJCIC recently codified the change in its bylaws, changing the position names once again. Now Rosen is president, and Singer is chairman.

Between the president and the chairman, Rosen says, the president is the "first among equals." The two will have certain shared responsibilities and will consult with each other before decisions are made.

Historically, insiders say, the WJC tended to take a harder line on Vatican issues than some other groups, including the AJCommittee, though some observers say that's changing.

"We do speak about Judaism in a proud way, and we will continue to do so," Singer says. "If that's hard-line, then that's what we stand for — and the pope likes that."

Will the appointments of representa-

tives from different groups to the IJCIC's top two positions create tension? Both Singer and Rosen say no.

Some people who are no longer in the WJC "took a much more aggressive style than Israel Singer, and I think that very often Israel Singer was unfairly represented as a result," Rosen says. "I feel comfortable that we share an orientation and an understanding."

"I have every confidence that he will respect the nature of my position and that we will be able to work together," he adds.

Meyers, the executive vice president of the Conservative movement's Rabbinical Assembly, says that "sometimes organizations on IJCIC will be on slightly different planes when it comes to making statements."

In a July sermon, Benedict did not list Israel among countries that have suffered from Islamic terrorism. Israel reacted strongly, and the Vatican fired back.

The IJCIC did not issue a public statement on the flap, opting to address the matter behind the scenes.

"I think it was unfortunate," says Seymour Reich, a former chairman and a current member of the IJCIC. "Israel has been a victim of terrorism, and the pope should have acknowledged that. But it's an issue that has been blown out of proportion by the Foreign Ministry of Israel and by the Vatican. This will pass."

At least one of the IJCIC's member groups did go public with its complaint to the Vatican.

On July 29, Bretton-Granatoor and Abraham Foxman, the ADL's national director, sent a letter to Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro Valls in which they expressed concern about the escalating rhetoric and Israel's absence from the "litany of places beset by terrorism." ■

**Relations between the Jewish community and a new pope set the tone for the rest of a papal term, a Jewish interfaith official said.**

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES**

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## WORLD

### Mbeki lauds Sharon

South Africa's president congratulated Ariel Sharon on Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

"We salute your courage and assure you of our support as you dismantle the Jewish settlements in Gaza and the West Bank," Thabo Mbeki said in a letter Wednesday to the Israeli prime minister.

He added that the sacrifice of the Israeli settlers, "painful as it undoubtedly is, opens the way to the implementation of the critically important Israel-Palestine road map to peace, cooperation and friendship.

It must surely strike a mighty blow for an end to the violence that has claimed too many Israeli and Palestinian lives."

### German Jews to welcome pope

Jews in Cologne, Germany, are preparing to welcome the pope.

On Friday, Pope Benedict XVI is slated to be a guest of the Cologne Synagogue during the Catholic Church's World Youth Day celebrations in that city.

Local Jewish leaders see the historic visit of the German-born pope as proof of his commitment to interfaith relations and say they're not troubled by recent tensions over his failure to deplore terrorism against Israel.

"This disharmony between Rome and Jerusalem doesn't overshadow the visit," the Cologne Jewish community board member Abraham Lehrer told JTA.

## NORTH AMERICA

### Arms export dispute over

Israel and the United States defused their dispute over Israeli arms exports to China.

The Defense Ministry in Tel Aviv said Tuesday that it had signed an understanding with the Pentagon "aimed at solving past problems that had seriously harmed relations in the realm of technological security."

The accord addressed U.S. government complaints about Israel's sale of Harpy attack drones and other advanced weaponry to China, which Washington had said could be used to threaten its ally Taiwan.

No further details were immediately available, but the Pentagon said that the deal included the provision that the United States would be informed in advance of future Israeli arms exports.

According to media reports, Israel has scrapped a Harpy maintenance deal with China.

### Sheehan reportedly made anti-Israel comments

The mother camped out near President Bush's Texas ranch reportedly has said her son, who died in the Iraq war, was killed to "benefit Israel."

Cindy Sheehan, whose son Casey was killed in Baghdad last year, told a Veterans for Peace conference earlier this month that she would tell the president, "You get America out of Iraq, you get Israel out of Palestine."

The Republican Jewish Coalition, which compiled the quotations, says Sheehan has aligned herself with anti-Israel "peace" organizations and several Democratic lawmakers and activists have given her support.

The National Jewish Democratic Council questioned the authenticity of Sheehan's quotes and said she should not be seen as speaking for all Democrats. Sheehan recently told CNN that she didn't say her son died for Israel.

"I do believe that the Palestinian issue is a hot issue that needs to be solved and it needs to be more fair and equitable, but I never said my son died for Israel," she said Monday.

### Arrest in Israeli Consulate plot

A Pakistani man was arrested in connection with an alleged terrorist plot against the Israeli Consulate and other buildings in the Los Angeles area.

Hammad Riaz Samani was arrested Aug. 2, The Associated Press reported.

The arrest followed an investigation that was launched after police found a list of targets during a search of a robbery suspect's home.

### Canadian Muslim under fire

The president of the Canadian Islamic Congress is being criticized for urging the government to replace two Jewish appointees because of their perceived pro-Israel views.

The appointment of former senator Leo Kolber as chair of an advisory council on national security matters and Jonathan Schneiderman as Middle East adviser to Canada's Foreign Ministry is "bad news" that is making Canada's Muslims nervous, Mohamed Elmasry warned in a news release.

The two men are "strong pro-Israel voices in Canadian party politics, which could herald bad news for Canada's Muslims," Elmasry said. In a newspaper interview, Elmasry urged that a Muslim be chosen to replace Kolber on the advisory council.

### Forum: Jewish education must change

Jewish educators must change to meet the American Jewish community's emphasis on lifelong learning, experts said.

Such reforms, including collaboration with other Jewish institutions, will help create the "sacred communities" that 21st-century American Jews are seeking.

Those were the messages conveyed to more than 1,100 rabbis, teachers, administrators and communal workers in Jewish education this week at the 30th annual Conference on Alternatives in Jewish Education, continuing through Thursday at the University of Washington in Seattle.

The four-day conference was sponsored by the 4,000-member Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education, the largest membership organization of Jewish educators in North America.

## MIDDLE EAST

### Immigrants heckle Israeli politician

North American immigrants to Israel reportedly heckled an Israeli Cabinet minister who met them when they arrived in the Jewish state.

The immigrants harassed Ehud Olmert on Wednesday because of the Israeli government's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, the Jerusalem Post reported.

The incident came as the 250 immigrants arrived at Ben-Gurion Airport in the latest wave of what officials predict will be the largest number of immigrants to Israel from North America since 1983.

The flight was sponsored by Nefesh b'Nefesh and the Jewish Agency for Israel.

### Third intifada seen

The Palestinian terror campaign could resume in 2006, Israel's military intelligence chief predicted.

Addressing the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on Tuesday, Maj. Gen. Aharon Ze'evi-Farkash said Palestinian terrorist groups were expected to launch a new wave of violence next year if there is no progress in peace talks with Israel.

He said the factions mostly would hold fire until after Israel completes its Gaza Strip withdrawal next month and the Palestinian Authority holds parliamentary elections in January.