

## IN THE NEWS

## Israel completes Gaza withdrawal

Israel completed its withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

Israel Defense Forces sources said Monday that the last settlement, Netzarim, had been evacuated except for a few families.

Settlers and soldiers prayed in Netzarim's synagogue before the settlement was evacuated.

Two more West Bank settlements are slated to be evacuated this week as well.

## Conservative Jews say Roberts is OK

The Conservative movement deemed Judge John Roberts "qualified to serve" on the U.S. Supreme Court.

The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism sent a letter Monday to Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.), chair of the U.S. Senate's Judiciary Committee, concluding that the movement considers Roberts qualified to be a Supreme Court justice.

The movement said Roberts is well educated, avoids an ideologically defined approach to judicial interpretation and has a "balanced respect for foundational documents, reasonable interpretation and societal realities."

Confirmation hearings for Roberts begin next month.

## White supremacist sentenced to life in jail

A follower of an anti-Semitic Christian philosophy was sentenced to life in prison for a series of bombings in the southeastern United States.

Eric Rudolph, who admitted to bombing the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta and several other sites, was sentenced Monday for the attacks, which killed two people and injured hundreds.

He was a follower of Christian Identity and spent four months in 1984 at a camp for followers in Missouri.

He told relatives that he hated Jews, complaining of their presence on television, and espoused Holocaust-denial rhetoric in high school.

Rudolph also attacked an abortion clinic and a gay nightclub.

# WORLD REPORT

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## Relative ease of Gaza withdrawal could affect Israel's future agenda

By LESLIE SUSSER

**J**ERUSALEM (JTA) — In the long run, the ease with which Israel evacuated Gaza Strip settlements could prove to be as significant as the pullback itself.

The fact that the withdrawal went relatively smoothly challenges the long-standing belief that Israel will not be able to dismantle large numbers of settlements in the West Bank, shores up Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's international and domestic standing, and suggests that the settler movement will not be able to set the national agenda in quite the same way as it has for more than three decades.

Despite apocalyptic forecasts of conflicts approaching civil war, it took the Israeli army and police less than a week to remove the roughly 9,000 Gaza settlers and about 3,000 radicals who had infiltrated the settlements to stiffen resistance.

The strategy was to isolate the settlements and send overwhelming numbers of soldiers and police into one or two at a time. The military chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz, explained that the huge numbers made it possible to do the job using minimal force.

The settlers expressed their anguish at being forced to leave their homes: There were tears, harsh words and some ugly physical clashes, but no bloodshed.

Indeed, what violence there was seemed to set clear limits to future resistance after Israeli society unanimously condemned waving sticks, hurling wooden beams and pouring down oil, paint and turpentine to fend off soldiers and police as "intolerable hooliganism."

All this could have major implications for the West Bank. For decades, many Israelis have

argued that the settlement project was irreversible. Now pundits are challenging that view.

Writing in Ha'aretz, Zvi Barel argued that the ease of the evacuation had shattered the irreversibility theory.

"Suddenly it becomes clear that the logic that dismantled the Gaza settlements can also be applied to the West Bank. The fears that drove the state are also reversible: no civil war or military mutiny. Only curses, nails and oil," he wrote. "This is precisely the time for

the state to continue down the same path it charted in Gaza and proceed to the West Bank, the illegal outposts, the tiny settlements, the lawbreakers — even the state's fear of the settlements can be reversed."

Only six weeks ago, Yonatan Bassi, the official in charge of resettlement and compensation, argued that a similar operation in the West Bank would be impossible because of the large number of settlers involved: If Israel annexes only the three large settlement blocs close to the pre-1967 boundaries, the estimate is that 50,000-80,000 settlers would have to be moved from far-flung settlements.

That could mean up to 10 times the effort and 10 times the amount in compensation, compared to the Gaza operation. That, Bassi had insisted, made it impossible.

Six weeks ago many analysts would have agreed, but Bassi's thesis seems far less convincing today.

The speedy evacuation also is helping Sharon. The fact that he didn't shrink from the Gaza operation and carried it out with such impressive efficiency has enhanced his international reputation.

An Italian group has nominated the Israeli

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ANALYSIS

## ■ *Ease of Gaza withdrawal has some looking to the West Bank*

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prime minister for the Nobel Peace Prize, and Sharon himself feels confident enough to address the U.N. General Assembly next month, a forum in which Israel regularly is criticized.

Even some Palestinians have been impressed by the Gaza operation. In a rare expression of empathy for Israeli suffering, journalist Daoud Kuttab, writing in *The New York Times*, argued that "whether Palestinians and Arabs will admit it or not, the powerful images of the last few days cannot be ignored."

The "new view of Israel" that such images inspired could help the cause of peace, Kuttab suggested.

Sharon's domestic situation has improved, too. The way in which the evacuation was carried out won him plaudits in the media and could translate into several percentage points of support in polls.

More importantly, there are signs that he may be gaining ground in his Likud Party, where he faces a leadership challenge from former Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Though recent polls showed Netanyahu ahead in the party, there is a growing perception among Likud activists that Sharon would be a much more electable candidate in a national election.

Sharon's recovery in the party could prove temporary, however; much will depend on the Palestinians' next moves. If there is a renewed outbreak of terrorism, Netanyahu will blame the Gaza withdrawal. If there is quiet, Sharon's comeback will gather pace.

Most importantly for many secular Israelis, the balance of power between their vision of a democratic Israel and some settlers' vision of a theocratic state seems to have swung dramatically in the democrats' favor.

Novelist Amos Oz articulated the mood in an article in the *Yediot Achronot* newspaper.

"For more than 30 years," Oz wrote, "the settlers' dream has overwhelmed the dream of secular

Israelis. Day in and day out, the vision of Greater Israel and the reign of the Messiah crushed the hope of being a free people and building a just society."

But now, Oz wrote, the tables have been turned: The settlers are no longer setting the agenda, and they're experiencing

distress similar to what they caused mainstream Israelis for nearly three decades.

The settler defeat has put the Yesha settler council under enormous pressure. Hard-liners, who blame the Yesha council for the failed anti-evacuation campaign, say the group was not militant enough.

But Sharon maintains that Yesha's leadership did little to curb violence and that, consequently, he will

not allow the group a role in government plans to develop the Negev and Galilee to host evicted settlers.

For now, secular, pragmatic Israel, with Sharon as its chief representative, has the upper hand. The extremists on both sides are at bay. The question is, for how long? ■

**'It becomes clear that the logic that dismantled the Gaza settlements can also be applied to the West Bank.'**

**Zvi Bareil**

Ha'aretz

## Arrest made in plot on Jewish sites

By TOM TUGEND

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — More than 200 federal and local counterterrorism agents are investigating links between the activities of Islamic gangs in California prisons and possible planned attacks on local Israeli and Jewish targets.

The lengthy and highly secretive investigation has led to the arrest of a Pakistani national and two Black Muslim converts.

The case started mundanely in mid-July when police arrested Levar Haney Washington, 25, and Gregory Vernon Patterson, 21, as suspects in a string of gas station robberies.

A search of Washington's apartment turned up what police described as "jihadist" literature, bulletproof vests and an address list of some two dozen Los Angeles sites.

Two separate entries referred to the "Consulate of Zion," which investigators took to mean the Israeli Consulate, and the El Al ticket counter at the Los Angeles International Airport, the site where an Egyptian immigrant killed two Israeli Americans in 2002.

Also listed were two synagogues and

a number of California National Guard recruiting stations.

A spokesman at the Israeli Consulate confirmed earlier that warnings of possible threats had been received from the FBI, adding, "We fully trust American authorities to handle the situation."

The probe by the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force was extended recently with the unannounced arrest of Hamad Riaz Samana, a 21-year-old Pakistani college student. Samana and the two other arrested men allegedly attended the same mosque in the Los Angeles area.

FBI and police spokespersons have been extremely tight-lipped about the investigation, but the *Los Angeles Times* reported that the probe is also targeting California's Folsom State Prison, where Washington converted to Islam while serving a term for assault and battery.

A particular focus is a group called *Jamiyyat Ul Islam Is Saheeh*, roughly translated as the Assembly of Authentic Islam. According to gang specialists, JIS has operated at Folsom for five years and is the smaller of two Islamic gangs active in California prisons. ■



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# Pope's visit to synagogue goes well

By TOBY AXELROD

BERLIN (JTA) — Pope Benedict XVI's visit to a German synagogue was replete with symbolism: most notably, the potential for positive relations between the country's Jewish community and a pope who served in the German army during World War II.

For Germany's Jewish community, which has tripled to more than 100,000 since 1989 with the arrival of former Soviet Jews, the live broadcast of Benedict's visit during World Youth Day in Germany served another purpose.

Millions of Germans tuning in to ARD-TV last Friday had a chance to look inside a German synagogue and hear an introduction to Judaism from a Cologne Jewish community board member, Michael Rado, as they waited for the pope to arrive.

They learned that Cologne is home to Germany's oldest Jewish community, with documents dating back to the fourth century. They heard that this synagogue was rebuilt in 1959, on the site where a synagogue erected in 1899 was destroyed during Kristallnacht on Nov. 9, 1938.

Then they witnessed the rabbi's warm welcome of Benedict, the moment of silence in which they remembered the victims of the Holocaust and the procession to the bimah as a choir sang "Heveinu Shalom Aleichem."

For the Catholic Church, the public-relations value against the backdrop of simmering anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in Europe could not be underestimated.

But it could have been much different. While many Germans were proud when their cardinal, Joseph Ratzinger, was elected pope in April — the popular Bild Zeitung tabloid bore the headline, "We Are Pope!" — for many Jews, Ratzinger embodied a Catholic conservatism that sees other faiths as secondary.

Add to that the new pope's boyhood membership in the Hitler Youth and his recent failure to condemn terrorism against Israel, and the possibility for tension was there.

For now, however, skepticism seems to have waned as the pope's visit marks

more evidence of his commitment to interfaith relations.

The event was a historic first: Never before had a pope officially visited a German synagogue. In fact, this was only the second time a pope has formally entered a Jewish house of worship; the late Pope John Paul II visited the Great Synagogue of Rome in April 1986.

Some said the presence of Israeli Ambassador Shimon Stein might bode well for relations between the Vatican and Israel, strained over Benedict's recent failure to condemn terrorism against the Jewish state.

Others demanded that the pope follow words with deeds by opening the doors to the Vatican's World War II-era archive, shedding light on the church's wartime stance toward the Holocaust.

In his remarks to some 500 people gathered in the Cologne Synagogue, the pope stressed the future, not the past.

Worried about growing anti-Semitism and xenophobia in Europe, determined to teach tolerance to Catholic youth and noting the negative role played by the Church in the past, Benedict declared his commitment to cooperation with Jews.

He added that interfaith dialogue must be carried out in recognition of "existing differences."

"In those areas in which, due to our profound convictions in faith, we diverge, and indeed precisely in those areas, we need to show respect and love for one another," the pope said to a standing ovation.

Some said afterward that the pope should have mentioned Israel, as well as the specific crimes of the church, such as the massacres carried out during the papally approved Crusades of the 11th-13th centuries and the brutalities of the Span-

ish Inquisition.

But Cologne Rabbi Natanael Teitelbaum told JTA he is "happy with the pope's remarks. He looked back on Jewish history, and said he is against terrorism and for mutual respect, and those are the most important things."

Teitelbaum's address also drew a standing ovation.

Paul Spiegel, head of the Central Council

of Jews in Germany, said it did not matter that the pope did not directly address the subject of terrorism against Israel.

"That will be between the Vatican and the Israeli government," said Spiegel, who survived the Holocaust in hiding and came back to Germany as a boy with his parents.

"My heart is full of the impressions of today," Spiegel added at a news conference. "We are well on the way to mutual respect and, as the pope said, to mutual love."

After the ceremony, guests — including local and national politicians, religious leaders and members of the Cologne Jewish community — personally greeted the pope on the bimah, shook his hand and presented gifts, including a large shofar.

There also were other types of gifts. George Ban, executive vice president and CEO of the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, gave the pope a brochure about the work of his foundation, which supports Jewish education in Central and Eastern Europe.

"I don't think it is very often that one has the chance to have your organization known by the No. 1 person in the Christian world," Ban told JTA.

Some guests came away with a souvenir, too: The royal-blue yarmulkes printed for the occasion with the date and the words "Besuch-Papst Benedikt XVI" — "Visit of Pope Benedict XVI."

'My heart is full of the impressions of today. We are well on the way to mutual respect and, as the pope said, to mutual love.'

Paul Spiegel

Central Council of Jews in Germany

BEHIND  
THE  
HEADLINES

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### NORTH AMERICA

#### Chasidic community vandalized

A Chasidic community's summer retreat near Montreal was vandalized.

The cottage that the Belz Chasidic community uses for prayer services in Val Morin, Quebec, was broken into and prayer books were taken and thrown into a nearby lake.

The community, which vacations there during the summer months, is embroiled in a legal battle against several Val Morin residents who accuse the Chasidim of disturbing others during the vacation period.

The Canadian Jewish Congress' Quebec Region has been assisting the Belz in their legal defense.

"To take sacred texts and treat them with such contempt is truly a deplorable act," the congress' Adam Atlas said. "To do this in a place where children gather to study and spend their summer days is even more shameful."

The Torah scrolls used for services are kept in a safe and were not damaged.

#### Florida cemetery vandalized

A Jewish cemetery in Florida was vandalized.

Approximately 35 burial sites were damaged over the weekend in Pensacola, causing an estimated \$30,000 in damages, said members of the Temple Beth-el Congregation, which manages the cemetery.

Police are investigating the incident.

#### Comments hurt Seattle candidate

A candidate running to head a multibillion-dollar monorail project in Seattle is taking heat for comments about Jews.

Cindi Laws, who is running for re-election as head of the Seattle Monorail Project, said Aug. 9 that her opponent Beth Goldberg — who opposes the monorail — would enjoy an edge because the city's Jewish community is largely against the transportation project and therefore would be likely to support Goldberg, media reports said.

Speaking to members of the King County Labor Council in an effort to garner the body's support, Laws said that three-quarters of the cash raised in a monorail recall campaign last year came from Jews — and that a Jewish candidate would be able to get hold of that money more easily than she would, according to a member of the council.

The council voted to oppose Laws' re-election.

### MIDDLE EAST

#### Sharon vows to expand settlements

Ariel Sharon said Israel will continue building in West Bank settlement blocs.

"There will be building" in the blocs, the Israeli prime minister was quoted as saying in the Jerusalem Post on Monday, as security forces prepared to evacuate two settlements in the northern West Bank in the final stage of the government's withdrawal plan.

Sharon vowed that the Gush Emunim and Ariel blocs would remain Israel's forever, and stood by his decision to connect the Ma'aleh Adumim settlement to Jerusalem, although that has drawn censure from Washington.

#### P.A. takes charge

Palestinian Authority security forces began deploying around West Bank areas evacuated by Israel.

The Palestinian Authority said Monday it was posting police personnel around Kadim and Ganim, two northern West Bank settlements evacuated last week under Israel's withdrawal plan.

Another two settlements in the area, Homesh and Sa-Nur, are to be cleared Tuesday.

Israeli authorities expect fierce resistance from anti-withdrawal activists holed up there, and local Palestinians have been advised to stay indoors for their own safety until the evacuations are completed.

### WORLD

#### U.N. support for P.A. protested

Jewish groups protested United Nations financing for a propaganda poster used at a Palestinian Authority rally.

A tag line on a poster at last week's rally in the Gaza Strip that read, "Gaza today, West Bank and Jerusalem tomorrow," said the sign was paid for by the U.N. Development Program.

The United Nations "has no business paying the costs of this propaganda, especially when it is aimed at a member state of the United Nations," the American Jewish Congress said in a statement.

Other Jewish groups protested as well.

A U.N. official said the aid is not intended for political uses and that the incident is being investigated.

#### U.N. urged on Holocaust remembrance

An Israeli official urged the United Nations to declare an international Holocaust Memorial Day.

More than 30 European countries support the plan, which would come after the international body held a special session earlier this year to mark the 60th anniversary of the Holocaust, the Jerusalem Post reported.

The United Nations is expected to vote on the proposal during its General Assembly, which begins next month.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center has been campaigning for the United Nations to declare such a day.

#### Muslim charges blasted in Britain

Jewish leaders criticized the U.K.'s main Muslim umbrella group for claiming a pro-Israel lobby had influenced BBC filmmakers.

In an open letter sent to BBC's director general, Mark Thompson, the Muslim Council of Britain said the makers of a documentary about the organization were swayed by "highly placed supporters of Israel in the media."

The hourlong film about the council, which aired Sunday, explored whether the body could control extremism among the U.K.'s 1.5 million Muslims.

The council's letter read, "The BBC should not allow itself to be used by the highly placed supporters of Israel in the British media to make political capital out of the July 7 atrocities in London."

Said a spokesman for the Board of Deputies, the representative body of U.K. Jewry: "The baseless suggestion that any minority community has sought to exploit the bombings for political gain is deeply hurtful not only to that community, but to the victims of 7/7 and their families. It is disappointing" that the Muslim Council "would try to demonize a fellow minority community in this way," the board spokesman said.

A BBC spokesman also rejected the council's accusations.