



IN THE NEWS

Bush lauds Jews for their Katrina work

President Bush thanked the American Jewish community for aiding Hurricane Katrina victims.

In a speech Wednesday marking the 20th anniversary of the Republican Jewish Coalition, Bush singled out the work of Jews, including Chabad of Tulane University and a synagogue in Baton Rouge.

Jewish organizations thus far have raised \$17 million to help Katrina victims, Bush said, which is believed to be 10 percent of all private funds raised for Katrina relief in the United States.

"Our citizens are answering the call of the prophet Isaiah: 'If you give what you have to the hungry and fill the needs of those who suffer, then your light will rise in the darkness and your darkness will be like the brightest time of day,'" Bush said.

King Abdullah asks rabbis to support him

King Abdullah II of Jordan called on Jews to join with him in promoting peace and reconciliation.

In a speech Wednesday in Washington to more than 70 rabbis, Abdullah said Jews and Muslims share a common heritage.

"It is my hope that we as children of Abraham can go forth from this gathering with a common mission, to work together toward peace, justice and reconciliation," Abdullah said.

Abbas says he won't crack down on terrorists

Mahmoud Abbas rejected an international call for the Palestinian Authority to fulfill its commitments to crack down on terrorists.

"With regard to dealing with the Palestinian organizations, this is our affair," the P.A. president told reporters Thursday, when asked about the demand leveled this week by mediators from the "Quartet" — the United States, European Union, United Nations and Russia — driving the "road map" peace plan.

WORLD REPORT

PUBLISHED WEEKDAYS BY JTA—THE GLOBAL NEWS SERVICE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE · WWW.JTA.ORG

If no police indicted for 2000 riots, Arabs say they'll take case abroad

By GIL SEDAN

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Five years after the October 2000 riots that brought Jewish-Arab relations to an unprecedented low, Israel's Arab population is again on the offensive.

The reason for the renewed tension is the decision of the Justice Ministry's Police Investigations Department not to press charges against any police officers in the killing of 12 Israeli Arabs and a Palestinian during the riots, which broke out in sympathy with the nascent intifada.

The reason: "Lack of incriminating evidence against the suspects."

The Arab population reacted with rage, saying it showed that the state treats them as second-class citizens. Many Jews agreed.

"A situation in which 13 people were killed and no one is indicted is unacceptable," said Shimon Shamir, a member of the Orr inquiry commission established by the government, which investigated the riots and issued a 2003 report that found flaws in the way the police reacted.

The Orr Commission instructed the investigations department to determine whether "there is reason to take criminal or other procedures" against policemen for the rioters' deaths. However, the investigations department found that there wasn't enough evidence to support criminal charges against specific police officers.

The Follow-Up Committee, the informal leadership of Israel's Arabs, agreed Monday on a series of measures intended to reverse the department's decision and lead to the indictment of police officers. The measures

include demonstrations, a hunger strike by Arab leaders in front of the Prime Minister's Office and appeals to the High Court of Justice to compel the state to press charges.

The Arab leadership is threatening to bring the issue before overseas legal authorities if they don't get their way in Israel.

"This is legally possible," Marwan Dalal, a senior attorney at Adalah, the Legal Center for Minority Rights in Israel, told JTA.

A number of legal systems allow foreigners to be tried in severe cases of human-rights violations, he said.

As an example, Dalal cited the U.S. Alien Torts Act, which he said allows foreigners to press civil lawsuits in U.S. courts against officials involved in human-rights violations.

The act was dormant for 180 years until a 1980 case in which Paraguayan citizens pressed charges against the country's inspector general for allegedly having tortured their son to death, Dalal said.

Similarly, Switzerland and Germany convicted Yugoslav citizens for human-rights violations in Bosnia. A British court convicted a Pakistani citizen for crimes committed in Afghanistan.

The idea of looking abroad when the Israeli courts — generally recognized as among the best in the world — don't satisfy their grievances is becoming increasingly popular among Palestinians, Israeli Arabs and their supporters on the fringes of the Israeli Jewish left.

War-crimes charges several years ago against Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, filed in Belgium, provoked a diplomatic

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THE
HEADLINES

■ Israeli Arabs look abroad for legal satisfaction in a case stemming from 2000 riots

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confrontation between the two countries before they were dropped.

A British court recently issued an arrest warrant for alleged war crimes against reserve Maj. Gen. Doron Almog, former commander of Israeli forces in the Gaza Strip, for his anti-terror efforts during the intifada. The order eventually was revoked, but Almog, who was about to enter Britain, was advised not to disembark from his airplane and eventually returned to Israel.

Palestinians and their supporters also talk of filing charges abroad against former Israel Defense Forces chief of staff Lt. Gen. Moshe Ya'alon and the current chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz, for their role in the assassination of Hamas terrorist kingpin Salah Shehade. The bomb that killed Shehade also killed a number of Palestinian civilians.

"Not all countries give their court universal criminal authority," Hebrew University law professor Ruth Lapidot, a world-renowned expert on international law and a former legal advisor to the Foreign Ministry, told JTA.

To the best of her knowledge, Lapidot said, no foreign court has ever gone ahead with a legal process against Israeli citizens.

Moreover, she said, even countries that adopt the "universal responsibility code" usually limit it to charges of genocide, Nazi war crimes or hijacking

of airplanes. Israel, for example, used the prerogative of international law to try Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann and John Demjanjuk, who was accused of being a notorious concentration camp guard.

The conduct of Israeli policemen in the October 2000 riots doesn't fall under any of those categories, Lapidot noted.

"The main legal issue is the question of the snipers," Ilan Saban of Haifa University's law school told JTA. "It is quite obvious from the findings of the Orr commission that the use of sharpshooters in the riots was improper, and I fail to understand why the police investigation department refrained from recommending legal action against those responsible for the use of sharpshooters against civilian protestors."

However, Saban added that it's a complicated legal matter to decide whether the use of snipers could be defined as a war crime.

The investigation department said that the refusal of several of the rioters' families to allow autopsies after the deaths, and the amount of time that had since elapsed, made it impossible to assemble enough evidence to warrant criminal prosecutions.

In addition, as the Jerusalem Post noted in an editorial Tuesday, the Arab leaders are angry that no one has been held responsible for the death of Arab citizens do not seem troubled that none of the rioters has been identified as the killer of an Israeli Jew who died when his car was pelted with rocks.

Israeli Arab leaders have threatened several times to take their grievances to international forums, but they can hope for little more than sympathy there. In April 2004, Israeli Arab leaders discussed their grievances in a Cairo conference hosted by the Arab League titled "The Strategic Congress for Ties Between the Arab World and the Arabs of 1948," a circumlocution that avoids the word "Israel."

Still, the move resulted in few benefits for the Israeli Arabs beyond a limited public relations gain abroad — and a large measure of criticism back home.

Dalal said Adalah would pursue legal recourse overseas only if it feels that all local legal tracks have been exhausted.

"If we start turning to overseas instances with all kinds of allegations ... there will be no end to it," warned Ze'ev Segal, a law professor at Tel Aviv University. "I believe every

authority in Israel can make a mistake in one affair or another, but to believe that we should seek justice abroad — that it will be given there, if at all — presents the danger of mixing politics with justice."

None of the Arab figures interviewed saw any problem with pursuing legal cases abroad against Israeli officials.

"It's the Arabs' duty, not just their right, to turn to any international body that can assist them," said As'ad Ghanem of Haifa University's political science department. "The world today is a global village and international law deals with minority rights, especially indigenous minorities," he said, adding, "We need to turn to any forum that can put an end to the distorted situation in Israel in which the state does not honor our basic rights as citizens."

In an editorial Tuesday, Ha'aretz called for a fresh commission of inquiry by the Attorney General's Office. Even if it, too, decides that there's not enough evidence to indict individual officers, the paper wrote, at least it might reassure Arab citizens that everything had been done on their behalf.

But Dalal said his organization would be satisfied only when policemen are in jail.

"Any ruling that will not lead to the conviction of the defendants will not satisfy us," he said.

Asked how he could reject any other ruling in advance, Dalal replied, "It's illogical that no one will be accountable in this case." ■

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As'ad Ghanem
Haifa University

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JTA WORLD REPORT is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For more information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.
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'Quartet' gets tougher on Palestinian side

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip already is paying diplomatic dividends, chief among them a clear call to the Palestinian Authority to disarm terrorists.

A statement Tuesday by the "Quartet," the body comprised of the United States, European Union, Russia and the United Nations that is driving the Middle East peace process, was unequivocal about the need for P.A. President Mahmoud Abbas to fulfill his commitments to take away terrorist groups' guns.

"While the P.A. leadership has condemned violence and has sought to encourage Palestinian groups who have engaged in terrorism to abandon this course and engage in the democratic process, the Quartet further urges the Palestinian Authority to maintain law and order and dismantle terrorist capabilities and infrastructure," the Quartet said in a statement after the meeting.

Quartet representatives were more equivocal about Israel's threat not to facilitate Palestinian elections in January if Hamas participates.

"It's not that we are not going to let them have elections, but we will not provide them with any support," Prime Minister Ariel Sharon told a group of Jewish leaders in New York on Sunday.

That could mean a refusal to remove roadblocks and checkpoints or a refusal to allow Palestinians in eastern Jerusalem to vote.

"How can you have a terrorist group participate in elections and call it democracy?" said an Israeli official who asked not to be identified because Israel wants to avoid the appearance of interfering in internal Palestinian matters. "It's an activist terrorist organization that calls for Israel's destruction everyday — it's not like this is academic."

Asked at the Quartet news conference about Israel's stance on P.A. elections, Condoleezza Rice, the U.S. secretary of state, expressed understanding but suggested the matter was best left to the Palestinians.

"You cannot have kind of an armed

option within the democratic process," Rice said. "But we understand that the Palestinian political system is in transition, that it is in transition toward a democratic system, and that that has to be a Palestinian process."

She later added, "We have to give the Palestinians some room for the evolution of their political process."

That difference hardly impinged on what otherwise was a week of diplomatic highs for the Israelis.

Sharon, who was applauded for a speech at the U.N. General Assembly that essentially said the ball is now in the Palestinian court, was praised by the Quartet as displaying "political courage."

Sharon and his foreign minister, Silvan Shalom, met with Arab and Islamic counterparts in the U.N. corridors, hearing echoes of a call that Israel long has made: It's better to talk than not to talk.

The foreign minister of Qatar, which has hosted an Israeli trade mission since 1996, said Arab leaders were wrong in the past to say they never would make peace with Israel.

"The Arabs — some of them — they went too far with their people that they would not talk with the enemy by any way," Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabr Al-Thani said at a Council on Foreign Relations meeting last week. "There is no enemies and no friends, but there is always not only responsibilities, but interests."

Also gratifying for the Israelis were U.N. calls on Lebanon to disarm Hezbollah, the terrorist group that continues to attack Israel five years after Israel's U.N.-certified withdrawal from that country.

At the Quartet meeting, Rice successfully headed off a Russian initiative to convene an international peace conference, an idea Israel rejects until Abbas disarms terrorists.

President Bush, always friendly to Israel, once again went further than much of the international community,

condemning Palestinian looters who destroyed the 21 synagogues Israel left behind in Gaza.

"We condemn the desecration of synagogues in Gaza that followed Israel's withdrawal," he said last week at a dinner in Washington marking 350 years of Jewish life in America.

Despite the good will, differences over details among Israel, the Palestinians, the

Bush administration and Congress promised to keep the parties busy in coming months.

Rice signed off on a Quartet statement that pledged \$750 million to the Palestinians in the coming year — including, presumably, at least \$200 million from the United States. Both parties in Congress remain skeptical about the efficacy of such funds as long as Abbas is not in full control.

The House of Representatives' International Relations Committee was to hear testimony on Palestinian funding Wednesday from the two top U.S. envoys to the region, Gen. William Ward on security and David Welch on diplomacy.

Israel has not announced a timetable to remove at least 24 illegal settlement outposts in the West Bank, though Sharon had told Bush he would do so as soon as the Gaza withdrawal was complete.

The Quartet also called on Israel to immediately freeze settlement expansion, something Sharon might hesitate to do as he heads off a primaries challenge in the coming months from the hawkish flank of his Likud Party.

Rice gave little quarter there, saying she regarded a settlement freeze as an Israeli obligation.

"President Bush has been very clear that we do not expect Israel to engage in activities that will prejudice a final status, because questions about the final border are indeed final-status issues," she said.

Rice specifically cited an Israeli plan — currently frozen — to expand the West Bank settlement of Ma'aleh Adumim to adjoin Jerusalem.

'You cannot have kind of an armed option within the democratic process.'

Condoleezza Rice
U.S. Secretary of State

NEWS ANALYSIS

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

Senate introduces Iran restrictions

The U.S. Senate introduced legislation to restrict American businesses from obtaining nuclear-fuel assemblies from anyone that also sells them to Iran.

The Iranian Nuclear Prohibition Act of 2005, introduced Tuesday by Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pa.), targets fabricated nuclear items that contain enriched uranium, used to create nuclear energy.

Under the bill, no American business or entity would be able to purchase the fuel assemblies from a business, entity or government that sells to Iran.

Bush, Congress remember Wiesenthal

U.S. lawmakers introduced legislation honoring Simon Wiesenthal. Bills were introduced Tuesday in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives marking the Nazi hunter's death at age 96.

Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) introduced the bill in the House; Sens. Norm Coleman (R-Minn.) and Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) introduced the bill in the Senate.

The legislation honors Wiesenthal's life and reaffirms Congress' commitment to fighting anti-Semitism and prosecuting remaining Nazi war criminals.

President Bush also remembered Wiesenthal. "Throughout his long career, he relentlessly pursued those responsible for some of the most horrific crimes against humanity the world has ever known," Bush said in a statement.

Jewish groups oppose Head Start changes

Some U.S. Jewish groups launched an effort to prevent a bill that they say would result in religious discrimination in federally funded programs for preschool children.

The groups oppose a legislative amendment being considered in the U.S. House of Representatives this week that would repeal protections that have existed since 1972, prohibiting Head Start centers from discriminating in hiring based on religion.

Backers of the bill, which include Orthodox Jewish groups, say allowing staff of the same faith to be hired furthers the mission of organizations that operate Head Start programs.

Rep. John Boehner (R-Ohio) is expected to introduce the amendment to the School Readiness Act this week.

Christians, Jews want to protect animals

Evangelical Christians and Jews are joining together to fight congressional attempts to weaken the Endangered Species Act.

In separate statements released together Wednesday, members of the Academy of Evangelical Scientists and Ethicists and the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life presented plans to campaign against the efforts.

Ex-JPost owner pleads guilty

One of the former owners of the Jerusalem Post pleaded guilty to taking part in a plan to siphon millions of dollars from the newspaper's holding company.

David Radler pleaded guilty Tuesday to one count of mail fraud in a case in which \$32 million was siphoned away from Hollinger International Inc. for personal use, the Jerusalem Post reported.

MIDDLE EAST

Hamas softens tone

Hamas could stop seeking Israel's destruction if the Jewish state meets Palestinian demands, an official from the terrorist group said.

Mohammed Ghazal, Hamas' senior representative in the West Bank, told Reuters on Wednesday that he saw a day when his group would enter talks on coexistence with Israel.

"Historically, we believe all Palestine belongs to Palestinians, but we're talking now about reality, about political solutions," he said.

The Hamas charter calling for Israel's destruction, Ghazal said, "is not the Koran."

The comments came as the group tries to present a new, less radical face ahead of its bid to win seats in a Palestinian Authority parliamentary election scheduled for January.

West Bank withdrawal complete

Israel completed its military withdrawal from four West Bank settlements.

Military officials said Wednesday that Sa-Nur, Homesh, Kadim and Ganim, four small settlements near Jenin, had been completely emptied.

The area remains under Israeli security control, but Palestinians already have entered the former settlements.

In Sa-Nur, the synagogue was dismantled and buried in a bid to prevent a repeat of the desecrations seen in former Gaza settlements earlier this month.

Israel demarcates Gaza border

Israel formalized its border with the Gaza Strip.

Interior Minister Ofir Pines-Paz on Wednesday redefined the former cease-fire line around Gaza as part of Israel's international border, saying it soon would include four official crossings with passport-control facilities.

Israel completed its withdrawal from Gaza last week, saying the territory could no longer be considered occupied.

The Palestinian Authority disputes this, noting that Israel continues to control Gaza's airspace and coastal waters.

WORLD

Estonian Jews get new synagogue

The Estonian Jewish community marked the beginning of the construction of a new synagogue in the capital of Tallinn.

Estonia is the only member of the European Union without a proper synagogue; the current synagogue in Tallinn is housed in a converted room of the Jewish community center.

Previous synagogues were destroyed during World War II and never reconstructed.

The Tallinn synagogue is slated to be completed in eight months, said Boris Oks, chairman of the country's Jewish community.

Jail time for Irish vandal

A man responsible for anti-Semitic vandalism at Jewish sites in Dublin was sentenced to 20 months in prison.

David Hughes received four consecutive five-month sentences after pleading guilty to charges of criminal damage.

Hughes vandalized Dublin synagogues, the Irish Jewish museum, Jewish graveyards, a Jewish nursing home and the house of Ireland's former chief rabbi, Isaac Herzog, several times between November 2004 and June 2005, when he was arrested while painting a swastika outside the main Orthodox synagogue.

Report clears British students union

A British students union was cleared of allegations that it failed to address anti-Semitism among its members.

But an independent inquiry found that the National Union of Students did not have a rigorous procedure in place to handle complaints.

Three Jews quit top posts in the union in April, citing increased attacks on Jews on campus and the distribution of leaflets at a student conference touting "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion," a notorious anti-Semitic forgery.

When they brought their complaints to the union, the trio said, they were brushed off.