

IN THE NEWS

Assad boosting Palestinian terror?

Syrian President Bashar Assad reportedly has instructed Palestinian terrorist groups to step up attacks on Israel.

Citing Palestinian sources, Israel's Army Radio said Wednesday that Assad convened representatives of Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Damascus earlier this month.

According to the report, the Syrian president told the terrorist groups to mount new attacks as a means of distracting international scrutiny from his regime's alleged support for the Iraqi insurgency and involvement in the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

Israel cancels Palestinian meeting

Israel's justice minister canceled talks with a top Palestinian official to protest the killing of an Israeli man by Hamas.

Tzipi Livni called off her meeting Wednesday with the Palestinian Authority's minister for prisoners, Sufian Abu-Zayda, after Israeli media broadcast images of the captive Sasson Nuriel.

Hamas said it abducted Nuriel, 50, to ransom him for the release of Palestinian prisoners by Israel, but then decided to kill him Monday as Israeli forces mounted sweeps in the West Bank.

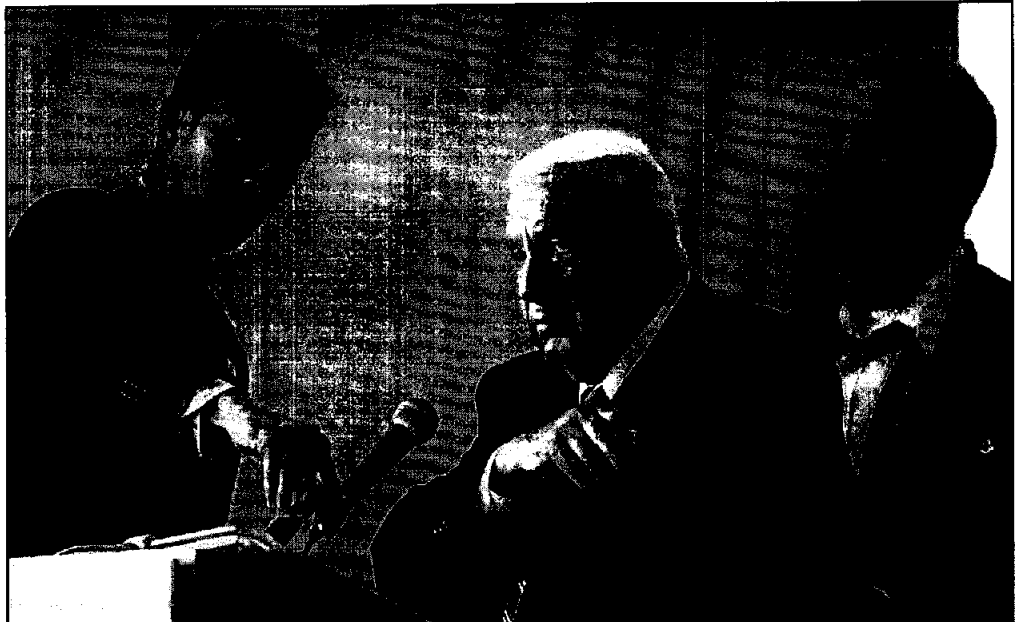
Aide outlines Sharon strategy

A top aide to Ariel Sharon said the Israeli prime minister long ago abandoned the principle of "land for peace" in dealing with the Palestinians.

Addressing a security conference in Herzliya this week, Eyal Arad said the failure of the Oslo peace accords drove Sharon to formulate a more realistic plan of "independence for security," in which Israel would grant the Palestinian Authority sovereignty in the West Bank and Gaza Strip on condition that it cracks down on terrorism.

WORLD REPORT

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Brian Hendler

An aide to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon fiddles with the microphone after it was cut off at the start of his live broadcast speech to the Likud Party's Central Committee on Sunday in Tel Aviv.

Round 1 goes to Sharon, but Bibi preps for the future

By LESLIE SUSSER

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Ariel Sharon may have beaten back his most immediate challenge in the Likud Party, but the possibility of a split in the ruling party still looms large.

Two opposing factions in the party, led by the Israeli prime minister and his main rival, former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, remain bitterly divided over major policy issues.

The showdown merely has been postponed for a few months after a key party vote Monday. By a vote of 52 percent to 48 percent, the Likud's Central Committee rejected a motion to bring leadership primaries forward to

November, meaning that Netanyahu's bid for Likud leadership has been postponed to April or May.

"Round one in the battle over Likud ideology is over; round two is still ahead of us," Netanyahu declared after the results were announced late Monday night.

Had he lost the vote, Sharon might have left the Likud to form a new centrist party, without Netanyahu's more hawkish faction. Though he denies he has any intention to leave Likud, many pundits believe Sharon still may do so eventually.

Given the deep ideological differences and the bitter personal animosities between the

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THE
HEADLINES

■ Sharon wins the first round, but his battle with Netanyahu isn't over

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Likud's two camps, it's hard to see how the party can remain united.

At the center of the ideological divide is Israeli policy vis-a-vis the Palestinians.

Sharon believes the recent withdrawal from the Gaza Strip has created conditions for a major breakthrough. Netanyahu maintains that Gaza will turn into a terrorist base, and that future moves regarding the Palestinians should be made only on a basis of strict reciprocity, not in terms of unilateral Israeli concessions.

Dozens of missiles fired from Gaza at Israeli towns over the weekend put the opposing visions to the test. The missile attacks by Hamas seemed to vindicate Netanyahu, and polls taken the day before the Central Committee vote showed him leading by between 9 percent and 12 percent.

But Israel's sharp military response to the rockets, which silenced the Palestinian guns, helped Sharon redress the balance.

Most pundits agree that Sharon's victory is only temporary. Writing in Yediot Achronot, political analyst Sima Kadmon argued that Sharon "has been given a reprieve during which he will be able to decide what to do next.

"He has regained the ability to make choices according to a timetable that suits him. It doesn't mean he's staying in the Likud," Kadmon wrote. "Victory is sweet, and victory over Netanyahu even sweeter. But Sharon is under no illusions.

He knows he still faces the really tough hurdle: defeating Netanyahu in party primaries."

Many pundits feel Sharon won't wait around that long. He knows that even if he wins the primary and retains the premiership as Likud leader, he'll be faced with an even more oppositional Likud Knesset faction than the present one, making it difficult for him to govern.

Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert contends that the rifts in the Likud are too deep to be papered over. In his view, the fundamental problem is that the fault line in the Israeli political divide runs directly through the Likud.

That likely will lead to a significant realignment of political forces in Israel, including a split in the Likud, he believes.

"If the positive process set in train by Israel's withdrawal from Gaza gathers momentum, then naturally the makeup of the political forces will have to be adjusted to meet the changing reality," Olmert told JTA. "And there will have to be a degree of compatibility between the positions taken by political leaders and the political forces they represent."

In the meantime, Sharon is taking tough military measures to keep the lid on terrorism from Gaza. Since the withdrawal Israel has evolved a new security doctrine for Gaza, based on deterrence.

The thinking behind the new stance is that the withdrawal gave Israel back the moral high ground: The Palestinians will not be able to depict terrorist attacks as resistance to occupation, and the international community will condone strong retaliation against Palestinian aggression.

The barrage of Kassam rockets was a first test case. During a Hamas show of strength in Gaza's Jabalya refugee camp last Friday, rockets that the terrorist group was displaying exploded, killing 21 people and wounding dozens.

Israel denied any involvement in the explosion — and, for once, most Palestinians believed the Israeli account. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas accused Hamas of putting Palestinian ci-

vilians at risk by toting around explosives in public, and he urged Hamas to desist from further military parades.

Hamas stuck to its version of events, however, and fired more than 40 rockets at Israeli civilian targets between last Friday afternoon and Saturday night.

Sharon and Israel's top military brass decided to hit back hard to make the new rules clear from the outset.

Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz made a string of tough statements underlining the central principle of the new policy: The Palestinians will be made to pay a very heavy price for any attacks on Israeli civilians from Gaza.

"Gaza will shake," he declared. "If Israel children have difficulty sleeping at night, so will Hamas leaders."

He added, "The artillery we have moved up to the border with Gaza is not there for show."

Israel retaliated against the attacks on a wide front: Air force planes hit Hamas institutions and rocket-making laboratories in Gaza; dozens of Hamas and Islamic Jihad activists in the West Bank were arrested; Mohammed Sheik Khalil, a top Islamic Jihad military leader, was assassinated in an attack from the air; artillery was moved up to the Gaza border and a special land force began training.

Military analyst Alex Fishman commented in Yediot that "the Israeli response, codenamed 'First Rain,' seems more like a tornado... Short of reoccupying Gaza, there is everything: closure of the West Bank and Gaza, targeted killings, preparations for a land invasion."

The tough measures seemed to work: On Sunday night, Hamas leader Mahmoud Al-Zahar declared that the militiamen were calling off their attacks. Not only that: Hamas also bowed to the P.A.'s call to refrain from military parades.

For the moment, Sharon seems to have been vindicated. But coming months will give a clearer idea as to who was right about Gaza, Sharon or Netanyahu, and whether they run against each other in the Likud or as the respective heads of two opposing political parties.

**Victory is sweet,
and victory over
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is under no illusions.'**

Sima Kadmon
Yediot Achronot analyst



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Jews, Protestants mend ties in Holy Land

By RACHEL POMERANCE

NEW YORK (JTA) — A mission to Jerusalem by national Jewish and Protestant leaders may not have changed minds, but it seems to have opened hearts.

The five-day "Jerusalem Peace Pilgrimage," which ended Sept. 22, took place against a backdrop of tense relations between Jews and Protestants due to Protestant churches' consideration of economic sanctions against Israel.

But the faiths have found renewed cause for cooperation, issuing a joint statement upon the trip's conclusion.

"We have demonstrated that Christians and Jews can work together to seek peace even when there is disagreement on specific policies and solutions," the statement reads. "As a result of these days, we will now be even more effective advocates for a secure, viable and independent Palestinian state alongside an equally secure State of Israel, affirming the historic links that both the Jewish people and the Palestinian people have to the land."

Those words went a long way toward soothing Jewish officials and keeping the door open for dialogue.

The Presbyterian Church USA first took up the issue of divestment last summer, proposing to drop holdings in companies that profit from Israel's West Bank security barrier or its presence in the territories, or that support violence against innocent civilians on either side of the conflict.

The move surprised and outraged Jewish officials, who called the act a misguided and unfair strategy. It also paved the way for other mainline Protestant churches to consider divestment from Israel.

As a result, Jewish-Protestant dialogue has intensified over the past year, culminating in the recent mission, the first to bring such broad representation of Jewish and Protestant groups to Israel.

It also came on the heels of a weeklong trip to Israel for local Jewish and Protestant leaders from across the United States, sponsored by the United Jewish Communities federation umbrella group and the Jewish Council for Public Affairs.

The national mission drew 17 leaders from eight Christian denominations and

six Jewish organizations, including defense groups and religious movements.

Stops included visits to a Jerusalem café that had suffered a suicide bombing, Israel's Supreme Court, Yad Vashem, the security fence and meetings with Christian leaders and Israeli and Palestinian officials.

Protestants and Jews split the programming responsibility, allowing for a more inclusive narrative, participants said.

"I think we all came away with a sense that we're working with colleagues who have open minds and who are willing to talk about the situation and all of its really hard human realities," said Jay Rock, coordinator for interfaith relations for the Presbyterian Church USA.

The trip served as "a reminder of how complicated the whole situation is," he said.

"Conversation hasn't been very easy, and this trip actually made it possible for us to sit on the bus together and have some conversations together," Rock said. "Where that will lead us, I think it's too soon to tell, but I certainly feel positive about it."

The purpose of the trip was to improve communication, not to reverse divestment, which will continue to be a source of conflict, said Richard Foltin, legislative director for the American Jewish Committee.

The Jewish delegation gained a better understanding of Palestinian suffering, and the Christian leaders appreciated Jewish ties to the land of Israel and "the difficult choices that Israel has to wrestle with every day," Foltin said.

One meeting in particular captured the essence of the friction between Jews and Protestants. That was an encounter with Naim Ateek, who directs the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center, which the Anti-Defamation League has called the driving force behind the divestment movement.

"Those people and those churches that use Sabeel's writings and theology to support their political point of view potentially may be considered accessories in the

advancement of anti-Semitic theology," the ADL said in a statement after the meeting.

Ateek told the group that a Jewish homeland should have existed in Germany, not in the Holy Land, according to Rabbi Gary Bretton-Granatoor, ADL's director of interfaith affairs.

That "cuts to the core of who we are," Bretton-Granatoor said, referring to the Jewish people's historic and religious ties

to the land of Israel.

Jim Winkler, general secretary of the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society, has a different take on Ateek, who he said advocates non-violence and is open to dialogue with the Jewish community.

"I think it's a mistake for my Jewish colleagues to try to isolate and discredit Naim, and I hope that they won't do that," he said. Calling Ateek a "respected voice" among Palestinian and American Christians, Winkler said "he is not anti-Israel, and it's unfair to make him out to be."

But Sabeel's brand of liberation theology, which presents a stark picture of Palestinian victims and Israeli oppressors, exemplifies the reliance on simplistic analyses of complex problems, Bretton-Granatoor said. Most participants on the trip came to realize that simple answers like divestment won't fix complicated problems, he said.

As part of the group's joint statement, they agreed to expand interfaith dialogue and work together to press for a two-state solution.

According to Winkler, "Most of the people on the trip already had significant personal experience or background with the situation there, and so I don't think that there was probably for most of us any dramatic transformation," he said. "What I had hoped for, and I think happened for me, was quantity and quality time to deepen personal relationships with friends and colleagues, both Jews and Christians."

While the trip for national leaders helped repair tension, the weeklong trip preceding it, sponsored by the JCPA and the UJC, may have gone further toward influencing the opinions of less-seasoned participants.

The trip served as 'a reminder of how complicated the whole situation is.'

Jay Rock

Presbyterian Church USA

BEHIND
THE
HEADLINES

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Israel's population growing

Israel's population rose by nearly 1.8 percent in 2004 to more than 6.8 million.

Some 5.2 million Israelis are Jewish, with 1.3 million Arabs and 300,000 others, according to figures released this week by the Central Bureau of Statistics.

The growth rate among Muslims was 3.3 percent, more than double the rate among Jews.

Israeli Arabs on hunger strike

Israeli Arab lawmakers declared a hunger strike to protest a Justice Ministry decision not to prosecute police who killed 13 Arab rioters in October 2000.

The lawmakers, led by Ahmed Tibi, staged a sit-down protest outside Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's office in Jerusalem on Tuesday, vowing to fast until next week.

They are demanding that police officers who shot and killed rioters be prosecuted.

Israel's top prosecutor closed the case earlier this month, saying there was not enough evidence to win convictions against individual policemen.

Israeli gets U.S. bioterrorism grant

An Israeli university researcher won U.S. funding for his work that focuses on fighting bioterrorism.

The U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases awarded the \$5.6 million grant for research it described as unique in the world.

Raymond Kaempfer, who is the Philip Marcus Professor of Molecular Biology and Cancer Research in the department of molecular virology at the Hebrew University Faculty of Medicine, and his colleague Gila Arad, previously uncovered a novel molecular mechanism by which the superantigen toxins elicit a vastly exaggerated immune response that leads to death.

The researchers used this insight to design peptides — short stretches of protein — that block this harmful response in animals, thereby protecting and rescuing them from lethal toxic and septic shock.

What remained was an immune response that was adequate to halt the toxins but without the excess that brings on shock.

Indeed, once protected, the survivors became immune to further toxin challenges.

NORTH AMERICA

9/11 memorial service held

A Jewish memorial service was held in New York City on the fourth anniversary on the Jewish calendar of the Sept. 11 attacks.

Some 30 people gathered near the site of the World Trade Center on Tuesday to hold the service. Yossie Nemes, a Chabad rabbi from New Orleans, who has been living in New York since Hurricane Katrina, blew a shofar at the service.

Former guard dies awaiting deportation

A former concentration camp guard who lied about his past to gain entry into Canada in the 1950s died in June, a Canadian newspaper recently revealed.

Michael Baumgartner, 83, a retired autoworker in Windsor, had been a Waffen SS guard at the Stutthof and Sachsenhausen camps.

He had been awaiting deportation since a Canadian judge ruled in 2001 that he had received citizenship under false pretenses and should have been automatically rejected.

Katrina money donated in Rabin's name

A \$25,000 check for hurricane relief was handed to President Clinton in memory of Yitzhak Rabin.

Clinton joined Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Dalia Rabin, the late Israeli prime minister's daughter, at a Sept. 22 dinner in Washington to honor Morton Bahr, outgoing president of the Communications Workers of America, who long has been a supporter of Israel.

The hurricane relief money was raised on the spot.

The Rabin Center for Israel Studies, which promotes democratic values, is naming a wing after Bahr.

The center is being dedicated in Israel this year to mark the 10th anniversary of Rabin's assassination.

Jewish star-shape removed from playground

A city in California changed the shape of a design on a city playground because a resident thought the original shape resembled a Jewish star.

The city of Burlingame paid \$1,600 to have a contractor fill in the shape after the resident said it was disrespectful to have children step on the design, The Associated Press reported.

The design was changed to resemble a sun.

Survey: Young, poor buying kosher

Younger and lower-income consumers are driving the kosher market, according to a new survey.

Some 70 percent of respondents who said in the survey that they "buy kosher occasionally" are between the ages of 18 and 34, while 67 percent earn less than \$30,000 a year.

There were 86,000 products certified as kosher in 2004, as opposed to 75,000 in 2002.

The results of the survey were released in advance of the 17th annual Kosherfest, to be held in New York City on Nov. 15-16.

WORLD

Irish church may divest from Israel

The Church of Ireland is considering selling \$6 million worth of shares in an Irish firm because of its involvement with Israel's West Bank security barrier.

The church, which is part of the Anglican movement, is reviewing its investment in Cement Roadstone Holdings, a major multinational with operations in 24 countries, because of its minority stake in Mashav Group, the owner of Neshar Cement, a producer of cement in Israel.

The church's investment committee has contacted the holdings group regarding its Israeli connections.

The move follows recommendations laid out in a report by the Anglican Peace and Justice Network on the Israel-Palestinian conflict and adopted by the Anglican consultative council earlier this year to consider divesting from corporations connected to the construction of the security barrier.

A final decision is not expected before May.

Jewish library opens in Brussels

Israel's chief Ashkenazi rabbi opened the European Jewish Library in Brussels.

Surrounded by ambassadors to Belgium and the European Union and by Chabad rabbis from all over Europe, Yona Metzger announced that due to its location, "This is one of the most important libraries in the world."

The 3,000-volume library is housed in a Chabad center that was opened last year and is part of a growing Chabad presence in Brussels, home to the European Union.