

## IN THE NEWS

**Israelis warned on travel to Egypt**

Israel urged its citizens to avoid Egypt, saying they could be at risk of kidnapping.

Citing "concrete intelligence," the government issued an advisory over the weekend against travel to Egypt and asked Israelis already there to return home.

Ma'ariv reported that Israel had received word of a Palestinian terrorist cell that had infiltrated into the Sinai and, under orders from Hezbollah, was looking for Israeli tourists to kidnap.

Last year, a similar advisory issued before the High Holidays proved prescient when suicide bombers struck several Sinai resorts favored by Israelis.

According to media reports, around 3,000 Israelis are already vacationing in Egypt, and the number could reach 30,000.

**Israeli president to visit the Vatican**

Israel's president will visit Pope Benedict XVI in the first visit to the Vatican by an Israeli head of state.

Moshe Katsav will visit Rome in mid-November, Israeli officials announced this weekend.

The visit will be the latest in a series of steps Benedict has taken since his election to demonstrate his commitment to furthering Jewish-Catholic relations.

**President Bush sends Rosh Hashanah wishes**

President Bush called for reflection "on the history of the Jewish people" in his annual Rosh Hashanah message.

"This year, we mark the completion of an especially joyous occasion, the 350th year of Jewish life in America," Bush said in a statement last Friday.

"Throughout America's history, Jewish Americans have strengthened and enriched the character of our nation."



# WORLD REPORT

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## Ushering in a new era, U.S. Supreme Court opens term

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

**W**ASHINGTON (JTA)— With the U.S. Supreme Court about to launch a new era, Jewish activists say they will be watching closely for clues to future rulings on controversial issues such as abortion rights and the separation of church and state.

The court officially opens its session Monday under the helm of a new chief justice.

John Roberts was confirmed by the full Senate on Sept. 29. The high court will likely have a second new member by the end of the term. President Bush will reportedly nominate a justice to replace Sandra Day O'Connor this week.

The passing of the gavel from Justice William Rehnquist, who died earlier this month, to a Roberts court could have a major effect on issues that will come before the court, both this year and for years to come.

Already included on the court's docket for the session are cases involving doctor-assisted suicide, the use of drugs for religious purposes, abortion rights and campaign finance laws.

One of the first cases to challenge the new court examines the legality of Oregon's law permitting doctor-assisted suicide. The U.S. Department of Justice has said assisting suicide is a violation of federal law, despite Oregon's 1994 ballot initiative legalizing the practice.

The case, *Oregon v. Gonzales*, will be heard Oct. 5, the second day of Rosh Hashanah.

The case will likely focus on the debate between protecting life and states' rights, analysts said.

While many Jewish groups have not weighed in on the case, they will be watching

closely for its larger implications on end-of-life issues and states' rights.

The Orthodox Union joined a brief in the case, arguing against euthanasia.

In another case, several Jewish groups have joined briefs in a case that involves the use of a hallucinogenic drug for religious purposes.

Jeffrey Bronfman, a member of the Jewish philanthropic Bronfman family, and other members of the Brazilian O Centro Espirita Beneficente Uniao Do Vegetal religion, known as UDV, are challenging the federal government's Controlled Substance Act. They are claiming they should be allowed to import a specific tea that contains DMT, which is banned in the United States but is central to their religious practices.

The petitioners claim that laws against importing DMT violate their First Amendment rights and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993, known as RFRA, which requires a "compelling government interest" for burdening religious exercise.

The court found RFRA unconstitutional in 1997 as it applied to the states but not to federal legislation.

That legislation was widely supported by the Jewish community, and many were angry when the court knocked it down. But last year, the court upheld a similar law, which set the "compelling government interest" standard for denying prisoners religious expression.

A large number of Jewish groups joined briefs in the current case, supporting the plaintiffs and defending RFRA's constitutionality for federal powers.

"Congress is free to express and imple-

*Continued on page 2*

BEHIND  
THE  
HEADLINES

## ■ Assisted suicide, abortion and the religious use of drugs are on the court's docket

*Continued from page 1*

ment its own interpretation of the Constitution through legislation, even when it may differ from the interpretations of this Court," said a brief by the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, signed by the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the Jewish Council for Public Affairs and the United Synagogue for Conservative Judaism.

Opponents say the legislation violates the separation of powers, and that it is a government interest to uniformly regulate controlled substances.

Agudath Israel of America and the Union for Reform Judaism joined another brief, making a broader argument supporting the UDV and against the Justice Department's claim, as did a separate brief the Orthodox Union joined. The case is slated to be heard Nov. 1.

On Nov. 30, the court will hear two cases regarding abortion rights. The first case, *Ayotte v. Planned Parenthood*, takes up the issue of whether a parental notification law for abortions on women younger than 18 is unconstitutional if it does not include a health exemption.

Several Jewish groups are expected to weigh in on the case, opposing restrictions for access to abortions. However, amicus briefs have yet to be filed in the case. The case could also give analysts their first assessment of where Roberts and the other new justice, if sitting by then, stand on the abortion issue.

The second case regards the free speech rights of abortion opponents. Lower courts

have found that anti-abortion groups that use violence or threats are violating the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act.

The court also agreed to hear two cases on campaign finance laws, which could effect Jewish participation in the political process. The first case challenges spending limits for state legislature races in Vermont.

The second case challenges prohibitions on corporate election communications, like issue advertisements that have been used by Jewish organizations, as well as Wisconsin Right to Life. Dates for the Supreme Court to hear arguments have not been scheduled for either case.

Court watchers say several other cases of Jewish interest may come down the road, either this year or in the near future. Specifically, Jewish groups are watching cases regarding the holding of detainees in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and several challenges to a law criminalizing a procedure known as "partial-birth abortion."

In addition, many people are watching

a current Pennsylvania federal case, where several parents are challenging a Dover, Pa., school board's decision to teach "intelligent design," as an alternative explanation for evolution. The case is expected to make its way to the U.S. Supreme Court in the next few years.

Cases like these raise the stakes for the court's next confirmation of a Supreme Court justice.

Several Jewish activists said they expected

the next court fight to be larger than the battle over Roberts, partially because the new justice would be filling the seat of O'Connor, considered the court's centrist justice.

Mark Pelavin, associate director of the Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism, said the Union for Reform Judaism chose not to formally oppose Roberts because they wanted to concentrate on the next nominee.

"By picking and choosing your battles, your opposition becomes more meaningful," Pelavin said. "By not marshaling the troops as often, they'll have more energy when the time comes."

**Jewish groups are watching to see what the Supreme Court's rulings will be under a new chief justice.**

## Hamas loses Palestinian elections

By DAN BARON

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The results of local elections in the West Bank suggest that mainstream support for Hamas and kindred groups like Islamic Jihad may not be as widespread among Palestinians as Israel and the West fears.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah factions took 51 of 104 municipalities, and Hamas lagged with 13, according to results released over the weekend. The other municipalities were split among smaller and independent factions. Hamas blamed Israeli arrest sweeps in the West Bank which whittled down its list of candidates, but the charge was not echoed by Abbas, who praised the local polls as a fair reflection of the Palestinian mood.

Another indicator was a finding by the well-regarded Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research that, while 84 percent

of Palestinians view Israel's recent withdrawal from the Gaza Strip as a triumph for the violence of Hamas and other terrorist groups, 62 percent are opposed to continued attacks from the territory.

Israel's justice minister expressed hope that mainstream Palestinians' appreciation of the relative quiet will translate into a desire for permanent stability as a democratic state.

"They cannot create a situation where Hamas uses the democratic process to take control," Tzipi Livni told Israel Radio. "It seems that this is being understood."

Israel appears to be taking a wait-and-see attitude on Hamas, the dominant Palestinian terrorist group.

The key question is whether the Palestinian Authority will go ahead with a plan to allow Hamas to run in parliamentary elections in January.

Israel has hinted this could kill off the peace process.

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# Beleaguered DeLay buoyed by pro-Israel group

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Just hours after Tom DeLay stepped aside as a Republican leader because of his indictment in a campaign finance scandal, he walked into a standing ovation from people who think the Texan's views on money, demographics and borders are just fine.

Just fine when it comes to the Middle East, that is.

"We love you Tom!" screamed supporters at the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, a pro-Zionist group that hosted a conference in Washington last week.

The Republican majority leader's temporary resignation Sept. 28 embittered not just the network of corporate and social conservatives whose causes he forcefully championed, but also the pro-settler lobby in the United States.

"Tom DeLay has been a friend of Israel through thick and thin, and we are pleased and proud to welcome him this evening as a friend of Israel," Rabbi Yehiel Eckstein, the IFCJ founder, said in introducing DeLay.

"You're choking me up here," DeLay responded.

In a Congress generally regarded as overwhelmingly pro-Israel, DeLay stood out for extending those sympathies to Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Gaza

## THIS WEEK

### MONDAY

- Palestinian Authority negotiators begin a round of briefings with State Department, White House and congressional officials.

### WEDNESDAY

- Lawrence Franklin, the Pentagon analyst charged as a co-conspirator in an espionage-related U.S. government case against two former AIPAC staffers, is expected to enter a guilty plea. Franklin's lawyers would not say which charge he would plead to, but said that afterwards, he would be required to testify against Steve Rosen and Keith Weissman, the former AIPAC staffers.

- Hungarian Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany attends Rosh Hashanah services at Park East Synagogue in New York City. Rabbi Arthur Schneier, the synagogue's senior rabbi — and president of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation — survived the Holocaust in Budapest and has worked to strengthen ties between the religious leadership and communities of Hungary and the United States.

Strip, even standing with them against Israel's government.

Jewish leaders were stunned this summer when DeLay told a closed meeting of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations that instead of relinquishing the Gaza Strip, Israel by biblical rights should be expanding its territory.

Gary Bauer, a onetime Republican presidential candidate who helped organize the IFCJ event, persuaded DeLay not to cancel his scheduled appearance despite the indictment, telling the congressman he would receive a much-needed warm welcome.

And he did.

"So how was your day?" he said to laughter and applause. "Thank you for allowing me to come under the present circumstances."

The charges against DeLay are based on accusations that he played a role in circumventing a Texas law that bans the use of corporate money in state elections.

The prosecutor in the case, a Democrat, alleges that the money funded a Republican victory in the Texas legislature in 2002. The legislature redrew the congressional map, helping consolidate the Republican majority in the U.S. House of Representatives with an additional five seats.

DeLay, who says the new redistricting is not gerrymandering but a corrective step to reflect Texas' natural conservative leanings, told the IFCJ audience he would fight the charges.

"I fear no evil, the truth is on my side, and make no mistake, justice will be served," he said to applause.

DeLay opposed the \$300 million the Bush administration succeeded in pushing through Congress for Palestinian aid this year, and he was behind the rigorous oversight that is slowing its disbursement.

"He wasn't simply a guy who would vote for aid or a pro-Israel resolution," said Morton Klein, president of the Zionist Organization of America, which tried to rally opposition in the United States to Israel's evacuation of Jewish settlers from Gaza this summer.

"He cared about Israel in every fiber of his being," Klein said. "He was a very strong supporter of the belief that God gave this land to the Jews and this was the Jews' land."

Across the ideological divide, Americans for Peace Now said pretty much the same thing — but cast it in different terms.

"He has been a very negative behind-the-scenes influence in terms of trying to get legislation and appropriations approved that would advance the peace process," said Lewis Roth, APN's assistant executive director.

Rep. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.), the majority whip who is replacing DeLay for now, is no slouch when it comes to Israel. Pro-Israel groups note that since 1999 Blunt has led four trips to Israel for GOP legislators. The visits were sponsored by the American Israel Educational Foundation, an arm of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

But Blunt believes in following the Israeli government's lead when it comes to Israel policy, and has little interest in the pro-settler opposition. He would not meet last year with settler leaders who came to Washington to lobby against the Gaza pullout.

"I'm recognized as a leader of a group in the Congress that supports Israel," Blunt told JTA at the time. "I believe the Congress will be overwhelmingly supportive of the Israeli government's efforts to find a permanent and peaceful solution" to the conflict with the Palestinians.

On Middle East issues, Democrats appreciate Blunt because he leaves behind the Congress' current acrimony when it comes to Israeli-Palestinian peace, working closely with his Democratic counterpart, Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-Md.).

DeLay is keeping his seat in Congress, and says he expects to return to his leadership post by December.

Don't count him out, said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Presidents Conference.

"He's only been indicted, not convicted," Hoenlein said. "He'll still be a member of Congress, and it's his nature that he will continue to participate actively and vigorously for Israel."

**'He has been  
a very negative  
behind-the-scenes  
influence.'**

**Lewis Roth**

Americans for Peace Now

## NEWS IN BRIEF

## MIDDLE EAST

**Immigration to Israel up**

Increased immigration to Israel from France and North America was cited as the cause of a rise in aliyah last year.

Since September 2004, 23,124 people immigrated to Israel, as opposed to 21,604 the year before, the first increase since 1999, the Jerusalem Post reported.

Zeev Bielski, the chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel, credited the increase to improved security and economics in Israel, as well as improved marketing by the agency.

**Apology over Gaza**

One of the Israeli officials in charge of the Gaza Strip withdrawal asked for forgiveness from evacuated settlers.

"If, God forbid, we hurt them more than necessary, apart from the very, very hard blow they suffered in being deported, I sincerely, sincerely apologize before them," Yonatan Bassi, head of the government's Disengagement Authority, said Sunday on Army Radio.

While most of the former Gaza settlers have been rehoused in Israel, 633 families will spend the High Holidays in hotels or temporary dwellings.

Settler leader Avner Shimoni said most of the holdouts were demanding that they be relocated together with their original Gaza communities.

**Arabs for Zion?**

Most of Israel's Arab citizens accept Zionism, a poll found.

According to the Hebrew University poll released this week, 63 percent of Israeli Arabs believe in the principle of two states for two peoples, whereby Palestinians gain independence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and Israel serves as the Jewish state.

Thirty-four percent of respondents express opposition to the Zionist principle.

The findings appeared to counter the hard-line rhetoric of many Israeli Arab leaders, who demand that Israel abandon its principles as a Jewish state.

**Israeli ship implicated in accident**

An Israeli ship was implicated in a deadly accident off Japan's coast.

Japanese media reported Sunday that a Zim company tanker was the main suspect in a crash last week near the northern island of Hokkaido in which seven Japanese fishermen were killed.

The tanker later docked in South Korea and was said to show signs of a collision. Zim, Israel's biggest shipping company, denied involvement.

The Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem said it was taking part in the investigation.

## NORTH AMERICA

**Groups want stronger species bill**

Jewish groups expressed disappointment at the passage of a weakened Endangered Species Act.

The legislation, which passed the U.S. House of Representatives on Sept. 29, removes several protections Jewish groups have endorsed.

"Jewish texts clearly state that all species deserve our wonder and protection," said Adam Stern, director of the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life. "Every species of plant or animal is thus understood by Jewish tradition to occupy an ecological niche in our interdependent, living world."

The debate on the House floor included several discussions of faith and God.

**Reform launches 'virtual' repentance**

The Reform Jewish movement launched a "virtual repentance" for this Rosh Hashanah.

The Skirball Center for Adult Jewish Learning invited Jews to virtually replicate tashlich, the tradition of symbolically casting one's sins away by tossing bread crumbs into water.

A Web site notes the passage in Micah that commands the casting away of sins, and then allows a recipient to fill in a blank space with one's sins. A cartoon figure then casts the "note" into a river.

More information is available at [www.adultjewishlearning.org/tash.html](http://www.adultjewishlearning.org/tash.html).

**Groups blast ex-education secretary**

The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding condemned "racist rhetoric" by a former U.S. education secretary.

William Bennett said Wednesday on his radio show that crime could be reduced if you "abort every black baby in this country." Bennett later said it was an "impossibly ridiculous and morally reprehensible thing to do, but your crime rate would go down."

The foundation's president condemned the comments.

The American Jewish Committee also protested the remarks.

**Liberal Jewish groups merging**

Two Jewish groups working on social change philanthropy plan to merge.

The Jewish Fund for Justice and The Shefa Fund are coming together to form Jewish Funds for Justice, the groups said Sept. 28.

"For almost two decades, Jewish Fund for Justice and The Shefa Fund have been allies and partners in the fight against social and economic injustice," said Simon Greer, formerly the CEO of the Jewish Fund for Justice, who will be the CEO and president of the new group.

## WORLD

**Russian rabbi named to top body**

Russian President Vladimir Putin named one of Russia's two chief rabbis as one of his personal choices to sit on a new advisory body.

Chief Rabbi Berel Lazar of the Federation of Jewish Communities and main Chabad emissary in the region was one of several religious leaders appointed to the Public Chamber alongside clerics representing Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Pentecostalism.

The new body of 126 public figures is being touted by Putin as a tool to increase democracy in Russia.

Human rights groups and critics of the Kremlin have decried the chamber as mere window-dressing to legitimize the government's increasingly authoritarian policies.

**Mass grave leads to construction halt**

Construction work was stopped at an airport in Germany after Jewish leaders protested following the discovery of a World War II-era mass grave.

The work was halted last Friday at the airport in Stuttgart.

It is believed that dozens of slave laborers died there in either 1944 or 1945, and were dumped in a trench then covered with dirt.

**Turkish rabbi joins interfaith panel**

Turkey's chief rabbi joined other religious leaders in a "Meeting of Civilizations."

Isak Haleva participated in a weeklong symposium in Turkey to discuss religious tolerance. "If religions cannot protect civilizations from committing suicide, all steps taken until today would be of no use," he said after the event.

Haleva was wounded two years ago during the bombing of the Neveh Shalom Synagogue in Istanbul.