

## IN THE NEWS

## Iran accuses West in spat over Israel

Iran accused the West of using its president's comments about the destruction of Israel in order to intensify pressure on Iran over its nuclear program.

The weekend comments by Iranian officials came after the U.N. Security Council criticized Iran after Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said last week that "Israel should be wiped off the map." [Story, Pg. 3]

## Palestinians say rocket attacks over

The Palestinian Authority said it secured a commitment from terrorists in the Gaza Strip to stop launching rockets into Israel.

Hamas and Islamic Jihad, the main groups behind the cross-border salvos, declined to confirm Sunday's announcement by the Palestinian Authority.

But they said they would suspend attacks if Israel scales back its military overflights in Gaza.

Spiraling violence last week had stirred concern that Palestinian terrorists could formally abandon the cease-fire that they declared in March at Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas' behest.

Though never consistently honored, the truce had allowed for some progress in Israeli-Palestinian preliminary negotiations.

## Libby, temple member, quits after indictment

Lewis Libby, a member of Temple Rodef Shalom in northern Virginia, resigned as Vice President Dick Cheney's top adviser after he was indicted for perjury.

Libby was charged with lying to a federal grand jury considering possible charges in the leaking of a CIA operative's name two years ago.

Libby resigned last Friday, as soon as the indictment was announced.

# WORLD REPORT

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## On Iraq war, grass roots pushing Reform movement to take a stand

By SUE FISHKOFF

**P**ACIFIC GROVE, Calif. (JTA) — A grass-roots campaign to push the leadership of the Reform movement to take a stand on the Iraq war is gathering steam, and is expected to come to a vote next month at the Union for Reform Judaism's General Assembly in Houston.

Spearheaded by Congregation M'kor Shalom in Cherry Hill, N.J., the initiative is supported by about a dozen other Reform congregations, several of which are preparing resolutions to take to the floor of the convention during its plenary sessions Nov. 16-20.

"I think it's a welcome development," said Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Union for Reform Judaism.

The Reform movement made its only public statement on the war in September 2002, when its executive committee voiced careful approval of unilateral U.S. military action in Iraq only if all diplomatic means had been exhausted.

Like the Conservative and Orthodox movements, the Reform leadership stated its support for the upcoming war's objectives — removing Saddam Hussein and his alleged weapons of mass destruction — without endorsing the war itself.

"A lot has emerged since then," Yoffie noted, adding that "the Jewish community, and the general American community, is concerned about the war, where it's taking us, and how to get out of it."

Surveys last year showed that support for the war is lower among American Jews than non-Jews. Yet no mainstream Jewish organizations have joined the anti-war movement, which has been plagued by a strong

anti-Israel undertone that has dismayed even long-time Jewish leftists.

Two small groups, the Philadelphia-based Shalom Center and the San Francisco-area Tik-kun Community, have come out against the Iraq war. In addition, the Shalom Center and Rabbis for Human Rights have asked the U.S. government to condemn the torture of war prisoners.

The Reform movement's Social Action Commission recently jumped into the fray, and now is working on its own draft resolution to take to the biennial convention.

"We knew M'kor Shalom was working on this, and we've been working with them on it," said Emily Grotta, director of communications for the Union for Reform Judaism. "Our goal

is to draft a resolution that will reflect the consensus of where the movement is and bring a single resolution to the floor that will be agreed to by the congregations and the Resolutions Committee."

While no congregations have come out publicly against such a resolution, it's far from certain that it will pass at the biennial. Yoffie notes that the wording is still being finalized. "What will happen to the draft when it gets to the floor — how it will be greeted, whether it will pass, I don't know," he said.

The grass-roots initiative seems to have been spurred by a Rosh Hashanah sermon by M'kor Shalom Rabbi Barry Schwartz.

"It wasn't about the war, it was about the need to approach our Judaism with passion, with a concern for social justice," Schwartz said of his sermon, which was titled "Judaism on Fire." "But within hours, a small group of people came to me and said, 'We need to do something about our movement

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FOCUS  
ON  
ISSUES

## ■ *The Reform movement is expected to vote on an Iraq war resolution next month*

*Continued from page 1*

and the war.' Within a few days, the whole thing materialized."

Nancy Axelrod, immediate past chair of M'kor Shalom's Social Action Committee, was part of that group. She was motivated, she says, by her own opposition to the war and her "distress" at the anti-Israel tone taken by the anti-war movement.

"It can be partly attributed to a lack of a Jewish voice speaking out against the war," she said. "I don't think they would have gotten away with it if the Reform movement" was part of the anti-war coalition.

Though several people interviewed spoke of their anti-war sentiments, those drafting the resolutions say they'll be asking the movement to take a stand, rather than stating what that stand should be.

"It certainly is a plea from congregations for the movement to discuss the issue and take a stand," Schwartz said.

M'kor Shalom's resolution has been approved by its board, though the text may change as they work more closely with the movement's Social Action Commission to come up with a joint resolution.

As of now, the congregation's resolution calls on the Bush administration to "level with the American people and provide a clear exit strategy," and asks the Reform leadership "to join public statements and coalitions consistent" with its principles.

"We want the movement to end its relative silence," Schwartz said. "Other than its statement on the eve of the war, there has

been no statement, no action and no joining of coalitions with people who share similar principles."

Yoffie said it was "ridiculous" to claim that the Reform community had ignored the issue.

"Of course we've been dealing with it," he said. "The problem is what to say. We're a very large, diverse movement."

Noting that "being against the war can mean many things" to many people, he added, "there's enormous confusion about what is the best way to extricate ourselves."

The union's Social Action Commission will not release details of its draft document yet. Schwartz said he has heard from "about a dozen" congregations in the past two weeks, "expressing interest, and support for what we're doing."

One is Temple Sinai in Pittsburgh.

"Our congregation, along with others, feels that Reform Judaism historically has not shied away from using its voice on matters that are crucial to our movement

and our country," said Temple Sinai's Rabbi James Gibson.

Gibson emphasized that the resolution his congregation is working on will focus on asking movement leaders to show leadership, rather than dictating to them what stand to take on the war.

"This is something all of us are struggling with, especially those of us with relatives in the military," he said. "We want to balance their needs with those of our country's policies."

The Reform movement appears to be the

only denomination so close to making a formal declaration on the war.

In September, Mark Waldman, director of public policy for the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, told JTA that the Conservative movement "hasn't had any discussions recently as an organization."

"The Reform movement appears to be turning a corner," Schwartz said. "It appears ready to address this at the biennial. That's a good sign, and precisely what we have been trying to initiate." ■

**A** Rosh Hashanah sermon appears to have launched an initiative within the Reform movement to take a stand on the Iraq war.

## Bill Gates visits Israeli high-tech

By DINA KRAFT

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Declaring Israel a "technology powerhouse," Bill Gates gave a rousing morale boost to the country's high-tech sector on his first trip to the Jewish state.

The Microsoft chairman and world's richest man put his money where his mouth is in a country he predicted will play a major role in the international market, offering the Israeli government \$1.4 million for local start-up companies and promising to help connect thousands of economically disadvantaged Israeli children to the Internet.

"It's no exaggeration to say that the kind of innovation going on in Israel is critical to the future of the technology business. So many great companies have been started here," Gates said at a news conference.

He heaped more praise in an interview with the Ma'ariv newspaper.

"There is a greater concentration of

talented high-tech manpower here in comparison to other countries, almost to the extent of Silicon Valley," Gates said.

Last week, Gates specifically touted Israel's achievements in information security. He said he also was impressed that so much of the country's population is computer literate.

Gates said he had come to learn about the Israeli market, where Microsoft has some \$120 million in annual sales, the Globes newspaper reported.

The agreement Gates signed with the government promises cooperation between Microsoft and the chief scientist at Israel's Science and Technology Ministry. The agreement stipulates that money provided by Microsoft will be allocated to start-ups; the companies also will receive help from Microsoft in strategizing new ideas and launching them in the global market.

Gates also met with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and a group of Israeli students who excel in computer-related topics. ■

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**THIS WEEK****MONDAY**

■ A U.N. resolution commemorating the Holocaust is set to pass. The resolution, marking the 60th anniversary of the creation of the United Nations, is the first to specifically recall the Holocaust.

■ The Jewish Agency for Israel's Board of Governors' meeting continues in Jerusalem through Wednesday.

**TUESDAY**

■ More than 100 rabbis, educators, and lay leaders will get a "sneak preview" of the Synaplex program in New York City. Synaplex was inspired in part by mega-churches that tailor worship services to suit congregants of different ages.

**WEDNESDAY**

■ The U.S. Supreme Court considers a religious freedom case closely watched by Jewish groups. *Gonzales v. O Centro Espirita* considers the right of a Brazilian church to import a hallucinogenic drug critical to its ceremonies. The case will test how newly installed Chief Justice John Roberts handles the scope of religious exemptions from the law.

■ The Palestine Liberation Organization's new U.S. envoy starts work in Washington on Tuesday. Afif Safieh served for 15 years as PLO envoy to London.

■ The Consulate General of Poland in New York City will be the first U.S. host of the multimedia exhibit "The Jews of Czystochowa" through Nov. 10.

■ U.S. District Court Judge T.S. Ellis, in Alexandria, Va., considers final motions in the classified information leak case against two former staffers of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. But Ellis has said he will consider postponements.

■ Shaul Mofaz, Israel's defense minister, arrives in Washington for a two-day visit aimed at reviving the U.S.-Israel strategic relationship, ruptured in recent years by Israel's arms sales to China.

■ Brandeis University's Steinhardt Social Research Institute hosts its inaugural conference. The institute is working to address the problems in studying American Jewish demography.

**THURSDAY**

■ The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Anti-Defamation League honor District of Columbia Police Chief Charles Ramsey for initiating a program that uses the museum to sensitize police officials. The program, "Law Enforcement and Society: Lessons from the Holocaust," is credited with reducing friction between police and protesters in Washington, and has been expanded to other police forces and the FBI.

**SUNDAY**

■ Gen. Moshe Yaalon, who retired this year as Israel's military chief of staff, delivers a lecture at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, marking the 10th anniversary of the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

# Israel gains from Iran spat

By DAN BARON

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel often comes under international criticism for its counterterrorist and settlement-building policies.

But comments by Iran's president calling for Israel's destruction have elicited international sympathy for the Jewish state.

In itself, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's call, at a televised anti-Zionist rally in Tehran last week, for the Jewish state to be "wiped off the map" wasn't so new, a reiteration of the traditional rhetoric of hard-line Iranian religious officials.

But since the comments came not from one of the country's ayatollahs but from its president — and came soon after Israel garnered international plaudits for its Gaza Strip withdrawal, and as international scrutiny on Iran's nuclear program intensifies — they drew a lot of attention.

Israel found its objections to the radical rhetoric echoed worldwide — from the United States to Europe to the United Nations.

Even Russia, which is helping Iran build its Bushehr nuclear reactor and has long been hesitant to criticize its trading partner in the Persian Gulf, joined in.

"What I saw on television is unacceptable. We will bring this to the attention of the Iranians," Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who only last month in his landmark United Nations address bemoaned the fact that "no one opens their mouth" when such threats are made against his country, launched a campaign to have Iran expelled from the forum.

"A country that calls for the destruction of another people cannot be a member of the United Nations," Sharon said.

Jerusalem officials admitted that a U.N. ouster of Iran was unlikely, given that it would require a Security Council recommendation and two-thirds majority vote in the General Assembly — traditionally a bastion of anti-Israel sentiment.

"I don't know if it has any chance of

success," Vice Premier Shimon Peres said of the campaign. "But it is something we must say. I don't think it is a matter of what one thinks is worthwhile or not. This is intolerable."

Last Friday, the U.N. Security Council did rebuke Iran for Ahmadinejad's comments.

For its part, Iran over the weekend accused the West of using its president's comments about the destruction of Israel in order to intensify pressure on Iran over its nuclear program.

At the same time, Iran's Foreign Ministry released a statement over the weekend, saying that the government's official stance "is that the occupation of Palestine should end, refugees should return and a democratic state should be formed with Jerusalem as its capital."

According to some Jerusalem officials, the international community

responded so strongly to Israel's diplomatic offensive in a bid to avert an Israeli military offensive.

Sharon, like President Bush, has long hinted that force could be a last resort for preventing Iran from getting the bomb. Ahmadinejad's speech at the "World Without Zionism" rally — where the title was posted in English, not Farsi, for international consumption — coupled with his lack of cooperation with European-led efforts to curb Iran's nuclear program, have made this specter of confrontation loom ever larger.

"Such a country, with nuclear arms, is a danger, not just to Israel and the Middle East, but also to Europe," Sharon said.

Similar comments came from the White House.

Still, no one expects military escalation before the exhaustion of U.S.-led efforts to bring Iran before the Security Council and impose sanctions unless it abandons its quest for weapons of mass destruction.

Ahmadinejad has made this possibility more likely.

"I cannot fail to recognize that those who favor transferring the Iranian nuclear issue to the U.N. Security Council now have an additional argument," Lavrov was quoted as saying.

Iran gains unwanted attention for its nuclear program.

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## WORLD

### Holocaust resolution gains momentum at U.N.

A resolution on Holocaust commemoration is gaining support among U.N. member states.

The document, called Holocaust Remembrance, already has at least 90 co-sponsors and is scheduled to be debated in the General Assembly on Monday.

Those with knowledge of the resolution say they expect it will be passed by consensus.

"The draft resolution has been receiving an extensive amount of support," said Marco Sermoneta, a political counselor at Israel's U.N. Mission. "The number of co-sponsors is a reflection of the consensus that it has already gained among member states."

The document calls for the world body to mark an annual Holocaust remembrance day and for U.N. departments to incorporate issues regarding the Holocaust and its significance into their educational programs.

### JNF cut ties to British branch

The Jewish National Fund ended its relationship with its British branch.

The Jewish National Fund says that JNF-UK uses the name to raise money for non-JNF projects in Israel, the Jerusalem Post reported.

The president of JNF-UK told the Post that the organization had funneled less money to the Jewish National Fund in Israel in recent years because it has been working against terrorism and poverty in Israel and less on the environmental concerns that the Jewish National Fund focuses on.

## NORTH AMERICA

### House expands Syria sanctions

The U.S. House of Representatives voted to substantially expand sanctions against Syria.

Approving a Senate bill Oct. 26 affirming existing sanctions against Iran, the House attached an amendment adding Syria to the sanctions, which relate to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

That effectively would broaden current sanctions against Syria to other countries that may provide it with materials that could be used to make weapons, an option President Bush has resisted until now.

Similar sanctions helped cripple trade with Saddam Hussein's Iraq, since "dual-use" materials encompass a broad range of trade.

The bill, which was passed on a voice vote, must go to House-Senate conference.

### Court to consider religious freedom case

The U.S. Supreme Court will consider a religious freedom case closely watched by Jewish groups.

The case to be heard Tuesday, *Gonzales v. O Centro Espirita*, considers the right of a Brazilian church to import a hallucinogenic drug critical to its ceremonies.

In 1999, U.S. Customs agents seized 30 gallons of the hallucinogenic tea from the Santa Fe, Calif., home of Jeffrey Bronfman, the church's U.S. leader and an heir to the Seagram's whiskey fortune.

Jewish groups will be closely watching how new Chief Justice John Roberts handles the case.

### Al-Arian rests case

The lawyer for a Florida professor charged with assisting Palestinian terrorists rested his case without calling witnesses.

After nearly five months of testimony from more than 70 prosecu-

tion witnesses, the lawyer for Sami Al-Arian surprised observers with his Oct. 27 move, The Associated Press reported.

Attorneys for Al-Arian's three co-defendants were presenting defenses on behalf of their clients.

The defendants face a 53-count indictment charging that they used a think tank, charity and school as fronts to raise funds for Islamic Jihad.

The prosecution's case centers on transcripts of wiretapped phone calls and fax transmissions that it says shows that the defendants raised money for suicide bombings.

The defendants deny that they supported violence.

### Rabin memorialized in New York

Yitzhak Rabin's absence is an "endless vacuum" that "grows larger from year to year," his daughter said Oct. 27 at a memorial event in New York City.

The ceremony, sponsored by the Israeli Consulate and hosted by journalist Charlie Rose, marked 10 years since the assassination of the Israeli prime minister on Nov. 4, 1995.

"Let us all vow to keep the torch lit and the mission of peace alive," Mayor Michael Bloomberg said. "Together we may achieve the glorious peace that Yitzhak Rabin was allowed to dream, but never allowed to see."

In addition to Dalia Rabin, speakers included Israeli Consul Arye Mekel and Israel's U.N. ambassador, Dan Gillerman.

### RJC backs Alaska drilling

The Republican Jewish Coalition supports drilling for oil in Alaska.

The group joined a Capitol Hill news conference last Friday with Sens. Ted Stevens and Lisa Murkowski, both Alaska Republicans, calling for opening the state's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to fossil fuel production.

The RJC maintains that opening the refuge would make the United States less dependent on Middle Eastern nations for its energy supply.

## MIDDLE EAST

### Boim gets immigration portfolio

Zeev Boim was named Israel's new immigration minister. Boim, a former deputy defense minister, was given the immigration portfolio Sunday by a Cabinet vote.

But his appointment may not be ratified in the Knesset, where opponents of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon within the Likud Party are expected to vote against what they see as the promotion of those who backed the recent Gaza Strip withdrawal.

Other appointments expected to encounter opposition are those of Roni Bar-On as trade minister and Ehud Olmert as finance minister, a post he has been filling on an interim basis.

### Ex-official: A shame Rabin assassin lived

Yitzhak Rabin's assassin should have been killed rather than arrested and jailed, a former Shin Bet director said.

Carmi Gillon, who retired from the Israeli security service in disgrace after its bodyguards failed to prevent Rabin's shooting at a 1995 peace rally, said Sunday that the survival of the assassin, Yigal Amir, was a triumph for Jewish extremism.

Israelis are preparing to mark the 10th anniversary of the Nov. 4, 1995, shooting.

Amir's brother stirred outrage by saying in an interview broadcast over the weekend that the assassination was morally defensible.

In separate remarks, Amir's mother said Prime Minister Ariel Sharon should be executed for engineering the Gaza Strip withdrawal.