

## IN THE NEWS

**Rabbis ask governor to pardon execution**

More than 90 California rabbis have signed a petition asking Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to pardon death-row inmate Stanley "Tookie" Williams.

The former gang member and convicted murderer, who has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to turn at-risk youths away from crime, is scheduled to be killed Dec. 13.

"While our tradition holds that murder is the worst of offense," states the petition, circulated by the Progressive Jewish Alliance, "the tradition also states that one who saves a life is considered as if he has saved an entire world."

**Iran presses ahead with nuke plans**

Iran said it plans to build 20 new nuclear reactors.

The Islamic republic, which already has a reactor under construction at Bushehr, said through its official new agency Sunday that 20 more are planned.

Construction is to begin on the first two of the new reactors in March, one with Russian help. Israel saw in the statement further cause for concern that Iran soon will attain nuclear weapons.

"The danger is a global danger, and I think it is entirely clear that we cannot allow situation to emerge where Iran becomes a nuclear power," Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said.

**Boat sunk off Gaza Strip**

The Israeli navy sank a Palestinian boat off the Gaza Strip.

A 22-year-old man, described by the Palestinian Authority as a fisherman, was killed in Saturday's incident.

Israeli military sources said he had entered prohibited waters, ignored warning shots and fired at naval vessels.

There were no Israeli casualties.

Last Friday, Israeli troops killed a Palestinian who tried to climb the Gaza Strip border fence and cross into Israel.

# WORLD REPORT

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## With time short on Iran nukes, AIPAC criticizes Bush approach

By RON KAMPEAS

**W**ASHINGTON (JTA) — As time dwindles for diplomatic efforts to curtail Iran's drive for nuclear weapons, the pro-Israel lobby in Washington is criticizing the Bush administration's handling of the issue.

The United States has endorsed a European Union plan that would allow Iran to continue its nuclear development as long as it leaves uranium enrichment, the final stage of converting uranium to fuel, to Russia. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the hope is that such a deal would keep Iran from bringing its uranium to weapon-grade level.

"We're prepared to see if the Russians can explore something that may bring the Iranians around to the recognition that they cannot enrich and reprocess on their territory, that they have a credibility problem with the international community as to the fuel cycle," Rice told USA Today last week. "We'll see whether it works."

Within days of Rice's interview, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee delivered a rare public criticism of the Bush administration.

"Last week's decision allowed Iran to win a critical round in its game of cat-and-mouse with the international community," AIPAC said in an email earlier this week headlined "IMPORTANT — AIPAC press statement critical of Administration's recent decisions on Iran policy."

AIPAC and Israel had hoped that the United States would nudge the International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N. nuclear watchdog, into referring Iran to the U.N. Security Council last week for sanctions. The IAEA board met last week in Vienna and deferred a decision on whether to refer Iran to the Security Council while Britain, Germany and France — the "E.U. 3" — try to negotiate with Iran.

A senior Bush administration official said Iran was clearly in non-compliance, but the United States wanted to make sure Russia would not exercise its veto if the matter goes to the Security Council.

"We're satisfied that reporting Iran's non-compliance to the Security Council will advance the issue," said the official, who spoke anonymously because the matter is still under negotiation. "But because Russia is in a position to veto, we want to make sure Russia is cooperative when we get to the Security Council."

The negotiations are to begin within two weeks, and no one expects the IAEA to consider the matter again until at least February.

But that could be too late, according to an assessment by Maj.-Gen. Aharon Zeevi-Farkash, Israel's military intelligence chief.

"If, by the end of March," the IAEA board "does not succeed in transferring the issue to the Security Council, it will be possible to say that the diplomatic effort has failed," Zeevi-Farkash reportedly told the Knesset's Defense and Foreign Affairs Committee this week.

The U.S. official said the Bush administration does not agree with that date. "There's a difference, it's not huge," the official said. "But Israel sees it as a bit closer than we do."

In a deal brokered last year by the E.U. 3, Iran agreed to shut down its nuclear fuel-cycle activities. That ended this summer after critical E.U. and IAEA reports suggested that Iran was not allowing inspectors full access, and

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FOCUS  
ON  
ISSUES

## ■ AIPAC blasts Bush approach to Iran nukes

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uncovered earlier deceptions by Iran.

Iran defiantly resumed its nuclear fuel cycle; moreover, its new president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, is a radical who has ratcheted up anti-Israel rhetoric, publicly calling for Israel's destruction.

On Sunday, Iran announced that it plans to build 20 more nuclear reactors. Construction is to begin on the first two of the new reactors in March, one with Russian help.

Israel saw in the statement further cause for concern that Iran soon will attain nuclear weapons.

"The danger is a global danger, and I think it is entirely clear that we cannot allow situation to emerge where Iran becomes a nuclear power," Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said. Israel's military chief of staff said Sunday that he doubts diplomatic pressure will stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

"The fact that the Iranians are successful time after time in getting away from international pressure ... encourages them to continue their nuclear project," Lt.-Gen. Dan Halutz told foreign journalists. "I don't believe for the time being that political pressure will bear any fruit."

Iran says it has no interest in enriching uranium to weapons levels, and wants only to convert it to fuel for peaceful energy purposes. But AIPAC and Israel are concerned that allowing Iran any uranium conversion capability would bring it dangerously close to weaponization if the E.U.-Russia deal falls through.

"The Russian proposal allowing Iran to

possess a key step in the nuclear fuel cycle is a dangerous concession made at a time of continued Iranian intransigence," AIPAC

said in a memo accompanying its statement. Senior Israeli officials brought the matter up in a strategic dialogue session this week with their U.S. counterparts.

The Americans, headed by Nicholas Burns, an undersecretary of state, said they agreed that Iran ultimately should face sanctions, but didn't want to bring the matter to the Security Council until they were certain that Russia and China would not veto sanctions.

There likely would be a majority on the Security Council for sanctions, but Russia and China — who are wary of nuclear oversight because of their own nuclear programs — have indicated they would exercise their veto right.

The U.S. believes that bringing Russia into the mix would give it a motive to back sanctions eventually. Israel and AIPAC worry that could take too long, and they favor going to the Security Council now, if only to show Iran how serious they are.

Moreover, Israel believes that a warning statement from the Security Council — rather than full sanctions — likely would not be vetoed now. Getting Russia and China on board with such a warning now would make it harder for them to veto sanctions later if Iran continues to defy warnings, the thinking goes.

Another option is to operate outside the U.N. framework. Europeans have suggested they would consider sanctions if the United States presses hard; Iran does a great deal of business with Europe, and such sanctions could have some bite.

Another factor informing resistance to the E.U.-Russian formula is that advocates of sanctions do not regard Russia as entirely trustworthy when it comes to Iran. Russia has an array of defense and nuclear investments in the Islamic republic, and Russian media reported last Friday that Russia and Iran have just signed a \$1 billion missile deal.

The U.S. official said the Russian proposal as it now stands was not acceptable.

The United States wants to shut down all fuel conversion in Iran, while the Russians want the Iranians to be able to continue

converting uranium to fuel, reserving only the final enrichment stage for Russia.

"We don't think conversion in Iran makes sense," the official said. There's enough existing fuel on the open market to power the single nuclear reactor Iran says it needs, the official said, and the amount of fuel that a separate conversion process would yield is excessive. "No country needs this much fuel to power a single reactor."

The undercurrent of the U.S. strategy appears to be to allow Russia to realize how stubborn the Iranians are, a process that would finally drive Russia into the camp in favor of sanctions. "We were supportive of the efforts of the E.U. 3," the official said, referring to a failed agreement last year to shut down Iran's nuclear cycle. "They came to a dead end. Now we're trying to be supportive of Russia's efforts."

AIPAC prides itself on its close working relationship with the Bush administration, and officials at the pro-Israel group suggested they would not have issued such public criticism if they didn't consider the matter urgent. Iran has been a top AIPAC priority for more than a decade, and the organization believes the Islamic republic poses a grave danger to Israel.

If it comes down to a political battle, signs are that AIPAC could muster strong support in Congress to press the White House to demand sanctions on Iran.

Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.), chairwoman of the U.S. House of Representatives' Middle East subcommittee, signaled outspoken opposition to the E.U.-Russia deal weeks ago.

"It is baffling that the Europeans still seek to appease and arm the terrorist regime in Tehran," she said in a Nov. 10 statement. "To add insult to injury, they want to entrust Russia, a nation with an already dubious record regarding Iran's nuclear and missile proliferation, to process Iran's uranium."

Ros-Lehtinen noted that her own Iran sanctions bill has the support of three quarters of her House colleagues, though she's trying to line up additional co-sponsors.

"By allowing Iran nuclear capabilities, the Europeans are giving the match to the pyromaniac," she said.

**'Last week's decision allowed Iran to win a critical round in its game of cat-and-mouse with the international community.'**

**AIPAC statement**

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**THIS WEEK****MONDAY**

■ Geneva Convention signatory states meet in Geneva through Tuesday to decide on a neutral emblem for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Acceptance of the new red diamond would smooth the way for Israel's Magen David Adom to gain access to the international movement after nearly 60 years of exclusion. The MDA would be able to display the Star of David — whose usage has been opposed for years by Arab and Muslim states — inside Israel, and would use the red diamond, with the star displayed either inside or beside it, when working abroad.

■ The Israeli Embassy in Washington commemorates 10 years since Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated. Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), ranking member on the U.S. House of Representatives' International Relations Committee, delivers the keynote address.

■ An exhibit commemorating the Jews of Czeszochowa, Poland, a community that perished in the Holocaust, opens in the Russell Senate Office Building in Washington.

■ The German Embassy in Washington and the Lubavitch movement co-host a discussion on Jewish life in present-day Germany.

**TUESDAY**

■ The Moroccan Press Group, a Moroccan media company, together with the U.S. Institute of Peace, a government-run think tank, host a conference in Washington on the West and the Arab world. Speakers include Meir Sheetrit, Israel's Moroccan-born transportation minister.

**WEDNESDAY**

■ Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion sponsors a symposium on human trafficking. With almost 1 million women trafficked illegally across international borders each year, the symposium offers a Jewish perspective on the phenomenon.

■ The Arab American Institute releases a poll of Arabs in the Middle East. The AAI says the findings will show that Arabs are likelier to identify with their country than with pan-Arabism, and that they see the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as less important.

**THURSDAY**

■ Yuval Rabin, son of Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli prime minister assassinated in 1995, opens a library in his father's memory at the Jewish Primary School in Washington. Yuval Rabin has a home in suburban Maryland.

■ Jessica Montell, executive director of B'tselem, an Israeli human rights watchdog, lectures in Washington on the effect on Palestinians of Israel's West Bank security barrier and settlement expansion.

**SUNDAY**

■ John Bolton, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, addresses the Zionist Organization of America's annual dinner in New York.

# Restitution advance in Berlin

By TOBY AXELROD

BERLIN (JTA) — A major battle has been won in the fight for restitution of prime property in Berlin to its Jewish heirs.

The Karstadt-Quelle company is dropping its suit to retain properties in former East Berlin that once belonged to the Wertheim family, which ran one of the biggest department store chains in pre-Hitler Germany.

The decision, confirmed to JTA by the company on Dec. 1, was greeted with enthusiasm by lawyers for the family and by the Claims Conference, which filed and fought the cases. Both hoped this signaled Karstadt's readiness to face what many saw as inevitable — restitution of the properties, or payment of their value.

"We are extremely pleased," Gideon Taylor, the Claims Conference's executive vice president, told JTA. "There is no question this is a tremendous breakthrough."

Taylor said several other cases were pending against Karstadt, which has 92,000 employees and had more than \$15 billion in sales last year.

"This case is really about history — it is about making sure that the story is told the way it really happened," he said.

"You're talking about prime real estate, right in the center of Berlin. At one point it was destroyed, it was rubble," Taylor said. "And today it is one of the most valuable pieces of real estate in the country."

The reserved celebration came after Joerg Howe, spokesperson for Karstadt, said in the German media that the company would "withdraw our suit" to retain title to four parcels of real estate where Wertheim department stores were located before World War II. JTA has since confirmed that this action by the company is taking place.

"We take every small victory as it comes," said Gary Osen, a lawyer for the Wertheim family in New Jersey, "but there still is a long way to go."

Now that Karstadt has dropped the suit, the property or its value should be transferred to the Claims Conference as

the successor organization. In such cases, about 80 percent of the proceeds usually go to the heirs.

The Claims Conference uses the rest for programs to help needy Holocaust survivors and to meet its administrative costs.

The suit, which was to be heard in Berlin's administrative court Dec. 9, was a complaint by Karstadt-Quelle against the reassignment of a key property to Wertheim by a state Restitution Authority. But the prognosis for Karstadt was not good: Last March, in a similar case, the court ruled that Karstadt-Quelle had failed to establish itself as the legal successor of another parcel, and Karstadt's appeal against that ruling failed in the German High Court in Leipzig in October.

Howe told the DPA news service a withdrawal from the latest suit would not cause the company any financial damage, because the property in question was not actually owned by Karstadt.

"Our claims simply were not recognized," he said.

He added that the company would not give up its legal claims over another parcel known as the Lenne-Triangle, a parcel near the former Berlin Wall that Karstadt sold to Otto Beisheim for some \$175 million.

Beisheim reportedly invested nearly a half-billion dollars on the site, building the Ritz Carlton Hotel.

Karstadt-Quelle already has fought against several reassignments of property. Matthias Druba, an attorney for the Wertheims in Berlin, told DPA that there are at least three similar cases open.

In all, there were seven prime Berlin properties in question, worth about \$590 million today. In October and November, American courts refused to hear suits by the Wertheim family related to the properties, but German courts have found for the Claims Conference.

In the latest development, Karstadt must have "realized that there was no possibility of them succeeding," Taylor said, "and that the legal victories we had up to now had set up the legal situation such that it was going to be a clear victory for the Claims Conference."

**'There is no question this is a tremendous breakthrough.'**

**Gideon Taylor**

Executive vice president,  
Claims Conference

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## MIDDLE EAST

### Rockets fired from Gaza

Palestinians fired six rockets at Israel from the Gaza Strip.

The salvoes on Saturday and Sunday caused consternation in Israeli villages along the Gaza boundary, but no serious casualties.

Israel responded with artillery fire and air strikes targeting open fields and an empty building in northern Gaza.

### Military chief: diplomacy unlikely to stop Iran

Israel's military chief of staff said Sunday he doubts diplomatic pressure will stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

"The fact that the Iranians are successful time after time in getting away from international pressure ... encourages them to continue their nuclear project," Lt.-Gen. Dan Halutz told foreign journalists. "I don't believe for the time being that political pressure will bear any fruit."

### Palestinians court Pope

Mahmoud Abbas invited Pope Benedict XVI to visit Jerusalem.

"You will be very welcome in Jerusalem and the holy places," the Palestinian Authority president told Benedict at the end of a 20-minute meeting in the Vatican on Saturday, although the Palestinian Authority has no control over Jerusalem, which is Israel's capital.

The Palestinian Authority wants eastern Jerusalem as its future capital.

The pope, who has said he is considering Israeli invitations to visit Jerusalem and other parts of Israel, thanked Abbas.

Benedict was also presented with a Palestinian Authority passport and an invitation to visit Bethlehem in the West Bank.

### Peres can pick future post

Shimon Peres was offered his pick of posts in a future Israeli government under Ariel Sharon.

Sharon said Sunday that if he's re-elected prime minister in March 28 elections, Peres could choose the role he wants to play in politics and diplomacy.

"I asked Shimon Peres to pick any job he wants. Shimon can fill any post, I believe, with great success," Sharon said at a joint press conference with Peres, who quit the Labor Party last week to endorse Sharon's new centrist movement Kadima. "Regardless of the job Shimon picks, it is crystal clear that he will be a full and central partner in the diplomatic process."

Peres said he had left Labor, his political home for decades, because of the need to help Sharon push for peace with the Palestinians.

"I would not have been able to forgive myself if, because of partisan considerations or inconvenience, I had not lent a hand to the move Arik Sharon is leading," he said.

### Peres optimistic on peace

Israel's new Kadima Party could achieve peace with the Palestinians, Shimon Peres said.

Peres, who quit the Labor Party and is expected to join the government if Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's Kadima Party wins March elections, said Saturday that he was optimistic on peacemaking prospects.

"The Sharon party is for a Palestinian state, for negotiating with the Palestinians, for the 'road map' and for starting it right away. That was my position all my life," Peres told the BBC, referring to the internationally backed "road map" peace plan. "The situation is that most of the Israelis and most of the Palestinians have a fair idea of

what a permanent settlement will look like. So why waste time?"

Though Peres has yet to receive a formal position in Kadima, he called on Labor to join a coalition if Sharon wins March 28 national elections.

## WORLD

### Toll-free number for Russian Jews

Russian Jews who are considering immigrating to Germany can call a toll-free number to get legal advice from the Berlin Jewish community there.

The hotline was opened by the Berlin office of the World Congress of Russian-speaking Jewry, or VKRE, and will be operational only on the first Monday of each month.

VKRE officials said they expect the hotline to be popular with future Russian Jewish immigrants now that Germany's new immigration rules are going into effect.

### Canada continues shift toward Israel

A Canadian diplomat said Canada would vote against more of the U.N.'s annual litany of anti-Israel resolutions.

Last year Canada took a more pro-Israel stance on four of the annual package of 20 or so anti-Israel resolutions, and Deputy Ambassador Gilbert Laurin on Dec. 1 told the General Assembly that Canada would vote against three more of the "divisive and unhelpful" resolutions this year.

B'nai Brith Canada called the stance a "welcome first step."

"Canada's recognition of the injustice of the entrenched ritual of politicized anti-Israel resolutions ought to be part and parcel of a policy of zero tolerance on the part of our government for Israel-bashing at the U.N.," said Frank Dimant, B'nai Brith's executive vice-president.

According to Shimon Fogel of the Canada-Israel Committee, Canada's intention to sponsor a more balanced resolution next year "represents a substantial contribution to rehabilitating the U.N."

### Goldschmidt to return to Russia

Moscow chief rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, who was barred from entering Russia after a trip abroad in September, will be allowed to return to the Russian capital.

The Conference of European Rabbis issued a statement last Friday announcing that Goldschmidt, chairman of the CER's Standing Committee, had "received an invitation on Friday from the government of the Russian Federation to return to his family and community in Moscow."

French Chief Rabbi Joseph Sitruk, the CER's president, thanked "all those in the diplomatic community and Jewish organizations who have worked so tirelessly over the last three months on behalf of Rabbi Goldschmidt."

## NORTH AMERICA

### Jewish groups file 'intelligent-design' brief

Several Jewish organizations filed a brief arguing against a Pennsylvania school board that added "intelligent design" to its curriculum.

The Jewish Social Policy Action Network, Jewish Council for Public Affairs and the Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action filed a brief in a Pennsylvania federal court last Friday, arguing against the Dover Area School Board, which required schools to tell students that evolution is only a theory and direct them to a book on intelligent design.

The Jewish organizations dispute the school board's claim that the new language is just a "modest curriculum change."