

## IN THE NEWS

## Iranian leader links Zionism, fascism

Iran's president likened Zionism to fascism.

In remarks published by Iranian media Monday, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said the State of Israel was created as part of a Western scheme aimed at "sweeping the Jews out of Europe and at the same time creating a European appendix with a Zionist and anti-Islamic nature in the heart of the Islamic world."

Accusing Israel of "massacring" Muslims, Ahmadinejad said "Zionism is basically a new fascism." The hardline president has drawn international censure for his anti-Israel and anti-Semitic comments, including the assertion that the Holocaust was a myth.

## Report: Sharon seeks alternative plan

Ariel Sharon reportedly plans to seek U.S. approval for Israel unilaterally delineating its border on West Bank land.

Senior Israeli officials have recently proposed to counterparts in the Bush administration that the "road map" plan for peace be abandoned and that the United States agree to the Jewish state annexing West Bank areas unilaterally, Ma'ariv reported Monday. [Story, Pg. 2]

## Pope may visit Auschwitz this spring

Pope Benedict XVI may visit Auschwitz this spring during a planned trip to Poland.

A spokesman for Archbishop of Krakow Stanislaw Dziwisz told The Associated Press that Dziwisz had invited the German-born pontiff to visit the former Nazi death camp.

Dziwisz was the longtime aide to Benedict's predecessor, the Polish-born John Paul II, who prayed at Auschwitz during his landmark return trip to his homeland in 1979. No dates for his trip to Poland have been announced, but he is expected to make the journey in May.

# WORLD REPORT

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

## As new year dawns, groups reflect on a tough legislative session

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

**W**ASHINGTON (JTA) — Jewish activists are holding on to a glimmer of hope that scheduled Medicaid cuts, which could take millions of dollars from Jewish social service programs, will be spared.

As the U.S. House of Representatives prepares to hold a final vote on the budget bill this month, social service advocates are hoping they can convince enough Republicans to vote against the cuts, which are part of a plan to eliminate \$40 billion from the federal budget over five years.

If the budget passes, it will be the final chapter in a legislative year that has raised concerns for many in the Jewish community. Social service programs took a large hit in 2005 as money was moved to other priorities, including Hurricane Katrina clean-up.

The United Jewish Communities, the umbrella organization for North American Jewish federations, has joined other social service groups, including the Salvation Army and the United Way of America, in speaking out against the cuts. The chief concern is that senior citizens would be penalized for any assets transferred out of their possession up to five years before they need extended care, double the previous length of time.

Many seniors who will require long-term care transfer their assets to family members or charities, leaving the seniors indigent and forcing Medicaid to pay for the care. But the new regulations would mean seniors would be required to pay an amount equal to their assets five years before care begins.

"The person would still be indigent, and we will not kick them out," said William Daroff, UJC's vice president for public policy. "In the guise of trying to create disincentives to fraud, what they are doing is shifting the burden" to social service providers.

Daroff estimates that the loss of Medicaid subsidies would cost the Jewish social service system tens of millions of dollars.

The cuts will have other effects as well. Joyce Garner Keller, executive director of the Ohio Jewish Communities, which represents Ohio federations, said the Medicaid cuts could force the state to increase patient co-payments instead. That could mean that fewer patients would seek preventative care, and could leave social service programs to foot the bill for more expensive care later.

"It gets to be rather frustrating year after year," Keller said of the budget cuts. "This year was especially frustrating because so many charities suffered in trying to help with Hurricane Katrina."

Privately, Jewish leaders concede that there's only a slim chance that the budget will fail. It passed 212-206 last month, with nine Republicans in the House joining all Democrats in opposition. But the pressure on those Republicans to support the measure as the legislative year dwindles will be strong.

"I don't believe Republicans who voted yes are uncaring or unfeeling," Keller said. "I think their sense of what they were accomplishing while meeting goals of deficit reduction were different."

The measure passed the Senate in December, with Vice President Dick Cheney casting the tie-breaking vote. There are other items

*Continued on page 2*

FOCUS  
ON  
ISSUES

## ■ *A legislative year that raised many concerns for the Jewish community*

*Continued from page 1*

of concern in the budget as well, including cuts to food-stamp programs and college tuition assistance.

Mark Pelavin, associate director of the Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism, said the vote showed victims of Hurricane Katrina and others that Congress "cannot be counted on to support them in times of need."

The hurricane aftermath has been an interesting factor for the Jewish community in the legislative year.

Jewish groups were split over whether to support voucher programs, which reimbursed public and private schools that took in students displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

The voucher measure passed Congress last month as part of Defense Department appropriations.

The Orthodox Union lobbied hard for the program, which gave schools \$6,000 for each displaced child taken in.

"It sets a positive precedent, not for vouchers but for equal treatment in a government program," said Nathan Diament, director of the O.U.'s Institute for Public Affairs.

Other groups, including the Anti-Defamation League, said the arrangement violates the separation of church and state because it does not prevent students from receiving religious instruction, and even worship, with federal funds.

"The human-needs element has to be a factor, but we had to oppose this program because it has all of the attributes of vouchers," said Michael Lieberman, the

ADL's Washington counsel. Lieberman said the scope of the program is much larger than voucher programs in Cleveland and Washington, and could therefore set a precedent.

The Jewish community did unite to urge Congress to pass the Workplace Religious Freedom Act.

The legislation would give employees the right to seek accommodations for their religious practices, provided they don't create undue hardships for the employer.

It would give observant Jews the right to wear head coverings and other religious garb, take time off for Shabbat and holidays and participate in religious practices at work.

The measure, which has been a Jewish community priority for years, garnered a hearing in November before the House Education and Workforce Committee's

subcommittee on employer-employee relations. No vote on it is scheduled, however.

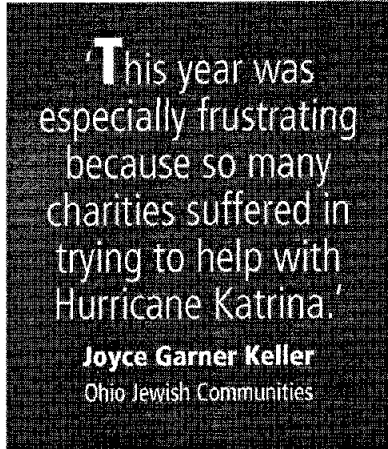
Jewish groups also largely supported expansion of federal legislation against hate crimes, which passed the House in September.

The legislation would expand the definition of hate crimes to include crimes committed based on disability, sexual orientation and identity.

Congress passed \$240 million in economic aid to Israel last year, as well as \$2.28 billion in mili-

tary support. Israel had been expected to seek additional aid to help offset costs associated with the Gaza Strip withdrawal, but decided to defer the issue after Hurricane Katrina.

Congress also passed \$600 million for U.S.-Israeli cooperative defense programs, \$150 million more than the White House sought.



## Israelis worry about renewal of terror

By DAN BARON

JERUSALEM (JTA)— Will the Palestinians start the new year with a renewal of violence?

That has been the question asked by many Israelis in the final weeks of 2005, as the "truce" declared by Palestinian terrorist groups early last year came to an end.

True, there was never a complete cessation of violence. Islamic Jihad, which did not join in the truce, carried out several suicide bombings during the pact's nine-month stretch.

But the relative lull helped Prime Minister Ariel Sharon engineer the Gaza Strip withdrawal, and is credited by the Shin Bet with a 60 percent decrease in Israeli casualties from terror during 2005.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, who coaxed terrorist groups into observing the cease-fire he declared with Sharon, appealed for an extension.

"I think it is our interest that the truce continues, in order to have the opportunity to reconstruct our country and to make things take their ordinary course," he said

Monday during a fund-raising trip to the United Arab Emirates.

Hamas, the Al-Aksa Brigade and smaller factions have so far resisted the call.

Hamas is running in Palestinian Authority parliamentary elections on Jan. 25. It is seen as unlikely to resort to major terrorism before the votes are in.

Further complicating matters is the deterioration of Gaza into anarchy.

All of this means that the U.S.-led "road map" for peace could end up in tatters. Sharon may be preparing for that eventuality. According to a front-page report Monday in Ma'ariv, Sharon has sent Israeli officials to propose to the United States that, following the Palestinian Authority election, the road map should be abandoned in favor of unilateral action.

Sharon wants President Bush's endorsement for Israel declaring a border that would include some West Bank land while allowing for the creation of a temporary Palestinian state, the newspaper said.

There was no immediate U.S. response, and a senior Israeli political source dismissed the article as "speculation."

**JTA**  
WORLD  
REPORT

**Daniel J. Krifcher**  
President  
**Mark J. Joffe**  
Executive Editor and Publisher  
**Lisa Hostein**  
Editor  
**Michael S. Arnold**  
Managing Editor  
**Lenore A. Silverstein**  
Finance and Administration Director  
**Noa Artzi-Weill**  
Marketing Director

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](http://www.jta.org).  
© JTA. Reproduction only with permission.

# Fueled by immigration, Montreal Jewry is back

By BRAM EISENTHAL

MONTREAL (JTA) — Facing an uncertain future with an aging population, low birth rate and the loss of younger members for jobs elsewhere, Montreal's Jewish community suddenly has a more optimistic outlook.

The Argentine economic crash of 2001-2002 and the surge in anti-Semitism in France linked to the Palestinian intifada have been a boon to Montreal's Jewish community.

Poli and Damian Nisenson, a married artist and musician, came to Montreal from Buenos Aires with their two young daughters 18 months ago.

"We were both well-known, teaching, working at our professions and having a good standard of living. But then life got very violent," said Damian Nisenson, who plays jazz, Beatles and his own compositions on saxophone and guitar.

Nisenson, who is in his early 50s, is struggling to succeed as a musician in Montreal, and works at the Jewish Public Library. His wife, who is in her 30s, paints, works when she can find jobs and occasionally exhibits her art around the city.

"We didn't want to leave our home. I never felt anti-Semitism there or anything like that, but we were living in fear: You would go out and didn't know if you would come home again," Damien Nisenson said. "So we decided it was worthwhile living a safer life, a quieter life, even though we would have to sacrifice a lot to be here. We

## THIS WEEK

### SATURDAY

- The International Conference of Jewish Parliamentarians begins in Jerusalem. The council is a project supported by the Knesset, World Jewish Congress, Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Israel Forum. Its goal is to bring together Jewish legislators and lawmakers from around the world.

- Japanese Prime Minister Juichiro Koizumi to visit Israel and the Palestinian Authority as part of a trip to the Middle East. The visit is aimed at offering Japanese support for jump-starting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

- A congress of Jewish medical ethics in Copenhagen, arranged by the Jewish community of Denmark, deals with topics such as terror and ethics, transplantations and ethics and breast feeding and Jewish medical ethics. The congress runs through Monday, Jan. 9.

came with only our bags, nothing else."

Once the largest Jewish community in Canada, numbering approximately 135,000, the size of Montreal's community nosedived after the election of the first Quebec separatist government in 1976.

Many Jews moved to Ontario, primarily Toronto, which now has the largest Jewish community in Canada.

Families still return to Montreal on holiday weekends to visit aging parents and grandparents or to pick up excellent wood-oven fired bagels. And a thriving community remains, numbering between 85,000 to just over 100,000.

With the arrival of Argentine and French Jews, all bets on declining demographics are off.

"New immigrants mean that there still will be a strong Jewish community in Montreal in a couple of generations. It's as simple as that," said Shellie Ettinger, executive director of Jewish Immigrant Aid Services Montreal.

For Jews looking to leave Argentina and France, Quebec is a hot destination.

Since 2001, 2,044 Jews have come to Quebec from Argentina and 1,372 have arrived from France, according to JIAS figures.

Argentine immigration rose from 76 in 2001 to a high of 644 in 2003, before falling over the past two years to 463 in 2005. The fall coincided with an improvement in the Argentine economy.

The data from France show the impact of anti-Semitism resulting from the Palestinian intifada: The number of immigrants rose from 58 in 2001 to 582 in 2005.

The demographics of the new arrivals — many are young families with more than one child — portend positive change for an aging community that has wondered how to increase its numbers.

Many more come on their own, either through business, university exchange programs or the purchase of property.

Jewish officials are treating the issue delicately.

"We want to be responsive and welcoming. We want even to be encouraging, but it has to be passive encouragement," said Victor Goldbloom, a former Quebec

Cabinet minister who soon will assume the presidency of JIAS Montreal. "It must be clear that we are not on a recruiting campaign to draw people away from their home communities."

It's not always easy for the immigrants. While they credit JIAS with helping them get settled, the Nisensons have had a difficult time making social and professional contacts in the community.

"JIAS helped us find our way when we got here, bought us our beds and mattresses, which we really appreciated," Damian Nisenson said.

JIAS also helped the couple find a day-care center for daughters Miranda, 4, and Dalila, 2.

"But I had a hard time finding anyone to integrate with culturally or even to speak to at first, and our real contacts came from outside the Montreal Jewish community," Damian said.

Things have improved as Nisenson makes a name as a musician in Montreal. The family was accepted at

a reduced fee at last summer's 10th Klez-Kanada festival, an annual weeklong event held in Quebec's Laurentian Mountains, where he made new connections.

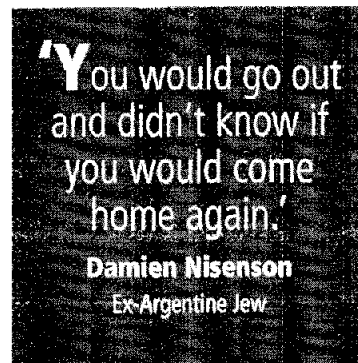
Things have been easier for Jean Charles Ada, 31, at least when it comes to finding work. Ada, an optometrist, and his wife Karine, 29, an optician, came to Montreal from Paris six months ago with their sons, aged 4 and 1.

Karine said she was relieved to be in Quebec, away from the recent stresses the family faced in France, though she said they had left more for the children's sake than for their own.

"The environment is bad for them in Paris," she said. "The Jewish schools have security barriers around them and the children are afraid to go to school."

Karine praised local Jewish organizations for helping them get settled. Jewish Employment Montreal helped Jean Charles find a job in his field, and JIAS helped them find a school for one child and a good day-care center for the other, as well as doctors and other services.

"Everyone has been very nice and helpful," she said.



# NEWS IN BRIEF

## MIDDLE EAST

### P.A. looking to delay vote

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas said this month's Palestinian elections would be delayed if Israel prevents Arabs in Jerusalem from voting.

The comments are the most serious indication to date that the Palestinian parliamentary elections, scheduled for Jan. 25, could be postponed. Israeli officials say they have yet to decide whether to allow Jerusalem Arabs to participate in the vote.

There has been speculation that the Palestinian Authority wants to delay the elections because of political gains by Hamas.

### Palestinians storm Gaza-Egypt border

Palestinian Authority policemen crossed the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt last Friday, firing bullets to protest the killing of a fellow officer.

About 100 officers stormed the border, leading European monitors manning the border to flee to a nearby Israeli army base.

The border was then closed, as agreements between Israel and the Palestinian Authority specify that the border can operate only with European monitoring. The officer had been killed a day earlier. The policemen said they would close the border until the person responsible was executed, but the situation was brought back under control and the border reopened within a few hours.

### Barghouti: Give Fatah a chance

Tanzim leader Marwan Barghouti apologized for the Fatah party's failures.

In a statement from an Israeli jail, where he is serving life sentences for his involvement in multiple terrorist attacks, Barghouti urged Palestinians to give the ruling party a second chance in upcoming elections against Hamas, according to a copy received by The Associated Press.

"We do not hesitate to apologize to the Palestinian people for the mistakes that have been committed in recent years," Barghouti said. "And I call upon the Palestinian people to renew their confidence in Fatah and to give Fatah a new opportunity."

Barghouti was chosen to head the list of Fatah candidates in this month's parliamentary elections.

### Turkey pitches in

Turkey plans to take over an industrial zone on the Gaza Strip's border with Israel.

Jerusalem sources said Monday that Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul was expected to arrive later this week to sign off on the acquisition of the Erez zone, which has been closed since Israel quit Gaza last year. The move would allow Turkey to increase its profile in peace efforts and help revive Gaza's economy.

### Iraqi Jews to visit hometown

A group of Iraqi-born Jews in Israel are planning a trip to their hometown.

A dozen people will make the trip to Mosul this spring, the Jerusalem Post reported.

A Kurdish guide will help coordinate the trip.

An estimated 120,000 Jews left Iraq in the 1950s, with most going to Israel.

### Wedding bells going silent?

Fewer Israelis are getting married. According to Interior Ministry statistics released this week, 35 percent fewer couples registered as

married in 2005 compared to the year before. There was also a slight decrease in the number of divorces.

Around one in four Israeli marriages is dissolved, a rate well below that of Britain and the United States.

### Army health scare

An Israeli military base was evacuated because of a health scare.

Some 500 conscripts were moved out of the Tzukei Uvda camp in the Negev last week after at least a dozen of their comrades were hospitalized with pneumonia. Israeli officials ruled out enemy action or terrorists in the contagion, saying a probe was under way into whether the virus had been carried by the base's water supply.

## NORTH AMERICA

### Summer camp for hurricane victims

A group that supports Jewish camping recently established a scholarship fund for Jewish children affected by this year's hurricanes. The Foundation for Jewish Camping's fund, called "Habayita: Coming Home to Jewish Camp," aims to help an estimated 400 Jewish families affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

The foundation hopes to raise \$1.5 million for the fund.

More information is available at [www.jewishcamping.org](http://www.jewishcamping.org).

## WORLD

### Chirac exhorts citizens to fight anti-Semitism

French President Jacques Chirac called on all French citizens to be "uncompromising" in the fight against racism and anti-Semitism.

In his New Year's message to the country, Chirac identified schools as the key to fighting racism and discrimination.

### British rabbi warns on anti-Semitism

Britain's Orthodox chief rabbi warned against a "tsunami of anti-Semitism." Jonathan Sacks made the tsunami comment in an interview broadcast over the BBC on Sunday after he was asked about the recent anti-Semitic comments of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadenijad.

Ahmadenijad's comments are part of a "tsunami of anti-Semitism which is taking place a long way from this country but which Europe seems unaware of," Sacks said.

Sacks added that he is frightened by the heightened rhetoric. "It's that kind of feeling that you don't know what's going to happen next that is making at least some European Jewish communities uncomfortable."

### Estonia blasted on WWII crime probe

The Simon Wiesenthal Center called an Estonian investigation of a suspected World War II-era criminal a whitewash.

The center said the investigation of Harry Mannil, which cleared him of any crimes, was a farce and shows the lack of political will in the Baltic country to hold Nazi-era war criminals accountable.

The center believes Mannil, who lives in Venezuela, was a member of the wartime Estonian security police, which murdered civilians.

Estonia has failed to prosecute a single Nazi war criminal since it declared its independence in 1991.

### Hitler film on tap

A European Jewish film director is planning a satirical comedy about Hitler. Dani Levy, whose Jewish comedy "Go for Zucker" won awards in Germany, said he would start shooting his movie this month, according to the DPA news agency.