

IN THE NEWS

Iranian Jews appeal to president

An Iranian Jewish official criticized the country's president for denying the Holocaust.

"How is it possible to ignore all of the undeniable evidence existing for the exile and massacre of the Jews in Europe during World War II?" Haroun Yashayaei wrote in a recent letter to Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, copies of which reached the international media this week.

"Challenging one of the most obvious and saddening events of 20th-century humanity has created astonishment among the people of Iran and spread fear and anxiety among the small Jewish community of Iran."

There was no word on whether Ahmadinejad responded to the letter.

Rice: Putin to press Hamas on Israel issue

Russian President Vladimir Putin promised to demand that Hamas recognize Israel, Condoleezza Rice said.

The U.S. secretary of state made the comments Monday in an interview with CBS Television.

Putin broke with the international community last week when he became the first member of the "Quartet" for Middle East peace to say he would talk to a Hamas-led Palestinian government.

Mamhoush Abbas gets new powers

The outgoing Palestinian Authority Parliament gave Mahmoud Abbas new powers.

In its final session, lawmakers gave the P.A. president power to appoint a constitutional court that would arbitrate disputes between him and a Hamas-led government.

The new powers could give Abbas the ability to cancel any law passed by the new Hamas government. Lawmakers from Hamas, which recently won Palestinian elections, could overturn the legislation with a two-thirds majority.



WORLD REPORT

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Analysts: Russian invite to Hamas could undermine Israel, 'road map'

By LESLIE SUSSER

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Russia's readiness to hold talks with Hamas following the terrorist group's victory in Palestinian parliamentary election has surprised and angered decision-makers in Israel. But how damaging is the Russian move likely to be?

Israeli leaders worry that Russia's overture to Hamas might become a precedent and that, if others follow suit, Israel's attempt to force a Hamas-led government to moderate its anti-Israel positions or face international isolation will fail.

More than diplomatic isolation, however, it's the loss of economic aid that Hamas fears, and this comes not from Russia but mainly from the European Union and United States. If they withhold the \$1.5 billion they transfer to the Palestinians every year, some hope it could impel Hamas to accept Israel's three conditions for dialogue: Recognition of the Jewish state's right to exist, renunciation of terrorism and acceptance of previous agreements the Palestinians have signed with Israel.

Israel's strategy is to show Hamas leaders and Palestinians in general that a radical government will not serve their interests. Through a combination of diplomatic and economic pressure, the aim is to force Hamas to adopt a more pragmatic line or face such intense popular discontent on the Palestinian side that P.A. President Mahmoud Abbas might be forced to declare new elections, in which Hamas could be ousted.

For the policy to work, however, Israel needs broad international support, which the Russian move threatens to erode.

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni was

assigned to get the United States on board. In talks in Washington last week with American leaders, including an unscheduled meeting with President Bush, Livni secured an American commitment not to talk to Hamas unless it accepted the Israeli conditions for dialogue.

Dov Weissglas and Shalom Turgeman, aides to Acting Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, focused on Europe, urging Javier Solana, the European Union's external affairs minister, not to transfer any of the E.U.'s massive aid package to a Hamas-led government — either directly, through development projects or through UNRWA, the United Nations agency that supports Palestinian refugees.

For now, the Europeans are listening — but what will happen if withholding aid money leads to intense suffering on the Palestinian side? And, Solana asked, was there not a danger that if Europe withheld funds, radical countries like Iran could step in to fill the vacuum?

Weissglas assured Solana that Iran could not contribute anything remotely approaching the sums the Palestinians receive from Europe, and that withholding aid might force the Palestinians to be more pragmatic.

Nevertheless, most Israeli pundits are skeptical and do not believe Europe will persist in denying funds to the Palestinians. Writing soon after Russian President Vladimir Putin's announcement that he intended to invite Hamas leaders to Moscow, Ma'ariv editor Amnon Dankner forecast the imminent collapse of international support for the Israeli position.

"It seems that the next step is already written on the wall: Hamas will mumble

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NEWS
ANALYSIS

■ *Russia has endangered the 'road map' by breaking ranks on Hamas*

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something vague and deliberately misleading out of the side of its mouth in order to enable the international community to establish ties, open a dialogue and urge Israel to sit down and negotiate," Dankner wrote.

Israeli politicians were highly critical of the Russian move, seeing it as a cynical attempt to regain center stage in Middle Eastern affairs, regardless of the diplomatic or security costs to Israel. Transportation Minister Meir Sheerit described it as "a knife in the back."

Israeli pundits echoed the anger.

"Putin has identified a rare and great opportunity to again become the central and chief player in the Middle East, the only one who can deliver and mediate between the parties. But he ignores the fact that he is playing a dirty game, and that the goal he scored was after the referee had already whistled for half-time," Ma'ariv political analyst Ben Caspit commented.

Though the Russians claimed they merely want to impress on Hamas the need to meet Israel's conditions for dialogue, the pundits were not convinced. They argued that Russia would be conferring legitimacy on Hamas without the terrorist group having to change an ideology

that calls for Israel's destruction.

Ha'aretz military analyst Ze'ev Schiff predicted that the Russian move would boomerang: Instead of becoming the only party in a position to mediate, he wrote, Russia no longer would be able to play the role of honest broker in peace talks.

Moreover, Schiff said, the Russian gambit endangered the internationally backed "road map" peace plan. If France — which gave mixed signals that it might follow Russia's lead — indeed did so, "that will be the end of the road map," Schiff warned.

Some saw a return to days when the Soviet Union served as the Arabs' main foreign backer. Writing in Yediot Achronot, analyst Sever Plotzker warned that Russia would reap scant rewards.

"Has Russia learned nothing from the Soviet Union's support for Palestinian terror in the past?" he asked. "Its Middle

Eastern policy was rife with errors, failures and strange alliances that led to Moscow being banished from every corner of the Middle East."

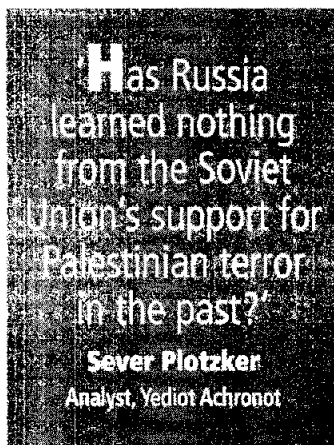
The experts agree that there is not a lot Israel can do about the Russian move, besides shoring up support in Europe and the United States. Israel's responses are limited when dealing with a major power like Russia, they say.

Avi Primor, head of European Studies at the Herzliya Interdisciplinary Center, told Israel Radio that "relations with Russia are far too important to create a crisis over this."

Primor, who served as Israeli ambassador to the European Union, believes the European embargo on aid to the Palestinians could hold. Moreover, he claims that Israel has powerful economic leverage of its own.

"Hamas was elected to improve the Palestinian standard of living," he notes. "They can't do that without our help."

Still, the big question remains: Will the Russian move set off a domino process that leaves Israel's anti-Hamas policy in ruins?



Pollard appeals to U.S. Supreme Court

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Jonathan Pollard is looking to the U.S. Supreme Court to help him get out of prison.

Pollard, a former U.S. Navy intelligence officer, petitioned the high court Wednesday to reverse a lower court decision that had denied his lawyers access to classified information used to sentence him in 1986 to life in prison for spying for Israel.

Pollard's attorneys are seeking access to 40 pages of materials, in a bid to prove that much of the supposed repercussions of his spying never occurred. The lawyers believe this information will help convince President Bush or future presidents to free Pollard.

After several unsuccessful attempts to have his sentence overturned, Pollard and his advocates believe a pardon is the most viable option to get him out of jail.

Pollard tried last year to get his sentence overturned due to ineffective counsel, but was denied by the three-judge panel.

Judge David Sentelle, writing for the majority in the Federal Appeals Court for the District of Columbia Circuit, ruled against the petition, saying clemency is at the discretion of the executive branch.

Even if Pollard's case is heard and is victorious, it would remain an uphill battle to see the documents.

Another lower court, in an earlier petition, had also denied Pollard's motion to gain access to the documents, but on the grounds his attorneys did not have a "need to know" the content.

The classified information includes a memo by then-Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger, who is believed to have been significant in persuading the court to ignore normal sentencing guidelines. It is believed to have outlined the effect Pollard's spying had on U.S. intelligence.

Pollard's attorney Eliot Lauer wants to show that many of Weinberger's contentions did not come true.

"Let us do the legwork, so we can establish for the president that none of these things ever materialized," Lauer said.

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Turkish diplomat leaves strong Israeli, U.S. ties

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Islamist prime minister assumes control in Turkey. Turkey rebuffs the United States on Iraq. Six Jews killed in synagogue bombings in Istanbul.

Those 2003 headlines were guaranteed to chill the lobbyists, diplomats and Jewish community professionals who have carefully nurtured a Turkish-Israeli-American alliance.

Just three years later, however, there's a consensus that the alliance is stronger than ever — thanks in no small part to Osman Faruk Logoglu, the unassuming Brandeis graduate who helmed the Turkish Embassy during a time of potential crisis in the relationship.

"What made Ambassador Logoglu successful is that he spoke not only English, but also American," said Soner Cagaptay, director of the Turkish research program at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a think tank that leans pro-Israel. "It gave him a grasp of the country that in a time of crisis made him likeable and approachable, that made it go forward."

Speaking last month just before the end of his four-year term here and of his career as a diplomat, Logoglu said the American Jewish community played a critical role in keeping the U.S.-Turkish relationship smooth.

"They are as committed to our relationship with the United States as we are to the relationship with Israel," Logoglu told JTA. "We provide support and understanding to Jewish concerns as they provide support to us in matters of our concern in this country."

As an example, Logoglu cited efforts by the Jewish lobby to head off Armenian-American attempts to get Congress to declare as genocide the mass killings of Armenians in Turkey during World War I.

Leaders of the Jewish community unanimously return Logoglu's compliment.

"To have an ambassador of Turkey who was accessible and reached out was extremely important for our community," said Dan Mariaschin, executive vice-president of B'nai B'rith International, who visits Turkey frequently.

"Everyone has nothing but enormous

respect for the man," agreed Barry Jacobs, director of strategic studies at the American Jewish Committee.

Logoglu forged a close friendship with Daniel Ayalon, the Israeli ambassador to Washington.

"Ambassador Logoglu is deeply understanding of the importance of relations between Turkey and Israel and worked tirelessly to strengthen relations between Ankara, Jerusalem and Washington," Ayalon told JTA.

The ambassador's low-key, avuncular approach was crucial.

"He's just a calm person," Cagaptay said. "In a period of crisis a calm, well-anchored, extremely sophisticated personality really calms nerves."

Mariaschin and others say Logoglu's undergraduate years at Brandeis four decades ago helped establish his closeness to the Jewish community and lifelong friendships with American Jews. He also has a doctorate from Princeton University.

More crucial, however, was his steadfast adherence to the traditions of modern Turkey — secularism and a Western outlook — at a time of political upheaval in his homeland.

His presence here helped convince Americans that the ascension of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a politician once associated with Islamist causes, to the premiership in 2003 was not a threat to the alliance.

Whatever his politics, Erdogan's ascension proved the resilience of the Turkish-Israeli alliance, Logoglu said, showing that it could thrive under a prime minister who had made outreach to other Islamic nations a campaign platform.

"The relationship, especially the military relationship, is very robust," Logoglu said. "I get complaints from the U.S. defense sector because some tenders go to Israel."

Trade between Israel and Turkey has grown almost 20-fold in the last 12 years to \$2 billion annually. Turkey has taken a proactive role in midwifing the Gaza

Strip to stability after Israel's withdrawal a few months ago, providing Palestinian Authority police with non-lethal equipment and training and, in recent weeks, investing in the rebuilding of the Erez industrial zone.

Notably, Turkey and Israel are in close agreement on Syria. The Bush administration is openly contemplating the ouster of Syrian strongman Bashar al-Assad because of his support for Palestinian terrorism, his interference in Lebanon and his failure to contain insurgents filtering into Iraq from his country.

Israel and Turkey agree that Syria must be pressured to change, but fear that replacing al-Assad could make the situation worse.

"We should keep talking to Bashar Assad to press him with these demands," Logoglu said.

A turning point in the relationship was Turkish reaction to the attack on Istanbul synagogues in November 2003, which killed six Jews and injured dozens of others. Erdogan was emphatic in emphasizing that the attacks, believed to be carried out by an Al-Qaida affiliate, were as much an attack on Turkey as they were on Jews. The prime minister reinforced that message with a visit to Israel last year.

"Turks and Jews have been friendly to each other throughout history," Logoglu said, noting as an example the safe haven that Jews fleeing the Spanish Inquisition found in Ottoman Turkey.

That may be, U.S. Jewish leaders say, but Logoglu's persuasion was critical in getting Erdogan to go the extra mile.

That was not always easy: The conservatives running Turkey did not always trust Logoglu, a modernist who said he will devote his post-diplomatic career to fighting for women's rights in his homeland.

"It was not easy for Logoglu," said a representative of an American Jewish organization who deals with Turkey. "Often I would get notice from the Turkish government for some visitor coming in before he did. But he kept his equanimity and his common decency."

BEHIND
THE
HEADLINES



NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Holocaust cartoon contest begins

Iran's biggest newspaper launched a competition for cartoons satirizing the Holocaust.

Hamshahri issued an English-language invitation on its Web site for submissions this week, saying the cartoons can focus on "looting and crimes perpetrated by the United States and Israel as well as alleged historical events like the Holocaust."

The deadline for entering is May 5, and the newspaper has promised \$140 in gold to the winners. The contest, coming on the heels of repeated statements by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad denying the Holocaust, has drawn global censure.

Israel links Hamas to Chechen terrorists

Israel launched an international campaign linking Hamas to Chechen terrorists.

The campaign was ordered by the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem after Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has cracked down on Muslim separatists in Chechnya, said last week he would invite Hamas leaders to Moscow.

Israeli diplomatic missions in Russia and elsewhere were issued an academic document detailing Hamas' moral support for Chechen warlords, and instructed to persuade local communities that no distinction should be made between one terrorist group and another, a political source said Monday.

Hamas claims Cabinet

Hamas announced that it would head the next Palestinian Authority government.

"The prime minister will be a leader in Hamas," Mushir al-Masri, a spokesman for the radical Islamic group, said Monday, confirming what seemed likely after Hamas won last month's Palestinian Authority elections.

Talks on building the Cabinet will begin next week after the new Palestinian Authority Parliament convenes. Israel has ruled out talks with a Palestinian Authority led by Hamas unless the group renounces terrorism.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has tried to head off the crisis by offering, as chief executive, to remain Israel's main diplomatic contact.

Lesbian couple in legal landmark

An Israeli lesbian couple won state recognition as joint parents of their children.

In a ruling hailed by gay rights activists, Israel's Family Affairs Court this week allowed Tal and Avital Yaros-Hakak to legally adopt three boys they had borne between them after being artificially inseminated.

It marked the end of a 17-year legal battle for the Yaros-Hakaks, but activists said it would be a while before Israel fully recognizes single-sex unions.

WORLD

Azerbaijan may upgrade Israel relations

The president of Azerbaijan told a group of American Jewish leaders that his country may upgrade its relations with Israel and open a trade mission there.

The delegation of 50 American Jewish leaders, under the auspices of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress, met Monday in Baku with President Ilham Aliyev and other top officials.

Azerbaijan, a Muslim state, has had some diplomatic relations with Israel for more than 10 years but has yet to open an embassy in Israel; Israel has an embassy in Baku.

Azerbaijan has said its complicated geopolitical situation, particularly its proximity to Iran, as well as its membership in international Islamic organizations, prevent it from opening a mission in Israel.

On Monday, the last day of the delegation's four-day visit to Baku, the Jewish leaders also met with the Caucasus nation's foreign minister and chief Islamic religious authority.

Terror victims meet in Spain

Victims and relatives of victims of terrorist attacks, including Israelis, gathered in Spain.

Hundreds of people gathered Monday for the two-day conference, The Associated Press reported.

The aim of the conference is to provide a support network for terror victims and to draw attention to their needs.

Polish president meets Jewish group

Poland's president met with an American Jewish Committee delegation in Washington.

At last Friday's meeting, Lech Kaczynski pledged to ensure the continued security and vitality of Poland's Jewish community.

Kaczynski, who said his own strong views on fighting anti-Semitism were shaped by his experiences as a university student during the 1968 anti-Jewish campaign of the ruling Communists, said Poland's anti-Semitic history was a "difficult truth" that citizens had to confront. He also said Israel could count on the European Union as a "loyal partner."

Poll: Some British Muslims see Jews as target

Thirty-seven percent of British Muslims see British Jewry as a "legitimate target as part of the struggle for justice in the Middle East," according to a new poll.

More than half of the 500 Muslims surveyed in the poll believe British Jews exert too much influence over British foreign policy.

The results of the poll were reported in the London Jewish Chronicle.

Arrest demanded in AMIA case

A former Argentine police officer accused of carrying out the 1994 bombing of a Jewish institution demanded the arrest of the country's former president Carlos Menem.

Juan Jose Ribelli said last Friday that he was sentenced to eight years in jail as a result of a cover-up in the investigation of the 1994 bombing of the AMIA Jewish center in Buenos Aires.

He also demanded the detention of several of Menem's staff and the former judge in the case, Juan Jose Galeano.

According to the 1998 testimony of a former Iranian security agent, Iranian authorities paid Menem \$10 million to stop an Argentine court investigation of possible Iranian connections to the bombing; Menem has denied the charge.

Galeano was impeached because of "serious irregularities" in his handling of the investigation. Some 85 people died in the attack.

NORTH AMERICA

Philanthropist dies at 93

Morris Silverman, who helped support the Holocaust museum in Houston, died Jan. 26 in Albany, N.Y., at 93.

Through his \$300 million Marty and Dorothy Silverman Foundation, Silverman also helped support a variety of non-Jewish and Jewish causes, including housing for former Soviet Jews in Israel.