

## IN THE NEWS

**Holocaust denier sentenced**

An Austrian court sentenced David Irving to three years in prison for denying the Holocaust.

Irving, a historian who pleaded guilty to the charges at the opening of the trial earlier Monday, looked stunned after the jury returned the sentence.

Holocaust denial is a crime in Austria.

Irving was arrested in November when he came to Austria to give a lecture. The charges are based on a speech and interview from 1989 in Austria in which he denied that there were gas chambers at Auschwitz.

At the court, Irving told reporters that he had changed some of his views since 1989 and now recognized that gas chambers had existed and that "millions of Jews died, there is no question."

**Islamic Jihad commander killed**

Israeli soldiers killed a top Palestinian terrorist in the West Bank.

The Islamic Jihad commander was shot dead Monday by troops in Nablus, along with a comrade. Another three gunmen were wounded.

The Israeli army has been in Nablus since early Sunday, searching for armed fugitives. Three local leaders of the Al-Aksa Brigade were arrested.

**Russian parties oppose extremism**

Twelve Russian political parties signed a pact aimed at combating extremism.

Monday's signing of the Anti-Fascist Pact was spearheaded by the pro-Kremlin United Russia Party.

The signatories of the document ranged from United Russia to a leading liberal opposition party to the Liberal Democratic Party of Vladimir Zhirinovsky.

"The struggle against fascism is an integral part of the struggle for the integrity and sovereignty of the country," the pact said.



# WORLD REPORT

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

## With moves on Hamas, Olmert searches for elusive middle ground

By LESLIE SUSSER

**J**ERUSALEM (JTA) — In imposing sanctions on the Palestinians now that a Hamas-dominated Parliament has been sworn in, interim Prime Minister Ehud Olmert faced two acute dilemmas: How to undermine Hamas without hurting the Palestinian people, and how to convince Israeli voters that he is being tough enough on Hamas without alienating the international community.

The steps he took — freezing the transfer of tax moneys Israel collects for the Palestinians, appealing to the international community to withhold funds that could be used for terror; curbing the freedom of movement of Hamas officials and stepping up security checks on Palestinian workers at border crossing points — were meant to strike the golden mean.

The measures, however, failed to impress Hamas, the international community or the Israeli opposition. Palestinian Prime Minister-designate Ismail Haniyeh said Hamas had funding "alternatives in the Arab and Islamic world." The Americans and the European Union indicated that they would have preferred Israel to wait until a Hamas government is formed. And, predictably, with elections in Israel less than six weeks away, Olmert, the head of the Kadima Party, came under strong criticism from rivals on both the right and the left. The right said it was too little too late; the left that it was too much too soon.

It is still too early to say what effect all of this is having on the voters — but if there is any single issue that could enable the opposi-

tion parties to make inroads on the Kadima Party's huge lead in the polls, it is the threat Hamas rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip poses to Israel.

By taking relatively mild steps, Olmert wanted to avoid any possibility of a humanitarian catastrophe on the Palestinian side for which Israel would be blamed. "The international community wouldn't tolerate pictures of starving Palestinian children, and the address for its complaints would be Israel," Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni said.

Nor does Olmert want to do anything that might spark a new round of Palestinian terror. That is probably the one way he could lose the upcoming election.

Some pundits argue that Olmert's room for maneuver against Hamas is extremely limited anyway, precisely because of Israel's need to retain the moral high ground and the international support that goes with it. By far the most dramatic measure Olmert could have taken short of war would have been to cut Gaza off from Israel and the West Bank. But that would have meant violating a customs agreement Israel signed with the Palestinian Authority.

Moreover, as political analyst Aluf Benn points out in Ha'aretz, the Oslo accords, the "road map," the disengagement plan and the agreements governing the border crossing all stipulate that Israel must "preserve the status of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as a single territorial unit."

The international community would have been up in arms and Israel's trump card — international backing against an unrepentant terrorist group in power — would have

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### NEWS ANALYSIS

## **Olmert's actions on Hamas epitomize his quest for the middle ground**

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been jeopardized.

At the core of the argument inside the Israeli establishment over how to deal with Hamas is the question of whether or not the organization can be tamed.

In other words, are the economic sanctions designed to pressure Hamas into recognizing Israel and negotiating a deal, or to convince the Palestinians to call new elections and vote an implacable Hamas out of office? There are two schools of thought — the majority who say Hamas

will never change and that Israel should move swiftly to curb its nefarious influence on Palestinian affairs, and a small minority who argue that Hamas should be allowed to fail in government on its own, with as little Israeli prodding as possible.

■  
The chief of the Shin Bet, Yuval Diskin, has been the most outspoken voice for the majority. He told the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee Monday that over time, a Hamas-run entity would constitute a strategic threat to Israel, and that Israel should not accept any Hamas offer of a cease-fire, because the organization would only use it to bring in arms and recruit Muslim militiamen from Al-Qaida and other organizations to fight Israel. His

operative conclusion: Israel must do what it can to get Hamas out of office as soon as possible.

Israel's national security adviser, Giora Eiland, takes the minority view. In the discussions leading up to Olmert's decision on sanctions, he argued that Israel's main card in fighting Hamas is international support, and that, therefore, Israel should not be seen to be doing anything that might be construed as not giving Hamas a chance to embrace moderation. "Anyone starting sanctions

now could shoot himself in the foot and lose international support," he declared. Eiland maintains that Israel should let Hamas make the mistakes — like turning to Iran for aid, or restarting terror against Israel.

There are more than two voices on the Palestinian side. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, although a member of the defeated Fatah party, still wields a great deal of power, and he is urging Hamas to honor all previous agreements with Israel, and calling on Israel to

re-open peace talks with him.

Among the Hamas leadership, there are differences in tone, too — with Haniyeh indicating that the organization might be ready for a long cease-fire with Israel, and the party's Damascus-based leader, Khaled Meshaal, saying there will be no compromises with the "Zionist entity." Meshaal is now in Tehran seeking Iranian economic and other support.

■  
The Israeli right, especially the Likud, is accusing Olmert of weakness in the face of an existential threat posed by a Hamas-Tehran axis. In campaign ads, they have dubbed the interim prime minister "Smolmert" — a play on his name and the Hebrew word for left wing. "The Likud is trying to push him into tough action against the Palestinian population. And that would lead to a new wave of terror from which there would be just one beneficiary at the polls: the Likud," political analyst Nahum Barnea wrote in Yediot Achronot.

The left argues that instead of imposing sanctions from which Israel will eventually have to back down, the government should look to Abbas as a potential peace partner. If there is progress there and Hamas tries to block it, there is a possibility that the Palestinians will hold new elections and vote Hamas out of power, they insist.

## **Film on Philippine transsexuals working in Israel wins Berlin prize**

BERLIN (JTA) — A documentary about transsexual workers from the Philippines in Israel won three awards in this year's Berlin Film Festival.

Though it did not reap any of the top prizes, "Bubot Niyar," or "Paper Dolls," directed by Tomer Heymann, clearly was a favorite among those attending the 56th annual festival.

An Israeli-Swiss co-production, "Paper Dolls" tells the story of several male nurses from the Philippines who care for frail elderly Jews in Tel Aviv by day, and perform in a transvestite revue by night. The film includes moving demonstrations of respect and appreciation between some of these nurses and their charges, including a scene in which one nurse shows off the dress given by his elderly patient.

The film won a Manfred-Salzgeber prize, a Panorama audience prize and an award from the readers of Siegesaule, a gay and lesbian magazine in Berlin.

Another Israeli prizewinner was "Karov l'Bayit," or "Close to Home," a feature film by Dalia Hager and Vidi Bilu about young Israeli women during their military service, which won a Forum C.I.C.A.E. prize.

An audience prize went to the Israeli short film, "Hayelet Bodeda," or "The Substitute," directed by Talya Lavie.

The short film "Barburot," or "Swanettes," by director Rony Sasson, won a prize from the German DAAD academic association; and "Vika," by Tsivia Barkai, won a special mention in the children's film festival.

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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).  
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# Divestment advocates stress Jewish enlistment

By DAVID J. SILVERMAN

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Speakers at the Palestine Solidarity Movement conference, held at Georgetown University, exhorted anti-Israel activists to enlist Jews in the effort to divest from Israel.

At least two speakers at the fifth annual divestment conference, held Feb. 17-19, suggested the tactic as a way to gain legitimacy for the movement, which intensified its call for universities and institutions to sever economic ties to Israel and companies that do business with the Jewish state.

"There are many obstacles that confront us," said Philip Farah, a senior economist and featured speaker at the event in Washington. "One of the most important of course is the claim that divestment is anti-Jewish. For that, my advice is very, very important: Work with progressive Jews and Israelis."

Farah endorsed the tactic as a way to "inoculate yourself from the charges of being an anti-Semite." Another speaker, Noura Erakat, legal advocate for the U.S.

Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation, echoed Farah's suggestion.

"It works better and to our favor to make allies with sympathizers, with Israelis themselves," she said.

The appeal came after a succession of conferences on U.S. campuses that created what some Jewish students claimed was a hostile environment.

"I'm not surprised that they would attempt to create a false veneer of legitimacy by promoting their cause through the mouths of Jews and Israelis," said David Friedman, the regional director of the Anti-Defamation League, one of several organizations that had helped organize counter-events. "It doesn't matter who is speaking; what matters is the content of the message, and that message of an analogy between South African apartheid and Zionism is false and extreme."

Over the three-day period, 376 student and community activists from 90 universities and organizations attended the conference, according to Nadeem Muaddi, the spokesman for the Palestine Solidarity Movement.

Farah said that churches, which he labels the "so-called silent majorities," are also key to success in the divestment movement.

"It's one thing for marginal radicals to oppose Israel's occupation; it's quite another thing when activism reaches the churches," Farah said.

Although no public American universities have divested from Israel, the movement has made inroads with some Protestant churches. Both the Presbyterian Church USA and the Church of England voted to review holdings in companies that do business with the Jewish state.

Some speakers said the Palestine Solidarity Movement had not done a good job of popularizing itself.

Erakat said there is a decline in divestment activism on American campuses, and attributed the setbacks to poor activist turnover. In addition, she said that the Palestinian struggle has been overshadowed by the "so-called war on terror."

Panelists condemned the international community's response to the election of a Hamas-led government in Palestinian elections last month.

Ali Abunimah, co-founder of the Electronic Intifada news service, said the international community at this moment "is at its most complacent, most hypocritical."

He censured the European Union, Japan, Canada, Norway and "all of these do-gooding countries who claim that they are there to support peace when in fact what they're doing is subsidizing and propping up the occupation."

Abunimah called the U.S. policy of pressing other countries to discontinue aid to the Palestinian entity "immoral."

Speaker Sue Blackwell, who led the boycott by British academics of Israeli institutions last year, stated as a goal "ending the special status

that Israel currently enjoys with the United States and the European Union, and letting the world know Israel is a pariah, apartheid state."

The conference speakers said they were opposed to violence of any kind. Absent were calls to urge Hamas to recognize Israel's right to exist, disarm Hamas or to support a two-state solution.

"What was so depressing was that all the speakers I heard, many of whom seem highly intelligent, reduce all the problems in the region to Zionism," said David Sinkman, a student at Georgetown Law Center.

Sinkman was one of a small number of pro-Israel Georgetown students who attended the conference. Jonathan Aires, chair of the school's spring pro-Israel festival, said that many pro-Israel students were not planning to attend. Instead, the university sponsored an open house for pro-Israel students on Saturday. Aires said 40 attended the informal event.

Friedman lauded the Georgetown administration's efforts in making the atmosphere comfortable for Jews and the conference open to the public. "I think they did a very masterful, responsible job at every level in ensuring that Jews felt safe and secure in their membership in the Georgetown community throughout this time," he said.

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

**'Inoculate yourself from the charges of being an anti-Semite.'**

**Philip Farah**

Economist, conference speaker

## THIS WEEK

### WEDNESDAY

■ The American Enterprise Institute, a think tank in Washington, publishes a report that challenges assumptions that the Palestinians are the fastest growing population in the world, suggesting they have been overcounted.

### SUNDAY

■ The Jewish Council of Public Affairs opens its annual plenum in Washington with a forum on the future of Middle East peace. The umbrella organization for Jewish community relations councils will debate how the United States should deal with the Palestinian Authority lead by Hamas, and discuss the Iraq war. On Tuesday, the conference will hear from the chairs of the Democratic and Republican parties.

■ New York University's Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies holds a two-day conference on Yiddish literature, history and culture in the Diaspora. Topics include the revival of Yiddish studies in the 21st century, the cultural role played by Yiddish in the interwar Jewish communities of Europe, and how Yiddish is used today among Soviet immigrants and Chasidic Jewish in the United States. All events are free and open to the public; the schedule is at [www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/hebrew/YiddishConf.html](http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/hebrew/YiddishConf.html).

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## WORLD

### European Jews want Iranian leader tried

A European Jewish group is planning to file an international criminal complaint against the Iranian president for inciting genocide.

The European Jewish Congress on Sunday voted in favor of filing the complaint in the International Criminal Court in The Hague against Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Ha'aretz reported.

The group is also promoting a resolution in the European Parliament to declare Ahmadinejad persona non grata in the European Union.

Additionally, the congress is circulating a petition to politicians, businessmen and intellectuals which will be published in European newspapers, calling on European governments to bar Ahmadinejad from their countries.

The Iranian president made recent headlines by denying the Holocaust and calling for Israel's destruction.

### Jewish man's murder angers Parisians

At least 1,200 people demonstrated in Paris on Sunday to show their anger at the murder of a Jewish man.

The man known as Ilan H., 23, was kidnapped, tortured and murdered, his body was found last week at a train station outside Paris.

Ilan apparently was lured into a trap by a woman of North African origin who came into a Paris store where Ilan sold mobile phones.

The demonstrators at Sunday's protest shouted slogans and carrying banners that read "Justice for Ilan" and "Avenge Ilan!"

Detectives investigating the case have said that they do not consider the case to be an act of anti-Semitism. However, the victim's mother told an Israeli daily newspaper that she believes that "if Ilan weren't Jewish, he wouldn't have been killed."

### Poland to ban Iranian Holocaust 'probe'

Poland's foreign minister said his country would not allow Iranian researchers to come to Poland to investigate the Holocaust.

Stefan Meller was quoted as saying that "these people who deny that people were murdered in gas chambers at Auschwitz-Birkenau won't set foot in Poland."

His comments came last Friday after Iranian officials said they wanted researchers to probe the "extent" of the Holocaust.

Since taking office last year, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has drawn international criticism for several comments he made denying the Holocaust. Some 1.5 million people were killed at Auschwitz, 90 percent of them Jews.

### New cartoon controversy strikes Russia

Russian human rights activists criticized the decision of provincial authorities to close a newspaper that published a controversial cartoon of religious leaders.

The Moscow Bureau on Human Rights said the decision to shut down the Gorodskie Vesti newspaper in the southern city of Volgograd was a show of "incompetence" and epitomized the inability of local officials to deal with interfaith issues.

Last Friday, city authorities in Volgograd annulled the license of Gorodskie Vesti, which published a cartoon depicting Jesus, Moses, Buddha and Mohammed in front of a television showing two groups of people about to start a fight.

The caption read: "We did not teach them to do that."

The decision to shut down the paper came despite the fact that no local religious community in Volgograd said it was offended by the cartoon.

The officials stated the closure of the city-owned paper was needed to avoid "incitement of ethnic hostilities."

According to the Moscow Bureau on Human Rights, a group that monitors anti-Semitism and xenophobia in Russia, Volgograd officials never paid attention to another local newspaper, Kolokol, that over the years has consistently published anti-Semitic and xenophobic articles and published "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion," an anti-Semitic forgery.

## NORTH AMERICA

### Court must consider 'Israel' on passport

A U.S. appeals court ordered a lower court to rule on whether an American citizen born in Jerusalem can have "Israel" alone inscribed as the place of birth.

Last Friday's decision sends the case involving a 3-year-old American citizen back to the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

The District Court had ruled that a request to list Menachem Zivotofsky as born in "Jerusalem, Israel," was a political matter, rather than a judicial one, and refused to adjudicate.

Zivotofsky's parents are now seeking to have only "Israel" listed as his birthplace.

The United States does not currently recognize Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem.

The State Department is defending the case; joining the Zivotofskys in friend-of-the-court briefs are the American Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists and a number of members of Congress led by Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.).

### Jewish skater earns a silver

U.S. Jewish ice skater Ben Agosto and his partner earned a silver medal in ice dancing at the 2006 Olympics.

Agosto and Tanith Belbin finished second to Russians Tatiana Navka and Roman Kostomarov in the ice dancing competition, which concluded Monday.

Agosto's mother is Jewish and his father is Puerto Rican.

Israelis Galit Chait and Sergei Sakhnovski, who had been expected to contend for a medal, finished eighth.

## MIDDLE EAST

### Peres slams Hamas

Shimon Peres called Hamas' political rise to power a disaster.

"Hamas is a disaster for the Palestinian people," Peres told Israel Radio on Monday. "They have no solutions. They spell anger and trouble. Like this it is impossible to lead a nation into the 21st century."

Peres is a senior member of the Kadima Party, which is expected to win the March 28 general elections on a platform of tough pragmatism in peacemaking.

Kadima's leader, interim Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, on Sunday ruled out any talks with a Palestinian Authority led by Hamas unless the radical Islamic group reforms.

### Israel seizes Gaza-bound goods

Israel seized millions of dollars' worth of merchandise bound for a Palestinian company.

The Shin Bet and the Customs Authority have impounded 31 containers of goods ordered by the Gaza Strip-based company after they arrived in the port of Ashdod, Israeli officials announced this week.

According to the Defense Ministry, the importer is on Israel's blacklist after it helped fund Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorism.