

## IN THE NEWS

## Hamas official conflicted on peace?

The leading Hamas politician gave conflicting comments regarding relations with Israel.

In an interview, Ismail Haniyeh suggested Israel and the Palestinians could reach peace "in stages." Haniyeh, tapped as the next Palestinian Authority prime minister, told *Newsweek* magazine that Israel should cease its military countermeasures and quit all of the West Bank if it wants the current lull in bloodshed to continue. "If Israel withdraws to the 1967 border then we will establish a peace in stages," he said.

On Sunday, he backpedaled from those comments, saying Hamas sought a "political truce" with Israel, not peace.

## Jewish council addresses Iran, Hamas

The Jewish Council for Public Affairs opened its annual plenum in Washington.

Policy issues to be addressed at the plenum, held Sunday through Tuesday, include church divestment from Israel, the newly elected Hamas Parliament in the Palestinian Authority, Iran's nuclear buildup, rehabilitation after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and keeping religion out of the public schools.

The massacres in Darfur, Sudan were high on the priority list for the umbrella body of Jewish community relations councils. The 400 delegates are to end the plenum with a day of lobbying on Capitol Hill, joined by another 400 delegates attending a forum of the Hillel student movement.

## Family gathers as Sharon turns 78

Israel's ailing Prime Minister Ariel Sharon turned 78.

A select group of relatives and confidants gathered around Sharon's bedside at Jerusalem's Hadassah hospital in Ein Kerem on Sunday for a quiet birthday celebration. Sharon has been in a coma since his Jan. 4 stroke.

# WORLD REPORT

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## Reverberations still echoing after Hamas official visits Turkey

By YIGAL SCHLEIFER

STANBUL (JTA) — Israeli and Turkish officials say relations between the two countries are back on track following a strong disagreement over the recent visit to Ankara of a top-ranking Hamas leader, but repercussions from the trip are continuing to be felt both inside and outside Turkey.

Breaking ranks with the American, European and Israeli policy of refusing to meet with Hamas until it recognizes Israel's right to exist and denounces terrorism, Ankara hosted the group's top political leader, Khaled Meshaal, for a one-day visit on Feb. 16.

Meshaal, who lives in exile in Damascus, met with Turkey's foreign minister, Abdullah Gul, and other Foreign Ministry officials.

The visit led to a swift and angry denunciation from Israel. "How would you feel if we got together with Abdullah Ocalan?" Israeli government spokesmen Ra'anana Gissin said during an interview on Turkish television, referring to the imprisoned leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, an outlawed Kurdish militant group that fought a bloody war against Turkey in the 1980s and 1990s.

Turkey's Foreign Ministry called Gissin's statement "totally baseless and wrong," adding in a released statement, "We relayed our discomfort and dissatisfaction with this statement to Israel."

An initial attempt to smooth Israel's feathers failed when the Israeli ambassador to Turkey, Pinchas Avivi, refused to attend a Turkish Foreign Ministry briefing on the Hamas meeting.

The next day, though, Avivi went to the Ankara headquarters of Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party, where he met with top party leaders to discuss the future of the Turkish-Israeli relationship.

"After a few days of a mini-crisis, things are returning to their normal track and everything is continuing as normal," Avivi told JTA, speaking by telephone from his office in Ankara.

"I am convinced that this will not lead to anything else."

But one week after Meshaal's visit, the debate in Turkey over the wisdom of the trip continued unabated, with the Turkish media columns overwhelmingly critical of the government's decision to host the Hamas leader and accusing the leaders of the AKP of inviting Meshaal over the objections of several career diplomats at the Foreign Ministry.

The AKP is descended from the reformist wing of Turkey's political Islam movement and the party's leader, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, caused a crisis in Turkish-Israeli relations a year ago when he repeatedly referred to Israel's actions against the Palestinians as "state terror."

"A diplomatic blunder!" Cengiz Candar, a leading Turkish political analyst, wrote about the visit in a column in the English-language daily *The New Anatolian*.

"Turkey, naturally, is not obliged to obtain permission from Israel or the U.S. in formulating and following a Middle East policy of its own. However, when it comes to an extremely sensitive, complicated and murky issue such as the Palestinian question, it is obviously a necessity to take into

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### NEWS ANALYSIS

## ■ Turkish officials deny that Meshaal's visit was a blunder

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consideration the international balance of forces," Candar wrote.

The Meshaal visit was also strongly criticized in the United States, where both members of Congress and leaders of Jewish organizations — who have frequently acted as the main lobbyists on Turkey's behalf in Washington — expressed their deep dismay over Ankara's actions.

"The meetings send the wrong signal that Ankara is willing to deal with a terrorist organization whose platform call for the destruction of Israel and is in direct contrast to the U.S., E.U. and international communities' desired goals of lasting peace and security in the Middle East," Rep. Robert Wexler (D-Fla.), co-chairman of the Congressional Turkey Caucus and the Congressional Study Group on Turkey, said in a statement.

"Ankara's decision to give Hamas 'undeserved legitimacy,' " he continued, "is shocking considering that Turkey has been victimized by terrorist organizations like the PKK."

Meanwhile, leaders of the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League and B'nai B'rith International held a meeting in Washington with Turkey's ambassador to the United States to convey their dissatisfaction with Meshaal's visit.

"Hosting Hamas, which continues to call for the destruction of Israel, a friend and partner of Turkey, was a tragic mistake," said David Harris, executive director of the AJCommittee. "Anything

that confers legitimacy on Hamas before it fulfills the requirements of the Quartet will only undermine prospects for peace, in which Turkey has invested so heavily."

A top Jewish official in Washington said the Meshaal visit has left many on Capitol Hill scratching their heads.

"There is a lot of dissatisfaction here in Washington. The question we are all asking is what did Turkey get out of this?" said the official, who asked not to be named.

"It was counter-productive, both as foreign policy and regarding relations with groups that are very important for Turkey," the official added, pointing out that after his meetings in Turkey, Meshaal continued on to Iran, where he was warmly received by the controversial Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Turkish officials, though, denied that the Hamas leader's visit was a blunder.

According to a senior Foreign Ministry official, the visit was used as an opportunity to pass to Hamas the message that they cannot resort to violence and that they must recognize Israel's right to exist.

"We told them that there is no second chance to make first impressions," the official said. "It is a process that will contin-

ue for some time, but the important thing is to give them clear and strong messages and we are planning to keep the channels open with both sides. The alternative is chaos, complications and instability," the official added.

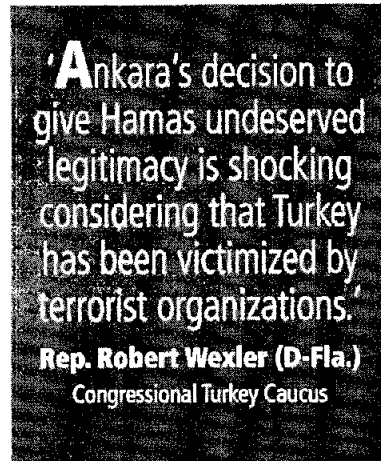
Soner Cagaptay, director of the Turkish Research Program at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, described the Meshaal visit not so much as a blunder as an outgrowth of the current Turkish government's desire to improve its relations with its Arab neighbors and to strengthen its role as a mediator in the Middle East.

But he warned that the Turkish approach might be misguided.

"The role that AKP says it wants to play by this trip, of being an interlocutor, is actually being damaged by this trip because the Israelis are now saying that the Turks are not an neutral actor anymore," he said.

"The more they continue along this line, the more the Israelis will see them as being sympathetic to Hamas."

Added Cagaptay: "It will be very difficult to mend the bridges if we see more steps along this line, of the AKP government's sympathizing with Hamas and its position." ■



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## Iranian official calls 'Tom and Jerry' part of a Jewish plot to rule world

JTA STAFF REPORT

NEW YORK (JTA) — "Tom and Jerry" was part of a Jewish conspiracy to present mice as clean, an Iranian official said.

Hasan Bolkhari, an adviser to the Iranian education ministry on mass media, said Hollywood Jews created the cartoon in an attempt to turn around the dirty image of mice, because Nazis had stigmatized Jews as mice.

"The mouse is very clever and smart,"

Bolkhari said in a televised seminar on film last week monitored by the Middle East Media Research Institute. "Everything he does is so cute. He kicks the poor cat's ass.

"Yet this cruelty does not make you despise the mouse. He looks so nice and he is so clever."

He added: "This is exactly why some say it was meant to erase this image of mice from the minds of European children, and to show that the mouse is not dirty and has these traits." ■

**THIS WEEK****TUESDAY**

■ The Jewish Council for Public Affairs completes its 2006 plenum with a day of Capitol Hill lobbying. Activists will lobby on cutting funding to a Hamas-led Palestinian Authority and on saving the people in Darfur from starvation and genocide.

■ Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), the majority whip in the Senate, introduces legislation that would severely restrict U.S. relations with the Palestinian Authority, replicating a similar bill now circulating in the House of Representatives.

**THURSDAY**

■ The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding holds its annual Capitol Hill breakfast honoring leading members of the black, Hispanic, Jewish and Asian caucuses.

**SUNDAY**

■ The American Israel Public Affairs Committee launches its policy conference. Keynote speakers include Vice President Dick Cheney; Rep. John Boehner (R-Ohio), the new majority leader in the U.S. House of Representatives; John Bolton, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations; and both parties' House whips. Key issues include support for legislation that would further isolate Iran and the Palestinian Authority.

■ Nefesh B'Nefesh, an organization fostering immigration from North America, is holding planning assemblies in New York and New Jersey designed for those who are either actively planning to make aliyah or are contemplating a move in the future. Sessions are being led by aliyah experts from Jerusalem who are offering professional and personal advice.

■ The North American Jewish Communities Young Leadership Conference takes place in Israel for the first time. The four-day conference, dubbed Tel Aviv 1, brings together more than 1,000 participants from North America and Israel in an effort to educate young North American Jews about Israel.

■ Orthodox rabbis, Torah scholars and heads of major yeshivas meet in Hollywood, Fla., through March 7 for a conference on Universally Accepted Conversions in Inter-marriage, to develop standards of conversion that will apply around the world. This is the second in a series of conferences sponsored by the Eternal Jewish Family and the Lillian Jean Kaplan Jewish Pride Through Education Project of Horizons, a Jewish outreach center based in Monsey, N.Y.

■ The Foundation for Jewish Camping's Leaders Assembly will bring together leaders of Jewish organizations and top Jewish philanthropists to discuss the Jewish camping experience and its impact on young Jews. The assembly will take place in Jersey City.

# Green Jews discuss divestment

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Audrey Clement biked across night-darkened bridges and through driving winter rain to make her point: Her party — the Green Party — made a fundamental mistake in a resolution calling for divestment from Israel.

She waited patiently for the DC-Statehood-Green Party to wade through its monthly agenda items of procedural items, reports on efforts to revive schools and libraries in afflicted areas of Washington and a lengthy discussion on making the Web site accessible to all members.

Then she rose and launched her critique of a resolution that calls for total divestment from Israel for its alleged abuses of Palestinians: "What I am addressing is what I believe is subliminal anti-Semitism," she said.

Clement appealed to the Washington branch at the Feb. 2 meeting because her Virginia branch of the party had ignored her request for a hearing.

Her appearance — and a debate now raging throughout the party's rank and file — was the result of a hard-driven campaign by Gary Acheatel, a banker in Portland, Ore., launched not long after the Green Party passed the resolution in November.

Acheatel said the resolution was the final straw in what he said was Israel's diminishing profile on the left. He joined the Greens and started contacting the delegates who voted against Resolution 190 losing a lopsided 55-7 vote.

Acheatel said one national Jewish group rebuffed him because the Greens are on the fringe of American political life.

"I don't believe the Greens to be so inconsequential," Acheatel countered. "Its candidates are invited to debates and merit coverage in the mainstream press. This enables the party to exercise an influence beyond its numbers."

Acheatel contacted Lorna Salzman, a veteran Green Party activist from New York City and they launched the "Let 190 Go" campaign, headquartered on the Web at [www.advocatesforisrael.org](http://www.advocatesforisrael.org).

In addition to Clement's appearance in Washington, a number of Jewish veterans of the party are appealing for the resolution to be rescinded.

Acheatel said he has an additional goal: empowering Jews on the left. On that score, Acheatel's campaign has enlisted a number of synagogues and progressive Jewish groups. National Jewish groups are playing a role too.

The Jewish Council for Public Affairs organized a conference call on the issue for about 15 Jewish community relations councils, and the Anti-Defamation League distributed material to Green Party delegates.

Much of the debate's focus is on how the resolution singles out Israel, while ignoring human rights abuses in a number of other countries, including many in the Middle East.

A statement accompanying the resolution takes other recent divestment proposals a step further by calling for the "serious consideration of a single secular, democratic state as the national home of both Israelis and Palestinians."

It is that call that has sparked the most acrimonious debate.

"I don't support Israeli aggression but I do support its right to exist

as an independent state," Salzman said in an exchange with Ron Francis, the co-chairman of the Massachusetts Green-Rainbow Party, a major backer of the disinvestments issue. "If you don't, then come out and say it straight, don't beat around the bush."

Francis had referred, in the exchange, to his state party's statement supporting "a secular, democratic governing entity for all people in the geographic region of historic Palestine (today referred to by some people as Israel, the West Bank and Gaza)."

Other considerations drive the debate. Some Green Party activists resented the passing of the national resolution without debate at the local level — a hallmark of the party that grass-roots members cherish.

Others say the party is betraying its feminist component by singling out Israel while ignoring the repression of women's rights by the Palestinians and other Arab nations. ■

**Protesters note that Israel is the Middle East country most in line with Green Party policies on women's rights and the environment.**

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## MIDDLE EAST

### Israel sidelining Abbas?

Israel's foreign minister said Hamas' election win in the Palestinian Authority had made Mahmoud Abbas irrelevant. Tzipi Livni told Israel Radio on Sunday that, with Hamas in charge of the Palestinian Authority government and refusing to change its hard-line stance against the Jewish state, Abbas "in this regard is not relevant."

Western mediators have voiced hope that the Palestinian Authority president could pursue peacemaking independent of Hamas policy, but Livni distanced herself from the idea. "Abu Mazen cannot be the fig leaf for a terrorist authority. Abu Mazen cannot be the pretty face of the ugly terror hiding behind him," she said.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, having decided to shut Yasser Arafat out of diplomatic contacts in 2001, often referred to the late Palestinian leader as "irrelevant."

### Dichter threatens Haniyeh

A senior member of Israel's Kadima Party hinted that the future Palestinian Authority prime minister could be assassinated.

Avi Dichter, a former Shin Bet chief tapped as the next defense minister if Kadima wins the March 28 elections in Israel, said last Friday that top Hamas politician Ismail Haniyeh should not consider himself "immune" once he takes over the Palestinian Authority government.

"In my eyes, he remains a man of terror, no matter what post he serves in," Dichter told the Yediot Achronot daily. "If there is a terror attack to which Israel decides to respond with a preventive measure, then Haniyeh would be a legitimate target, because Hamas cannot carry out a terror attack without Haniyeh's authorization."

Dichter added that, in his opinion, Haniyeh should be arrested and prosecuted for terrorism if he tries to cross an Israeli checkpoint.

## NORTH AMERICA

### Hillary Clinton blasts Hamas, Iran

Sen. Hillary Clinton called on the international community to shun Hamas.

"No nation in the world should recognize a government" committed to its neighbor's destruction, the Democratic senator from New York said Sunday at the annual congressional breakfast sponsored by the New York Jewish Community Relations Council.

Clinton also said U.S. policy on Iran should be "clear and unequivocal: We cannot allow Iran to build nuclear weapons."

Clinton, who is rumored to be considering a run for president in 2008, also tried to link security concerns with domestic issues. "It's a false choice" to separate security issues and "our mutual commitment" to help the poor and needy, she said to the approximately 250 people in attendance at the NYC event.

Speaker after speaker at the event, including Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) and several members of New York's congressional delegation, also spoke about the need to contain Hamas and Iran.

### Arrests made at Florida neo-Nazi rally

Police in Florida arrested 17 people, mostly counterdemonstrators, at a neo-Nazi rally.

The arrests came during a white supremacist rally Saturday through a black neighborhood in Orlando. An estimated 30 supremacists, wearing black boots and arm patches with swastikas, were greeted by about 100 counterdemonstrators.

Most of those arrested were leftist counterdemonstrators charged with disorderly conduct, The Associated Press reported.

## WORLD

### Livingstone suspended for Nazi jibe

London Mayor Ken Livingstone was suspended for comparing a Jewish journalist to a Nazi.

The Adjudication Panel of England, which hears complaints against local officials, found Livingstone guilty last Friday.

Reuters reported that Livingstone was suspended from duties for one month starting March 1.

The three-person panel's ruling comes after Livingstone asked a critical Jewish reporter from London's Evening Standard if he was a "German war criminal" and accused him of acting "like a concentration camp guard."

Livingstone has long courted controversy by censoring Israel and befriending an openly anti-Zionist imam.

### Danish firm stands up to boycott

A Danish sponsor of the country's national soccer team reversed its decision to pull its logos from the team's T-shirts for a match with Israel.

Arla Foods had initially said that its company logo will be removed from the team's jerseys for Wednesday's game because it didn't want to inflame Muslim public opinion.

On Sunday, the company decided to display the logo, which may reflect an easing up of the boycott, the International Herald Tribune reported.

The recent backlash following a Danish newspaper's publication of cartoons satirizing the Islamic prophet Mohammed reportedly cost Arla some \$1.5 million a day in lost exports to the Middle East.

### Chief rabbis, Vatican to discuss life and death

Representatives of Israel's Chief Rabbinate and the Vatican are discussing issues of life and death.

The talks, beginning Sunday, focus on what each faith views as the beginning of life and the end of life, and the resulting ethical implications. The meetings take place within the Israeli-Vatican Bilateral Commission on Interreligious Relations.

At the same time, the Steering Committee of the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations will meet in Rome to prepare for a meeting in November with the Vatican's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews.

The meeting will focus on Jewish and Catholic teachings on health care, including the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

### U.S. official: NATO not ready for Israel

NATO is not ready for Israel's membership, a senior U.S. official said.

"I think if this issue were to be put on the table formally within NATO, I think we'd find it immediately very controversial with a large number of countries saying not ready, not now," Kurt Volker, the deputy assistant secretary of state for European affairs, told an audience Thursday at Howard University in Washington.

"Solve the Israeli-Palestinian issue first, solve the Arab-Israeli issue first. Israel is not a European country, and after all, NATO is Europe and North America," he said.

### Italian Jewish leader resigns

Amos Luzzatto submitted his resignation as president of Italy's leading Jewish group.

Luzzatto, 78, cited health reasons for his decision to step down from the Union of Italian Jewish Communities last Friday. His term would have ended this summer.