

**IN THE NEWS**
**Israel blows up bridge in Gaza**

Israel blew up a bridge in the Gaza Strip.

Tuesday's airstrike was intended to prevent Palestinian kidnappers from taking an Israeli hostage, Cpl. Gilad Shalit, out of Gaza.

Israeli media reported that Israeli troops were poised to enter the coastal strip.

**Reports: Palestinians agree to document**

Palestinian officials reportedly reached agreement on a document that implicitly accepts Israel.

Fatah and Hamas leaders agreed Tuesday to accept the document, which calls for a Palestinian state in eastern Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza Strip, demands a "right of return" to Israel for millions of Palestinian refugees and their descendants, and upholds the validity of terrorist attacks in areas Israel won in the 1967 Six-Day War. Leaders from Islamic Jihad, another terrorist group, rejected the document.

The document does not meet international demands that Hamas renounce violence and explicitly recognize the Jewish state.

**Donald Rumsfeld slated to visit Israel**

Donald Rumsfeld is expected to visit Israel in the coming weeks.

Rumsfeld's visit, the first since he became U.S. defense secretary in 2001, is part of a regional tour that will include stops in Jordan and Egypt. In Israel, he is scheduled to meet with Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Defense Minister Amir Peretz and senior defense and security officials.

Last month, during Olmert's visit to Washington, the two agreed to work toward a closer defense and security relationship. The security relationship suffered setbacks following a dispute over Israeli arms sales to China.

# WORLD REPORT

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## Attack on army post shows failure of Israeli strategy after Gaza pullout

By LESLIE SUSSER

**J**ERUSALEM (JTA) — Beyond the immediate escalation, the Palestinian attack on an Israeli army outpost near the Gaza border raises serious questions about Israel's security and foreign policies.

Right-wing politicians argue that the incident, coupled with months of incessant rocket fire from Gaza on Israeli civilians, shows that the army has lost its deterrent capacity and that it will take a massive, sustained operation in Gaza to restore it.

Ehud Olmert's plan for a major unilateral withdrawal from the West Bank also is under fire, with some pundits maintaining that the latest turn of events will further erode public confidence in the prime minister's pullback strategy.

The attack left two Israeli soldiers dead and seven wounded. One soldier was kidnapped by the militants and brought back to Gaza.

The attack highlighted sharp differences on the Palestinian side. It came just days before Palestinian factions were set to reach agreement on a document meant to pave the way for negotiations with Israel, and was widely seen as an attempt to torpedo the deal. It also raised questions about the limits of power of both Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh.

With many splinter militia factions acting independently or taking orders from Hamas' more radical leadership abroad, it raised another fundamental question: Does any Palestinian leader have enough domestic clout to deliver on a deal with Israel?

Though there had been prior intelligence

warnings, the Palestinian gunmen surprised the Israelis early Sunday morning by attacking from the Israeli side and not the Gaza side of the outpost. Eight Palestinian militiamen infiltrated through a recently dug 300-yard-long tunnel, coming out well inside Israeli territory.

They then turned back toward the border, firing at the Israelis who were facing Gaza. Two attackers were killed while the others made it back to Gaza, taking Cpl. Gilad Shalit with them.

Israel demanded Shalit's immediate and unconditional release, but the abductors insisted on the release of all Palestinian prisoners under age 18 and all Palestinian women prisoners in Israeli jails — in return merely for information on Shalit.

The Palestinian leadership was divided. Abbas, who leads the Fatah movement, ordered a search for the soldier to hand him back to Israel.

Haniyeh, of Hamas, also favored a speedy resolution of the crisis. Both realized they had been presented with a chance to win diplomatic points and alleviate international sanctions against the Hamas led-government.

Danny Rubinstein, Arab affairs analyst for the Ha'aretz newspaper, called it "Haniyeh's moment," and suggested that he could make enormous international gains by forcing the militias to release the soldier.

But Haniyeh may not be calling the shots: According to Israeli sources, Khaled Meshaal, Hamas' Damascus-based leader, is in control, ordering the militiamen to stick to their demand for a prisoner exchange.

Meshaal is strongly opposed to the agree-

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NEWS  
ANALYSIS

## ■ *The attack raises serious questions about Israel's security and foreign policies*

*Continued from page 1*

ment reached Tuesday between Abbas and Haniyeh on a document that gives Abbas a mandate to negotiate with Israel and calls for restricting terrorist attacks to areas Israel conquered in 1967.

Israel's military options in the face of the kidnapping are not risk-free. The government considered three options: a commando operation to free Shalit, a major ground operation to smash the militias, and the assassination of Palestinian political and military leaders involved in terror.

Olmert warned that Israel would target leaders behind terrorism, "wherever they were." This was seen as a direct threat to Meshal and Haniyeh.

■  
"This is the essence of the government's warning: The blood of Corporal Gilad Shalit is on all your heads, from Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh down. There won't be a Hamas government in Gaza or Ramallah, and many of its ministers won't be alive, if they don't return the Israeli soldier the way he left: on his feet," analyst Ben Caspit wrote in Ma'ariv.

For the first few days after the attack, there was an uneasy deadlock. Israel did not want to take any action that might endanger Shalit's life; the Palestinians didn't want to harm him for fear that it would untie the army's hands.

With Israel, the United States and European Union refusing to deal with Hamas, which they consider a terrorist organization, Egypt was leading me-

diation efforts on Shalit's release. But Olmert warned that Israel would not wait indefinitely for results.

Israel massed troops along the Gaza border, threatening a major ground invasion. It also imposed a land and sea blockade on Gaza to prevent Shalit from being spirited out of the territories. According to one report, however, Palestinians were hoping to take Shalit through tunnels beneath the Gaza-Egypt border, an area where Israel has no way to operate.

When Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip last summer, it evolved a new military doctrine based on deterrence rather than occupation.

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The thinking was that with the occupation of Gaza finished, Israel would have international backing to respond with overwhelming force to any attack on sovereign Israeli territory. So far, however, this has failed to create a deterrent balance.

For months Palestinians have been firing Kassam rockets at the town of Sderot. When Israeli retaliatory shelling has killed Palestinian civilians, the international outcry has been resounding.

Right-wing politicians now are pressing the government to launch a large-scale attack on Gaza to restore

the army's deterrence.

"We should send the following message to the Palestinians: 'If you go on doing what you are doing, we will inflict

such damage on you that it won't be worth your while,'" Effie Eitam, a former brigadier general and legislator from the right-wing National Union-National Religious Party bloc, told JTA.

The persistent Palestinian attacks also are undermining Israeli public support for a unilateral pull-back from the

**This is the essence of the government's warning: There won't be a Hamas government in Gaza or Ramallah, and many of its ministers won't be alive, if they don't return the Israeli soldier the way he left: on his feet.'**

**Ben Caspit**

Analyst, Ma'ariv

West Bank.

"The demographic threat at the root of the plan sounds frightening, but it is still distant and not palpable. The Kassam and the Hamas are nearby and obvious to everyone," political commentator Aluf Benn wrote in Ha'aretz.

■  
Where is all this heading — toward escalation and a total breakdown of order on the Palestinian side? Is it the final jockeying for position by Palestinian factions before they accept a cease-fire? Or will there be a familiar, two-pronged Palestinian policy, with moderates negotiating with Israel while radicals attack it?

Olmert still sees unilateral withdrawal as the best answer to all these unsavory scenarios — but decision time on both sides of the border seems to be rapidly approaching.

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## Scottish police look for Nazis

NEW YORK (JTA) — Police in Scotland are investigating two potential Nazi criminals who may be living in the country. According to Scottish newspaper The Sunday Herald, some 5,500 former Nazis and German troops were held in prison camps in Scotland in 1947, and many were allowed to settle there. Some of the prisoners were members of the SS Galzein division, which massacred civilians in Poland and Ukraine.

The two suspects came to the attention of police after Lithuania tried to extradite Anton Gecas in 2001 from Edinburgh. Gecas was wanted for his involvement in the war-time executions of 34,000 people, including many Jews.

Gecas died before the extradition took place. Holocaust researcher Stephen Anker told the newspaper that there may be up to 50 Nazi war criminals in Scotland.

# Israel following new rights council

By RACHEL SILVERMAN

NEW YORK (JTA) — The United Nations' Human Rights Commission was seen by many as unabashedly anti-Israel, dominated by pro-Palestinian and Islamic agendas. Now supporters of Israel are wondering if its successor, the Human Rights Council, will be any different.

The new council, created March 15 as part of an ongoing U.N. reform campaign, convened for the first time last week, drawing 47 states to Geneva. The initial session will last through June 30.

The schedule so far has been dominated by speeches and visits by foreign dignitaries, but objections to Israel already have crept onto the agenda.

Representatives from Cuba, Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon all have alleged Israeli human rights abuses against Palestinians, according to Sybil Kessler, B'nai B'rith International's director of U.N. affairs.

Syria in particular asked for a special agenda item on Israel, Kessler told JTA from Geneva.

Such rhetoric is expected to increase during this week's session, an open forum which is the first opportunity delegates have to bring issues to the fore.

Though some countries have mentioned other conflict zones, such as Sudan and North Korea, Jewish groups worry that Israel's detractors will monopolize the floor, as they frequently did at the commission.

During a Monday forum, sources say that 32 of the 47 floor statements touched on Israel, one of only two regional issues to make the agenda. The other was genocide in Darfur.

Sources also report that Arab countries are working behind the scenes to draft an anti-Israel resolution.

It's certainly legitimate for countries to raise issues of concern to them, but "when it comes to drawing biased resolutions that are disproportionately focused on one situation," Kessler said, "that's what discredits the whole process."

Israel Singer, chairman of the World Jewish Congress' Policy Council, stressed the need to give the rights council some time "before the baby is called stillborn."

But some say the organization already is falling short.

Daniel Meron, director of human rights and humanitarian affairs at Israel's Foreign Ministry, said Israel's sense that the new council would be a carbon copy of its old self was "proven right in the past two days."

"Israel would have liked very much to support the council and is looking toward seeing the work that it can do in protecting human rights in the world," he said. "Unfortunately, we are very disappointed and concerned that the last few days are showing us that it's going in the wrong direction."

Hillel Neuer, executive director of U.N. Watch in Geneva, an American Jewish Committee affiliate, said that Islamic countries have a numerical stranglehold on the council, with 26 of the council's 47 seats either held by Muslim states or considered susceptible to Muslim pressure.

Muslim states dominate two regional groupings,

holding 16 of the 26 seats allotted to Africa and Asia. With much of the council's decision-making done by deliberation in such groupings, Islamic representatives will exert considerable influence on their peers, Neuer explained.

Questions about the council's credibility run deeper. Like its predecessor, the council has doled out seats to nations with dubious human rights records, such as China, Cuba, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Azerbaijan.

Though Neuer credited the council for blocking certain human-rights abusers, such as Sudan and Libya — both of which sat on the old commission — he expressed concern over the fact that nearly half of the council's new members, by his calculation, don't meet democratic standards.

"We have a membership where it's still the foxes guarding the chicken coop," Neuer said.

"It's true there are less foxes than there were on the commission," he added, "but if I were a chicken, that doesn't make me very happy."

The council does represent some progress, however. At a press conference in New York earlier this month, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan said, "I hope we are not going to see a situation where the Human Rights Council focuses on Israel, but not on the others."

His message was amplified by several countries in the opening days of the council session.

With the United States declining to run for a seat, Kessler expressed the hope that Western countries on the council, led by European Union members, would "draw a red line around where they stand when it comes to Israel."

The U.S. voted against the resolution creating the council because of a lack of "sufficient confidence in this text to be able to say that the HRC would be better than its predecessor," America's U.N. ambassador, John Bolton, said.

Watchdog groups hope the body's new "universal-review" mechanism, by which all countries are to be judged by the same yardstick, will be realized in practice.

Council members will be the first countries subject to the council's universal periodic review, which will assess how well states are fulfilling their human-rights commitments.

"It's a nice idea, but will it be a toothless mechanism or will it be real scrutiny?" Neuer asked of universal review. "There are some new mechanisms that have potential but will require enormous unity and determination."

Shai Franklin, director of international organizations for the World Jewish Congress, said Jewish groups are trying to harness that momentum.

"Maybe we can peel away a couple of enemies and create a couple of new friends," he said. "We have a real opportunity here."

FOCUS  
ON  
ISSUES

'It's a nice idea, but will it be a toothless mechanism or will it be real scrutiny?'

Hillel Neuer

Executive director, U.N. Watch in Geneva

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### MIDDLE EAST

#### Hamas claims kidnapping

Hamas said it is holding an Israeli soldier abducted outside the Gaza Strip. The terrorist group ruling the Palestinian Authority made the announcement late Monday, drawing renewed Israeli threats against the government of Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh.

Hamas gunmen were among a squad that kidnapped Cpl. Gilad Shalit and killed two other Israeli soldiers in a cross-border raid Sunday, but there are assessments that the operation was not ordered by Haniyeh.

Rather, blame is being directed at Khaled Meshaal, a Hamas leader based in Syria. Meshaal is widely considered to be more hard-line than Hamas leaders in Gaza and is believed to hold sway with the group's armed wing.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert hinted in a speech Monday that Meshaal could be targeted in a reprisal.

#### Hamas man killed in blast

A Hamas militant died in a Gaza Strip blast that Palestinians blamed on Israel. Israeli military spokesmen denied involvement in Tuesday's explosion of a car near Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh's office.

Palestinians claimed that the blast was caused by an airstrike, but Israeli security sources said it was probably the result of a Hamas-made bomb that was detonated by accident.

#### Settler kidnapped too?

Israeli forces searched for a West Bank settler feared kidnapped by Palestinians.

Police said Tuesday they were taking "very seriously" the disappearance of Elyahu Asheri, 18, of Itamar after the Popular Resistance Committees terrorist group said it had abducted a settler.

#### Olmert firm on West Bank plan

Ehud Olmert said the recent flare-up of Gaza Strip fighting would not deter Israel from pullbacks in the West Bank.

The prime minister faced off Tuesday with lawmakers who said the kidnapping of an Israeli soldier by Gazan gunmen and cross-border rocket fire proved that last year's Gaza withdrawal undermined national security.

"I have not backed down or changed my mind about the enormous historical importance of the disengagement plan," Olmert said in a speech, using the official term for the Gaza withdrawal.

### NORTH AMERICA

#### U.S. official lauds Israel on terror

The U.S. attorney general praised Israel for its cooperation in fighting terrorism. "Israel is a nation that believes, as America does, that terrorism and transnational crime is best combated through international teamwork," Alberto Gonzales said Tuesday at Tel Aviv University. Gonzales highlighted Israel's extradition of suspected Mafia boss Ze'ev Rosenstein to the United States, The Associated Press reported.

Rosenstein was extradited for alleged involvement in an Ecstasy drug ring.

#### House committee approves Israel-NATO legislation

A U.S. House of Representatives committee unanimously approved a resolution that calls for enhancing Israel's relationship with NATO. The resolution, introduced by Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.) and Rep. Robert Wexler (D-Fla.), was adopted Tuesday by the House

Committee on International Relations. The resolution recommends upgrading Israel's affiliation to a "leading member of NATO's Individual Cooperation Program," a promotion the bill says ultimately will lead to Israel's full membership in the alliance. "Incorporating Israel's vast experience facing daily threats from Islamist terrorists who seek to do it harm will be a great boon for NATO," Ros-Lehtinen said.

Israeli officials are not enthusiastic about the prospect of full NATO membership, fearing it could limit the country's ability to strike its enemies without consultation. The resolution is to be considered by the full House next month.

#### Rebbe commemorated at White House

A commemoration of the death of the Lubavitch rebebe will culminate in a White House briefing.

Leaders of both parties in Congress, as well as top Bush administration officials, are attending the two-day tribute to Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, who died June 12, 1994. The theme is education, and speakers include Elie Wiesel; U.S. Homeland Security secretary Michael Chertoff; and Australia's defense minister.

Chertoff and Joshua Bolten, the White House chief of staff, who are both Jewish, will attend the White House briefing Wednesday morning.

About 30 diplomats joined Lubavitch emissaries to their countries at the events.

Thousands of people also are expected to gather at the rebebe's grave in New York on the anniversary of his death.

### WORLD

#### Israeli repeats controversial remarks

Israeli novelist A.B. Yehoshua reiterated that Jews outside of Israel cannot be complete Jews. Diaspora Jews "put their Jewishness in a box," Yehoshua said Monday to delegates at the Jewish Agency for Israel assembly, held in Israel. He did, however, say his comments were part of a "dispute within the family."

Yehoshua's original remarks, made last month, created a controversy. Yehoshua has said he derives identity from territory and language.

Responding to the novelist's more recent remarks, Eric Yoffie, president of the Union for Reform Judaism, said an Israeli identity will not last if it is divorced from Judaism.

#### Ukraine cracks down on controversial university

Ukraine's Education Ministry called for seven branches of a Ukrainian university known for supporting anti-Semitism to be disbanded. The move is seen as a blow against MAUP, a Kiev-based private university that has printed anti-Semitic articles in school publications and supported conferences with anti-Semitic speakers.

"This is an important step forward, and we hope that this is the beginning of appropriate action taken against the leading purveyor of anti-Semitic activity in Ukraine," said Mark Levin, executive director of NCSJ: Advocates on Behalf of Jews in Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic States and Eurasia.

#### JNF branches aim to reduce tensions

The Jewish National Fund's Israeli and U.S. branches reached an agreement aimed at ending tensions between them.

The agreement, finalized Sunday, "will pave the way to new levels of cooperation in the coming years," according to a statement released by Keren Kayemet, as the Israeli branch is known.

Observers said the tensions stemmed from a belief among fund officials in Israel that their American counterparts were bypassing them on certain projects.