

IN THE NEWS
Kofi Annan: U.N. unfairly judges Israel

Kofi Annan said Israel is often unfairly judged at the United Nations.

The U.N. secretary-general, who steps down after 10 years at the end of 2006, told the opening of the 61st General Assembly on Tuesday that the United Nations' reputation for impartiality would suffer as long as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continued.

Bush appoints envoy to Sudan

President Bush appointed Andrew Natsios as U.S. special envoy for Sudan.

The move announced Tuesday, during Bush's address to the U.N. General Assembly, is aimed at putting pressure on the Sudanese government to end the massacre in Darfur, in which Janjaweed Arab militias have killed 200,000 to 400,000 people.

Natsios is a former administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Senator says he has Jewish roots

U.S. Sen. George Allen (R-Va.) acknowledged he has Jewish roots.

"I embrace and take great pride in every aspect of my diverse heritage, including my Lumbroso family line's Jewish heritage, which I learned about from a recent magazine article and my mother confirmed," Allen said in a statement on his Web site.

He added, "I was raised as a Christian and my mother was raised as a Christian." The statement was released after Allen berated a reporter for asking him if he is Jewish.

The Virginia Republican, in an unexpectedly tight race this year against James Webb, was asked in a debate Monday about a story in *The Forward* that reported that Allen's mother was descended from a prominent Sephardi family.

WORLD REPORT

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As U.N. General Assembly opens, Palestinians are on leaders' minds

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Hamas and the threat it poses to Israel, relegated to the back burner this summer by more pressing challenges from Hezbollah and Iran, are bubbling back into Western policy considerations.

The fate of the Palestinian Authority and the dilemma of how to circumvent the terrorists that lead it — while funneling funds to a Palestinian society on the verge of collapse — is high on the Israeli and U.S. agendas as world leaders arrive this week to address the General Assembly during its opening session.

European enthusiasm for Palestinian efforts to forge a national unity government, and a U.S. Congress mired in a campaign season, signal cracks in the wall of support Israel has enjoyed for the policy of cutting off Hamas.

President Bush included his vision for the Palestinians in his speech Tuesday to the General Assembly. Mahmoud Abbas, the relatively moderate P.A. president, also is in New York touting a possible national unity government with Hamas. Bush and Abbas are to meet Wednesday morning.

In his speech, Bush said he directed his secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, to "lead a diplomatic effort to engage moderate leaders across the region, help the Palestinians reform their security services, and support Israeli and Palestinian leaders in their efforts to come together to resolve their differences."

British Prime Minister Tony Blair "has indicated that his country will work with

partners in Europe to help strengthen the governing institutions of the Palestinian administration," Bush said. "Countries like Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt have made clear they are willing to contribute the diplomatic and financial assistance necessary to help these efforts succeed."

Bush's proposals will be at the center of considerations Wednesday by the Quartet, the diplomatic grouping of the United States, United Nations, European Union and Russia that guides the Middle East peace process. The U.N. Security Council will take up those considerations

Thursday.

JTA has learned that administration officials made it clear to Israel's foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, that consideration of the Palestinian issue was inevitable at the United Nations this week, no matter how pressing Israel considers the threat from Iran and Hezbollah.

Livni met last week with Bush and other top officials in Washington. She emerged from her talks with Rice with a dual message: Israel wants to help Abbas raise his profile, but not at the expense of funding Hamas, as long as the group continues to reject Israel's existence and embraces terrorism.

"This is a moment in time in which Mahmoud Abbas has to decide whether the Palestinian Authority will operate on his terms or on the terrorists' terms," Livni said. "This is the decision that he has to make. And this is the decision that any future Palestinian government has to make."

Livni and Abbas met Monday evening,

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■ *The Palestinian aid issue is resurfacing, as talk of a unity government continues*

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but details of their meeting were not available.

Livni repeatedly stressed that the problem is not Hamas per se but its platform. Bush administration officials echoed that line.

"We support voices of moderation," Stephen Hadley, Bush's national security adviser, said Monday in a pre-General Assembly briefing with reporters. "Obviously, President Abbas is one. He's committed to peace, and we have worked with him and would continue to work with him. That's why the president is going to see him. The big question, of course, is whether Hamas will renounce violence, accept the existence of Israel, and accept the agreements that have been made. That's the \$64 question."

The other question is whether Hamas will really need to change at all. European leaders say they're steadfast in denying the Palestinian Authority money until Hamas accepts Israel's right to exist and renounces terrorism, but their eager embrace of Abbas' plans for national unity suggests that their resolve could be weakening.

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A national unity government "creates a new situation," said Erkki Tuomioja, the Finnish foreign minister and current E.U. president. "It allows us to break the deadlock."

The Europeans are increasingly concerned by reports of a Gaza on the verge of anarchy, the result of nonpayment of salaries by the P.A. government, by far the largest employer in the Palestinian areas.

Tough measures in Congress that would severely limit U.S. assistance to the Palestinian Authority and to non-governmental organizations that help the Palestinians are languishing because of differences between a U.S. Senate bill and its counterpart in the House of Representatives. The Senate version has an exemption for Abbas and allows Bush greater flexibility in bypassing the ban on funds.

"I see a discussion taking place as soon as the new Congress is formed" in January, Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.), who is Jewish, said Monday in a conference call with Jewish media. "I don't see there's enough time to resolve the differences."

The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations is attempting to fill that vacuum, using the General Assembly to urge Quartet members — particularly the European Union — to closely examine the conditions for any Palestinian unity government.

"We are deeply concerned by reports that the European Union is reconsidering its commitment to the Quartet's conditions," the Presidents Conference said in a statement. "Appeasement will only vindicate Hamas' intransigence and signal to the Palestinians, and to the wider Arab world, that they can reject Israel, continue the terror and still receive European funds."

■
The European Union quickly latched on to news of a possible unity government, which Hamas took as confirmation that the Europeans — who used to be the Palestinian Authority's main funder before Hamas took power — would resume funding.

But E.U. officials said they would need three months to "reflect" on a new P.A. government's positions before determining whether to resume aid to the

Palestinian Authority, much of which has been rechanneled to humanitarian organizations.

Since July, the European Union has been making emergency aid payments to the Palestinians, including \$114.5 million for hospital supplies, fuel and salaries to 625,000 Palestinians whom the government can't afford to pay.

Abbas' office gets \$15.3 million from the European Union, and European governments provide direct aid adding up to \$98 million.

"If you think there is tension between the U.S. and the European Union on resuming funding, you are quite wrong," said a German diplomat who has been present at U.S.-E.U. discussions and who spoke on background. "In this case there might be nuances, but the E.U. and the U.S. will speak with one voice through the Quartet and

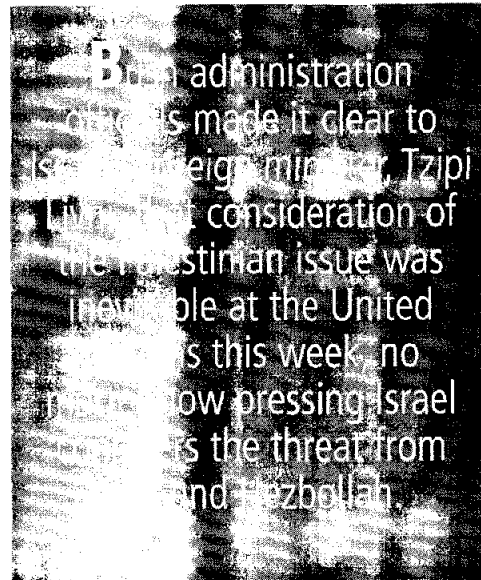
their demands will be the same, even if the language sounds different."

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Yet crucial differences could emerge over what constitutes recognition of Israel, a key requirement for resumption of funding. In the past, Palestinians have sought vague formulas that stop short of recognizing Israel, while outside observers have sought to divine in them some unstated acknowledgement of Israel's right to exist.

"I think the E.U. is looking for the implicit, not just the explicit. And if the unity government stands by all peace agreements, that's an implied recognition of Israel," said one source familiar with E.U. declarations on the Middle East.

The United States has been firmer in insisting that if the Palestinians really do accept Israel, they must state it plainly and not obfuscate with formulas that can mean different things to different people.

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JTA correspondent Dinah A. Spritzer in Prague contributed to this report.



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Israel's war behind the war

By LESLIE SUSSER

JERUSALEM (JTA) — More than a month after the guns fell silent, the Israeli government has finally approved a commission of inquiry into the Lebanon war, and the war of the generals is heating up.

With careers on the line, more and more politicians and Israel Defense Force commanders are going public and blaming each other for the war's failures and shortcomings.

The public mood and the commission's findings could have major consequences for Israel's military and political leadership.

Maj. Gen. Udi Adam, who commanded the key northern front during the war, has tendered his resignation and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Defense Minister Amir Peretz and IDF Chief of Staff Dan Halutz are under pressure to follow suit.

Headed by retired justice Eliyahu Winograd, the investigative panel will have all the powers of a full-fledged state commission of inquiry — with one crucial difference: The members of the Winograd panel were appointed by the prime minister, while members of a state commission would have been appointed by the Supreme Court president.

Olmert's critics ask how someone under investigation can nominate his investigators. His supporters counter that the Winograd panel's independence is beyond question — and, they add, since it's a government-appointed commission, the Cabinet will be forced to accept its findings and recommendations, even if it means political leaders and top military brass have to leave office.

In the war after the war, there are several battlefields. Ex-generals have been firing barbs at the current crop of military leaders; army commanders are pointing fingers at their subordinates, and vice versa; former holders of key offices are battling the incumbents; and generals and politicians are blaming each other.

In interviews over the weekend, former IDF Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon, former Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz and Gen. Adam sharply criticized the conduct of the war. Last Friday, ex-generals were equally blunt in their attacks on the IDF's top command in a meeting with Halutz.

Ya'alon, who was IDF chief of staff for much of the period during which Hezbol-

lah built up its rocket arsenal in Lebanon, claimed that the army he handed over was ready for war, but that the campaign had been hopelessly mismanaged. In an article in Ha'aretz titled "No Way To Go To War," he described the way the ground forces were used as a "catastrophe."

"There was no defined goal. There was no required achievement. They jumped from one idea to the next and introduced new missions all the time without any logic," Ya'alon declared.

Worse, he fumed, the final ground attack was launched when there was no need for it, simply as a kind of photo op. Therefore, Ya'alon concludes, Olmert, Peretz and Halutz all should go.

Ya'alon, whose term as army head was not extended by former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, also claimed that officers had been promoted because of their political connections — another broadside aimed at Halutz, known for his close ties to Sharon.

Indeed, more than Iran or Islamic terror, Ya'alon sees corruption in politics and the military as the biggest threat Israel faces today.

"If we do not act immediately to uproot the corruption from the political and military establishments, our very existence will be in danger. Arrogance and corruption are the existential threat to Israel today," he warned.

In an interview in Yediot Achronot, Mofaz, who was chief of staff and then defense minister for almost the entire period of Hezbollah's build-up from 2000 to 2006, shrugged off charges that he was responsible for the army's lack of readiness and the failure to pre-empt Hezbollah's attack.

Israel, he said, goes to war only when there is no choice. As to the army's readiness, he argued that Operation Defensive Shield against Palestinian terrorism in 2002 showed what the army could do when properly operated.

Mofaz also slammed the final ground offensive, a plan that needed several weeks to implement fully but which was given a mere 60 hours at the end of the war before

a cease-fire took effect.

"I asked Olmert what he would say to parents of soldiers killed in the 60-hour operation at the end of the war, and he replied, 'A good question. I don't have a good answer,'" Mofaz recalled.

Last Friday, Halutz held a second meeting with reserve generals, many of them heroes of previous wars. They did not spare him.

Most outspoken was a former northern command chief, Avigdor Ben Gal, who said Halutz, the first air force man to become chief of staff, also would be the last.

"An air force man cannot command the army and certainly not oversee the operation of the ground forces," the celebrated former tank commander declared.

Halutz has tended to shift blame onto field commanders like Adam or politicians like Olmert and Peretz. For his part, Peretz, who has scant military background and had been in the defense job for only two months

when the war broke out, blamed his predecessors for shortages of equipment and lack of ground-force training.

Olmert takes responsibility for the decision to go to war, but blames the army for tactical mistakes in the conduct of the ground operations.

The irony is that Israeli leaders are at loggerheads over a war that could well have positive ramifications, possibly leading to a quiet border in the North and better relations with Lebanon and even Syria.

The angst comes from the fact that Israelis and their leaders know the country cannot afford to be caught short militarily in more testing circumstances in the future.

But it's not clear whether the process of inquiry and recommendation will have a cathartic or a destructive effect on Israeli society.

Will the focus be on fixing the shortcomings the war revealed or on apportioning blame? Can Halutz, Peretz and Olmert put things right — or will new brooms be needed to sweep clean the IDF and the Israeli political establishment?

NEWS ANALYSIS

Arrogance and corruption
are the existential threat to
Israel today.

Moshe Ya'alon
Former IDF chief of staff

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Lebanon withdrawal by Rosh Hashanah seen

Israel's top general was quoted as saying troop withdrawals from Lebanon would be completed by Rosh Hashanah. Ran Cohen, a member of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, on Tuesday quoted the Israeli army's chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz, as saying that all Israeli forces were expected to be out of Lebanon within days.

"He told me unequivocally that, in his estimation, all Israeli soldiers will be out of Lebanon by Rosh Hashanah eve if everything goes well," Cohen told Army Radio. Rosh Hashanah begins Friday evening.

Olmert weighs expanded government

Ehud Olmert signaled his intent to broaden Israel's coalition government. The current partnership between Olmert's Kadima Party, Labor, Shas and the Pensioners' Party affords the premier a narrow parliamentary majority. But the stability of the coalition has been thrown into question by the recriminations between Olmert and the Labor chief, Defense Minister Amir Peretz, since the Lebanon war, as well as budgetary demands made by Shas and the Pensioners Party.

This has raised speculation that Olmert could try to bring in the hawkish Yisrael Beiteinu or Likud parties.

Terrorist dies in shootout

Israeli security forces killed a Palestinian terrorist in a West Bank shootout.

The Al-Aksa Brigade member was shot dead Tuesday after opening fire at troops who came to arrest him in Sanur, a village near Jenin. There were no Israeli casualties.

NORTH AMERICA

Republicans target candidate over Muslim ties

U.S. Republicans targeted a Muslim Democratic candidate in Minnesota for his ties to a U.S. Muslim advocacy group. Keith Ellison, who won last week's Democratic primary for a Minneapolis-area seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, accepted a \$2,000 donation several weeks ago from Nihad Awad, a senior official with the Council on American Islamic Relations. Republican groups, including the Republican Jewish Coalition, have noted CAIR's past defense of groups like Hamas, and Awad's own claim in 1994 that he preferred Hamas to the PLO. Awad's defenders note that in the same statement he said he favored Hamas "moderates," and clarified that he rejected the PLO because of its corruption.

Ellison is himself a Muslim who has repudiated his earlier ties to the Nation of Islam and has received the endorsement of some Minnesota Jewish leaders.

Santorum blasted on Iran

Sanctioning companies that deal with Iran emerged as an issue in the battle for Jewish votes in Pennsylvania. U.S. Rep. Allyson Schwartz (D-Pa.) and Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.), who are both Jewish, hosted a press conference Monday to blast U.S. Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pa.), who is fighting a tough re-election battle against Democrat Bob Casey.

Lautenberg says Santorum has consistently resisted Democratic efforts to expand sanctions to U.S. companies that allow foreign-owned subsidiaries to deal with Iran.

A Santorum spokeswoman, Virginia Davis, noted the Pennsylvania senator's pending bill that would expand sanctions against Iran, and said he had tried to meet Lautenberg halfway by applying the New

Jersey senator's sanctions to future investments while exempting existing investments.

Jewish leaders won't meet Ahmadinejad

U.S. Jewish leaders refused to meet with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in New York. The Jewish leaders said the Council of Foreign Relations invited them to a dinner with the extremist Iranian leader.

After the leaders protested, the council downgraded the dinner to a "working meeting," the New York Daily News reported. Ahmadinejad is in New York for the annual U.N. General Assembly. He repeatedly has denied the Holocaust and called for Israel's destruction. A pro-Israel and anti-Ahmadinejad rally is slated to take place Wednesday outside the United Nations.

Female concentration camp guard deported

The U.S. government deported a woman who served as a World War II-era concentration camp guard. Elfriede Lina Rinkel, 83, recently returned to her native Germany after a plea bargain in which she admitted to serving at Ravensbruck, a concentration camp for women.

Rinkel immigrated to the United States from Germany in 1959, but never applied for citizenship. The case against her was brought by the U.S. Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations, in conjunction with the Department of Homeland Security.

Shalom Center: Protest torture amendments

A liberal Jewish U.S. group urged followers to mark the High Holidays by calling on their senators to reject legislation that would amend protections against torture.

"I strongly urge you to speak publicly against and to vote against the president's plan to legalize what is actually torture," said the model fax proposed Tuesday by the Philadelphia-based Shalom Center. President Bush wants Congress to further define provisions in the Geneva Conventions in order to allow U.S. agencies to maintain interrogation techniques used in the war on terrorism.

Religious streams join fund-raising campaign

The three main U.S. synagogue movements joined the North American Jewish federation system's Israel Emergency Campaign.

The Union for Reform Judaism, the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism and the Orthodox Union announced their support this week for the United Jewish Communities' fund-raising campaign.

The campaign has raised more than \$300 million to help Israelis harmed by Hezbollah attacks during the recent war.

Jewish musician a 'genius'

A leader in new Jewish music is among those receiving MacArthur "genius" grants. John Zorn, an experimental, New York-based composer and musician who has incorporated klezmer music and Jewish themes into his work, was named Tuesday as one of 15 people to receive the grants given annually by the John T. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

WORLD

Hitler T-shirt creates controversy

Australian Jewish leaders called on department stores to stop selling a T-shirt that features Hitler and Winston Churchill.

The shirt features the two men with the words "paper v scissors" underneath them, an apparent reference to a childhood game. Anton Block, a local Jewish leader, said the shirt belittles the memory of Holocaust victims.