

**IN THE NEWS**
**Olmert confirms atomic arsenal?**

Ehud Olmert drew fire for apparently confirming that Israel has nuclear weapons.

The Israeli prime minister said in a German television interview broadcast Monday as he arrived in Berlin for an official visit that Iran's atomic ambitions had to be curbed because of its diplomatic stance. "Iran openly, explicitly and publicly threatens to wipe Israel off the map," he said.

"Can you say that this is the same level when they are aspiring to have nuclear weapons, as America, France, Israel, Russia?" Olmert's aides said his comments were taken out of context.

**Israel cracks Islamic Jihad ring**

Israeli security forces have cracked a major West Bank terrorist ring.

The Shin Bet security service announced Tuesday that it had arrested 50 suspected terrorists from the Hebron area in a swoop timed to prevent a major series of attacks. The detainees are said to belong to Islamic Jihad.

**Conservative schools mull admissions policy**

The Conservative movement's Solomon Schechter day schools are considering a more flexible admissions policy.

The 76 Schechter schools currently admit only children who are Jewish according to halachah, or Jewish law; or those with non-Jewish mothers, provided the students agree to convert within one year of admission.

At the national convention of the Solomon Schechter Day School Association, which concluded Tuesday in Boca Raton, Fla., delegates considered a draft that would extend the time limit for a student to convert. The association's board of directors will discuss feedback on the issue from convention delegates.

# WORLD REPORT

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## Increasingly radical, Israeli Arabs want end to Zionist vision of state

By LESLIE SUSSER

**J**ERUSALEM (JTA) — Increasingly alienated from the Jewish state in the wake of the recent Lebanon war, Israeli Arabs have produced a radical document demanding cultural autonomy and the right to veto government decisions that concern them.

The document, titled "The Future Vision of Palestinian Arabs in Israel," could prove to be a watershed.

Drafted by representative mainstream organizations and not by extremists, it constitutes an unqualified rejection of the Zionist model of Israel as a Jewish state in which Israeli Arabs are integrated as equal citizens with full rights.

Instead, the document proposes a model of Israel as "the state of all its citizens," in which two ethnic groups, Jews and Arabs, both enjoy a degree of autonomy in a binational state. That would be next to a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip that would be entirely Arab.

The rift between the Jewish majority and Arab minority in Israel has been widening steadily for years. Pre-existing tensions between the two communities were exacerbated by the Oslo process, the lethal clashes between Israeli Arabs and police in October 2000 and, most recently, by the second Lebanon war.

A last-ditch attempt by moderates on both sides to draft a conciliatory Jewish-Arab covenant collapsed in 2001. The protocols of their meetings, released recently, show that the main sticking point was the Arab side's refusal to recognize Israel as a Jewish state.

The new document takes this rejection further. It has eight chapters dealing with sensitive issues like land policy, economic development, education and the nature of the Israeli state. The drafters do not recognize Israel's essential Jewishness, and see it instead as a "joint homeland" for Jews and Arabs. That paves the way for the Arab side to demand not only individual rights but rights as a group.

From this basic position, the drafters derive their insistence on cultural, religious and educational autonomy. It also underpins their demands for separate representation in international forums and a veto right on domestic issues that concern them as a group.

The significance is far reaching: Israel would forfeit its Jewish character. Indeed, the drafters of the document urge Israel to forego its Jewish symbols of state — for example, the flag with the Star of David and the "Hatikvah" anthem, which expresses the Jewish yearning through the ages for a return to Zion.

The new document would seem to have widespread Israeli Arab support: It was drafted by the Supreme Arab Monitoring Committee and endorsed by the Arab Local Authorities' Committee, two bodies that represent a wide spectrum of Israeli Arab opinion.

Many Israeli Jews were stung and deeply disappointed by the document. For them, the *raison d'être* for the establishment of the state was to create a national homeland for the Jewish people. Few would be willing to consider, far less to discuss, forfeiting its

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NEWS ANALYSIS

## ■ *Many Israeli Jews were stung and deeply disappointed by the document*

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Jewish character.

In a bitter article in Ma'ariv, journalist Dan Margalit captured the widespread frustration at the direction Israeli Arab thinking seems to be taking.

"It's very sad and a great pity," he wrote. "We were wrong to harbor illusions. They [Israeli Arabs] are impossible."

Israeli intellectuals point out that if the thesis of a binational Israel were adopted, it would mean that in a two-state solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict — Israel and Palestine living side-by-side in peace — the Palestinians would have one-and-a-half states, the Jews only half a state.

Why are Palestinians entitled to full statehood and Jews not, they ask.

A recently published book, "Whose Land is This?" edited by veteran Ha'aretz columnist Uzi Benziman, tells another sad story: How leading thinkers on both sides, aware that Jewish-Arab relations were on a collision course, failed to formulate a common basis for dialogue and coexistence.

Between January 1999 and January 2001, 12 Israeli Jews led by Hebrew University Law Professor Mordechai Kremnitzer and eight Israeli Arabs led by Adel Manna, director of the Jerusalem-based Van Leer Institute's Center for the Study of Arab Society in Israel, made a Herculean effort to draw up a Jewish-Arab covenant that would take the sting out of ties between the two communities.

Both sides showed goodwill and significant progress was made. But the Israeli Jews threw up their hands in despair when the Arab side refused to recognize Israel as a Jewish state, in precisely the same way as the drafters of the new document are refusing to do today.

Disillusionment about Jewish-Arab ties in Israel was exacerbated by the recent Lebanon war, which underscored the huge disparity in basic sensibilities. Many Israeli Arabs accused Israel of a "disproportionate response" to Hezbollah attacks, and they openly sided with the Lebanese militia, even though they often bore the brunt of its haphazard rocket attacks.

"During the recent war, a line was crossed: Arab Israelis did not hesitate to openly express their support for the enemy and preferred their ties to the enemy over their obligations to the state of which they are citizens," Benziman wrote in Ha'aretz, arguing that the main reason for this was "their refusal to recognize the legitimacy of the Zionist idea — a refusal that is nourished by the foolish and evil policy of discrimination adopted by all Israeli governments."

Arab intellectuals acknowledge that the core of the argument is indeed over the legitimacy of the Zionist idea. Manna says even if there were no discrimination, the Israeli Arab demand for autonomy would remain.

The growing alienation from the

Jewish state has been accompanied by increasingly radical statements and actions by Israeli Arab political leaders. Soon after the Lebanon war, Knesset member Azmi Bishara led a delegation to Syria and Lebanon to express solidarity for the Arab side in the war.

Riad Saleh, leader of the Israeli Arab Islamic Movement's radical northern wing, declared that Jerusalem soon would

be the capital of an Islamic caliphate. Saleh often attempts to whip the Israeli Arab public into a frenzy by warning of imaginary Jewish plots to destroy the Muslim holy places on Jerusalem's Temple Mount.

Shawki Katib, head of the Supreme Arab Monitoring Committee, maintains that the aim of the eight-chapter document is not to present an ultimatum, but rather to spark debate on how the two communities can best live together.

Some Israelis take heart from this approach. Likud Party legislator Michael Eitan, who was one of the 12 Israelis who failed to draft a Jewish-Arab covenant, said he remains optimistic precisely because "the debate has not yet begun."

In any such dialogue, Eitan said, the sides tend to present tough opening positions as a bargaining ploy. If serious talks take place, Eitan said he was confident the two sides would be able to reach agreement within the basic parameters of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.

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## McCain: U.S. may need force in Iran

NEW YORK (JTA) — A nuclear Iran poses an "unacceptable risk" and may have to be confronted militarily, U.S. Sen. John McCain said.

In comments Sunday to Yeshiva University's annual Chanukah dinner in Manhattan, McCain urged a robust diplomatic effort — including immediate United Nations Security Council action — to obstruct Iran's efforts to acquire nuclear weapons, but warned that the military option cannot be taken off the table.

"It is a simple observation of reality

that there is only one thing worse than a military solution, and that, my friends, is a nuclear-armed Iran," the Arizona Republican said.

The senator, who is said to be considering a run for president in 2008, also called for perseverance in Iraq, the disarmament of Hezbollah in Lebanon and continued U.S. refusal to deal with Hamas.

"We will defeat terrorism against America and we will stand with Israel as she fights the same enemy," McCain said.

# German forum blasts Iran's Holocaust denial

By TOBY AXELROD

BERLIN (JTA) — How many Iranians share their president's Holocaust denial?

Most would probably reject it, "but they're a silent majority," Israeli scholar David Menashri said, speaking Tuesday at a daylong conference in Berlin on "The Holocaust in Transnational Awareness."

Organized jointly by the Technical University of Berlin and the German Federal Department for Political Education, the event coincided with a meeting of Holocaust deniers and their sympathizers in Tehran on the invitation of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Participants in the Berlin event took the opportunity to condemn Ahmadinejad for his Holocaust denial, anti-Semitic statements and threats against Israel — which he repeated Tuesday to warm applause from delegates, who included a fringe group of fervently Orthodox anti-Zionist Jews that often allies with Israel's enemies, and European and American writers who argue that the Holocaust was either fabricated or exaggerated.

"Thanks to people's wishes and God's will, the trend for the existence of the Zionist regime is downward, and this is what God has promised and what all nations want," Ahmadinejad said, according to news agencies. "Just as the Soviet Union was wiped out and today does not exist, so will the Zionist regime soon be wiped out."

Condemnations of the Tehran conference poured in from the West. The White House condemned the gathering as "an affront to the entire civilized world as well as to the traditional Iranian values of tolerance and respect." British Prime Minister Tony Blair called the meeting "shocking beyond belief" and said it proved beyond any doubt the Iranian regime's extremism.

In Berlin, speakers emphasized that Holocaust denial is a form of anti-Semitism and that Ahmadinejad is using the theme, together with his threats against Israel, to gain international standing among Arabs.

The average Iranian feels no solidarity with the Arabs, said Katajun Amirpur, a German journalist of Iranian background. For example, there is little support among Iranians for the Palestinians, she said.

"But Ahmadinejad is not addressing the Iranian masses," Amirpur said. "Rather, he is addressing much more the Arab masses when he says that 'if' there was a Holo-

caust, and 'if' the Germans caused it, then they should settle the problem. It is in line with what 95 percent of Arabs think," she said.

German journalist Esther Shapira said it's a mistake to dismiss Ahmadinejad's remarks.

"If Ahmadinejad says Israel should be wiped off the map — and he is not planning to revive Nazi Germany's plan to move the Jews to Madagascar — we should take him seriously," Shapira said. "It is dangerous to say that this is not what he really means."

Holocaust denial came to Iran years ago, with the 1979 Islamic revolution. But Ahmadinejad, Menashri emphasized, "really believes in what he says."

"He has an apocalyptic approach, that he was sent to pave the way" for the coming of the Messiah, he said.

Menashri said Europe has a moral responsibility to raise its voice about the Holocaust.

"They should tell the Iranian leader to get off of the Holocaust, you are touching very sensitive nerves, and not just of Jews but of many peoples," he said. "That is the only request I have of Europe."

Leading Muslim clerics "should stand up and say, 'That's enough, let's take care of the real business in the Muslim world. And the real business is not denial of the Holocaust,'" Menashri added.

Among the speakers at the Berlin conference were Holocaust scholar Raul Hilberg;

historian Wolfgang Benz, director of the Center for Research on Anti-Semitism in Berlin; Jean-Yves Camus of the Institute of International and Strategic Relations in Paris; historian Wolfgang Kraushaar of the Hamburg Institute for Social Research; historian Peter Longerich, director of the Research Center for the Holocaust and Twentieth Century History at the Royal Holloway College of the University of London; Israeli journalist and sociologist Natan Sznajder; and Gert Weisskirchen, a member of the German Parliament and representative on matters related to anti-Semitism to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

While participants agreed that the Iran conference had attracted a handful of well-known Holocaust deniers and their supporters, they noted that active Holocaust deniers were few.

"Numerically, they're not many," Camus said. "But they do have a network that puts their propaganda onto the virtual level," on the Internet.

Benz said spreading information about the Holocaust to a new generation is not easy. "The best teaching can be undone," he said, "when a pupil goes home, reports on what he learned, and then hears from an older relative, 'Oh, you know what it's like with the Jews.'"

"It ruins the whole lesson," said Benz, adding that media such as television and film are "more important than any other means of education." ■

The average Iranian feels no solidarity with the Arabs, but [Iranian President Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad is not addressing the Iranian masses.

Katajun Amirpur

German journalist of Iranian background

## Israeli high court overturns 'intifada law'

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's top court overturned a law preventing Palestinians from suing the army for damages caused during military operations.

The so-called "intifada law," passed by the Knesset last year, designated the West Bank and Gaza Strip as combat zones and in effect rendered Israeli forces immune from lawsuits for damages they caused there.

The law was overturned Tuesday by the High Court of Justice, which ruled that Palestinians who suffered damages in a situation that was demonstrably not combat-related could demand financial compensation.

Israel Radio reported that 500 private lawsuits were expected to be filed in coming days by Palestinians and human-rights groups. ■

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### MIDDLE EAST

#### Hamas fires on Fatah protest

Hamas security forces opened fire on a Fatah rally in Gaza, wounding four Palestinians. Tuesday's demonstration in Khan Yunis was to protest the deaths Monday of three young sons of a Fatah intelligence official, the result of a botched assassination attempt widely blamed on Hamas.

Fatah officials said that some of the protesters were throwing stones, but criticized the Hamas response as extreme. Hamas officials denied that their forces opened fire, maintaining that the stones and shots came from the protesters.

#### Israeli bill would limit Chabad proselytizing

A new bill would ban Chabad emissaries from approaching young Jews in Israel.

The proposal, brought to the Knesset floor Monday by Labor lawmaker Ophir Pines-Paz, would bar adults from pressuring anyone aged 18 or younger to intensify their religious involvement.

The bill would outlaw Chabad's practice of approaching young Jewish men on public thoroughfares and urging them to don tefillin.

### NORTH AMERICA

#### UJC lauds Congress for preserving benefits

The United Jewish Communities praised Congress for rebuffing efforts to slash Medicaid and Medicare funding.

Early Saturday morning, the U.S. Senate passed tax relief legislation already approved by the U.S. House of Representatives that preserves Medicaid reimbursements for long-term care facilities; it also provided more flexible caps on Medicare-funded physical therapy.

"This legislation represents significant strides in protecting the safety net for the nearly 200 Jewish nonprofit nursing homes and Jewish hospitals nationwide," William Daroff, vice president for public policy and director of the UJC's Washington office, said in a statement Tuesday.

#### Mehlman joins RJC board

The outgoing chairman of the Republican National Committee joined the board of the Republican Jewish Coalition. Ken Mehlman's move was announced Monday after the RJC's annual convention in Las Vegas.

Mehlman led the Bush-Cheney ticket to re-election in 2004, but failed to stem the anti-Republican tide in this year's midterm elections.

#### Canada to deport PFLP leader

An alleged former leader of a local arm of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine lost his court battle to stay in Canada.

Issam Al-Yamani, 50, who lives in Mississauga, Ontario, argued that his involvement with the PFLP was a form of freedom of expression. Canada banned the PFLP as a terrorist organization in 2003, however, and the judge ruled that no one has the right to belong to a terrorist group. Yamani was born in Beirut and has been living in Canada since 1985.

He received training to make bombs and shoot a Kalashnikov rifle, according to the Canadian Security Intelligence Service. He also allegedly was involved in the bombing of an Air Egypt office in 1977.

#### Israeli-Sudanese group launched

A Sudanese human rights activist praised Israel for protecting Sudanese refugees and established an Israeli-Sudanese fellowship association. "All the stereotypes I heard about Jews and Israelis were

wrong," Taraji Mustafa said last week in an interview with the Al-Arabiya network.

Mustafa, based in Canada, said she established the league in response to the Arab world's disregard of the crisis in the Darfur region and to help end Sudan's "unfounded enmity toward Israel."

#### N.Y. suburb: Holiday decorations look too Jewish

Residents of a wealthy New York City suburb complained that a local vendor's holiday decorations were too Jewish-looking.

Chappaqua jewelry-store owner Tara Caverzasi paid \$3,000 for 50 banners for the town's downtown business district, with Town Hall approval.

She said Tuesday that her goal was to be neutral, and chose blue banners with white snowflakes and the word "welcome." But dozens of residents called Town Hall to complain, saying the colors were those of the Israeli flag and that at least one of the snowflakes looks like a Star of David.

Caverzasi, who is not Jewish, also has been receiving angry phone calls from residents. "There has to be some tolerance," she said, according to the New York Daily News. "It was just a snowflake. I really don't see what the big deal is."

### WORLD

#### Vatican slams Iran Holocaust conference

The Vatican condemned Iran's Holocaust conference. In a statement issued Tuesday as the Foreign Ministry in Tehran wrapped up an international conference questioning whether the Holocaust took place, the Vatican said the Nazi genocide against the Jews was a historical fact that served as a warning to people to respect each others' rights.

"The last century saw an attempt to exterminate the Jewish people, which led to the killing of millions of Jews of all social categories merely because of the fact that they belonged to that people," the statement said. "The Shoah was an immense tragedy before which one cannot remain indifferent."

#### Austria rebuilding Nazi-era Jewish gym

Austria began to rebuild a Jewish sports club closed by the Nazis in 1938. Reuters reported that the foundation was laid Tuesday for reconstruction of SC Hakoah Vienna. The \$110 million complex, which will include a synagogue and school, is to be completed in 2008.

The original Hakoah was established in 1909 and produced a competitive soccer team as well as Olympic entries for Austria, notably in swimming and wrestling. The Nazis destroyed the building when they invaded Austria. The Jewish community regained title to the land in 2004 following a settlement with the Austrian Finance Ministry, Reuters reported.

#### Swiss exhibit documents Nazi-era hero

A Swiss museum is hosting an exhibition on a diplomat who helped more than 60,000 Jews escape Nazi-occupied Hungary. Carl Lutz is the subject of the exhibition at St. Gallen's History and Folklore Museum in eastern Switzerland.

The son of Methodist parents, Lutz was Swiss vice consul in Budapest starting in 1942.

He immediately began providing Jewish children with letters allowing them to immigrate to British Mandate Palestine. In 1944, when the Nazis took over Hungary and began mass deportations to death camps, Lutz issued many more Swiss protective letters than were permitted by the Nazi regime. He created 76 safe houses in Budapest.