



**Beyond belief**

**Uzi Benziman,  
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## Sharon may restrict his pullout plan to Gaza only

**By Aluf Benn  
and Nathan Guttman**  
*Haaretz Correspondents*

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is considering restricting his disengagement plan to Gaza only, without a concomitant withdrawal from the West Bank, in light of the growing opposition to the plan among Likud ministers.

Sharon will explore this possibility over the next few days, as well as the alternative of a small, purely symbolic withdrawal from the West Bank.

However, both the United States and Egypt have said they will not support the plan unless it includes a significant withdrawal from the West Bank.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Middle East David Satterfield reiterated this position in Washington yesterday. America, he said, has not yet formulated a position regarding the disengagement plan, and will do so only after receiving more answers from Israel. However, he added, one of the biggest questions is the scope of the planned withdrawal in the West Bank, which the U.S. views as a necessary complement to the Gaza pullout.

Meanwhile, the Palestinians are demanding that following the disengagement, Israel allow Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat to travel freely between Ramallah and Gaza, arguing that this is necessary for the PA security forces to assume control over Gaza once Israel leaves. Israel, however, rejects this demand.

Sharon met yesterday in Jerusalem with three American envoys who came to hear additional details of the disengagement plan and to discuss what the U.S. might give Israel in exchange for the withdrawal. The three – Steve Hadley

and Elliot Abrams from the White House and William Burns from the State Department – will meet today with Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom, National Security Adviser Giora Eiland and Sharon's bureau chief, Dov Weisglass.

Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz also discussed the plan with senior American officials in Washington yesterday. He met Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice. Mofaz told his interlocutors that American support for the plan is essential, because that will help Sharon to sell it to the Israeli public, as well as to the Palestinians and the rest of the world.

According to an early draft of the plan published in *Ma'ariv* yesterday, Eiland is proposing that Israel remain in three settlements in the northern Gaza Strip and in a widened Philadelphia Road corridor on the border between Gaza and Egypt. Sharon, however, is currently leaning toward a complete evacuation of the Strip – whereas Mofaz told his American hosts yesterday that Israel would withdraw from all the Gaza settlements, but not from the Philadelphia Road area, as control of this region is vital to prevent arms smuggling.

Eiland's document, which was submitted to Sharon in late January, also recommends a gradual withdrawal from the West Bank: four settlements in the northern West Bank would be evacuated at the time of the withdrawal from Gaza, followed by another 15 to 20 West Bank settlements later on.

Mofaz, in Washington, said merely that Israel is planning a West Bank withdrawal of some sort, but that its scope has not yet been determined.



The Spanish flag being lowered to half mast at the embassy in Tel Aviv yesterday. PM Sharon and FM Shalom sent their condolences. *AP*

### Analysis / Terror in Madrid

## Did ETA stray from its usual strategy?

**By Adar Primor**

During the run-up to the 1996 Spanish parliamentary elections, Jose Maria Aznar survived an assassination attempt by Basque terrorists, emerging virtually unscathed. Some people say the equanimity with which he treated the affair – reports say he simply brushed the dirt off his suit and continued walking – is what made him such a popular figure among Spanish voters, and eventually led to an election victory over his long-serving predecessor, Philippe Gonzalez. Since then, Aznar has become a byword for uncompromising war against terror.

In an interview with *Haaretz* in June 2003, Aznar made it clear that he does not differentiate between the local terror of the Basque separatist movement ETA, and the global, fundamentalist terror of Al-Qaida. As far as he is concerned, ETA, Al-Qaida, Hamas and Hezbollah are the same, since "differentiating between them merely strengthens the terrorists. One cannot make distinctions based on the source of the terror – in the end, all terror has fundamentalism at its root."

Aznar, however, surprised many in that interview, by saying that he objected to Israel's policy of "targeted killings."

"As someone who has a lot of experience fighting terror, I allow myself to say that the struggle must obey international law," he said. Aznar rejected Ariel Sharon's method of fighting terror. "Only international cooperation, only a concerted effort on the

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## Madrid is not the end of terrorism's road

**By Ze'ev Schiff**

Whether yesterday's terror attack in Madrid was the work of the Basque underground or of another terrorist organization, such as Al-Qaida – or perhaps even a collaborative effort – it is clear that the massacre at the train station in Spain's capital was modeled after

acts by Al-Qaida, Hamas, Islamic Jihad and their ilk: a massive terror attack against innocent civilians in the name of an ideology or political demand.

The modus operandi was also similar: setting off a bomb in a crowded place, or preferably several such places at once, and then afterward also trying to hit the rescue forces.

The Spanish say the Basque underground, ETA, has in the past refrained from mass terror attacks against civilians, preferring to target government officials and Spanish security personnel. But it is possible that ETA has changed its strategy, and has now decided to imitate the Islamic terror organizations. The same

thing has happened in Iraq recently: Opposition groups are making every effort to hit crowds of civilians, in order to terrorize and to prove that the government cannot defend its citizens.

This method was used extensively against Israel even before the September 11, 2001 terror attack in the

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## Al-Qaida's Spanish vendetta

**By Zvi Bar'el**

"The war against Iraq will not eradicate the threat of terror but, perversely, it may bolster it."

That was the comment, on the eve of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, of Spanish left-winger Balthazar Garzon, one of the most tireless campaigners against Al-Qaida.

The crusading judge, who currently serves as Spain's prosecutor general, is now running an investigation into some 40

activists suspected of contacts with Al-Qaida. The last of them was extradited yesterday from Jordan to Spain.

Garzon, unlike Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar, objected to Spain's participation in the war on Iraq, and publicly declared he had found no evidence that Saddam Hussein was in contact with Al-Qaida.

Garzon's prophesy about heightened terror may have come true yesterday, if it indeed turns out that Al-Qaida was behind the series of attacks on Madrid trains.

Al-Qaida has three scores to settle with Spain: Aznar allowed Spain to become the European headquarters that enabled President George Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair to present the war on Iraq as a coalition effort, and not a U.S.-U.K. duet; Spain has 1,300 soldiers stationed in Iraq at present; and Spain is in the process of putting a large group of suspected Al-Qaida activists on trial.

For the terror organization, this is

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## Sharon aims to get 1 million Jews to move to Israel in next few years

**By Amiram Barkat**

Last week, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon took a break from affairs of state to hold a meeting in his office on a subject that has preoccupied him for some time: He wanted to know how Israel can get a million Jews to immigrate here over the next several years.

The meeting did not produce an answer, but it was agreed that practical plans for bringing a million Jews here would be prepared for a follow-up session in June. Sharon, his associates said, left the meeting believing this goal was attainable.

The meeting was attended by ministers and representatives of agencies involved with immigration. Participants included Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Absorption Minister Tzipi Livni and the heads of the Jewish Agency,

Nativ and the National Security Council. Also present was Didi Araz, one of the founders of the computer company Nice. Araz, who has since left high-tech to devote his time to public affairs, recently agreed to head a Jewish Agency task force on encouraging immigration from North America.

Jewish Agency officials told the meeting that under the most optimistic scenario, immigration could be increased by 2010 to 70,000 people a year, including 20,000 from the former Soviet Union, 20,000 from France and 15,000 from North America. Overall, they said, the target of a million immigrants would require some 400,000 from North America and another 200,000 from the former Soviet bloc.

In the meantime, however, immigration to Israel has been declining steadily. Only 24,434

people immigrated in 2003, the lowest number since 1989. And only 2,650 people have arrived so far this year, a decline of about 30 percent compared to the same period last year. Officials active in Russia and Ukraine say the improved economic situation there has stemmed the tide of immigration, and the number of people leaving Israel for those countries now exceeds the number immigrating from them. In Argentina, economic improvement has also dried up the flow of immigrants.

Against this background, talk of bringing a million immigrants appears somewhat detached from reality. But Sharon, his associates said, thinks otherwise. "The assumption is that this is possible," said one associate who attended the meeting. "But it would require a drastic change in policies to encourage immigration."

One necessary change would be for the relevant agencies to shift their focus from distressed countries to the prosperous West – what the Jewish Agency defines as "immigration by choice." The problem is that there is no precedent in Zionist history for mass immigration of this sort.

"The dominant factor in mass immigration was distress," said Prof. Sergio Della Pergola of Hebrew University. Nevertheless, he said, it is possible to observe signs of distress even in the wealthy West – with France being the prime example.

Dr. Erik Cohen of Bar-Ilan University's school of education, who recently conducted a study of French Jews, concurred, saying that interest in

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## Will others follow the rabbi's lead?

Two weeks ago, Rabbi Stanley David abandoned his wealthy Reform congregation in Atlanta, Georgia and moved to Israel with his wife, Resa.

"Last June, we thought about moving to live near our children in Santa Monica, California, when we suddenly understood that we were looking in the wrong place, and the house we wanted was, in fact, in Jerusalem," he related.

Davis, 67, is also president of ARZA, the Reform Movement's Zionist organ. "At the last meeting of the Jewish Agency's board of trustees, everyone got up and applauded me," he said. "And I suddenly understood how surreal it is that the World Zionist Organization views immigration to Israel as such an exceptional event."

While Davis hopes that other American Jews will follow his lead, he thinks the chances of mass immigration from America are low. "Over the long term, it might be possible to have an influence via education and activities to strengthen [Jewish] identity, but in the short term, it would be very difficult," he said. (A.B.)



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