

**IDF AND BETHLEHEM MAYOR FACE OFF  
OVER FLYING OF THE PALESTINIAN FLAG****By Cynthia Mann**

JERUSALEM, Dec. 23 (JTA) -- A heated standoff between the Israeli military and the mayor of the West Bank town of Bethlehem over whether the Palestinian flag can fly over the town's Manger Square during Christmas celebrations threatened to further erode already waning support for the Palestinian self-rule accord.

On Tuesday, members of the Al Fatah wing of the Palestine Liberation Organization hoisted the flag atop the City Hall overlooking the square where Jesus was said to have been born, the site of annual Christmas celebrations and religious processions.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has long maintained that the Palestinian flag may not fly from any public buildings in the West Bank or Gaza Strip.

By Thursday morning, the flag had been removed. Israeli authorities denied any involvement.

Bethlehem Mayor Elias Freij, a Greek Orthodox Christian, has threatened to cancel the town's annual Christmas festivities if Israel does not rescind the flag ban.

The largely secular PLO, injecting politics into a Christian religious celebration, has announced plans to turn the Christmas celebration into a nationalistic event.

Fatah leaders have said Bethlehem will be bedecked with Palestinian flags for the traditional Christmas Eve procession of the Latin patriarch from Jerusalem to Bethlehem.

PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat joined the fray Thursday when he called Freij and told him to stand his ground.

**AS NEGOTIATORS RETURN TO MIDEAST,  
HAMAS OFFERS DEAL TO STEM VIOLENCE****By David Landau**

JERUSALEM, Dec. 23 (JTA) -- Israeli and Palestinian negotiators parted ways after a marathon session in the French city of Versailles, agreeing to resume their talks on the self-rule accord next week in Cairo.

In the Gaza Strip, meanwhile, members of the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas movement on Thursday offered to stop attacking Israeli settlers if the government of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin disarmed the settlers and ordered the army to stop shooting Palestinians.

If Israel did not accept the offer within three days, Hamas said in a leaflet, the bloodshed would continue.

Hamas has claimed responsibility for the deaths of 13 of the 20 Israelis killed since Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization signed their accord on Sept. 13.

In Versailles, the negotiations lasted more than 11 hours with only three short breaks.

Environment Minister Yossi Sarid said Thursday upon his return to Israel that there had been an agreement from both sides not to divulge details.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, who led the Israeli delegation, said Thursday that the talks

would go on as long as it took to reach agreement.

From his and Sarid's terse comments, it was clear that no breakthrough had yet been achieved on the three issues that have so far eluded resolution: who will control the borders between the Gaza Strip and Egypt and between the West Bank town of Jericho and Jordan, the size of the Jericho district that will be administered by the Palestinians and the size of the Israeli forces that will remain behind in Gaza and Jericho to protect settlers.

There were reports in Israel that the government was proposing that the Jericho district encompass 40 square miles, an increase from the previous proposal of 35 square miles.

The Palestinians had previously sought an area of 140 square miles, but earlier in the week there were reports that they were willing to accept 80 square miles.

In Israel, government officials offered no reaction to the Hamas ultimatum.

But defense sources were quoted as saying that the ultimatum showed that the fundamentalist forces in the territories were "feeling the heat."

According to these sources, Hamas was feeling the effects of recent Israel Defense Force actions.

The Israeli army has largely ceased hunting for wanted members of the PLO and was instead focusing on the members of the Hamas and Islamic Jihad movements.

*(Contributing to this report was JTA correspondent Lisa Glazer in Paris.)*

**REFORM MOVEMENT'S PETITION ALLEGES  
BIAS IN FUNDING OF CULTURAL PROGRAMS****By Cynthia Mann**

JERUSALEM, Dec. 23 (JTA) -- A petition filed this week with Israel's Supreme Court alleges bias against the Reform movement in the Religious Affairs Ministry's funding of Jewish cultural programs.

The case "represents a milestone in the history of religious pluralism in Israel," said Rabbi Uri Regev, head of the Religious Action Center of Israel, which filed the petition on behalf of the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism.

About six months ago, the Progressive Movement applied for 120,000 shekels, the equivalent of about \$40,000, for its Jewish cultural programs for new immigrants as well as its "informal education" programs, such as Bar and Bat Mitzvah classes and youth movements.

Since then it has received no funding and no explanation for the lack of funding. The movement suspects discrimination because it is a non-Orthodox institution, said attorney Anat Ben-Dor.

"We believe it is because our religious denomination is unpopular in the ministry," she said.

Ministry spokesmen could not be reached for comment on the petition's allegations.

Ben-Dor said it is difficult to protest discrimination because there is no public access to information on the ministry's budget and allocations.

The secrecy precludes public criticism of the

ministry's administration of public funds and also prevents applicants and the public from being able to identify discrimination, she said.

Regev thinks that of tens of millions of shekels in question, non-Orthodox institutions receive "almost none."

#### 'Special Allocations' Obtained

The petition calls for funding criteria to be applied fairly to the Progressive Movement's request.

It also asks that a list of all institutions receiving money for Jewish cultural education be published and that the money the movement requested be set aside so that funds will be available if the court rules in its favor.

The court did, in fact, issue an interim ruling this week in favor of setting aside the funds.

The battle for fair funding is not new to the Religious Action Center for Israel.

In 1990, its lawyers filed a petition against the system of government budget allocations then in place to "politically linked organizations, particularly Orthodox and haredi (ardently Orthodox) institutions."

That system, said attorney Ben-Dor, enabled Knesset members to lobby for and get "special allocations" for their institutions during Knesset budget debates.

In effect, that meant the institutions connected to well-placed political parties benefited financially, said Ben-Dor.

"Haredi (cultural) education was growing and growing and growing on state funds and resulting in discrimination against any alternative education," she said.

But the system was changed following the petition and a public outcry, said Ben-Dor.

Every government ministry was given a lump sum to subsidize private institutions on the basis of standard funding criteria that were to be established and published by each ministry.

The new criteria went into effect two years ago.

The first year, 1992, the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism received its first allocation, 34,000 shekels, or roughly \$11,000.

#### World Jewry 'Awakening' To Problem

But the request for 1993 has gone unheeded, while "we have read that other (Orthodox) schools have gotten their funding in this cycle," said Ben-Dor.

Meanwhile, said Regev of the Religious Action Center, "we have grave doubts as to whether the criteria are in compliance with the law by being objective and universal."

Regev thinks the funding requirements "exclude newcomers and benefit, with the bulk of the funding, those treated with favoritism in the past."

For instance, the criteria require the institutional applicant to have a host of locations and thousands of students.

These criteria can only apply to well-established, usually Orthodox institutions, said Ben-Dor.

Regev said the case reflects the recent mobilization by the Reform and Conservative movements in Israel in the fight for pluralism and equality.

"At the same time," he said, "we're seeing an awakening on the part of world Jewry" to the challenges the movements face in Israel.

Until very recently, "the issue has been

dormant, and even our own Reform Movement has paid only lip service to it," he said.

The Religious Action Center also has a petition pending on behalf of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, the Reform movement's academic institution, calling for funding on a par with yeshivot. A hearing is scheduled for Jan. 5.

#### **DESPITE PETITION, AUSTRALIAN LEADER WON'T RECOGNIZE 'STATE OF PALESTINE'** By Jeremy Jones

SYDNEY, Australia, Dec. 23 (JTA) -- Australia's foreign minister has reaffirmed that Australia would not be recognizing a "State of Palestine," despite a petition calling for such recognition signed by 80 members of Parliament from the ruling Australian Labor Party.

Foreign Minister Gareth Evans made his comment Thursday, when he said Australia remains "a strong supporter of the Middle East peace process."

Evans said the declaration of principles on self-rule signed Sept. 13 in Washington between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization "made clear that negotiations on the permanent status of the occupied territories would commence no later than the beginning of the third year of the interim period of Palestinian self-government."

He said "it would be quite premature to anticipate the outcome at this stage."

Members of Parliament told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that the petition had been promoted and circulated since April by the PLO representative in Australia, Ali Kazak.

Kazak stepped up the campaign for Australian support for recognizing the "State of Palestine" after the accord was signed.

The petitioners wrote that the measure would be "aiding the peace process," a claim firmly rejected by the foreign minister, Israel's ambassador to Australia and Jewish organizations here.

Israel's ambassador to Australia, Yehuda Avner, wrote to the 36 federal and 45 state legislators, expressing "surprise, indeed, bewilderment" at the petition.

He particularly noted surprise that it had come "at this most delicate juncture, at the very hour when representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel are intensely engaged in hammering out the final details of the first phase of their peace accord."

He added that he feared the petition "will only serve to encourage those extremist elements who seek to destroy the Israel-PLO accord and, through violence, call for the immediate creation of a Palestinian state."

Colin Rubenstein, editorial chairman of Australia/Israel Publications, said the call to recognize the "State of Palestine" violates "elementary rules of diplomacy, distorts the situation and, above all, is damaging to the current peace process."

He said the petitioners' demands reflect "a campaign contrary to the spirit of the accord and are disruptive and damaging."

The JTA Daily News Bulletin will not be published Monday, Dec. 27. There will also be no Daily News Bulletin dated Monday, Jan. 3.

## CANADIAN GROUPS DECRYING RULING FOR TEACHER WHO DENIES HOLOCAUST

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Dec. 23 (JTA) -- Canadian Jewish groups are calling for an appeal of a lower court's decision that overturns a Holocaust denier's suspension from teaching.

The New Brunswick Court of Appeals on Monday ordered that Malcolm Ross of Moncton, New Brunswick, be allowed to return to his teaching job.

Ross was suspended in 1989 after the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission found his publication of blatantly anti-Semitic material created a "poisoned environment" in the classroom.

"We are shocked and dismayed," said Karen Mock, national director of B'nai Brith Canada's League for Human Rights. "There is something deeply wrong when a man with openly racist and bigoted views is allowed to teach in a classroom."

Rochelle Wilner, national education chair of the league, said, "We are calling for this decision to be appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada."

"Holocaust denial is not a free speech issue. It is openly anti-Semitic hate propaganda and should be dealt with as such," she said.

The Canadian Jewish Congress, a party to the case, is likewise calling for it to be appealed to the Supreme Court.

The Ross case has been dragging through the Canadian legal system for more than eight years.

Julius Israeli, a retired chemistry professor living in New Brunswick, filed the original complaint against Ross with the local office of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in 1985.

Following a 13-month police investigation, the New Brunswick attorney general decided not to charge Ross for promoting hatred of a people, saying it would be very difficult to secure a conviction.

Ross has written and published books alleging that the Holocaust was a hoax and that Jews intend to take over the world. His "Web of Deceit" is stocked in local libraries as a legitimate history of 20th century civilization. The case, in fact, raised interest in the book, which Ross published and distributed in 1978 by his own Stronghold Publishing Co.

Ross, who is a local director of the Christian Defense League of Canada, a right-wing group, has also written "The Real Holocaust," "Christianity and Judeo-Christianity" and "The Battle for Truth."

In addition, Ross sent letters to the editor of The Moncton Times-Transcript alleging a Jewish conspiracy.

He was teaching English and remedial mathematics at a junior high school outside Moncton before his suspension.

An investigation by The Canadian Jewish News found no evidence that he taught his anti-Jewish views in the classroom. The local school board made the same decision.

But David Attis of Moncton, a parent of a student and a lay leader in the Canadian Jewish Congress, filed a complaint in 1988 with the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission.

Attis alleged that discriminatory conduct by the school board had, in fact, occurred from March 1977 to April 1988, as a result of Ross' actions.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center office in Toronto said it was not taking any action pending

a review of the matter by its legal committee, said Sol Littman, Canadian director of the Los Angeles-based center.

"There are a number of peculiarities of Canadian law involved in the Ross case which suggest that we not simply wade in without careful legal preparation," he said.

"We had never persuaded the attorney general of New Brunswick to charge Ross under the Canadian anti-hate literature law," he said.

Canadian law permits the use of the defense that the defendant is sincere in his beliefs and also exempts religious subjects from the legal judgment.

Ross has written his books as a defense of Christianity against Judaism, Littman explained.

"As long as you are talking religion, you can say almost anything" under Canadian law, he said. "You can attack someone's religion, you can point to another person's religion as a conspiracy or a work of the devil, if you choose."

"And since Ross' books were put in the context of a defense of Christianity against a so-called conspiracy to undo Christianity, the courts simply said he had been within his right to discuss it," said Littman.

However, he said, "the Simon Wiesenthal Center Legal Committee believes that the religious defense has to be qualified and cannot be given absolute free reign."

## JUDGE REVOKES U.S. CITIZENSHIP OF AUSCHWITZ-BUCHENWALD GUARD

WASHINGTON, Dec. 23 (JTA) -- A federal judge in Philadelphia has entered an order revoking the U.S. citizenship of a World War II death camp guard.

U.S. District Judge William Yohn Jr. on Tuesday ordered the denaturalization of Johann Breyer, 68, based on his activities as a guard at the Auschwitz and Buchenwald death camps, the Justice Department announced.

Breyer, a retired tool-and-die maker who is a native of Slovakia, admitted in court papers that he had served as an armed guard at the perimeters of both camps, with orders to shoot escaping prisoners. He also admitted that he had escorted prisoners consigned to slave labor to their work sites.

In a ruling in July, the judge noted that "activities which occurred at these camps were brutal and included such acts upon the inmates of the camps as murder, torture, confinement, forced labor and experimentation."

Based upon Breyer's admissions and captured Nazi documents, submitted as evidence by government lawyers, the court found Breyer was ineligible for the U.S. immigration visa he received in 1952 and for U.S. citizenship, which he acquired in 1957.

Last week, the Justice Department ordered the deportation of Alexander Schweidler, 71, a resident of Inverness, Fla.

Schweidler, an admitted SS guard at the Mauthausen death camp, was given until Feb. 1 to leave the county. He is a British citizen.

In November, Joseph (Juozas) Grabauskas, a 74-year-old Chicago man who admitted serving in a Lithuanian mobile killing unit, voluntarily left the United States.

Earlier in November, the Justice Department effectively closed the case against admitted Nazi persecutor Anton Baumann, 82, a Wisconsin resident who was deemed too ill for deportation.

# **BEHIND THE HEADLINES: HILLEL MOVING INTO NEW ERA OF OUTREACH, ORGANIZATION** By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, Dec. 23 (JTA) -- The Hillel outreach director at the University of Pennsylvania considers her Chanukah efforts a success, although the menorah-lighting and latke party she sponsored was not heavily attended.

Her efforts were successful, she said, because in dormitory rooms all over campus Jewish students lit the menorahs they received in Chanukah packages distributed by Hillel, the Jewish students organization, and celebrated the holiday together at small parties.

In the past, success would have been measured by the number of students who came through Hillel's door.

Now Hillel professionals are endeavoring to reach students "where they are" and "touch their lives Jewishly," said a speaker at a workshop at Hillel's annual conference, held Dec. 19 to 23 in Florham Park, N.J. It is one of many shifts taking place at every level of Hillel today.

Hillel, which is not affiliated with any single religious movement, has come up hard against the demographic fact that students who feel a strong connection to American Jewish life are a minority and an ever-shrinking part of the community.

In addition, Hillel's longtime sponsor, B'nai B'rith International, has cut funding dramatically in recent years.

So Hillel is shifting from one era into another as it reworks its strategy for reaching Jewish students, reshapes its organizational structure and looks for new sources of funding.

Richard Joel, Hillel's international director, described the new approach on campuses as one of "tradition and triage."

The tradition track will offer opportunities to deepen knowledge and involvement to students who already consider their Jewish identity central.

Triage is for the far-larger segment of the Jewish student population, to "provide Jewish connectors to a large number of students, to engage them and make them feel that it matters," Joel said.

## **'A Lot Of Jews Who Are Identity-Ambivalent'**

"These students can engage, but on their terms. We have to meet them and give them comfortable points of entry" into Jewish activities, he said in a speech to the 190 Hillel professionals at the conference.

University students are typically reluctant to cross the Hillel office threshold, said many at the conference. There are numerous factors, they said.

Students, in general, are often unenthusiastic about identifying Jewishly.

They also have a wide range of extracurricular activities from which to choose and feel pressured to select those activities that will help in their search for jobs.

"We deal successfully with a core group of student activists, but there are a lot of Jews who are identity-ambivalent and have questions about affiliating," Rabbi William Rudolph, associate international director of Hillel, said.

"Like the rest of the Jewish community, we serve the people who come to us wanting to be served," Joel said in an interview, "but that's only half the job."

One Hillel campus professional explained it

this way: "Students don't want to be part of Hillel, but they do want to do something Jewish. We need to ask them to do one thing, not to join the organization or be 'super-Jew.'"

According to Lawrence Sternberg, associate director of Brandeis University's Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, which is working as a consultant to Hillel, the change in approach is a fundamental break from the way Hillel and other Jewish groups operate.

"This is about touching them and getting them to own something of their Jewishness," he said at a workshop on outreach.

"The goal is to break out of patterns that Hillel is stuck with and to motivate, enable and empower people who don't normally cross the threshold into the institution," said Sternberg.

One way to effect that change, said Joel, will be to hire outreach workers on almost all of the 105 campuses on which Hillel has paid staff.

Their task will be full-time outreach, which will free the Hillel chapter directors for the fund raising and board-building that are growing parts of their job.

## **Hiring Students To Make One-On-One Contact**

In Florida, for example, Hillel is hiring 20 students on different campuses, some of which have no other Hillel presence, to work 10 or 12 hours a week making one-on-one contact with other Jewish students to find out what Hillel can do for them.

It is also a new era for Hillel funding.

While B'nai B'rith historically provided the lion's share, that organization's own financial woes have forced it to cut all but \$1.5 million to \$2 million a year in direct and indirect subsidies to Hillel -- less than 10 percent of the student group's approximately \$20 million annual budget.

B'nai Brith's contribution includes the rental value of offices at its headquarters in Washington that Hillel uses.

Today federations around the country are the largest single source of money for Hillel, providing about \$8.5 million a year, most of it in direct aid to individual campus Hillel chapters, said Joel.

The Council of Jewish Federations, the national umbrella body for local federations, plans to double that amount in the next five years, according to Michael Rukin, chairman of CJF's Hillel Commission.

Overall, Joel said he wants to increase Hillel's budget within five years to \$35 million.

A third source of funding is also being formed. The Fund for Jewish Campus Life, chaired by Edgar Bronfman, is being developed to solicit support from philanthropic heavyweights.

The shift in funding sources is reflected in Hillel's new name, from B'nai Brith Hillel to Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, as well as in its corporate structure.

Hillel's board of directors was, until recently, primarily the same as B'nai Brith's leadership.

A new board is being formed. Although it will include members of B'nai Brith and the Council of Jewish Federations, it will be the exclusive province of neither, said Joel.

Hillel will "not be taking marching orders from anyone," he said.

Of the changes Hillel is undertaking, Joel said, "If this is a noble experiment where we learn what we can't do, we'll know soon. We're prepared to take that challenge."