



**ELDERLY JEW EXECUTED IN TEHRAN  
FOR 'ASSOCIATING WITH ZIONISM'**

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, March 9 (JTA) -- A 77-year-old Iranian Jew who had been imprisoned on charges of "associating with Zionism," was executed in Teheran late last month.

Different reports have different dates for the execution, with some saying it took place on Feb. 24, others on Feb. 25.

It was unclear whether the execution was an act of vengeance for the killings of at least 29 Arabs in a Hebron mosque on the 25th. There was some indication that the killing of Feysollah Mechubad, a former synagogue shamash, or sexton, had been ordered days in advance.

A U.S. State Department official, who confirmed reports of the death said that "some reports from the emigre community have the execution taking place the night before the Hebron killings, others after.

"While we don't rule out any connection (to the Hebron murders), we don't necessarily know of one with certainty," the official said.

The United States cannot protest the killing to Iran, since it has no diplomatic ties with that country.

But, in a statement, the State Department did say that the act appeared to be "motivated by anti-Semitism." The statement said the United States considers this "a deplorable act of brutality which the entire world should condemn."

The National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, which received reports on the execution, also reported that it had heard of "one confirmed arrest of a member of the Jewish community since the Hebron tragedy."

Because Jews still remain in Iran, NJCRAC said, "We must be very careful about any actions affecting a xenophobic country like Iran."

Mechubad was arrested on May 29, 1992, on his way to synagogue, according to a report by the World Jewish Congress.

**Charged With 'Associating With Zionism'**

"He was thrown into Evin Prison, which is the central prison in Teheran, without any official or justified cause," the report said. He was charged with "associating with Zionism."

According to the report, Mechubad's arrest and imprisonment were justified by claiming he had maintained ties with Israel.

"This was the only charge they had against an elderly Jew," the report said.

"All that Mechubad had done, however, was to try and maintain contact with his family," some of whom live in Israel, the report said.

Mechubad was a dignitary of the remaining Jewish community in Iran, which is estimated as numbering between 15,000 to 25,000.

There were 80,000 Jews in Iran before the shah was deposed and a Muslim state was established there in the late 1970s.

The WJC protested the killing before the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva on Wednesday. The U.N. panel adopted a

resolution Wednesday which for the first time condemned anti-Semitism.

At a news conference following that session, Morris Abram, a former U.N. official and past president of American Jewish groups, protested "this barbaric act" and asked that the U.N. Human Rights Commission "investigate this shocking development."

The execution of Mechubad is the first known summary killing of a Jew in Iran since the late 1970s, after the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini returned in triumph to that country and established a strict Islamic state.

Jews were executed as spies at that time, but "we don't know of an execution of any Jews in Iran since the beginning of the Khomeini revolution," said Elan Steinberg, WJC executive director.

Mechubad was also reportedly tortured and his body ravaged after his killing. According to the WJC, Mechubad's eyes were gouged out and his face and body bore signs that he had been tortured during his imprisonment.

According to the report, "Information that has leaked out of Evin Prison suggests that when Mechubad denied the false accusations against him, he was subjected to extensive physical and mental torture," and denied most visits, "save for sporadic visits of no more than 20 minutes long that were allowed once every few months."

**Family Asked To Retrieve The Body**

The report said Mechubad's family was asked to retrieve his body on Feb. 26 from a Muslim cemetery.

There, it was reported, "with the help of an undertaker, they found the mound of earth beneath which Mechubad had been buried. With the undertaker's help, they dug into the grave in order to retrieve Mechubad's body and rebury it in a Jewish cemetery."

The WJC report also said Mechubad had three surgical operations while in prison, including a kidney operation and "two other operations whose nature is not clear but which required prolonged hospitalization.

"In all three cases, the treatment that Mechubad was given was inadequate, and he was returned to prison before even that treatment had been completed," the report said.

NJCRAC placed a conference call to member agencies to urge them to make contact with countries that might influence Iran.

Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, said the group has contacted the French and German governments, "as these countries are in the process of restructuring the Iranian debt." Said Hoenlein, "Our concern is not only for this case but that it not be repeated with others."

Hoenlein said there has been a pattern of killings of non-Muslims in Iran.

The Iranian-American Jewish Federation and the Los Angeles Jewish Community Relations Council has planned a memorial service for Mechubad on March 13 in Los Angeles.

**RABIN SEEMS ASSURED OF WIDER COALITION AS KEY BILL PROGRESSES THROUGH KNESSET**  
By Dvorah Getzler

JERUSALEM, March 9 (JTA) -- Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin moved an important step closer to broadening his fragile coalition government this week when a hard-fought piece of legislation was virtually assured of passage by the Knesset.

The fervently Orthodox Sephardic Shas party earlier this week had agreed to rejoin the Labor-led government, but Shas had conditioned its return on the passage of a bill that would pave the way for banning the importation of non-kosher meat.

In mid-February, the bill passed a preliminary vote in the Knesset, and on Wednesday it appeared there were enough votes to ensure final passage.

The bill had initially been opposed by Rabin's left-wing coalition partner, Meretz.

But Meretz -- which had made a number of concessions to Shas before the Orthodox party left the coalition last fall -- is now prepared for yet another concession in order to give the Rabin government the parliamentary support it needs to put the peace process firmly back on track.

Shas left the coalition when its political leader, former Interior Minister Aryeh Deri, was indicted on charges of bribery, fraud and breach of public trust.

Also obliged to vote for the religious legislation, though from the opposition benches, were the other Orthodox parties, United Torah Judaism and the National Religious Party. Almost in spite of themselves, they thus made it possible for Rabin to widen his coalition before leaving for an important trip to the United States next week.

What is still not clear is whether Rabin will undertake additional negotiations to further broaden his governing coalition.

Earlier this week, he seemed on the brink of a serious breach with Meretz and members of his own Labor party over his negotiations with the right-wing Tsomet Party, which he had also been trying to woo into the coalition.

**COMMISSION OF INQUIRY VISITS HEBRON SITE OF MURDER SPREE**  
By Dvorah Getzler

JERUSALEM, March 9 (JTA) -- The five-member commission of inquiry into the Feb. 25 killings of Arabs by a Jewish settler traveled this week to the Hebron mosque where the attack took place.

Guarded by dozens of soldiers, the commission on Wednesday was given a tour of the site of the murders by Maj. Gen. Danny Yatom, whose command includes the West Bank.

The commission also heard from the officer on duty at the time that Dr. Baruch Goldstein entered the Tomb of the Patriarchs and began firing into the crowd of Muslim worshippers.

The officer, whose name was later given only as Second Lt. Rotem, told the commission that Goldstein had arrived at the tomb, a holy site to Jews and Muslims alike, in a white car driven by an unknown man.

Rotem also said that Goldstein had left behind a letter of confession at the mosque. The

contents of that letter have so far not been made public.

On Tuesday, the first day of the commission's hearings, Yatom told the commission that according to the Israel Defense Force, Goldstein had killed 30 Palestinians at the mosque.

Initial estimates put the death toll anywhere between 29 and 50, but in recent days Palestinian and international monitoring groups have reportedly lowered the total to 30, in line with the estimates of the Israeli army.

The commission also heard on Wednesday from local Muslim religious leaders, who complained that Israeli security authorities had cleaned the site immediately after the killings and had destroyed what the leaders believed could have been vital evidence.

Nevertheless, the chairman of the local religious council, Sheikh Salah Natshe, promised that he and his colleagues would testify before the commission after March 13, which marks the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

The religious leaders also indicated that local Arab residents would be ready to testify despite their having "little confidence in the commission," which is headed by the president of the Israeli Supreme Court, Justice Meir Shamgar.

The commission, which includes an Israeli Arab judge, spent almost seven hours in Hebron talking to local people and inspecting security arrangements.

The Arab residents of Hebron complained to the reporters who were accompanying the commission that while they have been under a strict curfew since the Feb. 25 killings, Jewish settlers in the town are free to move around as they please. They also complained that they have been subjected to constant provocations by the settlers.

**U.S. WARNS TRAVELERS ON TERRITORIES**  
By Steven Weiss

WASHINGTON, March 9 (JTA) -- The U.S. government is warning Americans not to enter east Jerusalem, the West Bank or the Gaza Strip, as violence continues to plague those areas following the killings in Hebron.

In an advisory issued March 7, the State Department urged all American citizens to avoid travel to the troubled areas "at this time, due to the violence stemming from the murders of Palestinians in Hebron on Feb. 25."

At least 29 Muslim worshippers died at the hands of militant Jewish settler Baruch Goldstein at the Tomb of the Patriarchs, touching off unrest throughout the administered territories.

Immediately following the incident, the State Department, through its Bureau of Consular Affairs, alerted travelers to the danger of violent confrontations in the territories and various locations in Israel.

The warning extended to areas within Israel at that time because of violent protest demonstrations in Jaffa, Nazareth, various parts of the Negev and other areas inside the Green Line.

The release issued March 7 deleted the warning about areas within the pre-1967 borders, reflecting the cessation of violent activity in those locations. A State Department spokesperson said she believed there had not been such an advisory against travel to Israel and the territories since the Persian Gulf War in 1991.

**NEWS ANALYSIS:****ISRAELI POSITION NOT SO INFLEXIBLE  
AS ISRAEL AND PLO INCH BACK TO TABLE**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 9 (JTA) -- Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization are inching back to the negotiating table.

Outwardly, nearly two weeks after a Jewish terrorist murdered at least 29 Arabs in Hebron, there are few signs of renewed rapprochement between Israelis and Palestinians.

The territories remain under curfew, and tensions continue.

The PLO has loudly set new conditions for resuming the negotiations on implementing an Israeli withdrawal from Jericho and the Gaza Strip, which had been nearing completion before being broken off in the wake of the Hebron murders.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has been equally loud in refusing to accede to those conditions, which include disarming settlers, dismantling settlements and bringing international forces into the territories to protect the Palestinians.

But despite this apparent loggerhead, it seems that both sides are preparing to make compromises that could bring about some tangible sign of Israeli withdrawal by April 13.

Israel may well promise the PLO that it will dismantle some settlements, and allow some kind of international presence into the territories -- even while loudly denying that it is giving into any PLO demands.

And the PLO is already retreating from its demand that the settlers be disarmed.

At midweek, behind-the-scenes diplomacy proceeded without let-up, with the aim of arranging a high-level meeting between the two sides in Cairo early next week.

The meeting would be designed to pave the way to a formal resumption of the suspended bilateral peace talks in Washington soon after.

Both the United States and Egypt have been actively mediating between Israel and the PLO.

As the sides haggle over terms for the resumption, Israel sought to make its basic position clear -- both to PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, who received a personal emissary from Rabin in Cairo on Monday night, and to the public at home and abroad.

**The Best Way To Ease Tensions**

That position maintains that a speedy resumption, and above all a speedy conclusion and implementation of the Gaza-Jericho accord, would be the best possible way of easing the acute tensions and sporadic violence that have gripped the administered territories.

Rabin's top political aide, Jacques Neriah, met with the PLO chairman for what Rabin described Tuesday as "talks about the talks." They are understood to have discussed the PLO's demands for Israeli actions and concessions that can -- in Arafat's view -- enable a resumption.

Neriah is understood to have delivered a firm message to the effect that the agreements reached in Oslo last fall and in Cairo last month cannot now be reopened.

Israel, he told the PLO, did not demand that the agreements be reopened after terror attacks

took a heavy toll of Jewish lives in the months since the Declaration of Principles was signed last September.

On the face of it, these messages would seem to reflect an inflexible position on the part of the Israelis.

Analyzed more closely, however, the Israeli position is less categorical. It offers fairly wide latitude and promises future flexibility:

The small settlement of Netzarim, isolated in the heart of the Gaza Strip, may well fold despite Rabin's principled position against removing any settlements at this early stage of the peace process.

The religious Kibbutz Hadati movement, to which Netzarim belongs, informed the government Tuesday that it is prepared to consider dismantling Netzarim, which has not been a successful venture economically or socially.

Rabin told the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that the question of cash compensation from the government for settlers wishing to quit Kiryat Arba "will be examined" on an individual basis.

According to two Labor Knesset members and various media reports, a not insignificant number of settlers from Kiryat Arba and from other West Bank settlements have made such applications in the past weeks.

The Cabinet is still undecided over proposals to dismantle the small islands of Jewish settlement in the city of Hebron. Observers say that despite a ministerial majority favoring dismantlement, Rabin is unlikely to order it at this time.

Nevertheless, the very fact that dismantlement has become the focal issue of public debate in Israel, with ministers openly supporting it, can give the Palestinians cause for some expectation that Rabin seriously intends to crack down on extremist settlers. Rabin himself referred to the Hebron pockets Tuesday as "time bombs."

This expectation has been reinforced during the week by the crackdown on the followers of the late Rabbi Meir Kahane.

**Kahanist Leaders Arrested**

The police arrested four out of the five Kahanist leaders targeted with administrative detention orders. Dozens of other Kahane followers, the army announced, will no longer be drafted into reserve army service and will have their weapons confiscated.

Regarding an international presence in the territories, Rabin has reaffirmed the commitment to permit some such presence in Gaza and Jericho, as promised in the Declaration of Principles.

His current definition of that presence -- unarmed observers -- is different than Arafat's, which would include an armed force. But here, too, the Israeli position may prove flexible, with Israel possibly agreeing to the presence of international observers who are lightly armed.

If the talks do resume soon, it will be too late for Israel to meet the original April 13 deadline for withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho, as promised in the Declaration of Principles.

But Israeli officials say they still hope to mark that date with some high-profile and meaningful step on the ground signifying that, despite the difficult path taken by the peace process, implementation of the Israel-PLO accord is under-way at last.

**ONE IN FIVE GERMANS EXPRESS HOSTILE ATTITUDES TOWARD JEWS, SURVEY SHOWS**  
 By Miriam Widman

BERLIN, March 8 (JTA) -- More than one in five Germans has hostile attitudes toward Jews, and a growing number of Germans feel anti-Semitism is a very serious problem in their country.

These were some of the findings of a survey on German attitudes toward Jews and other minorities that was conducted in late January by the American Jewish Committee.

David Singer, the AJCommittee's director of research, released the survey's findings here on Monday.

Singer termed the survey's findings "disappointing," compared to a similar survey that was conducted among Germans in 1990.

He noted that one of the most alarming findings of the survey was that more and more Germans believe that anti-Semitism is a very serious problem -- 26 percent of the respondents in the current survey, compared to 14 percent four years ago.

Singer called this result a "warning flag."

Noting that younger and better educated Germans reflected more tolerant attitudes in the survey, Singer nonetheless said the gap between this group and others "is not as strong as one would like it to be."

The AJCommittee was scheduled to hold a follow-up briefing in Bonn with representatives of the German government, educational foundations and political parties to discuss the implications of the survey's findings.

The latest survey did show some improvement in attitudes toward Jews over the previous sampling of German attitudes.

In the current survey, for example, 31 percent said that Jews exert too much influence on world events, compared to 38 percent in 1990.

Significantly, residents of the former East Germany expressed more tolerance toward Jews than their Western counterparts.

While 24 percent of those from what was formerly West Germany believe that Jews have too much influence in German society, only 8 percent of those from the eastern part of the country expressed this view.

**Are Jews Exploiting The Holocaust?**

Asked whether they felt Jews were exploiting the Holocaust for their own purposes, 44 percent of Germans from the western part of the country agreed, while 19 percent of their counterparts from the east agreed.

All together, 39 percent of those interviewed thought that Jews are exploiting the Holocaust for their own purposes -- the highest percentage of any of the questions in the survey. Forty-one percent disagreed.

Among Germans in the west, 30 percent disapproved of a Jew being nominated as candidate for president of Germany, while 20 percent of their eastern counterparts voiced a similar disapproval.

In the western areas of the country, 56 percent said the Holocaust has been discussed too much, while 36 percent of Germans from the east felt the same way.

Singer theorized that the more tolerant

attitude toward Jews among residents of the former East Germany had to do with the strong anti-fascist ideology that was taught during the days of the German Democratic Republic.

He also suggested that West Germans, who were brought up in a democratic regime, were constantly forced to confront their wartime past.

He said he was surprised that 37 percent of those interviewed disapproved of establishing a national Holocaust Memorial museum in Germany. Singer said he originally thought 90 percent would approve of the idea.

Similar surveys have been conducted by the AJCommittee in East European countries, countries of the former Soviet Union and in the United States. The poll in Germany showed that German levels of anti-Semitism and their attitudes toward foreigners stood roughly in the middle of those surveyed from other countries.

On some questions, such as those dealing with knowledge of the Holocaust, Germans ranked at the top.

Roughly 90 percent of Germans answered several questions about the Holocaust correctly. Asked what the Holocaust refers to, 13 percent of the Germans surveyed did not know, compared to 32 percent of American respondents.

But Germans' attitudes toward Jews in politics were more disappointing.

Asked if they would approve of a party nominating a Jew as its candidate for president of Germany, 28 percent said no. A survey in the United States showed that only 5 percent of Americans would not vote for a Jew as president.

But Jews fared better than other minorities in the survey of German attitudes. While 22 percent of the respondents said they would prefer not to have a Jewish neighbor, 68 percent said they did not want Gypsy neighbors and 47 percent did not want to live near Arabs.

The survey of 1,434 adults -- 992 Germans from the western portions of the country and 442 from the east -- was conducted by the Emnid Institute, a major German research institute, on behalf of the AJCommittee.

**MECHANICAL FLAWS CITED IN EL AL CRASH**  
 By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Feb. 24 (JTA) -- An inquiry by the Netherlands Aviation Safety Board into the crash of an El Al 747 cargo plane has found that faulty engine mountings were responsible for the disaster.

The crash into an Amsterdam apartment complex, which occurred shortly after takeoff in October 1992, killed 47 people when the buildings were engulfed in flames after the fatal impact.

The findings were presented to the Dutch civil aviation authorities Thursday. The results of an inquiry by an Israeli inspection board were reported to be virtually identical with those of the Dutch board.

Neither El Al nor Boeing, the builder of the jumbo cargo jet, has admitted liability for the crash. But both have made compensation offers to the crash's victims and their relatives.

The Dutch board's task was to learn the probable cause of the accident, not to determine liability. However, the board also noted that the flight crews and traffic controllers had not been trained fully enough to cope with the emergency.