

**CONFUSION REIGNS IN GAZA AND JERICHO,  
CAUSING CONCERN AMONG ISRAELI LEADERS**  
By Dvora Getzler

JERUSALEM, May 23 (JTA) -- The somewhat chaotic situation in the newly autonomous Gaza Strip and Jericho district is causing the Israeli government considerable concern.

The subject dominated this week's Cabinet meeting.

Nearly three weeks after the signing of the Cairo accords calling for the implementation of Palestinian self-rule, Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat has still not finished naming the 24-member Palestinian Authority that will have overall responsibility for governing Gaza and Jericho.

And of the 18 members who have been named to the authority, none have yet been assigned defined functions.

The situation with the Palestinian police is also causing alarm. Only half of the envisioned 7,000-member police force has arrived in Gaza and Jericho, and PLO leaders repeatedly complain that they lack the funds to operate the force properly.

The leaders also state that they do not have sufficient weapons, or even food, for their police officers.

Israel is planning to pay the salaries of the 36,000 staffers who were previously employed by the Israeli civil administration until the end of May. But it is not clear who will be picking up the tab after that.

**PLO Activists Angered**

Another source of potential problems, the Cabinet learned at Sunday's weekly meeting, are local PLO activists in Gaza and Jericho, who are angry at being bypassed by Arafat for key positions in the autonomous zones.

Further complicating the situation, Israelis living or working in Gaza are voicing confusion over how to deal with the Palestinian police.

Highlighting these concerns was an incident Monday, when an Israeli arriving at the Erez Checkpoint in Gaza with Palestinian workers he was driving into Israel went past a Palestinian roadblock. He thought he would only need to be checked at the Israeli roadblock, but he soon found out he was wrong when Palestinian police shot out his tires.

And in Jericho, Palestinians who formerly cooperated with the Israeli authorities were voicing their fears when Jibril Rajub, who had spent 17 years in Israeli jails, arrived there to establish the local Palestinian internal security office.

On Sunday, Rajub attempted to allay fears that his office would endanger the civil rights of Palestinians living in Jericho. Nevertheless, former collaborators with the Israeli administration were said to be very worried since Rajub is known to have strongly opposed any pardon for collaborators and is

said to have begun compiling dossiers on them.

(Contributing to this report was JTA correspondent Hugh Orgel in Tel Aviv.)

**RABIN DEMANDING PLEDGE FROM ARAFAT  
COMMITTING HIM TO ACCORDS WITH ISRAEL**  
By Dvora Getzler

JERUSALEM, May 23 (JTA) -- Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is reportedly demanding that Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat provide a written pledge that he is fully committed to the accords he signed with Israel.

The demand was voiced Monday by Rabin spokesman Oded Ben-Ami after a tape recording of a speech Arafat made recently in South Africa was played on Israel Radio last week and caused an uproar throughout Israel.

In that speech, delivered during a visit he made to Johannesburg two weeks ago to attend the inauguration of President Nelson Mandela, Arafat had called for a "jihad" to regain Jerusalem.

Arafat later said he had been misunderstood and that he had used the word to mean a peaceful crusade rather than a holy war, as the Arabic word is generally interpreted in English.

During that speech, Arafat also said that he would abrogate the autonomy agreement he signed with Israel when it suited him, just as the prophet Mohammad had abrogated a treaty made in the year 627 with the Koreish tribe that was then living in Mecca.

Senior Arafat advisor Ahmed Tibi stated this week that Arafat had again been misunderstood and that he had no intention of going back on the agreements he had signed with Israel.

But Ben-Ami made it clear on Monday that Rabin wanted an explicit declaration of Arafat's intentions.

Rabin "is going to ask Arafat for a written reaffirmation of his commitment (to the peace process) in light of the speech in Johannesburg," Ben-Ami said. "We are not discussing any timetable for the next phase (of negotiations with the Palestinians) until we see whether the other side can stand behind its commitment."

Arafat's Johannesburg speech, coupled with continued anger at Rabin's willingness to negotiate with Arafat in the first place, led members of the opposition to introduce a no-confidence motion in the Knesset on Monday.

Also at issue in the no-confidence vote was the anger of fervently Orthodox parties over the government's decision to evacuate Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip and Jericho district on the Sabbath and on the holiday of Shavuot, actions they considered a desecration of those holy days.

Opposition speakers called on the government to prevent Arafat from visiting Jerusalem, as he has said he intends to do.

The government defeated the no-confidence motion by a vote of 50 to 44.

**ISRAEL AGREES NOT TO REFER  
IMMIGRANTS TO RELIGIOUS COURTS**  
By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, May 23 (JTA) -- The Israeli Interior Ministry has agreed not to refer new immigrants to rabbinical courts in order to deter-

mine their Jewishness for purposes of civil registration.

It is seen as a victory for champions of the separation of religion and state here, while the fervently Orthodox are calling the development a dangerous one.

The Ministry agreement was presented by the Attorney General to the Supreme Court last week in response to a petition filed by the Reform Movement's Religious Action Center here.

The petitioners alleged that the Ministry's Population Registry was making the referrals to the rabbinical courts, which are illegal.

In documents, David Efrati, director of the Registry, declared his division had not referred and would not refer new immigrants to the religious courts.

And the head of the rabbinical courts, Rabbi Eliyahu Ben Dahan, submitted affidavits agreeing that the rabbinical courts had no jurisdiction in the matter.

The Supreme Court "has long established the principle" that the Law of Return -- which grants certain rights to immigrants determined to be of Jewish descent -- and the population registry are civil matters, said Rabbi Uri Regev, head of the Reform center.

As such, they are not based on halachah, or Jewish law, and halachic definitions of who is a Jew, he added.

Regev said he had been seeking redress on the matter from the Attorney General's office for more than two years.

Regev has maintained that the rabbinical courts only have the "incidental authority" to judge Jewish status in matters squarely under their jurisdiction, such as marriage.

Meanwhile, the fervently Orthodox press greeted the legal agreement with strong criticism. It said a "red line" had been crossed in the increasingly difficult effort to determine the Jewish status of immigrants.

It should "cause sleeplessness to all Jews" concerned about the "enormous assimilation of gentiles into the Jewish fold," the World Rabbinic Committee on Conversion was quoted as stating.

Meanwhile the Supreme Court last week dismissed as unnecessary another petition aimed at reining in the rabbinical courts.

The petition called for the religious courts to be forced to obey a High Court ruling last February ordering them to apply civil, rather than religious, law to the division of property in divorce cases.

According to reports, the Supreme Court last week granted that the chief rabbis stated the rabbinical courts would not rule "according to any instructions which contradict halachah." But the Court also noted that the chief rabbis had not yet officially determined that the High Court ruling was contrary to halachah.

#### SHARP RISE IN ISRAELI PRICES PROMPTS EFFORTS TO STABILIZE HOUSING COSTS By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, May 23 (JTA) -- An unexpectedly large increase in the cost-of-living index for April has left Israeli ministers scrambling this week to find ways to clamp down on spiraling costs in a sector largely responsible for the increase -- housing.

The 2 percent rise in April's cost-of-living index, announced last week by the Central Bureau of Statistics, was described by Jacob Frenkel, governor of the Bank of Israel, as "extremely worrisome."

The announcement spurred Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to summon his housing and finance ministers and their senior aides to an emergency meeting on May 17 to examine the situation, particularly the effect of housing costs on annual inflation.

Soaring increases in home-purchase costs and in monthly rentals, which accounted for a full 40 percent of the April rise, have set red lights flashing in economists' offices here.

The emergency meeting lasted four hours, with participants presenting their views of the situation and proposing suggestions for speeding up home construction and holding down building costs.

In view of the wide range of suggestions put forward, Rabin instructed Housing Minister Binjamin Ben-Eliezer to put together an interministerial team to prepare an agenda on the steps which must be taken to reduce housing costs.

The agenda was scheduled to form the basis for discussions that are expected to take up nearly an entire Cabinet meeting planned for this week.

The issues to be discussed include the release of land reserves for construction, speeding up planning and construction procedures, giving incentives to contractors to build quickly, fining contractors who fail to finish building projects on schedule and reducing construction costs.

#### SOLE ISRAELI ARAB PANEL MEMBER TO REMAIN IN HEBRON MASSACRE INQUIRY By Dvora Getzler

JERUSALEM, May 23 (JTA) -- Israel's High Court of Justice has ruled that an Arab member of the commission investigating the massacre of Muslim worshipers in Hebron may remain on the panel, despite what the court called his lack of wisdom in making remarks on the subject to the media.

Two Israeli lawyers had submitted a petition to the court requesting that Judge Abdel Rahman Zouabi be removed from the Shamgar Commission, which was formed after the Feb. 25 killings of at least 29 Palestinians by an Israeli settler at the Tomb of the Patriarchs.

The lawyers had said Zouabi was clearly prejudiced against the settlers, basing their claim on a published interview with Zouabi in which he was quoted as saying he had always "known that the settlers were the cruel party in the territories."

Zouabi claimed that the published interview did not reflect his point of view.

The most severe criticism of Zouabi came from High Court Justice Aharon Barak, who pointed to the impropriety of judges granting media interviews on issues with which they were dealing professionally.

But the court nonetheless found nothing in Zouabi's conduct that should disqualify him from continuing to serve on the panel. Before it will hand down its findings, the Shamgar panel is reviewing the evidence it heard in the weeks following the Hebron massacre.

**NINE FORMER NAZIS LIVED FREELY IN ITALY AFTER THE WAR, ACCORDING TO NEWSPAPER**  
By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME, May 23 (JTA) -- Nine Nazi war criminals currently live or have lived with impunity in Italy since World War II, according to a report published Sunday by the Milan newspaper *Corriere della Sera*.

The war criminals are "nine mysteries to which Italy also has to respond," wrote the author of the article, Riccardo Orizio.

He quoted former SS officer Erich Priebke, discovered in Argentina earlier this month and wanted in Italy on war crimes charges, as telling an Italian interviewer:

"Why come all the way to Argentina just to find me? Many of my comrades are still in Italy; we have written to each other for years. If I am guilty, so are they. And they live there at your place."

Orizio's article, which provided details about the nine war criminals without giving the sources of his information, was published two days after Nazi-hunter Simon Wiesenthal reiterated his charge that Italy had for decades ignored Nazi criminals living on its soil.

Wiesenthal told Italy's ANSA news agency that in 1967 he had provided Italian authorities with a list of 66 residents of the Tirolean Alps suspected of war crimes, adding that he had asked the Italians for witnesses and documentation. The Tirolean region includes parts of Italy and Austria.

"Our letter never had an answer, and in the 1970s research (on these people) was suspended," he told ANSA.

Federico Steinhaus, president of the Jewish Community in Merano, in the South Tirol, and an expert on Nazi activities in that part of northern Italy, was quoted as saying that as far as he knew, these 66 people were all Austrian citizens.

**Senior Nazis Living In Northern Italy**

He said, however, that a number of senior Nazis were known to live in northern Italy, although none had been convicted of any war crime.

The list published by *Corriere della Sera* included:

- \* Erich Raja (or Rajakowitsch), an Austrian who was involved with the deportation of Jews from Holland and Czechoslovakia. He was also involved with ghettos and concentration camps in Poland and Italy.

The newspaper said he lived until 1963 in Milan, where he carried on an import-export business. He died in Austria in 1964.

- \* Anton Malloth, former SS officer condemned to death in Czechoslovakia for war crimes in the concentration camp at Litomerice. *Corriere della Sera* said he lived for years in Merano.

- \* Conrad Geng, an SS officer who operated in Italy in 1943-1944 and specialized in killing handicapped people and invalids. *Corriere della Sera* said that after the war he settled in Milan, where he worked for the German consulate until the mid-1970s. He was transferred to France, but on his retirement, the newspaper said, he returned to Italy, where he died in 1980.

- \* Anton Burger, a deputy of Adolf Hitler's chief aide, Adolf Eichmann. *Corriere della Sera*

said he was believed to have bought a vacation house in northern Italy. This was never investigated, the newspaper reported. Burger died a few months ago.

- \* Josip Susanski, Jan Griska, Alexander Mihalic and Misha Komalsky were Ukrainians who were guards at the Treblinka concentration camp. They were transferred in 1944 to the Risiera concentration camp near Trieste to help kill about 4,000 Jews, partisans and handicapped people.

*Corriere della Sera* quoted an unidentified Trieste magistrate as saying the four lived "tranquilly" in Trieste after the war. Mihalic died in 1985 and the others left the city. But, the newspaper said, it was believed that other Ukrainian guards from Risiera still lived in Trieste.

- \* Heinrich Kac, whom the newspaper described as a Yugoslav Nazi who fled to Argentina on a Red Cross passport -- as Priebke had done. But the newspaper report stated that Kac returned to Italy in 1960 and asked for Italian citizenship.

"It is not clear if he obtained it," the report said, "but he has remained in our country and managed to have all traces of himself lost."

**FRENCH VETERANS PROTEST FORMER NAZIS LAYING WREATHS AT NORMANDY CEMETERIES**  
By Michel Di Paz and Beatrice Luzzatto

PARIS, May 23 (JTA) -- French veteran groups reacted with outrage last week after former German SS soldiers laid wreaths at two cemeteries on the Normandy coast where their fallen comrades are buried.

In a ceremony last week, some 15 members of two SS Panzer divisions left wreaths at the cemeteries as the mayors of the nearby villages looked on.

The group of former SS soldiers even signed the official visitors' book at one of the nearby villages.

One of the mayors explained that he did not know who the soldiers were, saying, "It is not written on their foreheads that they are former SS soldiers."

He stated that he only realized who the soldiers were after reading the inscription on one of the wreaths: "From veterans of the Waffen SS in memory of the dead of 1944."

The mayor, Roger Boulais, who was from the western French town of Maizet, told French radio that he "took everything away as soon as (the Germans) had left."

A group of French war veterans termed the incident "a catastrophe."

"If they (the SS soldiers) led the mayors on, then they were acting as they did in the old days. Otherwise, the mayors should resign since they should have canceled the ceremonies," the group said.

This was the latest embarrassing incident surrounding the commemorations of the 50th anniversary of the Allied forces' D-Day landing on the Normandy coast on June 6, 1944.

A controversy erupted recently between France and Germany when it became clear that the Germans would not be represented at the landing beaches on June 6.

German Chancellor Helmut Kohl was said to be eager to attend, but veterans groups representing former Allied soldiers strongly opposed this.

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES:  
GAYS IN ISRAEL 'COMING OUT'  
FOR A MONTH OF PRIDE EVENTS**  
By Michele Chabin

TEL AVIV (JTA) -- For the first time ever, Israel will play host to a monthlong series of events for and about gay men and lesbians.

Although most of the activities related to Gay Pride Month will take place in Tel Aviv, the opening ceremony will take place May 30 at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem. The ceremony, the first of its kind in Israel, will honor the memory of homosexuals who died in the Holocaust.

In early June, thousands of Israelis are expected to attend the World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations, which is meeting here this year. There participants will discuss such issues as ensuring the legal rights of homosexuals, and the dearth of local advertising directed toward gay and lesbian consumers.

Other events will include a picnic for gay and lesbian parents and their children, and a giant food festival, hosted by Tel Aviv's most acclaimed chefs.

According to gay rights activists, the introduction of Gay Pride Month to Israel represents a victory for homosexual Israelis, many of whom have remained "in the closet" in the fear of encountering discrimination and harassment.

Ilan Shinfeld, spokesman of the Society for the Protection of Personal Rights for Gay Men, Lesbians and Bisexuals, said that Gay Pride Month is only one of many recent breakthroughs for gay men and lesbians in Israel.

Shinfeld believes that "societal attitudes have changed a lot in the past two years, especially in the area of education.

"About a year ago," he said, "I wanted to visit high schools and discuss what it means to be homosexual. I sent dozens of letters to schools, but received only two positive responses."

**Past Year Has Been 'Incredible'**

Noting that the Education Ministry recently announced its intention to introduce the subject of homosexuality into the high school curriculum, Shinfeld said, "It's incredible what has taken place in just one year.

"Education is very important," he added. "Without education, public opinion toward homosexuals will continue to be negative, regardless of what the law says."

Gay rights activists also point to progress in the legal sphere. Under the guidance of Knesset member Yael Dayan of the left-wing Meretz bloc, the Knesset recently passed a law forbidding discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Yet another sign of progress was the Tourism Ministry's decision last month to give a \$500 grant to the World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations.

The move marks the first time that a government body has contributed funds to an organization dedicated to gay causes.

Orly Doron, spokeswoman for the Tourism Ministry, does not consider the grant unusual. "The Ministry of Tourism has an interest in attracting all kinds of tourists to Israel," she said. "We support other kinds of conventions, so why not this one?"

Aderette Karni, an organizer of Gay Pride Month, attributes these strides to a greater openness within the gay and lesbian communities. "Society is changing because we're changing," she said.

Yet despite progress, gay activists say that Israeli society still discriminates against lesbians and gay men, especially in the synagogue and workplace.

Karni, who co-founded a gay-lesbian synagogue in Tel Aviv, Ga'avat Yisrael, said that it is "very difficult to be religious and gay, especially in Jerusalem."

A minyan comprised of lesbians and gay men also meets quietly once a month in Jerusalem.

But asked whether she could imagine establishing an openly gay and lesbian synagogue here, Karni said, "I wouldn't try it. The haredim (fervently Orthodox) would be very against it."

**AUSTRALIA DECIDES NOT TO PURSUE  
CASE AGAINST ALLEGED NAZI WAR CRIMINAL**  
By Jeremy Jones

SYDNEY, Australia, May 23 (JTA) -- Despite calls by the Australian Jewish community for a complete investigation, Australian authorities have announced that they will not pursue the case against an alleged Nazi war criminal recently deported here from the United States.

When Konrad Kalejs, 80, arrived here in mid-April, the Executive Council of Australian Jewry wrote to the Australian government arguing that "there is a compelling case" to "consider all remedies available" if grounds are found to prosecute Kalejs in this country.

But this week, the Australian Federal Police declared that his case will not be pursued.

After the dissolution last year of a special unit that had been established to prosecute alleged Nazi war criminals, the federal police became the only Australian institution with the authority to investigate such allegations.

In a brief statement issued in Canberra this week, the federal police announced that they had "made an assessment and took the decision not to mount an investigation."

In 1988, Australian war crimes legislation was amended to allow trials of individuals living in Australia against whom there was evidence of involvement in crimes against humanity during the Nazi occupation of Europe.

But past federal police investigations into Nazi war criminals have been shelved due to inadequate resources.

Kalejs immigrated to Australia from Germany after World War II and became a naturalized Australian citizen in the 1950s.

He immigrated to the United States in 1959 and omitted any reference to his wartime membership in the Aja's Kommando, a mobile killing unit in Nazi-occupied Latvia.

Isi Leibler, president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, described the decision not to pursue the case as "a bitter pill to swallow.

"This final episode of Australian government action concerning Nazi war criminals alleged to have enjoyed many years in free, democratic Australia, reinforces the fact that investigations should have taken place 40 years ago, when the outcome would have been decidedly different," he said.