

**MOMENT OF SILENCE DEBATE IN GEORGIA  
PROMPTS A MIXED REACTION AMONG JEWS**  
By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON, Aug. 31 (JTA) -- In the wake of a suburban Atlanta teacher's protest of a new school prayer law in Georgia, some Jewish organizations are preparing to join an expected legal challenge to the 3-month-old statute.

Brian Bown, a 41-year-old social studies teacher, refused to observe a 60-second period of "quiet reflection" last week and instead continued to teach his class.

Officials at South Gwinnett High School suspended Bown with pay after he refused again the next day to observe the moment of silence and then he left school grounds.

An administrative hearing is scheduled for next week to decide Bown's fate at the school.

The latest flap over school prayer has the Jewish community lining up along customary church-state battle lines.

The American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League are poised to fight the statute, while some in the Orthodox community are calling the perceived threat to the division between church and state "silly."

Many of the groups traditionally opposed to school prayer, however, are not supporting the teacher's actions per se, but rather opposing the Georgia statute itself.

"We have never endorsed a stature that an individual teacher should disregard school board regulations," said Mark Pelavin, Washington representative of the AJCongress.

"That could lead to anarchy in the schools," he said.

Pelavin expressed concern that if teachers opposed to school prayer and moments of silence violate local legislation, then the same thing could happen with teachers who support school prayer.

Instead of siding with the teacher, Pelavin said, AJCongress "expects at an appropriate time to join in a challenge of the statute."

There is currently no legal challenge to the Georgia law, but observers expect the issue to be aired in court.

**Legislature's Intent At Issue**

At issue is the Georgia legislature's intent when it enacted the law requiring a minute of silence in the public schools.

"A pure moment of silence does not constitute a constitutional problem," said Samuel Rabinove, legal director of AJCommittee.

"But this is an attempt to get prayer into the public schools through the back door and it's happening around the country," Rabinove said.

Jess Hordes, Washington director of the ADL, agreed, saying such moments of silence "have been used as thinly veiled attempts to promote prayer in schools."

The ADL, along with a coalition of local Georgia organizations, is studying the case to determine what specific courses of action to take, Hordes said.

But not all in the Jewish community agree with the assessment that a moment of silence represents a threat.

"Those who argue that a moment of silence in the schools poses a threat are silly," said David Zwiebel, director of governmental affairs and general counsel of Agudath Israel of America, an Orthodox group.

"This turns what is effectively an empty gesture into an issue of enormous importance," Zwiebel said.

While favoring certain types of non-denominational and voluntary school prayer, Agudat has remained on the sidelines of the debate over a moment of silence, Zwiebel said.

Unlike many other school prayer initiatives spearheaded by fundamentalist Christians, the Georgia law has its roots in an effort to motivate students, according to David Scott, the Georgia lawmaker who introduced the legislation.

Scott told his colleagues in the state Senate that he favored the moment of silence as a time of reflection to set an appropriate mood for learning.

The Supreme Court has sought to distinguish between a moment of silence and prayer in schools.

But in a legal challenge to the Georgia law, opponents of the measure say they would try to show that despite Scott's intentions, the Georgia legislature clearly tried to use the moment of silence to skirt the constitutional difficulties of enacting a broader prayer statute.

Four states -- Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama and Virginia -- have enacted statutes allowing school prayer. Courts are now in the process of hearing challenges to all four state laws.

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES:****RENEGADE RABBI RELISHES SPOTLIGHT,  
THOUGH HIS PLO ROLE REMAINS MURKY**

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Aug. 31 (JTA) -- Rabbi Moshe Hirsch clearly enjoys the public spotlight shining on him since he became associated with the new Palestinian governing authority headed by Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat.

Hirsch is easily the most famous member of the Neturei Karta, or "guardians of the faith," the anti-Zionist sect based in Jerusalem's fervently Orthodox enclave of Mea Shearim -- what Hirsch calls a self-imposed ghetto.

But Hirsch's anti-Zionism and his alleged appointment as "Jewish affairs minister" in the new Palestinian governing authority is so extreme that most of his religious anti-Zionist cohorts apparently reject him, while many vilify him as a traitor to the Jews.

"We believe in apartheid from the sacrilege state" of Israel, Hirsch said during a recent interview in his son's home, where he likes to meet reporters. The only distractions are his young grandchildren, who interrupt periodically to converse with him in Yiddish.

"We speak a different language so as not to

be a tool in the transformation from Judaism to nationalism," explained Hirsch, who grew up on New York's Lower East Side.

Hirsch, pale and slight, has a gentle demeanor and an easy smile. With his white wispy beard, he looks older than his 62 years.

"Judaism and Zionism are diametrically opposed," said Hirsch, who in the early 1980s made headlines for inciting riots in Mea Shearim against archaeological digs.

"Judaism is based on faith in God and teachings of Torah, while Zionism is out to transform Judaism into a nationalist concept based on land and language," he said.

The very establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 was an affront to God, Hirsch and other anti-Zionists believe, because it interfered with the divine plan to keep Jews dispersed until the Messiah comes and redeems them.

And, they believe, Israel represents a mortal threat to the Jewish character of the Jewish people.

Like other fervent anti-Zionists of Mea Shearim, Hirsch does not pay government taxes, accepts no social benefits and rejects such popular Jewish sites as the Western Wall, calling it "a platform for nationalistic events."

Hirsch not only advocates the dismantling of the State of Israel. He has also wholeheartedly embraced Arafat.

He refers to the PLO chairman as "our president" and describes him as "congenial, ingenious, wise, sympathetic, determined and courageous."

Referring to himself as a "Palestinian Jew," Hirsch said he shares Arafat's vision of a non-sectarian Palestinian state that would replace Israel, as long as it is accomplished in a non-violent manner.

Arafat apparently has returned the embrace.

Hirsch said he has been officially named the "Jewish affairs minister" in the new Palestinian governing authority.

He does not attend the Palestinians' weekly Cabinet meetings because they are held on Shabbat, he explained, but attends regular "mini-Cabinet meetings to discuss my chores" on other days. He did not expound on those chores.

#### Official Appointment Not Confirmed

Despite his claims, Palestinian staffers at Orient House, the PLO's headquarters in Jerusalem, and at Arafat's office in the Gaza Strip, would not confirm that Hirsch has been granted any official appointment.

One official said Hirsch had not been given a formal portfolio, and that he was only a close friend of Arafat's. Another official said Hirsch had "not yet" been given the appointment, but confirmed the regular meetings with Arafat.

Whatever Hirsch's official status, he has clearly been assigned a public role by Arafat.

He and other members of Neturei Karta have been included as advisers to the Palestinian delegations involved in the peace talks with Israel in recent years.

And he was pointedly placed on stage next to Arafat when the PLO leader made his first official visit to the autonomous West Bank enclave of Jericho earlier this summer.

Some analysts believe Hirsch is being manipulated by Arafat.

"The PLO can use these traditional-looking rabbis as propaganda to show the international media" that the organization is not anti-Jewish, said Menachem Friedman, sociology professor at Bar-Ilan University in Tel Aviv and an expert on the fervently Orthodox.

"But I think (Hirsch) knows it's a game; he's not stupid," Friedman continued. "He's embarrassing the State of Israel, and that's enough for him. And giving him an honor doesn't do the Palestinians any harm. They have nothing to lose."

Hirsch evidently is not taken seriously enough by the Israeli establishment to be considered a security threat.

"Rabbi Hirsch is no more and no less than a curiosity," said Gadi Baltiansky, a spokesman for the Foreign Ministry.

"He's not taken seriously even by his own neighbors and doesn't have influence over anyone," he said.

#### Hirsch's Role Is 'Meaningless'

Hirsch's role with the Palestinians is "meaningless," Baltiansky asserted. He "looks good on TV because he's something different, but he's more color than news. He has never participated in any formal negotiations where Israeli officials have been present."

Hirsch does not dispute this, but says it is by design.

"We don't negotiate with Zionists," he said. "We have chosen to be advisers instead."

Hirsch said Arafat has promised him a salary as well as an office in Gaza.

He said he supports himself through a stipend from the yeshiva as well as from the etrog business before the holiday of Sukkot.

Yet while he said he prefers to carry out his ministerial duties from Torah v'Ira Yeshiva, the small Neturei Karta base where he studies daily, a man who answered the phone recently at the yeshiva said the institution had nothing to do with Hirsch.

"We have no connection to him, he has no office here and we don't like what he does!" the man shouted at a reporter who had called looking for Hirsch.

Other residents of Mea Shearim also reacted harshly to the mention of Hirsch's name.

"Only the newspapers like him, but he has no support here and he's not worth talking about," said two Chasidic men, who identified themselves only as Yehuda and Mordechai, and who were selling Jewish music tapes on the street.

"He has no support except for his 14 children," said Moshe D., who is in his 20s and works in a store which sells religious articles.

Hirsch, in fact, said he has three children and "more than a dozen" grandchildren.

"He is crazy and has been corrupted," Moshe D. said. "He looks for publicity, but has no role and no status anywhere, not with Jews or Arabs."

Friedman, the Bar-Ilan professor, agreed. "Hirsch is very, very marginal," he said.

"He's offensive even to the very anti-Zionists who, nonetheless, are deeply Jewish patriots."

"To collaborate with people who murder Jews goes against the basic taboos of Jewish history," he said.

## CONGRESS JOINS CHORUS OF PROTEST AGAINST PAPAL AWARD FOR WALDHEIM

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON, Aug. 31 (JTA) -- Members of Congress have turned up the volume of protest against the Vatican's knighthood of Kurt Waldheim last month.

Led by U.S. Rep. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.), 30 House members have signed a letter urging the Vatican "in the strongest terms" to rescind Waldheim's knighthood.

In a July 6 ceremony in Vienna, Waldheim was made a member of the Ordine Piano, an order of knights named directly by Pope John Paul II.

Waldheim, the former president of Austria and former secretary-general of the United Nations, is banned from the United States for his Nazi activities during World War II. As a Nazi intelligence officer stationed in the Balkans, Waldheim has been implicated in the deportations of Jews to forced labor camps and reprisal killings of Yugoslav partisans.

Granting Waldheim this knighthood "implies that the world can overlook the gas chamber, ignore the slave labor, and forget the millions of Jews and others who perished at the hands of Nazi terror," the members of Congress wrote in their letter to Archbishop Agostino Cacciavillan, the Vatican's envoy in Washington.

Following the award, the Israeli government as well as Jewish groups denounced the move.

They were further incensed at the news that Pope John Paul II later bestowed a similar honor on Waldheim's wife, Elisabeth, to celebrate the Waldheims' 50th wedding anniversary.

The pope has "continued to insult the world Jewish community" with the recognition of Waldheim's wife, said Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

Although Hier expressed regret for the decision to honor Elisabeth Waldheim, he said, "We do not feel the same disgust because there is no evidence that she committed any war crimes."

Meanwhile, the Israeli government is still awaiting an explanation from the Vatican for its recent move.

On Aug. 4, Shmuel Hadas, Israel's first ambassador to the Vatican, met with a Vatican official seeking an explanation.

"We have not yet received a response," according to Avi Granot, counselor for church affairs at the Israeli Embassy in Washington.

Israel and the Vatican established diplomatic relations earlier this year.

## OPPOSITION MEMBERS CHARGE GOVERNMENT WITH DRAGGING FEET ON TOMB RE-OPENING

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Aug. 31 (JTA) -- Some opposition Knesset members are charging the Israeli government with dragging its feet on the re-opening of the tomb of the Patriarchs.

"The government simply hasn't decided to re-open the tomb, and that's all there is to it," said Knesset member Yigal Bibi of the National Religious Party, following a visit to the site Tuesday by members of the Knesset Interior Committee.

The group, led by committee chairman Yehoshua Matza, a hard-line member of Likud, had

demanding to see the progress of work inside the tomb in the wake of demands from both Jewish and Arab activists that it be re-opened.

The tomb, which is sacred to Jews and Muslims alike, has been closed to the public since Feb. 25, when Kiryat Arba settler Dr. Baruch Goldstein, dressed in army reserve fatigues, opened fire on Muslim worshipers at the site.

Twenty-nine died by Goldstein's fire before he himself was clubbed to death by enraged survivors of the attack. More than 20 other Arabs were killed in subsequent clashes with Israeli soldiers in Hebron later that day.

The evolving opinion within the army and security services is that the tomb, as soon as it is re-opened, could become an important test of the unfolding Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Particularly in light of this week's early empowerment agreement, which grants Palestinians control over a number of key policy areas, Hebron, and especially the tomb, are believed to be moving to the "cutting edge" of the ongoing peace process.

Since the massacre, teams of Israel Defense Force engineers and contractors have been at work inside the tomb, installing elaborate new electronic and other security equipment at the entrances and at all internal passages.

Now, with the High Holidays at hand, pressures are mounting on Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to order the site to be re-opened for worship.

## Both Sides Determined To See Tomb Re-Open

And as those pressures grow, tensions mount in Hebron, where Jewish settlers and Palestinian religious activists are determined to see the site re-open as soon as possible.

The parliamentarians' visit came a day after Israel's two chief rabbis had submitted a proposal to the prime minister for sharing the site between Jewish and Muslim worshipers.

The two chief rabbis' proposal to share space at the site would have both communities using the tomb on the same days, but with Jewish and Muslim worshipers restricted to separate sections of the tomb.

Rabbis Yisrael Meir Lau and Eliahu Bakshi-Doron, who toured the site on Aug. 25 in the company of senior army officers, said their proposal is fair to both Muslims and Jews and that it makes maximal use of the site for worship by both communities.

Muslim clerics reportedly rejected the rabbis' offer to meet and discuss the plan.

The rabbis wanted their plan to go into effect immediately, thereby enabling prayers to resume at the site during the High Holidays.

But despite their proposal and demonstrations by Kiryat Arba settlers outside the tomb this week, the site appears likely to stay empty and shut for several weeks into the new year.

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**Due to the Labor Day and Rosh Hashanah holidays, JTA will not publish a Daily News Bulletin on the following dates: Sept. 5, Sept. 7 and Sept. 8. There also will be no DNB on Yom Kippur, Sept. 15. We wish all our readers a shanah tovah!**

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**JEWISH VICTIMS OF MOROCCAN PLANE CRASH  
BURIED IN MASS GRAVE IN MUSLIM CEMETERY**  
By Henriette Boas

AMSTERDAM, Aug. 31 (JTA) -- An Orthodox Jewish family from Amsterdam, victims of a plane crash in Morocco earlier this month, was buried in a mass grave at a Muslim cemetery in Morocco despite efforts to have the remains brought to Amsterdam for Jewish burial.

Marius Goldberg, his wife, Eva, their 6-year-old daughter, Nuriel, and 4-year-old son, Emanuel, were interred last Friday with the other 40 victims of the Aug. 21 crash in the Moroccan resort town of Agadir.

Saying it would be impossible to find and identify the remains of the Jewish victims, Moroccan authorities rejected efforts by the Amsterdam Chevra Kadisha, or burial society, of which Marius Goldberg was a member, to bring the Goldbergs' remains to Amsterdam. Dutch authorities had also offered to send a special team of identification experts.

The Moroccan authorities also cited the need to bury all the dead as quickly as possible because Muslim law, like Jewish law, mandates that the dead be buried within 24 hours or as soon as possible after that in cases of emergency.

The Goldbergs, who were in Morocco to see the country where the Israeli-born Eva Goldberg's family originated, were not the only non-Moroccans aboard the Royal Air Maroc jet. There were eight Italians, five with French passports, one American and two Kuwaiti members of the royal family.

No one aboard the plane survived the crash, which has been blamed on pilot's desire to commit suicide. The crash occurred as the plane was en route to Casablanca from the coastal resort town of Agadir.

In Groningen, Holland, a Moroccan-born Jew, David Pinto, criticized the Dutch Foreign Ministry for not pushing harder to resolve the matter.

Pinto, who heads the Institute for Intercultural Relations, said he had been assured by a high-ranking Moroccan authority that the Dutch team would be admitted to Morocco without a visa, expediting the matter.

But the Dutch Foreign Ministry denied this. The ministry also said identification of the bodies would have taken a longer time than the Moroccans would allow.

Meanwhile, the matter has left the Amsterdam Jewish community in shock. Memorial services for the family were held over the weekend at an Amsterdam cultural center. Some 300 persons, including Marius Goldberg's elderly mother, attended.

**U.N. COMMISSION PRAISES PEACE PROCESS  
AS IT REJECTS ANTI-ISRAEL RESOLUTION**  
By Tamar Levy

GENEVA, Aug. 31 (JTA) -- The U.N. Human Rights Commission has passed a resolution praising progress in the Middle East peace process and calling on all U.N. member states to extend economic assistance to the three-month-old Palestinian governing authority.

At the same time, the 53-member commission rejected a second resolution that condemned Israel for committing human rights abuses in the

administered territories.

It marked the first time since 1968 that Israel was not condemned for its practices in the territories.

The second resolution had been sponsored by Syria, Lebanon and Cuba.

"They have been given a lesson that their negative attitude (toward Israel) is no longer accepted," Yitzhak Lior, the Israeli ambassador to the U.N. in Geneva, said in reaction to the defeated resolution.

"Israel is no more on the defensive at U.N. forums," said an American delegate.

Explaining the defeat, delegates to the commission said that African states are no longer willing to back Syria's anti-Israel positions and that instead they are siding with Israel in the hope that Jerusalem will be more helpful to them in the future than Damascus.

**TEENS ARRESTED FOR CEMETERY VANDALISM**  
By Gil Sedan

BONN, Aug. 31 (JTA) -- Three youths who overturned some 15 tombstones at a Jewish cemetery in the Thuringian town of Muhlhausen last week were released after local police determined that alcohol, not neo-Nazi ideology, had motivated them.

Police who arrested the three teen-agers last Friday for the vandalism said the young vandals had been released because they had "had no political motives" and were "not neo-Nazis."

A police official said that the youths, ages 14, 15 and 16, had been doing some drinking and were trying to show off to their friends.

Two of the vandals reportedly live in a home for troubled youths. A third lives with his parents.

The police left it up to a local prosecutor to decide whether to charge the youths for the crime.

Countries worldwide -- including France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States and Canada -- have seen a string of Jewish cemetery desecrations in the past couple of years. In several instances, police have arrested youths, some as young as 10 years old, for the crimes.

**RIGHTS DENIED FOR 'ANNE FRANK' STAGINGS**  
By Henriette Boas

AMSTERDAM, Aug. 31 (JTA) -- Performance rights will not be extended to amateur theatrical companies which had been planning to perform "The Diary of Anne Frank" during 50th anniversary celebrations of Holland's liberation from the Nazis next spring.

Several amateur companies were already rehearsing the play. But the Foundation for Special International Productions has acquired exclusive performance rights for this play for 1995 and will not allow amateur companies to perform the play as well.

Cleo Dankert, a 22-year-old actress, was chosen recently to portray the teen-age Anne Frank following a long search.

Dankert, a non-Jew who is several years older than Anne was when she wrote her diary, was selected for the part out of more than 200 actresses who applied for the role.