

**AX-WIELDING ISLAMIC MILITANT
MURDERS FEMALE ISRAELI SOLDIER****By Hugh Orgel**

TEL AVIV, Nov. 30 (JTA) -- An ax-wielding Islamic militant killed a 19-year-old Israeli soldier in the northern town of Afula on Wednesday.

The soldier, Sgt. Liat Gabai, was standing at a bus stop some 50 yards from the Afula police station when the assailant approached her, pulled an ax from under his coat and struck her several times on the head and throat.

She was treated at the scene by medics and then rushed, with the ax still in her head, to the local Afula hospital. She was then flown by an army helicopter to Rambam Hospital in Haifa, where she died shortly after admission.

The assailant, who was seized by passers-by and police summoned from the station, was identified as Wahib Abu Alrub, 25, from a village near the West Bank town of Jenin.

Alrub told security officials that he had gone to Afula to attack a soldier in order to prove his worthiness to be an active member of the mainstream Al Fatah movement of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

But Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said that Alrub had been detained by Israeli security officials several times in the past and that he was a known member of the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas movement, which has claimed responsibility for a recent spate of terror attacks on Israelis.

His brother is reportedly serving a prison term in Israel for his involvement with Hamas.

Noting that the suspect did not have an entry permit for Israel, Rabin said the attack should not be blamed on lax security by the Palestinian Authority, since Alrub came from an area of the West Bank still under Israeli control.

Confronted by a mounting terror campaign, Israeli security officials have launched a massive manhunt in the West Bank for suspected Hamas members.

An army spokesman said Tuesday that security forces had rounded up 40 suspected Hamas members this week, including many connected with the Oct. 19 suicide bombing of a bus in the heart of Tel Aviv that killed 23 people, including the terrorist.

**SARAJEVO JEWISH LEADER CALLS
SITUATION IN BESIEGED CITY 'DESPERATE'****By Larry Yudelson**

NEW YORK, Nov. 30 (JTA) -- The collapse of U.N. and American resolve to stop Serbian aggression is plunging the inhabitants of Sarajevo deeper into despair, according to the president of the besieged city's Jewish community.

"It's desperate. The Serbs continue to shell and to snipe," said Ivan Ceresnjec, president of Sarajevo's 600-member Jewish community.

The Clinton administration this week dropped its call to use air strikes and other forms of military intervention to pressure the Serbs to stop their attacks. Now, echoing its European allies, the United States is saying that the road to

peace must be paved by further concessions by the Bosnians.

Many American Jewish groups, comparing the situation in the former Yugoslavia with the Holocaust, had urged the government to take more forceful action.

After the administration made clear it was backing away from that position, Jewish groups expressed their disappointment.

"We are witnessing the ultimate tragedy in the horrible conflict in Bosnia, and that is the failure of the international community to mobilize an effective response that would bring an end to the war," said Lynn Lyss, chair of the National Jewish Community Relations Council.

"There is enormous frustration in the Jewish community about what is transpiring in Bosnia and the gross lack of international will to act," she said.

Sarajevo Aid Convoy Delayed By Serbs

One small piece of good news for Sarajevo was expected this week as an aid convoy of food, medical supplies and clothing organized by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee made its way to the city.

However, the JDC convoy, which was scheduled to arrive Wednesday, was being held up midweek, along with other relief efforts, by Serbian forces outside Sarajevo.

In recent weeks, as Bosnian Muslim forces began what proved to be an unsuccessful offensive, rumors circulated that the Serbians "would take revenge on Sarajevo (Bosnia's capital) because they have Sarajevo in the palm of their hand," Ceresnjec said.

The failure of the offensive, and the apparent Western acquiescence to the Serbian counteroffensive, have only further lowered morale.

As of midweek, the Serbs were closing in on the town of Bihac, which had been considered a "safe zone." They had stationed a surface-to-air missile system within range of the Sarajevo airport, 140 miles to the southeast, and threatened any flights attempting to arrive or depart from there.

"The airport is still closed," said Ceresnjec. "People feel abandoned from the rest of the world. Every time it's worse because people are losing their strength.

"It's 32 months of siege, and generally nothing has changed. You still have 300,000 people stuck in what looks like the biggest concentration camp in history," he said in a telephone interview from Berlin, where he was opening a photographic exhibition of the Sarajevo Jewish community.

The exhibit is part of a fund-raising effort to support the community's soup kitchen, which serves both Jews and non-Jews "in a totally non-sectarian way," he said.

This JDC-sponsored convoy of aid is the first to the community since August. Five trucks, containing 100 tons of food, medicine and winter clothing, departed earlier in the week from JDC warehouses in Split, on the Adriatic coast.

"The contents of the trucks have come from

Christian, Muslim and Jewish organizations around the world, mostly from Europe," said Yechiel Bar-Chaim, the JDC's country director for the former Yugoslavia.

At the moment there are no more evacuations planned for the Jews of Sarajevo.

"The people who have stayed after 30 months of war are people who want to stay. Whether the latest turn of events will change the situation, we don't know. Certainly, if there are people who want to come out, we will bring them out," said Bar-Chaim.

The JDC's last evacuation was in February.

Another, non-JDC evacuation effort led in July to the arrest and interrogation of the Sarajevo Jewish community's vice president, Danilo Nikolic, as well as other Jewish figures.

All those arrested were eventually released, and their passports and other confiscated documents were returned by September.

The community was concerned about the arrests, but is hopeful they are a thing of the past.

**A TRUCE, BUT NOT QUITE A TREATY
DECLARED BY JEWISH, CHRISTIAN GROUPS**
By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON, Nov. 30 (JTA) -- Leaders from Jewish and religious right groups declared a truce -- but not a treaty -- this week after a daylong Capitol Hill summit aimed at healing deep wounds between the communities.

With tempers in check and a mutual desire to forge friendly relationships, about 30 representatives from mainstream Jewish and religious right organizations came here Tuesday to participate in a roundtable sponsored by the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews.

The two sides are often at odds over the role religion should play in American life, but relations reached a new low this summer after the Anti-Defamation League published a scathing report critical of many of the groups at the summit.

The report, "The Religious Right: The Assault on Tolerance and Pluralism in America," criticized the Christian groups for, among other things, calling America a "Christian nation."

The report, which received considerable media attention, drew sharp attacks from several leaders of the religious right, including Pat Robertson, who heads the Christian Coalition, the pre-eminent religious right organization.

Planners of this week's gathering said that while the idea for such a dialogue had been kicked around for years, the furor over the ADL report provided the necessary impetus to move ahead.

Although the dialogue participants devised no concrete programs for cooperation, both sides agreed that the face-to-face discussion was long overdue.

At a news conference following the closed-door session, participants described the discussion as ardent and candid, but always polite.

"We have to learn to get along even when we disagree," said the Rev. Jerry Falwell, who headed the now-defunct Moral Majority.

"We agreed to disagree without maligning or impugning the motives or character" of others, said Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, president and founder

of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews. Eckstein said the participants also agreed to "create a mechanism for consultation prior to recrimination."

Although the groups are far from agreement on many core issues such as school prayer and abortion rights, they will work to "find a middle ground between a theocracy and a naked town square," Eckstein said, referring to the notion of a country without religion.

Phil Baum, executive director of the American Jewish Congress, spoke candidly of his reservations prior to the gathering.

"This was a risky enterprise and we felt apprehensive at the outset," Baum said, adding that he is "gratified at the conclusion."

The summit evolved into an exercise in diplomacy, rather than policy, many of the participants said at the news conference.

"We talked to each other and not at each other," said Abraham Foxman, ADL's national director. "We listened to each other and agreed to lower the rhetoric."

Foxman said the participants had pledged to "respect each other's differences and respect that there are truths, not only (one) truth."

Foxman said that ADL stands by its report, but that he hopes there "may not be a need for another report."

The participants also agreed in principle to meet again in the future.

"We have an obligation to prevent America from falling into a cultural or religious war," said Rabbi A. James Rudin, director of interreligious affairs at the American Jewish Committee.

The session "cleared away the debris and stereotypes" at a "very delicate and volatile moment in American religious history," he said.

The wide breadth of Jewish participants included leaders from the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, the American Jewish Committee, the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, the Council of Jewish Federations, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

MIRACLE SHINES FOR INFERTILE COUPLE
By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Nov. 30 (JTA) -- As Jews around the world this week celebrated the miracle of the oil that burned for eight days, one Jerusalem couple was marking a very different Chanukah miracle -- one bestowed on them by medical science.

According to a spokeswoman at Shaare Zedek Hospital, the couple, enrolled in the hospital's in vitro fertilization program, had been unable to conceive during six previous cycles of treatment.

But in the seventh cycle, the spokeswoman said, doctors tried a new technique on the 38-year-old wife, who was identified only as Yehudit.

"Just in time for Chanukah, when we relate the miracle of the oil, Yehudit had her own miracle -- she gave birth to a baby boy," the spokeswoman told Israel Radio.

Elsewhere in the country, Israelis marked the holiday in more traditional ways, lighting the menorah and eating the traditional potato pancakes and jelly donuts.

DONOR COUNTRIES PROMISE TRANSFER OF FUNDS TO STRAPPED PALESTINIANS

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Nov. 30 (JTA) -- Donor countries meeting this week in Brussels have promised to transfer some \$125 million to the Palestinian Authority.

The sum will go toward operating expenses and police activities over the next six months, Israel Radio reported.

The donor countries -- including European nations, the United States, Russia and Japan -- met this week in an effort to inject urgently needed funds into the Palestinian self-rule areas of Gaza and Jericho.

The foreign donor nations, along with Palestinian and Israeli officials, signed an agreement Tuesday outlining the Palestinian Authority's financial needs through March.

The agreement covers Palestinian tax collection, Israeli refunds on taxes due the Palestinians and proposals for self-help projects to help stave off massive unemployment in the Gaza Strip.

The donor countries have pledged more than \$2 billion to the Palestinians over five years.

But little of the roughly \$700 million pledged for 1994 has come through.

Many of the donor nations had refused to fulfill their pledges because of Arafat's refusal to demonstrate accountability for the funds.

Shortly before the conference began, the World Bank signed a deal with Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat for a \$58 million credit to the Palestinian Authority.

Both Israeli and Palestinian officials had warned that the Palestinian autonomy could collapse without the necessary operating funds.

Further evidence of the Palestinians' financial strain emerged this week as the Palestinian Authority requested that Israel delay until Friday the transfer of taxation and health affairs in the West Bank because of a severe cash shortage.

The transfer of taxation and health affairs, which were delayed two days, is part of the early empowerment agreement that extends Palestinian control over certain civilian affairs in the West Bank.

The Palestinian Authority assumed control over education, social welfare and tourism earlier this year.

ISRAEL'S GAY COMMUNITY SCORES VICTORY WITH HIGH COURT RULING ABOUT BENEFITS

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Nov. 30 (JTA) -- The High Court of Justice handed Israel's gay community a major victory this week, ruling that a company must extend the same benefits to gay couples that it does to heterosexual couples.

In the landmark 50-page decision, the court ordered El Al Airlines to grant the partner of steward Jonathan Danilovitz an annual free ticket and other benefits the company already extends to heterosexual couples.

The ruling brought to an end a five-year legal journey that wound through Israel's court system.

The case reached the High Court after El Al appealed a labor court ruling in favor of Danilovitz, a native South African.

The decision was based on an amendment to Israel's basic law for equal rights in the workplace, which bans discrimination based on sexual orientation.

The High Court ruling drew the ire of Israel's fervently religious political parties.

Knesset member Shlomo Benizri of the Shas Party said his party views the decision as a challenge to the sacred values of Judaism.

He added that his party was planning to take steps in the wake of the ruling, but declined to specify what they would be.

Gay rights activists hailed the decision, saying it would have far-reaching implications for Israeli society, which is regarded as conservative when it comes to homosexuality.

"I feel this is a major breakthrough on several levels.

"One of the justices explicitly said the decision is based not only on the law itself, but on the principle of equality of all human beings," said Amit Kama, the executive director of the Society for the Protection of Personal Rights.

"I believe that as long as our laws and court decisions are tolerant and liberal and pro-gay, then more and more people and heterosexuals will get rid of homophobia.

"Homosexuals and lesbians will feel more comfortable to come out in the workplace, to be open about themselves," said Kama.

The ruling held personal significance for Kama.

He and his partner, a full-time professor at Tel Aviv University, have sued the school to grant Kama the social benefits given spouses of university employees.

It could also affect the case of Adir Steiner, who has unsuccessfully sought pension rights from the army after the death two years ago of his spouse, the late chief army medical officer, Col. Doron Meisel.

CONTROVERSIAL GENERAL APPOINTED

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Nov. 30 (JTA) -- Maj. Gen. Amiram Levine was named this week as commanding officer in charge of the northern sector.

The post will give him overall responsibility for Israel Defense Force operations in the southern Lebanon security zone.

His appointment was regarded by some as controversial.

Levine was among three top military officers tried in connection with a 1992 accident at the Tze'elim training base in the Negev.

The accident claimed the lives of five Israeli soldiers and wounded six others.

Levine was originally among those held responsible for the misfiring of a missile at the training base.

But in October, a military court absolved Levine, Lt. Gen. Ehud Barak, the IDF chief of staff, and Maj. Gen. Uri Saguy, the IDF Chief of Intelligence, of any responsibility for the mishap.

Levine, 48, formerly the General Headquarters commander in charge of Israeli commando units, succeeds Maj. Gen. Yitzhak Mordechai.

Mordechai is expected to retire from the army at the end of the year.

He will have served in his present post for three years.

ANOTHER BUST ERECTED OF ROMANIAN WORLD WAR II DICTATOR ANTONESCU

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Nov. 30 (JTA) -- Yet another statue of World War II fascist dictator Ion Antonescu has been dedicated in Romania, the World Jewish Congress has reported.

The latest bust of Antonescu was unveiled last week in the Romanian town of Piatra-Neamt, at a ceremony attended by local officials and war veterans.

Jews in Romania and outside the country, fearful of renewed anti-Semitism in the country, are concerned about signs that the dictator's reputation is being rehabilitated.

During Antonescu's rule from 1940 to 1944, more than 250,000 Jews died in territories controlled by Romania.

Antonescu was executed in Romania as a war criminal in 1946.

In October 1993, Romania's first official statue of Antonescu was erected in the town of Slobozia, financed in part by local Romanian police.

Local government officials and a member of the Romanian Cabinet were present at that dedication too.

Nicolae Vulbashin, political counselor at the Romanian Embassy in Washington, said that Romanian President Ion Iliescu has condemned the erection of these statues.

"The government did not support the erection of busts or such things," Vulbashin said.

The president and other leaders have tried to distance the government from the rehabilitation of Antonescu, although some government officials have been present at the dedications of both statues.

At the same time, government officials have tried to explain Antonescu as a patriotic hero for Romanians.

Rabbi Andrew Baker, head of European affairs for the American Jewish Committee in Washington, registered a complaint about the new tribute to Antonescu with the Romanian ambassador to Washington, Mihai Horia Bodez.

Previous Attempts To Sanitize Antonescu

Baker said he had not yet received a response to his letter, which was sent to Bodez last week.

Baker said, "We have raised the issue here and last year in a visit to Romania, regarding the tributes to Antonescu and to the general revisionism that has taken place.

"Since previous responses have been to both sanitize Antonescu as a patriotic figure and to dismiss the government's culpability, I don't think we are going to find a dramatically different response in this case," he said.

Last year, before the first official statue of Antonescu was erected, Alfred Moses, then president of the American Jewish Committee, spoke directly to the Romanian president about it.

He was assured at that time that it would not be put up.

But the statue was erected nonetheless.

In the interim, Moses has been named U.S. ambassador to Romania.

He is expected to be sworn in to that post next week at a ceremony in Washington.

MUSCOVITES JOIN IN CHANUKAH SPIRIT WITH LIGHTING OF LUBAVITCH MENORAH

By Lisa Glazer

MOSCOW, Nov. 30 (JTA) -- Hundreds of Jewish Muscovites gathered Sunday night in below-freezing weather to witness the lighting of a huge Chanukah menorah in front of the Bolshoi Theater.

"Everyone there got into the spirit. There was dancing. It was just wonderful," said Rabbi Berel Lazar, a Lubavitch leader who helped organize the event, which was officially sanctioned by the Moscow city government.

Although the Lubavitch movement sponsors large outdoor menorahs around the world, the tradition in Moscow is only a few years old and has at times sparked fears of anti-Semitism, Lazar said.

The gold-painted, metal menorah was lit by Yechiel Fried, a longtime member of the local Marina Roscha Synagogue who is now in his late 80s.

As the temperatures dropped to some 60 degrees below zero, Fried was lifted by a crane to the top of the menorah. Despite difficulties caused by the bitter wind, he managed to light the first candle for the eight-day festival.

The event -- which featured fireworks, music by the Red Army Band, Jewish music sung by schoolchildren and kosher doughnuts -- was filmed by Russia's government-owned Ostankino Television and broadcast via satellite to Jerusalem, New York and Paris.

Lazar said there are two other outdoor menorahs being lit this year in Moscow -- one outside a large business complex and the other near the Marina Roscha Synagogue.

ISRAEL RAISES INTEREST RATES AMID CONCERNS OVER INFLATION

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Nov. 30 (JTA) -- In a move aimed at curbing rising inflation, the Bank of Israel has announced a 1.5 percent hike in interest rates, the eighth such increase in the past year.

In making the announcement, Bank of Israel Governor Jacob Frenkel warned that the government must take additional steps to rein in inflation, which is currently running at about 16 percent -- nearly twice the government's initial target for 1994.

The increase will go into effect on Dec. 1. The discount rate, which the central bank charges on loans to the country's commercial banks, is expected to rise to about 18.5 percent.

Interest rates have nearly doubled during the past year. The prime rate, which banks charge to their top customers, may rise to nearly 20 percent, according to news reports here.

Reaction to this week's rate hike was immediate, with stock prices dropping slightly Monday after posting gains of some 6 percent the day before.

In other economic news, the Knesset last week approved a controversial 10 percent capital gains tax to be imposed on Israeli investors in the stock market.

The legislation, which takes effect in January, passed 45-30, with five abstentions.