



## NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **Tens of thousands of Palestinians attended special prayers at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem under a heavy Israeli police presence.** Israeli authorities, temporarily suspending their closure on the territories, allowed West Bank Palestinians to attend the special services, which marked the last Friday in the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. Various local press reports put the number of Palestinians attending the Temple Mount prayers at 70,000 to 160,000 people. Some 1,700 Israeli police were deployed throughout eastern Jerusalem as part of additional security measures. Some 1,500 Palestinians also attended services at the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron.

■ **The Lithuanian government reversed itself and decided to reopen the case of alleged Nazi war criminal Aleksandras Lileikis.** The Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations is seeking to deport the 87-year-old Massachusetts resident, who served as head of the Vilnius Gestapo during World War II. A Lithuanian diplomat said an early announcement that his country didn't have enough evidence to prosecute Lileikis was perhaps "a bit hasty." [Page 3]

■ **The African nation of Tanzania has re-established diplomatic relations with Israel,** which it had broken in the wake of the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Gad Ya'acobi, Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, signed the documents with his Tanzanian counterpart, Daudi Mwakawago. Tanzania is the 28th country to establish diplomatic relations with Israel since the signing of the Declaration of Principles with the Palestinians in September 1993. The renewed ties come amid reports that Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak has attempted to prevent African nations from normalizing ties with the Jewish state.

■ **A 76-year-old Bukharan Jew accused of murder was released from a prison in Uzbekistan following an outcry of protest from Jews around the world,** the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews reported. The Uzbek Embassy in Moscow issued a statement on the case, saying that statements that Isif Koinov was arrested because he is Jewish "absolutely do not conform with the truth." [Page 3]

## Officials dismiss flurry of reports on missing airman

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Feb. 26 (JTA) — Israeli security sources are examining the claims of an exiled Iranian that he saw missing Israeli airman Ron Arad in an Iranian jail.

Despite their investigation, the sources dismissed the former Iranian diplomat as being "unreliable," and said they could neither confirm nor deny his claims.

Over the weekend, Israel's Channel 2 broadcast an interview with the Iranian exile, Manasher Mutamer, who claimed that he had seen Arad, who was shot down over Lebanon in 1986 and was believed to have been taken alive.

Mutamer, who fled Iran 10 months ago, said Arad was being held in a security jail near the Iranian city of Isfahan. He described Arad's health and mental state as "very bad."

Mutamer further claimed that guards at the jail had told him that the prisoner was "the Zionist" who had bailed out from an Israeli fighter plane over Lebanon. He said Arad was being moved from place to place every few months.

The Iranian's claims follow reports last week that Israel and Iran have been holding secret contacts, with German mediation, on Arad's fate.

The German newspaper that published the report said a tape and letter from Arad had been given to his family.

Israeli sources last week denied any knowledge of such contacts and refuted the story.

But Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin did confirm last week that Germany had been negotiating with Iran for Arad's release.

At the same time, an Israeli official said the German government had leaked details about its discussions with Iran about Arad in order to divert the world's attention from an important trade decision it had made regarding the Islamic republic.

### Germany reinstates Iranian credits

Claiming that Iran's financial status had improved, Germany's Economic Ministry last week reportedly reinstated government-backed credits to Iran valued at some \$100 million.

With little apparent progress made in obtaining Arad's release, the families of missing and captured Israeli servicemen have become increasingly critical of Israeli efforts to locate and release their loved ones.

Hen Arad, the brother of Ron Arad, said this week that although the Israeli government says Iran is "responsible for the fate of Ron Arad," the opposite is actually true.

"Mr. Rabin, you are responsible for the fate of Ron, and not the other way," Arad said. "You sent him, you were defense minister at the time. Today you are the prime minister, and for the whole eight years [that he has been missing] you directed the security apparatus. Where is Ron today?"

Meanwhile, Rabin on Sunday dismissed the recent reports on Arad's whereabouts.

"No other sources have succeeded to bring any clear information on the fate of Arad," he said.

At the same time, he insisted that Israeli officials would continue to pursue any relevant information. "Whenever there is new intelligence, we will do everything we can," he said.

At the same time, Rabin has appointed a new head to the team of security and military officials who handle ongoing attempts to recover missing and captured servicemen.

The move came after a commission appointed by the prime minister a year ago recommended that the staff be changed. The commission examined how security and military officials have dealt with information gathered on the fates of missing and captured Israeli servicemen.

As a result of the committee's recommendations, Rabin appointed Yossi Genossar, a former senior official in the General Security Service, to head the staff. □

## Amid charges, Holocaust council stands by museum's new director

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, Feb. 26 (JTA) — Less than a month before his move to Washington, Steven Katz has received a brutal reminder of Henry Kissinger's adage that the fiercest politics is academic politics.

Katz is due to assume the directorship of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum on March 16.

Last week, disciplinary measures taken against Katz during his 11-year tenure on the Cornell University faculty resurfaced in the Washington Post.

The actions were taken after Katz violated the university's leave policy and misrepresented a book contract. The measures at Cornell, located in Ithaca, N.Y., were taken in 1991 in response to what Katz characterized as "a cluster of accusations from people who were trying to injure me."

"I made two technical errors. I don't want to shy away from them," Katz said in a telephone interview last week. "It's very regrettable, but I did not do it intentionally."

The executive committee of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, which acts as the museum's board, is standing behind Katz. The museum leadership looked into the charges against Katz before he was nominated for the post, according to the council's chairman, Miles Lerman.

"We felt he may have committed bad judgment, but did nothing improper," Lerman said.

Katz was chosen to succeed Jeshajahu Weinberg, the museum's founding director, after a lengthy search.

Last week, in response to queries from the Washington Post, the executive committee and the museum counsel again looked into the charges.

### 'There is nothing to give us concern'

"We came to the conclusion that in as much as some of the innuendo may be correct as stated, overall there is nothing to give us concern that we have hired the wrong man," Lerman said in an interview.

The measures were taken against Katz after he violated the university's policy that barred faculty from taking other jobs while on a study leave. On such a leave in 1989, he taught at the University of Pennsylvania.

Katz said the rules violation was inadvertent. He said he "did not know the difference" between the more restrictive study leave and an unrestricted sabbatical leave.

Katz was also reprimanded for writing on resumes and grant applications that his work on the Holocaust was "to be published" by Harvard University Press when in fact no contract had been signed.

As punishment for these infractions, Katz was barred from further study leaves, and his salary was frozen for three years.

Of the resume infraction, Katz said, "That was a technical violation." He added that he should have said his book was "being considered" by Harvard University Press. Although Harvard University Press had expressed interest in the book, the book ended up being published by Oxford University Press.

Katz said Harvard rejected the book for the same reason that the work, described in 1983 as "being prepared for publication," was not actually completed until 1990. The research project had ballooned over the years from a 500-page manuscript to one of 7,000 pages.

After completing a one-volume version of the book in 1984, "I realized I had not done justice to the issues," said Katz.

In the end, "The Holocaust in Historical Context,

Volume 1: The Holocaust and Mass Death before the Modern Age" weighed in at 700 published pages.

Summing up the brouhaha in 1991, one Cornell University official wrote that "claims 'to be published by Harvard University Press' in specified years were unsatisfactory since they led us to deal with Professor Katz on the basis of false assumptions about his publications. I would add, however, that the significance of the loose representation pales in the face of the work accomplished and its current status."

Katz acknowledged the irony of his position, given his record as a scholar who has stressed the importance of accuracy and truth in documenting and interpreting the Holocaust. "I'm much more careful about scholarship than I am about my bookkeeping," he said.

"I was working so hard in one, I was just very casual about the other. That's not a crime. It's a sloppiness," he said. □

## Israeli prosecutor appeals death sentence of terrorist

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Feb. 26 (JTA) — An Israeli military prosecutor has asked a military appeals court to overturn the death sentence of a Palestinian convicted of plotting a fatal bus bombing in April.

The prosecutor, Moshe Bachar, told a five-judge appeals panel in the West Bank town of Ramallah last week that a lower court had overstepped its authority in November when it ordered the execution of Said Badarneh, 24, of the West Bank village of Yabad.

Badarneh had been found guilty of planning and assisting in the suicide bombing of a bus in the central Israeli town of Hadera. The bombing killed five Israelis and wounded dozens of others.

The terrorist had claimed responsibility for the attack in the name of the Hamas fundamentalist group.

Bachar said the Jenin military court had ignored his recommendation for a life sentence and asked the appeals court to hand down six life sentences instead.

A ruling on the appeal was set for a later date, but the death sentence was expected to be reversed.

All previous military death sentences have been overturned and commuted to life in prison. The only time Israel has employed the death penalty was in 1962, with the execution of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin had opposed Badarneh's death sentence, calling it a "blunder."

Meanwhile, Badarneh expressed no remorse for what he had done. He suggested that there would be reprisals from Hamas militants if he were executed. He also said he was not afraid of having his appeal rejected.

"We are blowing ourselves up in buses," he said. "Do you think I am afraid of the death penalty?" □

## Jordan to use Israel air space for flights to and from Europe

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Feb. 26 (JTA) — Israel and Jordan have reached an aviation agreement, in which Jordanian jets flying to and from Europe may begin using Israeli air space as of March 10.

The agreement by Israeli and Jordanian officials was made at the Red Sea resort city of Eilat. The talks cemented another part of the Oct. 26 peace treaty between the two countries.

The agreement applies only to Royal Jordanian Airlines. Kassar said other airlines could fly over Israel en route to Jordan if they first sought Israeli approval. □

## Responding to protests, Lithuania reopens Nazi case

By Jennifer Batog

WASHINGTON, Feb. 26 (JTA) — In an about face, the Lithuanian government has decided to reopen the case of an alleged Nazi war criminal.

Two weeks ago, Lithuania said it did not have enough evidence to prosecute Aleksandras Lileikis, 87, of Norwood, Mass.

The U.S. Justice Department is seeking to deport Lileikis. The department contends that as head of the Vilnius Gestapo, Lileikis signed orders directing his force to hold arrested Jews at the Vilnius Hard Labor camp and then turn them over to killing squads for execution.

The announcement not to prosecute, which triggered strong protests from Jewish leaders and others, meant that the deportation proceedings might be slowed down.

"Perhaps it was a bit hasty on the part of the prosecutors" to decide not to prosecute, said Lithuanian Consul General Petras Anusas, speculating on why his country changed its mind.

The New York-based diplomat also said a number of Lithuanian officials reportedly regretted the decision. The original prosecutors were removed from the case, and four others have been assigned, Anusas said in a telephone interview.

Lithuania's reversal came on the eve of a scheduled visit to Israel by Lithuanian President Algirdas Brazauskas. Some Jewish officials had speculated that the issue would cast a shadow over the historic visit.

Last year, the Justice Department's Nazi hunting arm, the Office of Special Investigations, began proceedings to strip Lileikis of his citizenship.

Those efforts could be accelerated if Lithuania decides to prosecute Lileikis, said John Russell, a department spokesman.

At least 55,000 Vilnius Jews and 220,000 Lithuanian Jews were killed during the war.

Lileikis has admitted involvement with the Nazis but he denies responsibility for any deaths.

If Lithuania decides to prosecute, Lileikis would be the first Nazi war criminal tried there since the country's independence in 1991. □

## Elderly Jew accused of murder released from jail in Uzbekistan

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, Feb. 26 (JTA) — A 76-year-old Bukharan Jew has been released from a prison in Uzbekistan after an outcry of protest from Jews around the world.

Iosif Koinov of Tashkent, the capital of the former Soviet republic of Uzbekistan, stands accused of killing his 17-year-old tenant, who was found murdered in bed Sept. 29.

According to the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, Koinov was traveling at the time the murder occurred and no traces of the victim's blood were found on the knife he allegedly used. After being arrested and tortured, he reportedly signed a false confession.

In response to an appeal by the Union of Councils, more than 5,000 letters from around the world were sent on Koinov's behalf.

Israeli officials were also said to have raised the issue with the government of Uzbekistan.

Although Koinov remains under indictment, the case has been sent by the courts back to the procurator for further investigation.

The original procurator in the case has since been

replaced, in a move the Union of Councils says it hopes is "an indirect acknowledgement of Koinov's innocence."

Micah Naftalin, national director of the Union of Councils, said he believes that "the Uzbek government is trying to do its best to resolve the case satisfactorily."

In a statement issued by the Uzbek Embassy in Moscow, the Uzbek government said the investigation is continuing.

"At the same time, because of the many petitions and regarding his high age, Koinov was freed but is not allowed to travel," the statement said.

The government said statements that Koinov was arrested because he is Jewish "absolutely do not conform with the truth."

"His guilt or innocence will be decided by [a] court of law independent of his nationality," the government said. □

## U.N. Watch: Panel of jurists should shed 'anti-Israel' bias

By Tamar Levy

GENEVA, Feb. 26 (JTA) — U.N. Watch, a non-governmental monitoring group, has called on the International Commission of Jurists to "come clean about its anti-Israel bias, reform its board and get out of the way of the peace process."

Morris Abram, chairman of the World Jewish Congress-sponsored U.N. Watch, wrote the Feb. 14 letter to Adama Dieng, secretary-general of ICJ. Abram is a former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva.

The Feb. 14 letter is the latest development in the controversy about a report by U.N. special investigator Rene Felber, a former Swiss minister, who had issued the report.

In that account, Felber had called for an end to his post, which included tracking human rights abuses in Israel's territories.

Felber had said the post stood in the way of the peace process: "You have to give priority to political rights as we conceive them."

ICJ had denounced Felber and his report as failing to live up to the U.N. mandate.

"The ICJ's hostility toward Israel has been an open secret in and around the U.N. for a number of years," Abram said.

He said, "What makes it so intolerable is that with its attack on Felber, the ICJ threatens to ruin the new climate of equal treatment, cooperation and good faith toward Israel, which has begun to emerge at the U.N."

By attacking an honorable and respected diplomat such as Felber, Abram said, ICJ is trying to drag the U.N. community back to when Israel was an outcast. □

## Fired teacher fined for suit

By Tamar Levy

GENEVA, Feb. 26 (JTA) — A Lausanne court has ruled against a former high school history teacher who filed a suit against a newspaper that referred to her as "a brown teacher," a reference to the color of the shirts worn by Nazi militants.

The court also fined the teacher about \$3,000, about half of which went to cover court expenses.

Three years ago, the teacher, whose name is not known, denied the existence of Nazi concentration camps.

She was subsequently fired and lost her rank as an officer in the military reserve.

A year ago, she filed a claim against the Swiss daily Bieler Tagblatt, which had published that she was a "brown teacher." □

## Germany's relations with Iran broached by visiting U.S. Jews

By Edward Serotta

BERLIN, Feb. 26 (JTA) — The subject of Germany's relations with Iran was high on the agenda of discussions when a delegation of American Jewish Committee officials paid a two-day visit to Germany earlier this month.

The delegation, representing AJCommittee's Board of Governors, was led by Los Angeles attorney Bruce Ramer.

Ignatz Bubis, chairman of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, along with representatives of Jewish communities from the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Russia and Great Britain, joined in the series of discussions with Germany's top government officials.

In a two-hour meeting with Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel, President Roman Herzog and Rita Suessmuth, president of the Lower House of Parliament, the AJC delegation emphasized its concern about Germany's relations with Iran.

Kinkel said Germany's decision to maintain open channels to Iran was meant to encourage moderation from the government in Teheran and to champion peace in the Middle East.

But the delegation differed sharply, saying Iran is a major exporter of international terrorism and is implacably hostile to the peace process.

Ramer said he believes that the official U.S. position calling for diplomatic isolation of the Teheran government is the proper way to deal with Iran.

The AJCommittee delegation also met with representatives from all four major political parties during their visit. During each briefing, they brought up their concerns about Iran.

The delegation also used the series of meetings to discuss the matter of restitution payments to Holocaust survivors in the former East Germany.

Before the fall of communism and the reunification of Germany in 1990, Jewish Holocaust survivors received no financial compensation from the former East German government.

With many of these survivors elderly and now living on meager pensions, the delegation requested that the German cut through bureaucratic red tape and provide restitution payments.

According to AJCommittee's European director, Rabbi Andrew Baker, Kohl told the group that he was sympathetic toward the survivors' plight and was willing to help on a case-by-case basis.

Kinkel invited the delegation to provide him with a list of names so that his office could investigate each of their cases. □

## European nations establish new forum to combat racism

By Joseph Kopel

BRUSSELS, Feb. 26 (JTA) — The European Parliament has decided to establish a branch of the London-based Inter-Parliamentary Council against Anti-Semitism.

This action stems from a call for a common struggle against anti-Semitism, a move made earlier this month by Klaus Hansch, who is the president of the European Parliament. Hansch was speaking at the opening session of Consultative Committee on Racism and Xenophobia.

The goals of the new branch will be to exchange information about incidents of racism, xenophobia and anti-

Semitism; to raise public awareness about these phenomena and to act concertedly against them, officials said.

The branch will be chaired by British Labor legislator Glen Ford and will include 50 members of the European Parliament, the legislative body of the European Union.

The new body will be independent of the Consultative Committee on Racism and Xenophobia, which the European Union established last year. Jean Kahn, the president of the European Jewish Congress, heads that committee.

At an inaugural conference to launch the new branch, Hansch stressed the need for the European Union to play an important role in the fight against anti-Semitism.

One of the most important objectives of the new group will be to establish legislation applicable to all E.U. member states to combat both Holocaust denial and the distribution of anti-Semitic materials, Ford said. □

## Last of stolen Budapest art recovered in Romanian capital

By Agnes Bohm

BUDAPEST, Feb. 26 (JTA) — The remains of a valuable collection of Jewish art stolen in December 1993 from the Budapest Jewish Museum has been found in Romania, police here said last week.

Romanian police said 30 Jewish religious art objects — valued at \$5 million — are under their control in the Romanian capital of Bucharest, according to Hungarian radio.

Most of the stolen treasure was found and was returned to the Budapest Jewish community last summer.

The Budapest Jewish Museum was robbed by three people. Two suspects have been arrested. One of the suspects, a Romanian-born Israeli, is at large.

Hungarian police were joined by Robert Turan, head of the museum, and Gusztav Zoltai, leader of the Hungarian Jewish Community in Bucharest, to examine the newly found works.

Israeli police also have been investigating the case. Sources said the recently found works may have been taken from Israel to Bucharest.

It will take another month until the objects are returned to Budapest, Hungarian authorities said. □

## Five receive revisionist mail after school trip to Auschwitz

By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, Feb. 26 (JTA) — High school students in the eastern French city of Strasbourg received mail denying the reality of the Holocaust after they went on a trip to Auschwitz.

Four students and their headmaster recounted in the local newspaper their December visit to the former Nazi death camp. A few days later, all five received letters at their homes claiming that Jews had killed other Jews in Auschwitz.

"We didn't file a legal complaint, but everyone at the high school was very shocked" said Jean-Pierre Perrin, headmaster of the international high school Pontonniers.

Perrin, who only recently revealed the letters, said, "We kept the whole issue down because we didn't wish to advertise it for the benefit of those" who had sent the mail.

"This incident did teach us something: Hatred is not dead and we all have to be very cautious," said Perrin, whose school has 900 students from 60 countries.

Students are scheduled to visit another former concentration camp later this month. □