



## NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **The Department of Housing and Urban Development has cleared security firms affiliated with the Nation of Islam of any wrongdoing.** The investigation, prompted by pressure from Jewish groups and members of Congress, has come under attack. [Page 1]

■ **Israeli police launched an investigation into alleged misuse of funds in the Histadrut labor federation.** A major political scandal erupted after reports that police officials are investigating Labor Party leaders who allegedly misappropriated Histadrut funds for their own political purposes. [Page 3]

■ **Israeli officials and Jewish leaders expressed dismay and surprise over a statement issued by eight church leaders that criticized the Clinton administration for "failing to recognize and support Palestinian rights and interests in Jerusalem."** Avi Granot, an official with the Israeli Embassy in Washington, said he "was offended" that Israel was not consulted.

■ **Representatives from Israel, Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinians convened in Amman for their first meeting to discuss the return to the territories of Palestinians displaced during the 1967 Six-Day War.** Differences regarding the scope of the meeting were evident, with the Israeli team calling it an "informal consultation meeting," while the Arab leaders referred to it as a formal attempt to solve the problem of displaced persons.

■ **The president of the U.N. Security Council met with an Israeli representative to express concern over the Israeli blockade of the Lebanese coast.** The meeting came in the wake of a letter circulated by Lebanon asking for U.N. intervention to end the weeks-old blockade. [Page 2]

■ **More than 1,000 fervently Orthodox Jews gathered outside the Israeli Consulate in New York to protest the excavation at the site of an ancient cemetery in Jaffa.** The demonstrators said the disputed land, designated for an underground parking lot, was a Jewish grave site. Israeli officials said such claims are "baseless" and that the land is a Christian burial site.

## HUD probe into Nation of Islam blasted by Jewish organizations

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON, March 7 (JTA) — A Department of Housing and Urban Development investigation, which has cleared security firms affiliated with the Nation of Islam of any wrongdoing, is under attack from members of Congress and Jewish activists.

At the same time, a congressional hearing on the subject last week signaled a low point in black-Jewish relations as some black members of Congress accused Jewish groups of launching an assault on Islam and blacks.

At the hearing, HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros said continuing the investigation "would simply be using government resources to persecute" the Nation of Islam.

Cisneros' evaluation drew the ire of representatives from the American Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League, who also testified at the hearing before the House Banking and Financial Services Subcommittee on General Oversight and Investigations.

For more than a year, Jewish groups had requested that HUD investigate \$10 million in security contracts at low-income housing developments held by firms with ties to the Nation of Islam, the virulently anti-Semitic group led by Louis Farrakhan.

HUD finally agreed to the investigation in January, succumbing to extensive pressure from Jewish groups — including 4,000 letters from supporters of AJCongress — and from members of Congress, including Rep. Peter King (R-N.Y.) and Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole (R-Kan.).

"It is my view that these contracts are helping to finance Farrakhan's empire of hate," King said in pushing for the investigation earlier this year.

At the hearing last week, the Jewish groups both criticized the HUD investigation and reiterated their belief that the Nation of Islam should not be granted government contracts.

Both ADL and AJCongress argued at the hearing that HUD has shirked its responsibility and "misinterpreted" its role.

ADL went further, calling the investigation "limited and inadequate."

### Session deteriorates into Jewish vs. black debate

The March 2 hearing had been expected to provide a forum to explore the link between the security firms and Farrakhan. It was also expected to explore allegations that these firms discriminate against non-blacks and people who do not belong to the Nation of Islam.

Instead, the marathon session before a packed congressional hearing room deteriorated into a minority vs. white and Jewish vs. black debate. The session lasted more than five hours.

The entire Republican side of the committee present were white men, which was in contrast to the black and Hispanic Democratic subcommittee members.

And the panel testifying against the Nation of Islam was made up exclusively of Jews: Marc Stern of the American Jewish Congress; Jess Hordes and Meyer Eisenberg of the Anti-Defamation League; and Jules Polonetsky, a New York state Assemblyman and Orthodox Jew.

"I have to admit that I wish today that you were Irish, black, Italian, Asian, Hispanic, that you didn't necessarily have to all be Jewish," Rep. Kweisi Mfume (D-Md.) said to the Jewish panel testifying against Nation of Islam.

"The tragedy, mark my words, is that this hearing is going to be seen as a referendum on black-Jewish relations. It's not that at all," said Mfume, a former chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus and himself a Muslim.

Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Calif.) called the hearing a "witch hunt."

"You're treading on dangerous ground when you make an argument against the Muslims. If you go after them today, it will be the Jews tomorrow," said Waters, who does not serve on the subcommittee but was allowed to participate in the hearing.

Republican members of the committee argued that the hearing was an appropriate investigation into whether government money is being used to finance the hate and anti-Semitism of the Nation of Islam.

"I summarily reject and repudiate those remarks," said Rep. Bob

Barr (R-Ga.) in response to Waters. "We seek some answers to some very legitimate questions."

Scores of Nation of Islam supporters at the hearing repeatedly interrupted the proceedings with applause as Cisneros and HUD officials praised the security companies for cleaning up the housing projects.

They also responded favorably as Democratic members of the committee attacked the Jewish groups for raising the issue and as Nation of Islam security company officials attacked ADL, suggesting that the group should lose its tax-exempt status.

Testifying in defense of the Nation of Islam-affiliated security firms, Leonard F. Muhammad, president of New Life, one such firm, and a Nation of Islam official, told King in a heated exchange, "You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"I don't appreciate this hearing one bit," Muhammad said. "The laws you seek compliance with should also be used for the protection of our rights. Where is the focus on the money we have saved you, and the lives we have saved?"

In response, Rep. Spencer Bachus (R-Ala.), the subcommittee chairman, admonished Muhammad, saying, "I don't consider you to have saved this country and its people one dime" if Nation of Islam guards recruit new members and spread Farrakhan's hatred about Jews.

Polonetsky came to argue that the security guards were proselytizing on the grounds of at least one housing development in New York.

The HUD investigation uncovered nine Nation of Islam-related contracts for security in public housing projects and federally subsidized apartments in Baltimore, New York, Chicago, Washington, Buffalo and Dayton, Ohio. Fifteen other contracts were terminated for unknown reasons or have since expired.

The \$10 million in contracts are held by New Life Self Development Inc., NOI Security Agency Inc., X-Men Security, Inc. and Nation of Islam Community Support Group.

#### **An 'odious and deeply offensive' comparison**

In testimony at the hearing, Cisneros outlined what he termed a "thorough" investigation that in the end praised the security services.

Although the investigation uncovered "some local contracts with security firms which are run by persons who practice the Islamic faith," Cisneros argued, "federal law does not permit a local housing provider to refuse to contract with firms because of their religious affiliation."

Cisneros equated the Nation of Islam contracts to those held by B'nai B'rith, which runs HUD-subsidized elderly housing developments as well as to contracts granted to other religious groups.

After the hearing, ADL National Director Abraham Foxman chastised the HUD secretary.

The "shallow comparison of the Nation of Islam with Catholic charities, B'nai B'rith and the Salvation Army is odious and deeply offensive," Foxman wrote to Cisneros.

Both ADL and AJCongress officials argued that Cisneros' investigation, which was based on interviews with tenants and a limited number of security guards, does not address the question of whether the firms discriminate.

"The issue is not whether the guards are doing a good job and the residents are happy with them," Stern said. "HUD did not ask the right questions."

Although he believes that this is a "HUD responsibility," Stern said his organization will pursue the issue, turning back to the Office of Federal Contract Compliance, which originally passed him on to HUD.

Both AJCongress and ADL said they will also

consider turning to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to look into the matter.

Another option that remains open is that the House Banking subcommittee will require HUD to refocus its investigation.

Capitol Hill aides say the subcommittee has not yet made any decision. □

#### **U.N. expresses concern to Israel over blockade of Lebanese coast**

*By Larry Yudelson*

UNITED NATIONS, March 7 (JTA) — The president of the U.N. Security Council met with an Israeli representative this week to express concern over the Israeli blockade of the Lebanese coast.

Lebanon last week circulated letters to Chinese Ambassador Li Zhaoxing, who this month holds the Security Council's rotating presidency, and to U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, asking for U.N. intervention to end the blockade.

On Monday, the issue was raised by the Omani ambassador during the Security Council's daily informal consultations. It was decided that Li would discuss the issue with Israeli and Lebanese representatives.

Israel has stated that the blockade is in response to Lebanese strictures on inhabitants of the security zone Israel controls in southern Lebanon. Ambassador Moshe Melamed, Israel's second-ranking diplomat at the United Nations, met with the council president in the absence of Ambassador Gad Ya'acobi, who was in Israel.

Melamed explained that Israel's measures were not directed against the fishermen or other people in southern Lebanon, but were designed to prevent terrorist activities from known bases in the area.

But according to Nohad Mahmoud of the Lebanese mission to the United Nations, with increased Israeli activity on the Lebanese coast, "the fisherman don't dare to venture into sea for more than half a mile."

There has been no indication as to whether the issue will proceed further in the United Nations.

"Here we do our utmost," said Mahmoud. "Something should be done there in the region, particularly with the arrival of Secretary of State Warren Christopher in the region this week."

On the eve of Christopher's visit, ongoing hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah guerrillas in Lebanon heated up.

Israeli helicopter gunships, artillery and tanks struck at Hezbollah bases in the southern Lebanon security zone shortly before midnight Monday.

About the same time, Israeli jets flew over a section of Beirut where Hezbollah maintains the headquarters of its high command. No bombs were dropped.

Earlier Monday, a member of the Israeli-allied South Lebanon Army was killed and two other SLA soldiers were wounded when a roadside bomb was detonated while their unit was on patrol in the eastern sector of the security zone.

Israeli sorties and artillery bombardments of Hezbollah positions resumed Tuesday in southern Lebanon.

The commander of the SLA forces, Gen. Antoine Lahad, toured Jerusalem on Monday with a delegation of 15 other SLA officers as the guests of municipal council member Yehoram Gaon. Gaon described Lahad as a "friend" whom he wanted to host in Jerusalem.

Lahad also met with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin last week when the Israeli leader was touring southern Lebanon. □

*(JTA correspondent Naomi Segal in Jerusalem contributed to this report.)*

**NEWS ANALYSIS**

**Labor Party faces new problems as Histadrut comes under investigation**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 7 (JTA) — Israel's ruling Labor Party, already beset by waning popularity and political ill-fortune, faces new woes in the form of a burgeoning police investigation into alleged misuse of funds in the Histadrut labor federation.

The scandal erupted this week after reports that police officials are investigating Labor Party leaders who allegedly misappropriated Histadrut funds for their own political purposes.

Histadrut, which represents more than 50 percent of the Israeli work force, was a bastion of the Labor Party for decades until last year, when Labor renegade Haim Ramon took over the reins of Histadrut after defeating former leader Haim Haberfeld in union elections.

Ramon was Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's original minister of health and was considered the brightest of Labor's younger generation of leaders. But he walked out of the Labor Party over its refusal to endorse his national health reform proposals.

Ramon subsequently set up his own party, and in a blitzkrieg campaign backed by enthusiastic media support, he succeeded in wresting control of the Histadrut from Labor in elections last May.

Claims that the Labor Party illicitly used Histadrut resources were at the heart of Ramon's attack on the Histadrut leadership during last year's campaign.

According to news reports, Ramon found evidence of corruption and systematic wrongdoing after he took over the leadership of Histadrut.

The allegations now under investigation involve two broad areas:

- Histadrut funds were allegedly misspent by former Secretary-General Haberfeld's campaign staff during his unsuccessful election effort to fend off Ramon's challenge for the union leadership.

- Histadrut monies were allegedly misused to help fund the 1992 election campaigns of several Labor candidates who held ranking positions in the Histadrut.

Political observers say the police investigation could snowball into an inquiry that would affect the highest echelons of the Labor Party.

Rabin has already been suffering a loss of public support over the stalled negotiations with the Palestinians and his inability to prevent repeated terror attacks against Israelis by those opposed to the peace process.

**His government appeared powerless**

His reputation has also suffered as a result of economic issues. Rabin's government canceled a controversial new tax on capital gains after vacillating for months over the issue. His government also appeared powerless in the face of a plunging stock market and a steady drop in the value of leading pension funds.

Mina Tsemach, a leading Israeli pollster, said this week that even without taking into consideration the allegations regarding the Histadrut scandal, Rabin would lose to Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu if national elections were held now.

Some observers recall that Rabin's first administration, from 1974 to 1977, lost public support. It eventually lost power to Menachem Begin's Likud under the weight of corruption scandals involving senior Labor figures.

Rabin himself declared Monday that he had full confidence in the legal system and would not interfere in the investigation.

He conceded, though, that he was "concerned by

the very fact that there is a police investigation proceeding in the Histadrut."

Both Rabin and Labor Party Secretary-General Nissim Zvilli sought to stress that the party itself was not under investigation or under suspicion of any wrongdoing.

The police inquiries were directed against individuals, Zvilli said, not against the party. The party's financial matters were conducted scrupulously, he added.

Police Minister Moshe Shahal, another senior Labor Party official, vowed that there would be no cover-up or any success in trying to influence the police during the investigation.

"Under my ministership," Shahal said, "the police are politically colorblind."

Police sources, for their part, disclosed that a high-ranking Histadrut official, Uzi Fassa, has signed an agreement to turn state's evidence. He is being interrogated each day at a police facility, though he is not under arrest.

The leader of the Likud faction in the Histadrut, Ya'acov Shammai, said Monday that he first submitted material to the police substantiating the allegations of wrongdoing.

But Israel Television, citing Likud sources, claimed that Shammai himself had used Histadrut funds during his own political campaigns.

Knesset members Haberfeld and Masha Lubelsky, a deputy minister who was formerly head of Na'amat, the Histadrut's women's division, are among those who have already been questioned by police. Arthur Yisraelowitz, a former treasurer of the Histadrut, was also under investigation.

Transportation Minister Yisrael Kessar, who was secretary-general of the Histadrut until 1992, refused Monday to answer reporters' questions on the ongoing investigations or on his own lengthy period of service at the top of the labor federation.

He would only say that in 30 years of working for Histadrut not even the slightest slur against him had ever been proven. □

**Rabin: Women still have long way to go for rights**

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, March 7 (JTA) — Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin denounced violence and discrimination against women in remarks this week at a gathering marking International Women's Day.

Addressing female civil servants in Jerusalem on Monday, Rabin said women still had a long way to go toward achieving equal rights.

Rabin also called for more action in the struggle to achieve equal rights for women.

Nava Arad, the prime minister's adviser on women's issues, said at the gathering that the groups who need the most attention are battered women, single parents, unemployed women and women who are paid less than male colleagues for performing the same work.

She said some progress for women has taken place in the business sector, including recent legislation calling for the appointment of women to the board of directors of state-owned companies.

"Since then, there are 116 women on boards of directors," Arad told Israel Television.

"But I am looking for hundreds of women" to be appointed to these bodies, she said.

The Center for Aid to Sexually Abused Women published statistics this week showing that 60 to 120 women are sexually abused in Israel every day, but that only 10 percent to 20 percent of them report these incidents to authorities. □

**FOCUS ON ISSUES****Abortion flap erupts in Canada, with Jewish group a key player***By Bram D. Eisenthal*

MONTREAL, March 7 (JTA) — The common confrontation between pro-life and pro-choice advocates in the United States appears to have found a new battleground in Canada, with a major Jewish organization a key player in the fray.

The battle, which provokes heated emotions from proponents on both sides, took a new turn recently when a B'nai Brith Canada official alleged that Human Life International, a right-wing anti-abortion group, is racist and anti-Semitic.

That charge prompted Human Life to take out a half-page ad in the Feb. 28 edition of Montreal's English-language daily, *The Gazette*, to deny B'nai Brith's charges.

Then, last week, the pro-life group sought to further defend itself at a news conference, which was attended by the group's American representatives, as well as several of its Jewish members. The rhetoric intensified when the group accused B'nai Brith, among other things, of having ties to the pornography industry.

Human Life was founded in Maryland in 1981 by the Rev. Paul Marx, a Roman Catholic priest. The Canadian branch is headquartered in Vanier, Ontario, a suburb of Ottawa.

**Headline emblazons advertisement**

Abortion has been legal in Canada since 1988, when Dr. Henry Morgenthaler, who performs abortions, launched a successful appeal before the Canadian Supreme Court to strike down the section of the criminal code outlawing them.

The Human Life ad was emblazoned with the headline "Human Life International and the Jewish People." It was signed by 44 well-known North American conservative Jews, including Midge Decter and Rabbi Daniel Lapin, the Orthodox founder of *Toward Tradition*, a small Seattle-based organization of conservative Jews that has aligned itself on many issues with the Christian Coalition.

"The charge is too preposterous to be given any credibility," the ad said of B'nai Brith's charges. "If anything, the leadership of Human Life International laments the lack of support for its cause from the Jewish community, support which Human Life International would enthusiastically welcome."

B'nai Brith had first leveled its charges in a recent report on right-wing extremism. The report's author, Stephen Scheinberg, the former chairman of B'nai Brith's League for Human Rights in Canada, detailed some of the writings and activities of Human Life.

At a news conference of its own March 1, B'nai Brith Canada stood by the claims first outlined in its report.

"We must continue to criticize the writings of Paul Marx and other materials distributed by HLI which repeatedly target the religious and ethnic origins of those they see as their opponents," said Frank Dimant, executive vice president of B'nai Brith here.

Dimant referred to an article written by Marx in 1987 called "Confessions of a Pro-Life Missionary," in which he asked readers to "note the large number of abortionists" in the Yellow Pages "and pro-abortion medical professors who are Jewish."

In the same article, Marx took on the man who successfully argued for the legality of abortion in Canada.

"In Canada, the leading abortion advocate and chief killer of unborn babies is Henry Morgenthaler, who claims to have been in Auschwitz," Marx wrote.

"Although they are supremely sensitive about their own Holocaust, Austria's Jews gave me and my colleagues no help in stopping this new holocaust," the article said.

Dimant said his group does not take a position on the abortion issue because of its "diverse membership spanning the spectrum of political and religious ideology."

Jews are not the only group targeted by Marx in his writings, Dimant said at the news conference. The group has scheduled a panel titled, "The Muslim Threat to the World" at its annual meeting here next month.

In an effort to counter the charges against it, Human Life issued a statement saying that Decter, a New York-based conservative thinker, had voiced "the thinking of many Jews when she points out that simply stating evidence about the activity of leading abortionists who are Jewish does not automatically render one anti-Semitic."

At its Feb. 28 news conference, the group called B'nai Brith's charges "irresponsible," "hypocritical" and "vicious."

Also at the news conference, American author Judith Reisman contended that B'nai Brith was engaged in promoting pornography because the Anti-Defamation League in the United States had given Playboy founder Hugh Hefner an award in 1980.

"So now we're pornographers?" said Scheinberg in response.

Calling Reisman's charge "just stupid," Scheinberg pointed out that ADL, which was borne out of B'nai Brith International, does not exist in Canada.

Scheinberg, a historian, accused Human Life of dredging up the centuries-old blood libel, in which Jews were falsely accused of murdering Christian babies, by implying that the Jews are perpetrators of the worst possible modern-day holocaust.

Theresa Bell, executive director of Human Life Canada, referred all questions of a Jewish nature to either Decter or Reisman.

Bell did, however, claim that Marx's writings had been created with the input of the group's Jewish membership, "none of whom had any problems with what Father Marx wrote."

Decter, a contributor to *Commentary Magazine* who is married to its editor, Norman Podhoretz, said in a telephone interview that Jews, precisely because they had suffered through the Holocaust, should never support abortion.

"I still maintain that the last people in the world that should be involved in abortion are Jews," Decter said.

Regarding Bell's insistence that Jewish members of the group had provided input for Marx's writings, Decter said that if this were true, such Jews were "big fools and didn't advise him very well."

"I can't believe they would be such idiots, and I don't believe they were," she said, adding, "If I had been Father Marx's adviser, I would have told him not to put it quite that way." □

**Guard wounds Palestinian youth***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM, March 7 (JTA) — An Israeli security guard shot and wounded a Palestinian youth in the southern port city of Ashdod on Tuesday.

The private security guard told police that he opened fire on the youth and two other Arabs with him, because he thought the youth was trying to snatch his weapon. Police did not think that the incident was a terrorist attack.

The victim, a 15-year-old Palestinian from the West Bank village of Dura near Hebron, was in moderate condition with wounds to the hip. □