



NEWS AT A GLANCE

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■ **Jordan wants the Clinton administration to abort a drive in Congress to move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem**, Jordanian newspapers reported. The Jordanians were reacting to a letter from 93 senators to U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, declaring the "U.S. Embassy belongs in Jerusalem." [Page 2]

■ **Israel and the Persian Gulf nation of Oman are close to establishing diplomatic ties**, Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin said after meeting with the Omani foreign minister in Cairo. [Page 2]

■ **The governor of the Bank of Israel announced a 1.5 percent cut in interest rates**. The move came after the government approved a package of budget and tax cuts. [Page 2]

■ **Canada launched proceedings to deport Erichs Tobias**, a Toronto man accused of taking part in the execution of civilians in wartime Latvia. Court papers said he obtained Canadian citizenship by concealing his membership in the Arais Kommando, a Latvian auxiliary unit under the SS. [Page 3]

■ **The Jerusalem District Court sentenced four young supporters of Kahane Chai**, an outlawed Jewish extremist group, to prison terms for carrying out a deadly grenade attack against Arabs in Jerusalem's Old City in 1992. One person was killed and seven injured in that attack. [Page 4]

■ **A Greek arms dealer told a court in Athens that the 1992 murder of Elias Cohen**, a Greek Jew, was part of an attempt by Arabs to send a message to the Mossad. The dealer, being held in connection with terrorist activity, also said a 1991 fatal bomb explosion in the Greek city of Patras was directly linked to Cohen's murder. [Page 3]

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Israeli and American Jewish women strategize for U.N. conference in fall

By Alexandra J. Wall

NEW YORK, March 22 (JTA) — As the fourth U.N.-sponsored World Conference on Women approaches this fall, members of the Israeli delegation say they are less apprehensive than in the past.

"We are finding that we are more accepted. People want to learn from our experience," said Nava Arad, the Israeli prime minister's adviser on the status of women.

"Before, we were outcasts, but now we are very popular," Arad said, referring to the anti-Israeli atmosphere that permeated previous conferences in Mexico City, Copenhagen and Nairobi, Kenya.

Arad made her remarks in an interview after a gathering here of Israeli and American Jewish women last week. It was the second meeting held to strategize for the upcoming conference, which will be held in Beijing in September.

The first meeting between the two delegations was held in Jerusalem in November. At that meeting, the delegates passed the Jerusalem Declaration, which welcomed the continuation of the peace process, the peace with Jordan and the signing of the Declaration of Principles between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

But with that groundwork already laid, there is still much work to be done, according to leaders of both delegations.

"We must stress the importance of peace to advance the status of women," Arad said.

And, she stressed, there are still battles to be waged on the domestic front. "Not everything is rosy," she said, citing the fact that there are more than 2,000 reported cases of battered women in Israel.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin recently announced a bill, which will be submitted to the Knesset, guaranteeing the establishment of a statutory authority for the advancement of women. The authority will be independent, with its own budget.

Preparing for Beijing will be one of the new authority's top priorities. "We need solidarity, and to safeguard and progress the status of women on a national and international level," Arad said.

American Jewish women's groups pledge support

Leaders of American Jewish women's organizations pledged their support for the Israeli delegation, along with voicing other concerns. Shirley Joseph, co-chairwoman of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council's Ad Hoc Committee for the Fourth World Conference on Women, also addressed the gathering.

"We must be a presence at Beijing, and show that Jewish women are concerned about women's issues, not only about Jewish issues," Joseph said. "And we must be prepared to respond to any problems in an appropriate way," she said.

Members of the American Jewish delegation will take part in conflict-resolution training, in the event that any confrontations should occur.

Confrontations over Israel have dominated past women's conferences. The equation of Zionism and racism, which shortly afterward became a major point of contention in the United Nations, originated at the Mexico City women's conference in 1975.

The Israeli delegation then was often met with shouts of "Death to Zionists."

In Copenhagen in 1980, Zionism was officially listed as an obstacle to peace, and therefore to the advancement of women.

It was only due to the determined efforts of the United States that Zionism was removed from this list at the 1985 conference in Nairobi. But even in Nairobi, the Israeli delegation was often heckled, or not permitted to speak.

Now, Arad is spearheading an effort for the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women to pass a positive resolution regarding Israel and the Middle East.

"Women must be a part of all levels of the peace process," she said.

"And we want special assistance to Palestinian women, so the effects of peace will be felt by the Palestinian people."

Arad cited the United Nations' former hostility toward Israel, and said it is very important that a positive resolution regarding Israel is passed. □

Hamas activists arrested in wake of foiled bombing

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, March 22 (JTA) — Palestinian police in Gaza have rounded up Hamas activists in connection with a foiled truck bombing near the southern Israeli town of Beersheba.

At the same time, Israeli police detained a Bedouin from the village of Tel Sheva, where the truck was discovered, on suspicion that he aided the two Hamas terrorists arrested in connection with the vehicle.

The incident occurred Monday night near Tel Sheva. Two policemen, suspicious of a truck bearing Gazan license plates, had approached the vehicle.

The driver of the truck hit one of the police over the head with a crowbar and then fled with the second occupant.

The truck was filled with several dozen pounds of explosives packed in cartons and plastic crates. Border police sappers were called to the site and safely blew up the vehicle.

On Tuesday, police arrested two suspects, both residents of Gaza City, who later told investigators that they were planning a suicide bombing in Beersheba.

"By finding the bomb, a major attack was aborted," Police Commissioner Assaf Hefetz told Army Radio.

Hamas was also believed responsible for Sunday's terrorist attack on a bus in Hebron, in which two Jewish settlers were killed.

In response to Monday's foiled attack, the Israeli government barred the entry of Palestinian vehicles from the Gaza Strip.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin also canceled talks on the release of Palestinian prisoners.

Earlier this month, Israel had announced that the ministerial committee on the matter would resume meeting, a confidence-building gesture in negotiations with the Palestinians.

Freih Abu Medein, the Palestinian Authority official in charge of judicial affairs, reacted angrily to Rabin's move, calling him a dictator for using the talks on prisoner releases as a way to pressure the Palestinians. □

Jordan said to protest drive to move U.S. Embassy in Israel

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, March 22 (JTA) — The Hashemite Kingdom will ask the Clinton administration to abort a drive in Congress to move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, Jordanian newspapers reported this week.

The Arabic-language dailies Ad-Dustour and Al-Aswaq cited unidentified Jordanian Foreign Ministry sources for the report.

The Jordanians were reacting to the latest congressional effort to encourage the Clinton administration to move the embassy.

In a letter delivered to Secretary of State Warren Christopher on Monday, 93 senators declared that the "U.S. Embassy belongs in Jerusalem."

The senators did not advocate an immediate transfer.

Instead, they called on the U.S. government to move its embassy "no later than" May 1999, when Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization are scheduled to complete their final-status talks.

The letter was sponsored by Sens. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.) and Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.).

A similar letter has gained significant support in the House of Representatives.

It was unclear whether King Hussein raised the topic during his meeting this week with U.S. Vice President Al Gore in Amman. □

Beilin: Ties with Oman are moving fast forward

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, March 22 (JTA) — Israel and the Persian Gulf nation of Oman are close to establishing diplomatic ties, Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin said this week.

"The obstacles which existed in the past are gradually being removed," Beilin told reporters after meeting with the Omani foreign minister, Yusef Ben Alawi, on Tuesday in Cairo.

Beilin said final details for establishing full ties still had to be worked out.

During their meeting, the two reached an agreement in principle to allow Israel's national air carrier, El Al, to fly over the Gulf Arab state's air space, the deputy foreign minister said.

Beilin also said Israeli businesspeople would visit Oman in coming weeks, and that the two countries would cooperate on water desalination projects.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin visited Oman in December in what was the first public visit by an Israeli head of government to the Gulf state. □

Interest rates to be slashed by 1.5%, says bank governor

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, March 22 (JTA) — The governor of the Bank of Israel announced a 1.5 percent cut in interest rates this week, after the government approved an economic package cutting both the budget and income taxes.

Share prices on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange responded positively to Sunday's announcement by the bank's governor, Jacob Frenkel, with both main trading indices up by more than 6 percent at the end of trading.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin welcomed the interest-rate reduction, saying it would help fight inflation and ease the tax burden on Israelis.

Economic observers called the latest developments a victory for Frenkel, who had insisted that any reduction in the interest rate be accompanied by budget and tax cuts.

The Bank of Israel's prime lending rate currently stands at about 16.3 percent. The bank has been keeping interest rates high as an anti-inflationary measure, but critics argue that the policy risks inducing a recession.

Frenkel said at a news conference in Jerusalem that the interest rate cut would take effect the last week of March.

Earlier Sunday, the government approved an economic package that will cut some \$300 million from this year's \$49 billion budget.

The government also approved some \$400 million in tax cuts that were scheduled to take effect in September of this year.

The plan also pares down the work force in government and state-run institutions by 2 percent. □

Toronto moves to deport alleged Nazi war criminal

By Gil Kezwer

TORONTO, March 22 (JTA) — Canada has launched proceedings to deport a Toronto man accused of participating in the execution of civilians in wartime Latvia.

Papers filed in Federal Court here say that Erichs Tobiass obtained Canadian citizenship by concealing his membership in the Arajs Kommando from 1941 through 1943. The Latvian auxiliary unit, subordinate to the SS, participated in the execution of the country's Jews.

Canada's Immigration Department also charged Tobiass, now in his 80s, with membership in the Waffen SS from 1943 until the end of the war. Tobiass is one of four suspected war criminals Justice Minister Allan Rock is moving to deport. The government is first moving to strip Tobiass of his Canadian citizenship.

Charges against two other suspected war criminals living in Toronto who allegedly obtained Canadian citizenship by false representation are likely to be filed before the end of March, according to Immigration spokesman Roger White.

Another Toronto-area man who is a permanent resident of Canada faces an inquiry before the appeal division of the Immigration and Refugee Board. □

Trial for murder of Greek Jew unfolds like John Le Carre novel

By Jean Cohen

ATHENS, March 22 (JTA) — A trial here involving the murder of a Greek Jew is unfolding like a John Le Carre spy novel.

A Greek arms dealer arrested earlier this month in connection with terrorist activity said in an official statement that the 1992 murder of Elias Cohen, a Greek Jewish psychiatrist, was part of an attempt by Arabs to send a message to the Mossad, Israel's intelligence agency.

George Alexakis, an arms dealer who claims to be a CIA informer, further told a magistrate earlier this month that a 1991 fatal bomb explosion in the Greek city of Patras was directly linked to Cohen's murder.

The arms dealer was scheduled to testify this week at the trial of Vassilis Danalatos, a gunsmith accused of two murders, including that of Cohen.

According to Alexakis, Cohen was believed to be a Mossad agent named Mohamed Yonis, who was involved in the Patras bombing. Yonis allegedly gave a booby trap to a Palestinian ring in Patras in order to uncover the ring, Alexakis has said.

The Patras bomb, on April 19, 1991, left seven people dead, including a Palestinian terrorist, Ahmed Hashlkeh, who had been carrying the device. Two days later, two Palestinian terror rings, one in Salonika and one in Patras, were uncovered.

Ringleader Assad Abu Al Nubani and other ring members were convicted in connection with the blast and sentenced to life imprisonment. At his trial, Nubani testified that the explosion was a Mossad provocation to smear the "Palestinian struggle."

Alexakis said that once the Arabs believed that Elias Cohen was a Mossad agent, an order was given to execute him one year to the day after the Patras incident.

On April 19, 1992, Cohen was killed while on his way to get his son from his estranged wife, Evdokia.

Despite the alleged connections with the Palestinian bombing, Greek police still believe that Danalatos, charged in the death of the psychiatrist Cohen, killed him in order to continue his affair with the doctor's wife. □

Freemasons visit camps, pay homage to Nazi resisters

By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, March 22 (JTA) — The main French organization of Freemasons, the Grand Orient de France, paid homage this week to Nazi resisters and those who died in the extermination camps by going to the sites of two concentration camps.

Some 300 Freemasons, representing groups from Europe and Africa in addition to France, were joined Sunday by representatives of Algerian women fighting fundamentalism in going to the death camp Auschwitz, in Oswiecim, Poland.

Another group of Freemasons, mostly French, went to the Natzweiler-Struthof concentration camp near the town of Natzweiler in eastern France.

The group wanted to remind the French state of its participation in the Nazi atrocities, those involved with the event said.

Freemasonry is an international secret society that has as its principles kindness, charity and mutual aid.

The modern form of the society has had a history of anti-Semitism.

At the same time, Freemasons were accused in anti-Semitic tract, "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion," of conspiring with Jews to take over the world.

During World War II, Nazis persecuted Freemasons together with Bolsheviks and Jews. □

Warsaw museum receives German films about the war

By Gil Sedan

BONN, March 22 (JTA) — The Goethe Institute has presented the Jewish Museum in Warsaw with 50 videocassettes of German films about World War II that were produced in Germany after the war's end.

At the presentation ceremony in Warsaw, the president of the Goethe Institute, Professor Hilmar Hoffmann, said the films could help battle the rise of neo-Nazism.

The Goethe Institute, which operates in 70 countries to help disseminate German culture, purchased the rights to the 50 films to hand them over to the Warsaw museum, which will use them for Holocaust studies.

The Goethe Institute and the museum have worked together in the past to document Jewish history, including a collaborative history of the Warsaw Ghetto.

The 50 films, some of which are recent productions, include "The Murderers Among Us," "Stars" and "Mein Kampf."

At the end of his speech at the presentation ceremony, Hoffmann assured the audience that the German government, along with the large majority of its citizens, would never allow neo-Nazi movements to prevail. □

U.S., Israel carry out military exercise

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, March 22 (JTA) — The United States and Israel carried out a joint military exercise this week to remove "wounded" soldiers from a U.S. 6th Fleet aircraft carrier.

U.S. Marines taking part in the exercises Sunday were flown by helicopter to Haifa's Rambam medical center.

There, they received simulated treatment from Israeli emergency medical staff, Israel Television reported.

The drill was part of a series of joint military exercises taking place in Israel this month. □

Two years after deadly attack, court sentences Jewish militants*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM, March 22 (JTA) — The Jerusalem District Court has sentenced four young supporters of Kahane Chai, an outlawed Jewish extremist group, to prison terms for carrying out a deadly grenade attack in Jerusalem's Old City.

One person was killed and seven were wounded when the grenade was thrown on Nov. 16, 1992, into a crowd of Arab shoppers in the Old City.

According to the charge sheet, the four defendants had planned the attack to avenge the death of Rabbi Meir Kahane, founder of the Kach movement. Kahane was assassinated in New York City in 1990.

After the sentences were handed down, the defendants left the courtroom smiling and handcuffed, as family members, friends and supporters cheered. Their names were not made public because they were minors at the time of the attack.

The father of the youngest defendant said his then 15-year-old son and his friends were mistreated during interrogation, and that confessions were extracted by force.

His son, who called news organizations at the time to claim responsibility for the attack, received a 10-year sentence as an accomplice to the killing.

The youth who confessed to throwing the grenade was given a 15-year prison term. He was also the only one of the four defendants who said he did not regret his actions.

A third defendant was sentenced to 10 years in prison for acting as an accomplice.

The fourth, who was the leader of the group but backed down at the last minute and stayed home the day of the attack, was sentenced to five years.

Judge Ya'acov Bazak said that in determining the sentences, he had taken into account the defendants' ages.

At the same time, he said, the court has to stress the gravity of the attack so "we do not turn into a second Lebanon in which this one kills that one and that one kills this one until they bring their country to ruin."

Defense lawyer Jonathan Goldberg said the four defendants were expected to appeal.

Kahane Chai and its sister group Kach were outlawed last year after a Kach activist, Dr. Baruch Goldstein, killed 29 Muslim worshipers at Hebron's Tomb of the Patriarchs. □

Right-wing lawmaker removed from prayer on Temple Mount*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM, March 22 (JTA) — A right-wing Knesset member was forcibly removed from the Temple Mount on Wednesday, after he tried to pray there against police orders.

Shaul Gutman of Moledet, which supports the transfer of Arabs from Jewish land, was stopped by police when he tried to stand in prayer on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem's Old City.

The incident occurred as Israel's Antiquities Authority rejected a Palestinian appeal to stop excavations around the Temple Mount. The authority denied Muslim officials' claims that the excavations were causing structural damage to the Al-Aksa mosque and other Arab buildings in the area.

The dig is part of an Israeli project to uncover parts of the city dating to the period of the ancient Jewish Temple. Al-Aksa, Islam's third holiest shrine, is built over the site of the destroyed Temple. □

Survey: Youths not as eager to serve in IDF combat units*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM, March 22 (JTA) — An Israel Defense Force survey has found that Israeli youths are not as motivated as in the past to serve in field and combat units.

The survey of high school students also found that even though the desire to serve in these units has dropped, overall motivation to serve in the army has remained at a high level.

The report, conducted by the army's behavioral science division, attributed the drop to social and political trends in Israel.

The findings did not indicate a crisis regarding service in the combat units.

But developments must be watched and addressed, the survey said.

In response, an IDF spokesman said the findings in the annual survey were not unusual.

The spokesman said that in comparison to this year's survey of Israeli youths, a slight rise in motivation was noted in 1993. □

Hezbollah fires grenades at forces in security zone*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM, March 22 (JTA) — Heavy fighting was reported Monday in southern Lebanon, as Iranian-backed Hezbollah fighters fired rocket-propelled grenades at an Israeli army patrol in the security zone.

There were no reports of injuries.

In response, troops from the Israel Defense Force and the South Lebanon Army shelled Jabal al-Dahr, a mountainous region used by the fundamentalist Hezbollah movement to launch attacks on the southern Lebanon security zone.

Israeli helicopters also bombarded infiltration routes used by the gunmen to enter the southern Lebanon security zone.

Meanwhile, sources in Lebanon said Israeli gunboats fired on Lebanese fishing boats off the port of Tyre. Fishermen were fired on after they ventured less than a mile from the coast, reports said.

The fishermen claimed that Israel has reimposed a naval blockade of Lebanon's southern ports.

Israel imposed a blockade off the coast of Lebanon in mid-February. It lasted for one month before being lifted. □

Israelis soon can shop via TV*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM, March 22 (JTA) — Israel's first TV home shopping network is scheduled to be open for business within six months.

A consortium of companies had competed for, and won, their participation in the television home shopping network.

Tuvia Saar, the joint-managing director of the group, said the network would bring Israeli consumers into a new era.

"Instead of hurtling into traffic jams and fighting for parking places, you can sit at home, watch the TV messages regarding our products and just make a phone call."

The purchases will either be sent to the consumers by mail or be picked up by consumers at one of Israel's major bookstore chains. □