

**NEWS AT A GLANCE**

■ **Two Israeli security officers and a Palestinian truck driver were killed in a collision and shooting incident in the Gaza Strip, officials said. Two Israel Defense Force soldiers were seriously wounded. Israeli and Palestinian officials gave conflicting accounts of the incident. [Page 3]**

■ **Israel and Syria were reportedly near agreement on the nature of security arrangements that would be implemented as part of a peace treaty between the two countries. As talks continued in Washington, Israeli officials sounded more optimistic than the Syrians. [Page 3]**

■ **The National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council called on the U.S. Parole Commission to parole Jonathan Pollard. Sentenced to life in prison in 1987 for spying for Israel, Pollard is up for parole in November.**

■ **Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin flew unexpectedly to Germany, prompting speculation there were new developments in the case of missing Israeli airman Ron Arad. But Israeli officials said Rabin's visit with Chancellor Helmut Kohl would focus on the peace process and Israel's ties with the European Union.**

■ **The launching of Israel's Gurwin-1 satellite by Russia failed when it crashed into the sea after takeoff. The \$3.5 million project was to have served as a test platform for a dozen Israeli high-tech firms, including a project for a space-based computer network. [Page 3]**

■ **A Madrid court acquitted a Syrian arms dealer who had been charged with aiding the Palestinian terrorists who hijacked the Italian cruise ship Achille Lauro in 1985. The court said it had insufficient evidence to convict him of piracy, kidnapping and murder. [Page 2]**

■ **The World Zionist Organization's newly elected chairman declared that the organization's \$745,000 budget deficit is unacceptable and has vowed to eliminate duplication and inefficiency. Meanwhile, the Jewish Agency's comptroller report exposed a series of financial irregularities. [Page 4]**

**FOCUS ON ISSUES****Looming welfare cuts may decimate programs for Jewish poor, immigrants**

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, March 29 (JTA) — Avraham has been in and out of psychiatric hospitals most of his life.

But for the last five years the energetic, rangy 40-year-old, whose head is covered by a cap in keeping with his Orthodox observance, has spent most of his days at a treatment program in the Brighton Beach section of Brooklyn.

There, he and 61 other mentally ill adults, three-quarters of them Jewish, attend group therapy, learn crafts, do light clerical work and socialize. They are closely monitored by therapists, who keep their illnesses at bay with a steady course of medication and counseling.

"This program keeps me out of the hospital and off the streets," said Avraham, whose last name and specific illness have not been used. "I need this program badly. I thank God that I'm not homeless, and it's because of this program."

But this program is likely to be eviscerated by the changes to the Medicaid system proposed by the Republican majority in Congress and by New York Gov. George Pataki, also a Republican. Payments from Medicaid, the health insurance program for the poor that is jointly funded by the federal and state governments, account for 90 percent of the program's budget.

The other 10 percent comes from the UJA-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, which has been cutting back funding to its services beneficiaries by as much as 40 percent over the past several years, according to the executive of one such beneficiary.

The funding cuts faced by Avraham's program, Brooklyn Rehabilitation and Education in the Art of Living reflect those faced by Jewish-run social service programs nationwide.

**Administrators struggle to preserve funding**

These programs include those aimed at the poor, the ill, the elderly and the newly arrived on these shores. The threats have program administrators struggling to find a way to preserve as much of their funding as possible.

On March 20, several of Brooklyn R.E.A.L.'s clients went on a lobbying trip to Albany, N.Y., organized by the New York Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services.

Brooklyn R.E.A.L. is one of the board's dozens of programs, which include residences for mentally and emotionally impaired children, counseling services for people with AIDS and three shelters for battered women.

Nina, 53, is a client at Brooklyn R.E.A.L., and went to explain to state legislators why the program is so important to her.

The petite, gray-haired woman wearing bright red lipstick was hospitalized 11 times before she joined Brooklyn R.E.A.L. eight years ago. Since then, she said, she has had just two stints in psychiatric wards.

Without the close monitoring and structure that the program provides, many patients would be more likely to go off their medications and suffer acute crises that would require hospitalization, said Nancy Loener, director of Brooklyn R.E.A.L. "We know that hospital care is more expensive than community-based care," she said.

In addition, Medicaid is likely to follow the national trend toward managed care, meaning that the number and duration of hospital stays will be limited.

"We've already seen situations in recent months where it's difficult to get patients in psychiatric crisis admitted to the hospital, situations where they are talking about suicide and can't control their impulses," said Loener.

"People in acute distress will end up calling 911 and using police time rather than getting the help they need," said Loener.

Hospitalization for a mentally ill patient in a psychiatric ward costs \$106,000 per year, according to Karen Roth, director of services for the adult mentally ill at the Jewish Board. By contrast, the entire budget for Brooklyn R.E.A.L. is about \$400,000 a year, she said.

The threatened cuts in welfare and social services may also affect other Jewish-sponsored programs. A Jewish soup kitchen and drop-in center

run out of a synagogue basement in Manhattan's Chelsea section serves about 30 homeless and near-homeless Jewish men and women each day.

On a recent Friday afternoon, the people eating a kosher lunch of fish and spaghetti included Zemira, a talkative 28-year-old woman who lives in a nearby YMCA, and Barry, a bookish 46-year-old who, before mental illness turned his life upside down, had studied to be an accountant.

"Coming here gives me back a sense of community," Zemira said, adding that she enjoys the Friday afternoon Shabbat celebrations and parties for Jewish holidays. "A lot of people who are homeless don't have that sense of community."

After a stay in a psychiatric hospital and seven months of living on the street, Barry has spent the last four years living in a flophouse, where 200 men sleep on beds literally caged in by fencing.

Social worker Laura Feldstein's current mission is to get Barry out of the flophouse conditions, which she terms "subhuman," and into a renovated single-room-occupancy facility in Times Square.

She is one of two part-time social workers on staff at the center who help get these Jews into shelters and single-room-occupancy hotels, help them apply for welfare and Social Security benefits, do some counseling and take them on occasional field trips to places such as the New York Botanical Gardens.

#### **Immigrants would be devastated by cuts**

The soup kitchen itself, a project of the Educational Alliance based on New York's Lower East Side, is privately funded. This enables the program to be tailored to the needs of the Jewish homeless, most of whom are mentally ill or substance abusers.

The program has lost several staff positions to funding cuts in the last several years, according to Feldstein. And yet she expects to see an increase in the number of Jews who need the center's help, once public funding for other social services is cut.

On another front in the ongoing debate over cutbacks to the poor is the plight of Russian Jewish emigres.

The overwhelming majority of Jews who come to the United States each year from the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and Iran enter the country as refugees.

Legislation passed this week by the House of Representatives would allow only refugees older than 75 and those who become citizens to collect welfare beyond five years.

The immigrant community and those dedicated to supporting them would be devastated by the cuts.

"When the government accepts immigrants, they are responsible to support these people," said Boris Kaplan, 49, who arrived in New York from St. Petersburg three years ago.

"There is a lot of floating anxiety out there among the emigres about the cuts," according to Pauline Bilus, director of Project Action for Russian Immigrants at the Shorefront YMHA in Brooklyn's Brighton Beach section.

Project ARI includes English-language classes, an array of social services and courses to aid acculturation.

Anticipating being cut from the welfare rolls on which so many of them are dependent, hundreds of Russian Jews are rushing to become citizens.

At the Shorefront Y, recent emigres from the former Soviet Union fill every space available in the English as a Second Language/Citizenship classes.

About 1,000 immigrants attend the classes each week, and more than 1,000 more are on a waiting list.

The classes are funded by a combination of federal,

state and city money, and a recent state memo indicated that funding for the English classes may be cut by as much as 50 percent, Bilus said.

Eligible to apply for citizenship after five years of residence in the United States, the immigrants are crowding into tests that, once passed, expedite their interview process with Immigration and Naturalization Service officials.

Twice a month a citizenship exam is given at the Shorefront Y and at another Brooklyn location. Since the Y began the testing 10 months ago, 1,000 people have taken the exams there, according to Bilus.

According to the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, another 1,000 have been reached by the citizenship workshops and test-preparation the agency has offered in 11 cities in the last year.

"There's a lot of anti-immigrant feeling out there, and the Russian immigrants are eager to become Americans," said Bilus.

Even before becoming eligible to apply for citizenship, and before they are eligible to vote, those at the Shorefront Y are exercising one of their democratic rights: the right to make their voices heard.

They are lobbying state senators about their concerns by writing them letters.

Boris Velednitsky, who came to the United States in 1993, wrote to New York state Sen. Martin Solomon on March 20. The Russian native wrote in English: "I ask you to give for me possible to study English and then I will be look for job. I want to work, to pay taxes and help other people. I hope that you can help me." □

#### **Spanish court acquits Syrian of links to Achille Lauro ordeal**

*By Mitchell Danow*

NEW YORK, March 29 (JTA) — A Madrid court has acquitted a Syrian arms dealer who was charged with aiding the Palestinian terrorists who hijacked the Italian cruise ship Achille Lauro in 1985, according to the World Jewish Congress.

Monzer al-Kassar was arrested in June 1992 on charges that he had supplied Kalashnikov assault rifles and grenades to the hijackers. He was freed on \$16 million bail in 1993 until the start of the trial earlier this year.

The charge sheet also accused him of involvement in piracy, kidnapping and murder.

On Oct. 7, 1985, terrorists belonging to the Palestine Liberation Front hijacked the Achille Lauro, which was on a Mediterranean cruise from Genoa, Italy, with a large number of American tourists aboard.

The terrorists, who seized the vessel in Egyptian waters, held the passengers and crew hostage for three days. Leon Klinghoffer, an American Jew confined to a wheelchair, was shot to death by one of the hijackers and thrown overboard.

The prosecutor in the case, who had sought a prison term of 29 years for Kassar, attempted to prove that the arms dealer had helped Mohammed (Abul) Abbas, who was said to have masterminded the hijacking.

Kassar denied that he ever knew or met Abbas. But a U.S. drug enforcement agent who testified at the trial produced a photo, taken in the course of a separate investigation into drug smuggling, showing Kassar and Abbas together.

The court nonetheless found Kassar innocent, citing insufficient evidence.

The three-week trial ended Feb. 1, but the verdict was only made public this week.

Leaders of the Spanish Jewish community, who monitored the trial, reported the court's findings to the World Jewish Congress. □

**Two Israelis, one Palestinian killed in a Gaza confrontation***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM, March 29 (JTA) — Two Israeli security officers and a Palestinian truck driver were killed in a collision and shooting incident Wednesday in the Gaza Strip, Israeli and Palestinian officials said.

Two Israel Defense Force soldiers were seriously wounded.

Israeli and Palestinian officials gave conflicting accounts of the incident.

According to the Israelis, an IDF officer and a police officer were killed when a Palestinian truck driver veered into an Israeli army jeep that was part of a convoy traveling to the Jewish settlement of Netzarim in the Gaza Strip. Witnesses said the driver jumped out of the truck and began shooting. Israeli soldiers returned fire, killing the driver, Israeli officials said.

Marwan Kanafani, spokesman for Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat, maintained that the collision was an accident and that the Israelis had planted a weapon next to the dead driver.

Meanwhile, in the Knesset, the National Religious Party and Tsomet introduced a no-confidence motion in the government, citing the deteriorating security situation. □

**Syria, Israel plow ahead amid reports of progress***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM, March 29 (JTA) — Israel and Syria are reportedly near agreement on the nature of security arrangements that would be implemented as part of a peace treaty between the two countries.

With ambassadors from the two countries in their second week of negotiations in Washington, Israeli officials sounded optimistic about the talks, which had long been stalled. The Syrians, however, were less upbeat.

On Tuesday, Israeli officials said the two sides had reached oral understandings that would serve as the basis for future talks on military arrangements, according to Israeli news reports.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres echoed that appraisal Wednesday, saying that he was optimistic that the two sides could agree on the principles of security arrangements by the end of this week. "There is some argument over the phrasing" of security arrangements, Peres told reporters. He added, "Maybe we can find a common language, which will open the way for negotiations between military officials."

But the official media in Syria charged Israel with painting too promising a picture of the talks in Washington.

The daily Al-Ba'ath, the official organ of Syria's ruling Ba'ath Party, said Wednesday that it expected the Washington talks with Israel to remain deadlocked because Israel has not changed its position on withdrawal from the Golan Heights. It also dismissed earlier reports that Syria was planning to evict from its soil 10 radical organizations that stand opposed to the peace process.

In addition, both Israel and Syria dismissed a report in The Washington Times earlier this week, which stated that President Clinton had made secret promises to Syrian President Hafez Assad to take Damascus off the U.S. list of states that support terrorism, in return for its renewing peace talks with Israel.

Israeli Ambassador to Washington Itamar Rabinovich resumed negotiations with his Syrian counterpart, Walid Muallem, in Washington on March 20 after Assad abruptly broke off the negotiations in December.

Top military officials from both countries had participated in the December talks, and may rejoin the negotiations, which cover security arrangements on the Golan Heights if and when the two sides reach an agreement.

Dennis Ross, the Clinton administration's special coordinator on the Middle East, is due in Jerusalem and Damascus as early as next week to help move the process forward.

Meanwhile, in Cairo, visiting Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev said he discussed new ideas Wednesday to revive the Middle East peace process at a meeting with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

Kozyrev would not elaborate on his proposals, but said he would present them to Syrian leaders when he goes to Damascus, the next stop on a Middle East tour that also includes visits to Israel and Lebanon. □

**Lost in the sea, not space: Israeli satellite misses mark***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM, March 29 (JTA) — An Israeli satellite launched on an historic mission from Russia this week never made it to its destination.

Space officials said Wednesday that the \$3.5 million satellite, which was three years in the making and was to serve as a prototype for future communications satellites, crashed into the sea in a far eastern region of Russia shortly after takeoff Tuesday. Israeli scientists have been unable to make contact with the satellite, which had been launched on a converted Russian nuclear missile.

The satellite, known as the Gurwin-1, was built by scientists at the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology. It was named for Joseph Gurwin, a Lithuanian-born businessman now living in New York, who had contributed \$1 million to the project.

It was due to pass over Israel every two hours and stay in orbit for three years. It was to serve as a test platform for a dozen Israeli high-tech firms, including a project for a space-based computer network that was intended to serve 1,000 users.

Because of its planned orbit, as well as fears that launch debris would land on neighboring Arab countries, the satellite could not be launched from Israel.

The failed launch cast doubt on the Russian military's plans to use modified missiles as space launchers for commercial deals with foreign partners.

In Israel, Professor Giora Shaviv, head of the Technion's center for space research, said even though the satellite was probably unrecoverable, the knowledge gained in research and development was not lost. □

**Hunger strikers still protest talks***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM, March 29 (JTA) — Israeli political and religious figures this week urged participants in a hunger strike, now in its 43rd day, to end the vigil against the government's peace negotiations with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The strikers have refused to end their protest, which is taking place opposite the Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem.

Israel's Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau visited the demonstrators' tent Tuesday and issued a religious ruling that called for an end to the strike.

Knesset opposition members, led by Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu, also visited the site. Netanyahu called on the protesters to end their fast, and asked them to take part in activities the opposition has planned. □

**Hebron settler renews call to bring down government***By Uriel Masad*

JERUSALEM, March 29 (JTA) — A leader of the Israeli settlers movement has renewed his call for a massive campaign of civil disobedience to bring down the government of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Zvi Katzover, head of the local council of Kiryat Arba, said what was needed was "a massive campaign of civil disobedience in the full sense of the word: Block the roads, put a siege on government offices — all within the boundaries of the law, of course."

"All we need is 10,000 people who will respond to our 'reserve duty call-ups' for 60 to 90 days, and this government will fall," he said.

Katzover made a similar statement a week ago, after terrorists ambushed a bus near Hebron, killing two Israelis and wounding five. Within days after the March 19 attack, the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas movement claimed responsibility for the shootings.

Katzover spoke on Army Radio after convening an emergency meeting of the settlers council of Hebron and neighboring Kiryat Arba. The meeting had been called to discuss the future of a continued Jewish presence in Hebron, where about 500 Israelis live among some 100,000 Palestinians.

The meeting dealt with the settlers' opposition to an eventual Israeli army withdrawal from the West Bank, a move called for under the terms of the Palestinian self-rule accord, but which has been postponed because of repeated terror attacks on Israelis.

The settlers also discussed a plan recently suggested by Environment Minister Yossi Sarid for evacuating all Jewish settlers from the heart of Hebron.

**Sharon voices grave reservations**

Attending the settlers meeting, Likud Knesset member Ariel Sharon voiced grave reservations about the impending army pullout from the West Bank.

The army withdrawal "would endanger not only the Jewish settlers, but also the Jewish citizens of Israel who live close to the Green Line," said Sharon, referring to the pre-1967 borders.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Sharon, a former defense minister, alleged that the Rabin government hates West Bank settlers. "We are witnessing a hatred that is cultivated by the government and by its prime minister with the aim of isolating the Jewish settlers, and making some of them want to leave the place," Sharon charged.

Rabin, during an interview on Israel Television last Friday, charged previous Likud-led governments with creating "perpetual friction" by establishing Jewish settlements in or near Arab towns in the West Bank.

Rabin also said it "requires more soldiers than settlers" to provide security for the settlements.

Leaders of the settlers movement met last Friday with Maj. Gen. Ilan Biran, the commander of the Israel Defense Force's central command, including the West Bank, to discuss security and defense issues.

Although nothing new was achieved, a military source said it was significant that the meeting took place at all, especially in the wake of the harsh accusations leveled by the settlers against the army in general, and against Biran in particular, in the aftermath of last week's terrorist attack in Hebron.

Along with concerns about an eventual army withdrawal, the council members have also had to confront a recent demand by the Ministry of Internal Affairs for the removal of one council member, Baruch Marzel.

The ministry has demanded Marzel's removal

because, it says, several convictions for "offenses of moral turpitude" disqualify him from serving on the council.

Marzel is leader of the militant anti-Arab Kach movement, which was outlawed last year after Jewish settler Dr. Baruch Goldstein killed 29 Palestinians during prayers at the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron. □

**Burg makes vow to contain WZO's massive budget deficit***By Uriel Masad*

TEL AVIV, March 29 (JTA) — Declaring that the World Zionist Organization's \$745,000 budget deficit is unacceptable, the organization's newly elected chairman has vowed to eliminate duplication and inefficiency.

"I do not intend to head a body whose budget is built in this way, and I will not agree to run a system operating at a deficit, with duplicate systems and organizational inefficiencies," Avraham Burg said at a WZO Executive meeting last week.

Burg, a Labor member of Knesset, was recently elected acting chairman of the WZO and the Jewish Agency for Israel. He will officially be named chairman in June.

The WZO undertakes Jewish educational efforts in the Diaspora and provides the mechanism for Diaspora Zionist organizations to participate in Jewish Agency decisions. The Jewish Agency is the primary recipient of funds raised for Israel by the United Jewish Appeal in the United States.

The WZO's annual budget, which it receives from the Jewish Agency, now stands at \$30 million.

To cope with the deficit, Burg appointed an ad hoc committee, headed by Agency and WZO Treasurer Hanan Ben Yehuda, to examine ways to deal with the existing deficit and to recommend cuts in WZO activities and operations.

Burg instructed the treasurer to freeze all the organization's financial reserves until the committee submits its report to the Zionist Executive. The 1996 budget will be structured according to new guidelines based on the organization's needs and priorities, Burg said.

Budget preparation and planning procedures will be re-evaluated, he said, adding that sanctions may be imposed on anyone who does not meet the new guidelines.

In a related development, the Jewish Agency's comptroller report has exposed a series of financial irregularities at the agency that reflected poor administration, improper management and bookkeeping, and lack of accountability.

The report, which was to be submitted to the agency's plenum in June, was leaked last week to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

According to the report, Renana Guttman, agency comptroller, found that all the irregularities occurred between 1992 and 1993. The findings apparently did not involve any criminal activities, so Guttman has not asked that they be handed over to the police for investigation.

But Ben Yehuda said all the improprieties have already been rectified.

Sources close to the process who did not wish to be identified suggested that the comptroller's report was leaked as part of political power struggles within the Jewish Agency.

Burg, who was attending an aliyah emissaries conference in Moscow, reacted to the Ha'aretz report in a written statement: "Ever since I entered this job, I am surprised to discover every morning the pin of a hand grenade — past matters that have not been dealt with and procedures that need rectifying." Burg said he intends to "bring about a swift correction of all improprieties." □