

NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **Israel and Syria resumed peace negotiations in Washington** with meetings between the countries' ambassadors to the United States. The talks focused on security arrangements on the Golan Heights, according to officials. [Page 2]

■ **The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee sent a medical team to Rwanda** in the wake of the latest violence to rock the region. The move is the latest JDC-led effort to provide humanitarian relief to Rwandan refugees. [Page 4]

■ **Israeli security forces reportedly detained seven members of the Palestinian security service in Hebron.** The forces took the action because under the terms of the Palestinian self-rule accord, Palestinian security forces are restricted to operating in the autonomous areas of the Gaza Strip and West Bank Jericho enclave.

■ **Most Jordanians oppose normalized relations with Israel until it also concludes peace accords with the Palestinians, Syria and Lebanon,** according to Jordan's recently appointed first ambassador to Israel. [Page 3]

■ **Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin announced that three basic-training bases in the West Bank will be moved inside Israel proper.** But he stressed that the bases were not being dismantled. [Page 3]

■ **Egypt may be bluffing in its stated opposition to an indefinite renewal of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty,** according to an Israeli diplomat. Signatories to the treaty are midway through a four-week conference to determine the future of the treaty. [Page 2]

■ **The sister of Alisa Flatow, the 20-year-old American college student who was killed in a suicide bomb attack in the Gaza Strip, is returning to Israel** to meet with some of the recipients of her sister's organs. [Page 4]

■ **Israeli Health Minister Ephraim Sneh signed an accord dealing with medicine in Cairo.** The agreement, signed with his Egyptian counterpart, Ali Fatah, calls for an exchange of information as well as an exchange of professional delegations.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**Jewish studies in Germany: Programs attract non-Jews**

By Miriam Widman

BERLIN, April 26 (JTA) — Julie Bouchain first became interested in things Jewish as a result of learning about the Holocaust in school.

When it came to explaining German atrocities against the Jews, she says, teachers at her Hamburg high school were very thorough.

"It was explained all too well," said the 27-year-old university student. "In fifth grade, we were first shown pictures of mountains of corpses. I think we were too young for that."

But the lessons left an impression, which only deepened when the events of the Holocaust were brought up year after year in school.

It got to the point that Bouchain, who grew up Catholic, wished that she were Jewish.

After high school she went to Israel, learned Hebrew and stayed for two years, working in a home for the disabled.

While in Israel, Bouchain also became interested in Islamic culture. And when she came back to her native Hamburg, she enrolled in an Islamic studies program.

But when the Moses Mendelssohn Institute of Jewish Studies opened last year in Potsdam, near Berlin, she enrolled there in an effort to give her experiences in Israel an academic foundation.

Bouchain is one of a growing number of non-Jewish university students who are enrolled in Jewish study programs throughout Germany.

There are now more than six such programs in Germany. Three additional programs have either been announced or opened in what was East Germany, where the Jewish community in the days before the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall amounted to a few hundred people, most of them elderly, out of a total population of 17 million.

Academics say the programs could not survive without non-Jewish enrollment.

Critics say German Jews uninterested in their heritage

The program at the College for Jewish Studies in Heidelberg, for example, began with 16 students. As of 1993, there were 130 enrolled, but only 22 of them were Jews.

Why would someone who is not Jewish enroll in a Jewish studies program — in Germany, of all places?

"Students discover an interest in Jewish studies as part of our German identity," says Christoph Schulte, an academic assistant at the Mendelssohn Institute.

Of the 40 students in that program, only a third are Jewish. The faculty has a similar breakdown of Jewish and non-Jews.

Schulte, a philosopher who describes his background as "liberal Catholic," said his interest in Jewish studies developed when his parents took him as a child to visit Israel, where he first became acquainted with Jewish culture.

Katharina Gruber, 27, and Thomas Renspies, 35, both got interested in Jewish studies through books.

"I didn't know any Jews growing up," said Gruber, who was raised in the Black Forest region of western Germany. "How could I have? There are very few Jews in Germany."

Both Gruber and Renspies, who were raised in the Protestant faith, are students at the Heidelberg program, which was founded in 1979 with support from Germany's Jewish community.

Gruber is specializing in Jewish literature. Renspies has chosen a more esoteric path of study, especially for someone who is not Jewish.

He is concentrating on the analysis of rabbinical texts and is now writing his master's thesis on "Kingdoms in Rabbinical Literature."

Critics within the Jewish community, such as retired Rabbi Ernst Stein, say German Jews are not interested in their own heritage. This lack of interest explains why there are not more of them enrolled in Jewish studies programs, he said.

According to varying estimates, there are between 40,000 to 80,000

Jews now living in Germany, which has a total population of 80 million. Even using the higher estimate, Jews account for only 0.1 percent of the overall population.

But those in the Jewish studies programs say that Germany's Jews are no different from their non-Jewish counterparts. "We live in a secular world," said Schulte. "Most Christians are not religious. Why should the Jews be different?" □

Is Egypt bluffing on NPT? Some say it might sign on

By Larry Yudelson

UNITED NATIONS, April 26 (JTA) — Egypt may only be bluffing in its stated opposition to an indefinite renewal of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, according to an Israeli diplomat.

The 25-year-old treaty is now at a crossroads as its 178 signatory countries are gathered here for a four-week conference to determine how to renew it.

The treaty bans all but the five nations who had nuclear weapons in 1970, when the treaty first took effect, from acquiring them. The treaty permits the United States, Russia, France, Great Britain and China to remain nuclear powers, but mandates that these nations pursue the transfer of nuclear technology and nuclear weapons disarmament.

The conference can vote to renew the treaty indefinitely, effectively making the treaty permanent, or pursue another option, such as renewing it for another 25-year term.

Bucking strong American diplomatic pressure, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amre Moussa last week told the treaty review conference that his country could not support the indefinite renewal of the treaty.

For months, Egyptian officials had threatened to withhold support for indefinite renewal because of its insistence that Israel sign on.

Israel has refused to sign the treaty, though it has recently promised to begin negotiating the creation of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East — but only after there is a comprehensive regional peace that includes Iran, Iraq and Libya.

Israel is widely believed to have developed an arsenal of hundreds of nuclear weapons, but its formal position is that it will not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons into the Middle East.

After months of Egyptian threats, which brought Israeli-Egyptian relations to one of their tensest levels in years, Moussa came before the NPT convention, saying the treaty "is incapable of safeguarding the national security of Egypt" without Israel as a member.

Israel, which is maintaining only an observer presence at the conference, expressed its disappointment with the Egyptians.

"The Egyptian statement was quite tough," said an Israeli diplomat, who asked not to be identified.

At the same time, this diplomat suggested, Egypt might be bluffing.

"I don't think that was the last word of the Egyptians," he said. "I feel somewhere down the line they will change their position" and support indefinite renewal of the treaty.

The other alternative being considered is to renew the treaty for another 25-year term. But because there are no provisions in the current treaty for subsequent renewals, its future beyond the year 2020 would be uncertain.

Regardless of how Egypt decides to vote on the treaty renewal when the conference concludes in mid-May, a top Egyptian official acknowledged that his country is committed to its provisions.

"If the treaty is extended and even if Egypt

doesn't vote for it, we are bound by it," Egyptian Ambassador Ahmed Maher El Sayed said this week.

Speaking at a forum sponsored by the National Arab American Association in Washington on Tuesday, El Sayed dismissed Israeli concerns over the nuclear weapon programs of Iran and Iraq.

"Iran does not present any nuclear danger and at the moment, it is under constant observation by the United States," he said, noting that Iran is a signatory to the NPT.

"If we believe that it is cheating, take Iran to the Security Council. Take Iran to the NPT powers," the ambassador said.

"But there is no recourse against Israel," he maintained.

The Egyptian criticism of the treaty, and of Israel, was echoed by other Arab nations, including Sudan, Algeria, Lebanon and even Jordan, whose strong condemnation of Israel surprised many here.

Jordan's Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti, in his address to the convention last week, said Israel's refusal to accede to the treaty "should impede confidence-building and deepen psychological barriers among states and people in the region and thus abort progress so far achieved in the ongoing peace process."

He added, "Jordan views it [as] impossible to convince the peoples in the region of Israel's credibility, seriousness and desire for just, durable and comprehensive peace in the Middle East" unless Israel joins the NPT.

Israeli officials said they were disappointed by the harsh tone taken by the Arabs.

But despite the attention being paid to Israel's nuclear policies by the Arab states, an Israeli diplomat said the real question that would determine the future of the treaty is "whether the nuclear weapon states will come up with some concrete answers to non-aligned states" on issues such as security assurances, a nuclear test-ban treaty and the ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament.

Indeed, the Jordanian foreign minister spent more of his speech addressing these issues than he did addressing the Israeli question.

Another indication that the Israeli issue will blow over came at a briefing by an Iranian diplomat at the conference this week. According to a person present at the briefing, the Iranian was asked what impact the Arab League's efforts to make an issue of the Israeli nuclear capability would have.

"We're happy to see that the Arab League is getting together," the Iranian reportedly replied, "and it should be applying pressure to Israel. But will the Arab League position succeed? I doubt it." □

(JTA correspondent Matthew Dorf in Washington contributed to this report.)

Israeli-Syrian talks resume

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON, April 26 (JTA) — Under the usual cloak of secrecy, Israel and Syria resumed peace negotiations here this week, Israeli and U.S. officials confirmed.

At an undisclosed location here, Israel's ambassador to the United States, Itamar Rabinovich, and his Syrian counterpart, Walid Muallem, met Tuesday and Wednesday to discuss security arrangements for Israel's withdrawal from the Golan Heights, officials said.

Israeli withdrawal from the Golan is expected to be part of any peace agreement with Syria.

Secretary of State Warren Christopher sat in on the talks on Tuesday, a State Department official said.

Israeli sources said the talks are expected to continue through next week. □

IDF bases to be transferred from West Bank to Israel proper*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM, April 26 (JTA) — Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has announced that three basic-training bases in the West Bank will be moved inside Israel.

But Rabin, stressing that the bases were not being dismantled, said other army personnel would be moved to the bases.

"This is not an evacuation with the intent of not returning with other forces," Rabin said Wednesday. "Instead of basic-training bases, these will be bases and units of the Israeli army."

Health Minister Ephraim Sneh said the changes were connected to the Israeli army's planned redeployment in the West Bank, which, along with holding Palestinian elections, represents the next phase for expanding Palestinian autonomy under the terms of the self-rule accord.

A senior Israel Defense Force source was quoted by Israel Radio as saying that the plan to transfer conscripts was just that — a plan that has not yet been implemented. The IDF estimated the cost of the transfer at some \$23 million, with the move taking place over the course of eight months.

The Palestinian Authority responded to the announcement by calling for a full IDF withdrawal from the territories, not just three training bases.

Finance Minister Avraham Shohat was due to meet next week with senior Defense Ministry and IDF officials to discuss funds needed for the planned redeployment of troops from the West Bank.

The Defense Ministry has asked for an additional \$330 million to pay for the redeployment.

At a Cabinet meeting Wednesday, the government also discussed a proposal for providing millions of dollars of economic aid to the Palestinian Authority.

The discussions took place after the IDF chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, warned earlier in the week that PLO leader Yasser Arafat could be toppled by Israel's ongoing partial closure of the territories.

Shahak said the closure could breed hatred among Palestinians cut off from jobs within Israel — and that this in turn could lead to more terror attacks against Israelis.

He also said the economic hardships caused by the closure could undermine support for the self-rule government.

Economic Minister Shimon Shetreet suggested speeding up delivery of aid that Israel pledged to the PLO over a five-year period, and turning over hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes collected from Palestinians.

Police Minister Moshe Shahal proposed a long-term loan to the Palestinians that would spur employment and investment. He put the cost at about \$300 million a year. "It is clear that the closure has caused economic problems in Gaza," said Environment Minister Yossi Sarid. "The present situation is totally unbearable and unacceptable. We have to decide — either we pay by security concessions — or we pay in cash." □

Ambassador: Most Jordanians oppose relations with Israel*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM, April 26 (JTA) — Most Jordanians are opposed to normalized relations with Israel until it also concludes peace accords with the Palestinians, Syria and Lebanon, Jordan's newly appointed ambassador to Israel said this week.

Speaking to reporters in Tel Aviv on Tuesday, Marwan Muasher said "most Jordanians' support is

lukewarm and guarded at best" for the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty signed in October.

Muasher, who took up his post as Jordan's first ambassador to Israel earlier this month, said most Jordanians want to see how the issues of Palestinian refugees and the future of Jerusalem and Jewish settlements is resolved before they would back the treaty.

A large proportion of the Jordanian population is of Palestinian origin and many have relatives living in the West Bank.

"Without successful conclusion of agreements on the Palestinian track in particular, but also on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks, we cannot hope to create the proper environment under which peace between peoples will prosper," Muasher said.

Earlier this week, Jordan's association of dentists said it was sticking to a decision to ban members from treating Israelis other than in emergencies.

Similar directives against having dealings with Israelis have already been issued by other Jordanian professional associations, including those serving writers, doctors, lawyers and engineers.

In each case, the directives reflected opposition to normalizing ties with Israel by establishing contacts through their professional fields.

Muasher, after speaking with reporters, later visited Palestinian official Faisal Hussein at Orient House, which despite ongoing Israeli opposition, serves as the Palestine Liberation Organization's de facto headquarters in eastern Jerusalem.

Muasher described the visit as unofficial and said it was not intended to antagonize anyone.

Muasher's comments regarding the Israeli-Jordanian peace process came as officials and business leaders from Israel, Jordan and the United States were attending a conference in the Jordanian capital of Amman to discuss the development of the Jordan Rift Valley separating Israel and Jordan.

The conference, sponsored by the U.S. Trade and Development Agency, was intended to develop a coordinated program in time for a North African-Middle East economic summit scheduled to take place in Amman in the fall.

At the meeting's start on Monday, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Jordan's Crown Prince Hassan called on the United States to help set up a joint authority to oversee development of the Jordan Valley.

On Wednesday, the U.S. Trade and Development Agency granted Jordan \$500,000 to study the feasibility of expanding the airport at Aqaba so that Israel could share it.

Israel and Jordan have been discussing the expansion plan as a means for easing congested traffic at the nearby airport at Eilat. □

Jerusalem police unit to rev up*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM, April 26 (JTA) — Jerusalem police have unveiled the latest tool to improve its fight against crime and terrorism: a 30-person unit on Kawasaki motorcycles.

Police said last week that the new unit was formed because of increased car traffic, which slows down response time to incidents, not because of a rise in crime and terrorism.

The unit has been trained to apprehend car thieves as well as terrorists.

The officers will travel in pairs and be equipped with machine guns.

If the unit proves successful, similar ones may be formed in Tel Aviv and Haifa. □

JDC persists with relief amid new violence in Rwanda

By Alissa Kaplan

NEW YORK, April 26 (JTA) — In response to the ongoing civil violence in Rwanda, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee is continuing the humanitarian presence it initiated in that troubled area of the world last year.

In the latest violence to erupt in the region, the Rwandan government carried out some 2,000 ethnic killings at a refugee camp over the weekend.

The JDC, which is heading a coalition of 39 Jewish organizations that came together last year for relief efforts in the area, is continuing its ongoing programs as well as implementing new forms of aid, said Gideon Taylor, JDC's assistant executive vice president.

A medical team of one doctor and two nurses, all of whom are from Ethiopia, have been sent from Goma, Zaire, where they were assisting refugees close to the Rwandan border, to inside Rwanda, Taylor said Tuesday.

He said the team works with the International Rescue Committee and has been called in with other staff to treat the wounded in the Kibeho refugee enclave in southwest Rwanda, where the latest violence occurred.

In addition, the nurses are working near Kibeho, in Butare, treating hundreds of people each day, well past midnight, Taylor said.

The JDC-led coalition has been supplying medical and other humanitarian relief aid to the region since July 1994, the height of the civil war that erupted in Rwanda between the Hutu and the Tutsi.

After the Hutu launched a campaign of genocide in Rwanda, killing about 500,000 mostly Tutsi, Tutsi forces prevailed, forcing some 2 million Hutu, fearful of retribution, into refugee camps in Zaire. As a result of the ethnic turmoil, the refugee population has been in need of medical attention. Many children have become orphans.

Taylor said part of JDC's efforts involve organizing a program to train people working with orphans to deal with trauma.

The Rwandan government is supportive of the project, which will bring a team from Israel to supply the training for the program, Taylor said. "The government feels that the experience the Jews have had is partially important in helping in the massacres," Taylor said, referring specifically to the Holocaust experience.

Taylor also said the JDC already is providing assistance to an orphanage in Kibongo, Rwanda.

Meanwhile, Israel has offered emergency aid to help the refugees caught in the conflict. Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin met with officials this week from the military, health fields, government and international Jewish aid groups to discuss what kind of assistance would be appropriate.

A delegation will be going to Rwanda to assess the situation, he said. "I believe that none of us can be indifferent to [the violence] and just watch it on television," he told Israel Television. □

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

Lawmaker reintroduces bill to release documents on Nazis

By Jennifer Batog

WASHINGTON, April 26 (JTA) — As countries around the world are moving to open their files on Nazi criminals, some members of Congress are moving to give Nazi hunters more access to pertinent information from U.S. sources.

As promised last August, Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-N.Y.) recently reintroduced legislation that would ensure that the U.S. government fully disclose any information it has on Nazi war criminals.

The bill, known as the War Crimes Disclosure Act, would apply to all individuals on the so-called "Watch List" of aliens who are excluded from the United States because of their Nazi activities.

The bill would amend the Freedom of Information Act to require government agencies such as the Central Intelligence Agency, the Justice Department, the State Department, the Defense Department and the Immigration and Naturalization Department to release information about such individuals.

Under current law, agencies can block such requests if they view that information as a threat to national security, even if the information is outdated.

The proposed legislation would close that loophole by specifying that the information must be a current threat to national security.

"We cannot use outdated Cold War excuses to keep valuable information about Nazi war criminals from the public," Maloney said in a news release.

The legislation would also exclude access to purely personal information.

Under the proposed legislation, information long sought about Kurt Waldheim would be made available.

The CIA has denied repeated requests to disclose its files on Waldheim, a former U.N. secretary-general and president of Austria.

Waldheim served as an intelligence officer in the Balkans during World War II and has been implicated in connection with deportations and reprisal killings of partisans.

If the Maloney bill passes, information now unavailable would be more available, said Aaron Breitbart, a senior researcher at the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

"This information will help us," Breitbart said, noting that under current law the information made available is "totally arbitrary."

Maloney, the ranking Democrat on the House Subcommittee on Government Management, Information and Technology, introduced a similar bill last August, in the dying days of the 103rd Congress.

The current legislation, revived last month, has 11 sponsors. Maloney said she hopes to hold hearings on the bill in the near future. □

Flatow's sister to return to Israel

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, April 26 (JTA) — The sister of Alisa Flatow, the 20-year-old American college student killed earlier this month in a suicide bomb attack in the Gaza Strip, is returning to Israel to meet with some recipients of her sister's organs.

Gail Flatow had come back to New Jersey, where her family lives and where the funeral took place, after her sister's death.

Israel Radio reported that Flatow, 18, will return to Jerusalem, where she has been studying at a religious seminary for more than six months.

Flatow's parents decided to donate their daughter's organs for transplant after she was declared brain dead from head wounds sustained during the attack.

Of the six Israelis who received organs, two have died.

The other four are still recovering in hospitals throughout the country.

Seven Israeli soldiers were also killed in the suicide bombing. □