

NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ A barrage of Katyusha rockets fired by Hezbollah slammed into northern Israel, causing brush fires but no casualties. Hezbollah said the rocket firings were in retaliation for an Israeli attack that killed two sisters, ages 11 and 16. Israel's chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Amnon Shahak, later called that attack a mistake. [Page 3]

■ Ukraine's foreign minister, Gennadi Udovenko, said he is determined to dispel the notion that the rebirth of an independent Ukraine is a threat to Jews. He spoke on the eve of a visit to Israel. [Page 1]

■ A World Zionist Organization emissary was found dead in his Mexico City apartment. He was believed to be murdered during a burglary, just days before he was scheduled to return home to Israel. [Page 3]

■ British supporters of Israel welcomed the appointment of Malcolm Rifkind as Britain's new foreign secretary. Rifkind, who succeeds Douglas Hurd, is the first Jew to hold the post since 1931.

■ Israeli and Palestinian negotiators announced the resumption of talks in Italy, as they move toward a July 25 deadline for a new agreement. Movement on the Israeli-Syrian track is also expected with the arrival Monday of Dennis Ross, Middle East peace envoy for the United States. [Page 3]

■ Amnesty International criticized both Israel and the Palestinian Authority for continuing to commit human rights abuses despite their commitment to peace. The group's annual report examined the record of human rights in 151 countries during 1994. Israeli officials rejected the Amnesty report, lambasting its findings. [Page 4]

■ The number of anti-Semitic offenses in 1994 in Germany more than doubled over the previous year, according to the annual report of the German Security Services. Although incidents of non-violent anti-Semitism rose, violent attacks declined. [Page 2]

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**On eve of official visit to Israel, Ukrainian minister reassures Jews**

By Alexander Lesser

KIEV, Ukraine, July 9 (JTA) — Ukrainian Foreign Minister Gennadi Udovenko is determined to dispel the notion that the rebirth of an independent Ukraine is a threat to Jews.

"Our government is committed to encouraging the rebirth of Jewish life here, just as for others living here," Udovenko said in an interview over the weekend, on the eve of a two-day official visit to Israel.

"Of course, we have some ultra-ultranationalists, but they are not influential at all," he said, turning to gaze on the glittering golden domes of Kiev's Saint Sofia Cathedral, a stone's throw from his office.

"Ukraine is on the path toward democratic development, and this naturally includes legal respect for the rights of minorities," said the 64-year-old Udovenko, who was named foreign minister last year by Ukraine's reformist President Leonid Kuchma.

A former Soviet republic, Ukraine split from Moscow in 1991 and now is Europe's fourth largest country.

Preparing for his visit to Israel, the minister said: "I would not be surprised to run into old friends, schoolmates, you know.

"In the small town in southern Ukraine where I grew up, there were just 10 kids in my high school class — seven Jews and three Ukrainians. We never thought being one thing or the other was important.

"Who knows — maybe some of my classmates are in Israel now," he said during the hour-long interview.

Peering through his glasses at a paper in front of him, the foreign minister said official statistics show that about 480,000 Jews live in Ukraine, which is 0.9 percent of Ukraine's roughly 52 million people.

"But these official statistics don't tell everything," he said. "We expect the Jewish population to rise in the next census, because in Soviet times people tried to hide being Jewish. Now there's no reason for that."

The foreign minister traced his concern over Ukraine's image to a CBS "60 Minutes" segment aired in October that portrayed anti-Semitism as a serious problem in Ukraine.

'Few hundred parade around in paramilitary costumes'

Since that broadcast, Ukrainian officials, supported by some American Jewish leaders, have worked hard to present a different picture of Ukraine.

Among them is American-born Rabbi Yaakov Bleich, who has worked in Kiev for the past four years and who complained that his words were taken out of context in the broadcast.

Bleich told this reporter last month that CBS' Morley Safer, who did the original report, has agreed to come back to Ukraine to take another look at conditions here.

The foreign minister's view about the extent of anti-Semitism was echoed by Jewish sources in Kiev.

"You have a few hundred extremists, mostly in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv, who parade around in paramilitary costumes.

"They're anti-Russian more than they're anti-Jewish and don't, by any stretch of the imagination, reflect the mainstream of Ukrainian society, which is very tolerant," said the Kiev representative of an American Jewish charity, who asked not to be named.

An Israeli Embassy official also agreed that anti-Jewish extremism is a marginal phenomenon in Ukraine.

"I would like to see this case closed," Udovenko said, referring to the "60 Minutes" piece.

The foreign minister said his personal support for Jewish causes dates back to the perestroika period of the late 1980s, when he was Ukraine's ambassador to the United Nations.

"I became friendly with many American Jewish leaders then, among them Shoshana Cardin [then head of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations] and Rabbi Arthur Schneier [of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation].

"When the first newly built synagogue since Communist times

opened in Kharkiv in 1990, I was there," he said. Since independence from Moscow in 1991, more than 26 synagogue buildings have been returned to Jewish communities in Ukraine and some 70 Jewish societies now exist in the country, Udovenko said.

"For anybody who remembers Soviet times, the change is unbelievable," he said.

Kiev also has many reminders of the city's pre-Soviet vibrant Jewish past.

Near Kreshatik, the city's tree-lined main boulevard, stands the building where Sholom Aleichem, the great Yiddish writer, lived and worked before the Russian Revolution.

Just down the hill from the Foreign Ministry lies Podol, on the banks of the Dnieper River, which, at the turn of the century, was a bustling, largely Jewish quarter.

Udovenko is aware of that past, and its tragic aspects as a result of the Communist era and Nazi period.

"Everyone here suffered in this century, both Ukrainians and Jews, but the Jews suffered more," he said.

Now, he said, he wants to see a special relationship between Israel and Ukraine.

"I want to exchange ideas about this with my Israeli colleagues. It could take the form of economic cooperation in areas like agriculture or food processing or high-tech industries," he said.

"And it should have a political aspect as well. The Middle East is on our southern flank, so we have a natural interest in stability there," he said.

Ukraine, he added, is a strong supporter of the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. He also invited Israel to play a role in the "triangular relationship" between Ukraine, Israel and Russia.

"These three countries have so much in common in terms of shared background. We want the Russians to come to see Ukraine as an independent country. That will take time. Maybe Israel can help them because Israel has so many Russian-speaking people."

Ultrnationalist politicians in Moscow such as Vladimir Zhirinovskiy often argue that Russia should be the protector of Russian speakers living outside Russia, including Ukraine.

"Can you imagine if Russia declared it will protect the Russian-speaking population in Israel?" Udovenko asked. "It's absurd, and the Russians should see that."

During his visit to Israel, which is scheduled for Monday and Tuesday, Udovenko is set to meet with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, President Ezer Weizman and Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert.

In his meetings with Peres, the two foreign ministers are expected to sign 14 bilateral agreements in areas such as trade, culture and customs regulations.

The Ukrainian foreign minister also plans to visit Yad Vashem, Kibbutz Tsorah and Netanya. He is not expected to meet with any Palestinian representatives. "We can't wait to see Jerusalem," said the foreign minister, who is being accompanied by his wife, Dina.

"We are Orthodox Christians, so for us it's a very special place." □

German stats show incidents of anti-Semitism doubled in 1994

By Gil Sedan

BONN, July 9 (JTA) — The number of anti-Semitic offenses in 1994 in Germany was more than double the number of the previous year, according to the annual report of the German Security Services.

In 1994, the security authorities recorded 1,366 offenses of an anti-Semitic nature, said the report, which

was released last week. The year before, 656 incidents were recorded.

The report stressed that the rise in numbers applied to what was called non-violent anti-Semitic activities, such as racist propaganda, anti-Semitic insults and property damage.

In contrast, anti-Semitic acts of violence dropped by 43 percent, from 72 cases in 1993 to 41 in 1994.

The report took special note of the firebombing of the synagogue in Lubeck on March 25, 1994. Another arson attempt at the same synagogue took place May 7 of this year, causing only marginal damage.

Despite the increase in anti-Semitic incidents, Manfred Kanther, German minister of the interior, told a news conference last week that violence against foreigners had declined last year by almost half.

Kanther said this was partially due to stricter immigration laws, which alleviated hatred against foreigners.

"History has taught us to be alert from the start, and not to wait with action until the anti-democratic elements grow and pose a real danger," the minister of the interior said.

Kanther said radical elements on the left were just as dangerous as those from the right.

Other prominent examples of anti-Semitic activities in 1994 cited by the report include the following:

- A band of skinheads on the grounds of the former Buchenwald concentration camp July 23 yelled out anti-Semitic slurs and caused damage to property, smashing windows in the camp's barracks.

A local worker was threatened that she would be set on fire.

- At the memorial site of the Sachsenhausen camp, a band of neo-Nazis raised their arms in the traditional Nazi salute and demanded that the crematoriums be turned on again.

A barrack in the same camp that had served as a Jewish museum was torched in September 1992. It reopened this year.

- At the Jewish cemetery of Neunkirchen in the Saarland, 27 tombstones were desecrated Sept. 18.

The tombstones were covered with anti-Semitic slogans, such as "We will get you all" and "Those who buy from Jews are traitors." □

Cemetery desecrated in Sweden

By Avi Stieglitz

NEW YORK, July 9 (JTA) — An ancient Jewish cemetery in Sweden was vandalized last week by unknown perpetrators, according to local police.

In the cemetery in the town of Karlskrona, two tombstones were overturned and 15 others were daubed with swastikas.

During the last couple of weeks, synagogues and Jewish cemeteries in England, Germany and Romania have been defaced.

"This is part of an unfortunate rash of cemetery desecrations in Europe," said Elan Steinberg, World Jewish Congress executive director.

The Karlskrona attack, in which the headstones were spray painted with swastikas, appears to be the work of neo-Nazi skinheads, Steinberg added.

The police promised a vigorous investigation and prosecution for those responsible.

The cemetery dates back to 1782, about the time the Swedish government wanted to attract "useful" immigrants.

Today, a handful of Jews live in Karlskrona, on the Baltic coast. □

Hezbollah calls rockets fired into Upper Galilee retaliatory

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, July 9 (JTA) — Violence from southern Lebanon is continuing to escalate, once again forcing residents of northern Israel into bomb shelters.

Katyusha rockets fired by the Islamic fundamentalist Hezbollah slammed into northern Israel before dusk Sunday, causing brush fires but no casualties.

Hezbollah said the rocket firings were in retaliation for an attack Saturday in which artillery fired by an Israeli tank killed two girls in the southern Lebanese town of Nabatiya.

Israel's chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Amnon Shahak, said Saturday's shelling had been a mistake. "Yesterday we fired at the wrong place in Nabatiya, but that happens in the kind of war we are fighting there," Shahak told Israel Television on Sunday.

Shahak said although the Katyusha attacks were part of a policy recently adopted by Hezbollah, "our mistakes also contributed to Sunday's attacks."

Prime Minister and Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin had reportedly criticized the tank fire at the weekly Cabinet meeting earlier Sunday, terming it a "needless mistake."

Other ministers also were reported to have spoken harshly against the army's action, which resulted in unintended casualties among Lebanese civilians and a further escalation of the tense border situation.

On Sunday, the Israel Defense Force ordered people in the Upper Galilee into air raid shelters — just 30 minutes before the latest rocket attack. Israel Radio reported that 27 rockets struck the Galilee.

Civilians also had spent Saturday night in shelters, but the anticipated counterattack by Hezbollah failed to materialize.

Then, after the funeral for the Nabatiya victims, the salvos came. The pro-Iranian Hezbollah said it fired the rockets "in response to the latest Zionist massacre that hit a southern family in [Nabatiya] whose bodies were torn by steel darts."

The Israeli army said it was investigating the use of darts, which are banned by international conventions on warfare.

Reporters on the scene spoke of large brush fires as a result of the attack on Israel, but no damage to property.

Last week, Shahak issued a stern warning to Hezbollah, appearing to threaten a new IDF sweep beyond the security zone if the rocket firings did not stop.

His threat came after four IDF soldiers were injured by a roadside bomb in the southern Lebanon security zone. Hezbollah took responsibility for that attack. The IDF and the fundamentalist Islamic group also exchanged fire in the same area.

Katyushas last landed in northern Israel June 23, after a Lebanese woman was killed in what Hezbollah said was an Israeli bombardment of a village. A French cook at an Israeli resort was killed in the June barrage. □

Israeli-Palestinian talks shift to Italy as deadline approaches

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, July 9 (JTA) — Israeli and Palestinian negotiators will meet in Italy Tuesday to resume their efforts to meet the latest deadline — July 25 — for concluding the second-phase agreement of their peace process.

On Monday, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is

scheduled to convene a meeting of top ministers and aides for a consultation before briefing the negotiating team, which is led by Uri Savir, director-general of the Foreign Ministry.

Italy, it appears, has been the discreet site of rounds of talks over the past few months between teams led by Savir and by the Palestinian Authority's economics minister, Ahmed Karia, also known as Abu Ala'a.

The Israeli media has so far failed to discover the precise site of such past sessions, or of the planned meeting this week. The Hebrew daily Yediot Achronot said it would take place at "a lavish villa in or near Rome."

Savir and Karia, who led their respective sides in the secret negotiations in Oslo during 1993 that resulted in the Declaration of Principles signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization in September of that year, are said to have an easy working relationship and a warm personal friendship.

Political insiders in Israel say Savir has gradually won the full confidence of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, which was only grudgingly given to him during the Oslo talks.

They say this is a reflection of the close coordination and harmony that has characterized the working relationship between Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres during this period of crucial decision-making, both in the Israel-Palestinian talks and on the Israeli-Syrian track.

Movement on the Israeli-Syrian track, meanwhile, was also expected this week with Monday's scheduled arrival of Dennis Ross, head of the Clinton administration's Mideast peace team, for talks in Jerusalem and Damascus.

The American diplomat is hoping to arrange for talks between Israeli and Syrian military in Washington in mid-July as a follow up to talks earlier this month between the two countries' chiefs of staff.

The next round of talks is expected to be followed by a shuttle between the two capitals by Secretary of State Warren Christopher in late July or early August. □

WZO emissary in Mexico found dead in apartment

By Uriel Masad

TEL AVIV, July 9 (JTA) — Shlomo Biran, a World Zionist Organization emissary, was found dead in his Mexico City apartment Sunday, officials said.

Biran, 59, had been bound and a cord had been wound around his neck. It is believed that he was murdered during a burglary, because the apartment was in disarray and a number of items were thought to be missing, said police. An investigation is under way.

Biran, who had worked for a year as a music teacher at the Magen David school for WZO's Department of Education and Culture in the Diaspora, was scheduled to leave Mexico for a vacation last Friday.

His flight included a stop in Madrid. He was supposed to arrive in Israel on Saturday. But when he failed to arrive, another WZO emissary went to Biran's apartment and noticed a strong odor. The police entered the apartment and found Biran's body.

During his time in Mexico City, Biran's family remained in Israel.

This is the second murder of a WZO-Jewish Agency for Israel emissary this year. In March, Shimon Feingold, a 49-year-old married father of two, was killed during a fight with drunken neighbors in Kiev, Ukraine. Feingold was serving a two-year stint, representing the Youth Department of the Jewish Agency.

Avraham Burg, chairman of the Jewish Agency and WZO, offered his condolences to Biran's family. □

Amnesty: Abuses prevalent despite commitment to peace

By Jennifer Batog

WASHINGTON, July 9 (JTA) — Both Israel and the Palestinian Authority continue to commit human rights abuses despite their commitment to peace, according to Amnesty International's annual report on human rights around the world.

Although Amnesty said abuses in Israel have declined, the organization cited concerns about Israeli and Palestinian treatment of dissidents. The report also detailed deaths, tortures and the number of arrests on both Israel and the Palestinian Authority's part.

This year's report, which examined the record of human rights in 151 countries during 1994, is the first to include the Palestinian Authority. The Palestinian Authority was established last year when, under an agreement with Israel, Palestinian self-rule was established in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank enclave of Jericho.

"The situation has not markedly improved," William Schulz, Amnesty's executive director, said, referring to Israel and the Palestinians.

"Given Israel's continued human rights abuses, supplemented by the Palestinian Authority's, the situation continues to deteriorate," he said at a news conference last week. One explanation for the continued abuses is the peace process itself, Schulz said.

The peace initiative has prompted terrorist acts from those who oppose it, which in turn causes reactions — from Israel or the Palestinian Authority — that violate the rights of the suspected terrorists, he said.

Israeli officials criticized the report, immediately firing off a four-page statement from the Israeli Justice Ministry, deriding what it termed Amnesty's "misleading terminology and decontextualized presentations of inaccurate facts."

The statement gives Israel's version of incidents in Amnesty's report, puts Israel's security actions in the context of a country besieged by terrorism and says accusations of torture are due to Palestinian fabrications.

Hoarding with dirty sacks, shackling mentioned

In the report, Amnesty asserted that "Palestinian detainees continued to be systematically tortured or ill-treated during interrogation by the General Security Service, often while held incommunicado."

Some of the methods of torture included hooding prisoners with dirty sacks, shackling them in painful positions for extended periods, beatings, confinement and sleep deprivation, the study said.

Israeli officials called the evidence on which Amnesty based its conclusions "neither credible nor reliable," and said Palestinians fabricated the incidents to avoid being seen as collaborating with the Israeli government. "Clearly such false claims of torture are made with a view to slander Israel's reputation in the international community," the Israeli statement said.

In a separate statement, the Israel Defense Force lambasted the report and said Amnesty had ignored the terrorist acts committed against Israelis during the year.

The study's assessment of human rights abuses in Israel contrasted sharply with the State Department's annual report, released in February. That report, which also looked at how political prisoners were treated, indicated that Israel's human rights situation was improving.

While Amnesty's study dealt primarily with the treatment of prisoners, torture and fair-trial issues, the State Department cast a wider net, examining religious freedoms, freedom of travel, discrimination and workers' rights.

According to Amnesty's study, Israel arrested more

than 6,000 Palestinians on security issues, down from the 13,000 arrested in 1993. Israeli forces killed at least 82 Palestinians, some of whom died under circumstances that suggest extrajudicial killings, the report said. In 1993, about 150 Palestinians were shot dead by Israeli forces.

The report said that in the territories, "Israeli authorities continued to make extensive use of firearms, arrests and restriction orders confining Palestinians to the territories."

On the Palestinian side, the authority's security forces arrested hundreds of Palestinians, many arbitrarily, and denied prisoners access to lawyers or judges, the study said.

Most of those arrested were suspected members of Islamic and other groups opposed to the peace process, the report said. Palestinian prisoners also reported incidents of torture, the report said, citing beatings as one method.

Also, 15 Palestinians were shot dead under circumstances that suggested that they were unlawfully killed, the report said. One prisoner, Farid Abu Jarbu', died at Gaza Prison's interrogation center. The authority arrested four officials in connection with the death, the report said.

The report also listed attacks by Islamic fundamentalist groups such as Hamas. About 75 Israeli civilians, 70 Palestinian civilians and 13 members of Israeli security forces were killed in such attacks, the report said.

More than 70 Palestinians were killed by Palestinian groups for "collaborating" with Israeli authorities, the study said.

Elsewhere in the Middle East, arrests of political opponents, holding people without charges, unfair trials and torture were prevalent, according to the Amnesty report.

In Syria, thousands of political prisoners remained detained, many without trials or charges and some after their sentences had expired, the report said. Also, many political prisoners arrested in the past remained unaccounted for, the study said.

The situation was better in Jordan, where 450 people were arrested on security grounds. Most were released, but allegations of torture by Jordan's General Intelligence Department were reported.

In Saudi Arabia, hundreds of people were arrested for their political or religious beliefs, at least 53 people were executed and the country continued to use amputation as a punishment, the report said.

In Iran, thousands of political prisoners were held by the government. There were continuing reports of torture, political arrests, unfair trials and summary executions, the study said.

In Iraq, torture was "widespread" and the government developed new punishments, the study said. □

Synagogue temporarily brought to life

By Ruth E. Gruber

KRAKOW, Poland, July 9 (JTA) — Hebrew prayers resonated in what once was a synagogue in southern Poland when a small group of Jews recently held Shabbat services there for the first time in decades.

Rabbi Michael Schudrich, the Poland representative of the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, organized a minyan to travel June 30 to the town of Lesko and pray in the remote former synagogue, which now is used as a museum.

Most of the minyan consisted of young Jews from Warsaw, Krakow and Wroclaw, Poland.

The Shabbat coincided with the opening of an exhibition on Jewish life at the museum.

Schudrich said, "The concept was that during the exhibition there should not just be artifacts, but a chance for the synagogue to be a synagogue again, even if only for one Shabbos." □