



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ Israel's state prosecutor said he would charge a resident of the West Bank settlement of Beit El with manslaughter in the Aug. 13 shooting death of a 22-year-old Palestinian. Ze'ev Lipskind, a father of six, said he was firing in self-defense after some 100 Palestinians clashed with Jewish settlers on a hillside near Beit El.

■ The closure of the Palestinian town of Jericho was lifted. Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin sealed off the self-rule enclave from the rest of the West Bank one week ago, after two Hamas members wanted in connection with the Aug. 21 Jerusalem suicide bus bombing fled there.

■ Israeli police arrested four settlers from Yizhar, located near Nablus, and charged them with attacking local Palestinians. Residents of the settlement complained that the police acted with unnecessary force when they came to make the arrests. [Page 1]

■ The Israeli Cabinet gave its preliminary approval to the country's 1996 budget of about \$53 billion. The budget calls for cuts of some \$566 million, which will be spread across the budgets of all Israeli ministries, including defense.

■ Russia may sell as many as four nuclear reactors to Iran, according to the country's nuclear power minister, Viktor Mikhailov. Russia already has a contract to complete construction of an Iranian nuclear power plant and to furnish it with its first reactor.

■ Palestinian security officials announced that they uncovered a cell of the Islamic fundamentalist group Hamas operating in the Gaza Strip. The cell was planning attacks on Palestinian Authority officials.

■ Australian Jewry's umbrella body sent a letter to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin expressing "profound concern" over what it described as "blanket condemnations" by Israeli government leaders of Jewish settlers. The communication was an unusual criticism for the traditionally Zionist community in Australia. [Page 2]

Probe of settlers group begins; charges of police brutality spread

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli police officials have been given the go-ahead to investigate the leaders of a Jewish settlers group on myriad charges, including conspiracy.

The investigation will focus on the leadership of Zo Artzeinu, or "This is Our Land," which has spearheaded protests against the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations to expand Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank.

At the same time, opposition leaders in the Knesset have become increasingly vocal in charging that the government of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is attempting to stifle protest against expanding Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank.

They claim that attempts to stifle dissent include repeated acts of police brutality, an increasingly frequent charge made by settlers during a summer of widespread demonstrations against the government's peace process policy.

"Freedom of expression is a basic right in a democratic regime, but public order is also a value that must be protected," said Attorney General Michael Ben-Yair of the decision to probe Zo Artzeinu.

Police officials said they had cause to investigate the group because it published a pamphlet that detailed instructions on blocking Israel's highways.

The grass-roots settlers group coordinated an Aug. 8 protest in which roads throughout Israel were blocked during the evening rush hour.

The group's leaders will be investigated on conspiracy to commit a crime, encouraging people to prevent police officers from doing their duty and obstructing an investigation.

Rabbi Benny Alon, one of the Zo Artzeinu leaders, said in an interview on Army Radio that he welcomed the police investigation, adding that the group had "nothing to hide."

Opposition leaders are comparing the investigation of Zo Artzeinu to recent government efforts to shut down a right-wing pirate station known as Channel 7.

In both cases, say opposition leaders, the government is doing whatever it can to quell dissent to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Members of the opposition also assert that the government has created a climate in which the Israeli police commit acts of brutality against demonstrators.

The suggestion this week by a Knesset member that demonstrators may fire back if fired upon by the police has provoked a storm of controversy.

Knesset member Rehavam Ze'evi of the right-wing Moledet Party made the remark during a special session this week.

Ze'evi was complaining about what he called the use of excessive force by police against protesters demonstrating against the government.

He said that if the opposition parties assume power, there would be a "blacklist" of police who hit demonstrators.

Calls issued to moderate overheated rhetoric

"If they use [tear] gas against us, we will consider it live fire, and respond accordingly," Ze'evi added.

Police Minister Moshe Shahal condemned the statements.

"This is a totally inappropriate declaration," Shahal said. "There is a kind of rebellion against law enforcers, to interfere with their fulfilling their duties."

However, after consulting with the attorney general, Shahal decided not to press charges for the statements, which he said were made by a "politician whose opinions are known."

The Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported that Shahal had received information that right-wing extremists were planning to attack government ministers.

Shahal reportedly was taking such warnings seriously and had stepped up protective measures for Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.

At the same time, Shahal called on right-wing leaders to moderate

their statements in an effort to avoid inciting extremists. In response, Likud opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu called on the government to allow public debate, which he described as legal and democratic.

Aharon Domb, spokesman for the Yesha Council, which represents settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, said acts of violence could work against the legitimate struggle of the settlers.

But he also accused Shahal of waging psychological warfare against Israel's right wing.

Ze'evi's remarks came amid rising concern among some Israeli political leaders that opposition to the peace process is becoming increasingly violent, in both word and action.

Shahal said he was concerned that certain individuals would be deeply influenced by statements such as Ze'evi's and would take "extreme actions."

Environment Minister Yossi Sarid also denounced Ze'evi's remarks.

"These kinds of threats are exactly the sign of a totalitarian regime," said Sarid.

Ze'evi was not the only opposition member to be critical of police behavior at demonstrations.

Likud Knesset member Uzi Landau accused police officers of not wearing identification tags so that they could beat protesters without being identified.

He added that the purpose of the police is to protect the right of the demonstrators to express their views.

Yitzhak Levy of the National Religious Party asked the Knesset's Legislative Committee to address the legality of the methods used by police to disperse a Zo Artzeinu demonstration last week.

Levy said he had pictures and testimony showing that a number of police officers had either covered their name tags with tape or had identified themselves with false names.

West Bank settlers arrested

Similar charges surfaced after Israeli police arrested seven Jewish settlers Wednesday as part of a clampdown on anti-government protesters allegedly causing disorder and harassing local Arab residents.

Police officials converged on the West Bank settlement of Yizhar, located near Nablus, early Wednesday morning to arrest four residents accused of setting fire to a nearby Arab school and of firing shots into a neighboring Arab village about a month ago.

The police also arrested three other settlers suspected of trying to prevent the initial arrests.

All but two of the settlers were later released from detention.

The residents of Yizhar called the arrests politically motivated.

They also charged that the police had entered houses without warrants, threatened people with their weapons and hit residents.

Yizhar resident Rivka Bernstein told Israel Radio that some police were "without name tags or even uniforms," adding that they were the ones who beat up settlers.

"They refused to give their names. They punched without cause," she added.

Police officials denied the reports of brutality at Yizhar.

An official from the West Bank district police station told Army Radio that the settlers had tried to prevent the arrests by lying in front of police cars and throwing rocks.

Two police officers were lightly injured by stones, the official added. □

Australian Jews appeal to Rabin to end verbal attacks on settlers

By Jeremy Jones

SYDNEY, Australia (JTA) — The umbrella body representing Australian Jewry has sent a letter to Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin expressing "profound concern" over what it described as "blanket condemnations" by Israeli government leaders of Jewish settlers.

"While we readily acknowledge that there are some extremists amongst the settlers and their supporters who seek to subvert Israel's democracy, and that some of them have used tactics and made statements against you and the government which deserve the strongest denunciation, we ask you to rise above provocations," said the letter from the Executive Council of Australian Jewry.

The letter, signed by council President Isi Leibler, also said, "Unfairly writing off all the settlers as extremists and fanatics could easily become a self-fulfilling prophecy, creating only further polarization and forcing the moderates amongst the settlers to the brink of despair."

Leibler added, "These blanket condemnations go beyond the understandable and commendably vigorous urgency of the democratic debate in Israel."

The letter was sent after a meeting last week of the council at which concern was expressed about the tone of the political debate in Israel.

During the summer, Israeli security forces have repeatedly clashed with demonstrating Jewish settlers, and the rhetoric from Israeli leaders of all political stripes has heated up over the issue of expanding Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank.

The letter from the Executive Council of Australian Jewry was noteworthy in light of the fact that the Australian Jewish community is recognized as particularly Zionist and supportive of the principle that Diaspora communities should refrain from public criticism of Israeli governments on security or foreign policy issues.

Leibler, who has residences in Melbourne, Australia, and in Jerusalem, and who has two sons living in Israel, is also an active supporter of Rabin's.

Leibler expressed this support in the letter and asked Rabin to "consider it as a constructive plea from heavy hearts who seek only peace for Israel." □

Record has El Al walking on air

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's El Al Airlines has set a record for the shortest flight from Los Angeles to Tel Aviv.

The direct flight for the fully booked new jumbo jet took 12 hours and 19 minutes. Flight controllers offered encouragement and suggestions to save time along the way, flight attendant Yehuda Levran told Israel Radio. □

Israel hits Hezbollah in Lebanon

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli air force jets launched repeated air attacks against Islamic fundamentalist Hezbollah targets north of the security zone in southern Lebanon.

The pilots reported successful hits and all planes returned safely to base, an Israeli army spokesman said.

The raids, which began early Sunday morning, targeted hillsides used by Hezbollah to launch raids against Israel Defense Force positions in the security zone.

The air attacks came in the wake of a week of increased Hezbollah attacks on positions of the IDF and its allied South Lebanon Army in southern Lebanon. □

Palestinian journalists object to Yad Vashem portrayal of mufti

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A group of Palestinian journalists toured the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial here this week in an effort to demonstrate openness toward Jewish and Israeli history.

But during the visit, the visitors took issue with a photograph documenting ties between Haj Amin al-Husseini — the mufti of Jerusalem at the time of World War II — and Nazi Germany.

The mufti of Jerusalem, an Arab nationalist leader at the time, "had a conflict with the Zionists," Lawi Khouri, of the Media and Communications Center in eastern Jerusalem, told reporters who covered the visit.

"True, he called for the death of the Jews, but these calls were tied to the political dispute in Palestine and had no connection to the Nazi racist philosophy," Khouri said.

The British deported the mufti from Palestine during World War II for his role in the Arab revolt against British rule in Palestine and against Jewish immigration there. He went to Iraq and later to Nazi Germany, where he was responsible for Germany's propaganda broadcasts in Arabic.

Of the 20 Palestinian journalists invited by Israel's Government Press Office to visit Yad Vashem, six accepted the invitation. Only three took part.

Their reactions to the visit did not focus solely on the mufti. Mohammed Abu Hadir, from the eastern Jerusalem Arabic newspaper Al-Quds, wrote in the guest book after the tour, "The sights were shocking. I have read about [the Holocaust], but to see these things is something else. It is tragic."

"I hope this is a lesson in building a better future," wrote Hania el Bitar, of the English-language newspaper The Jerusalem Times. □

Gay partner of army officer loses appeal to obtain benefits

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A military appeal committee has upheld the Defense Ministry's refusal to grant the homosexual partner of a deceased army officer the same benefits given to bereaved heterosexual spouses.

Adir Steiner's request that he be recognized as a bereaved spouse, and subsequently eligible for the benefits, was rejected this week by the Defense Ministry's appeal committee.

Gay rights activists said the decision could set back efforts to gain equality "by years."

Steiner, 28, has maintained that the army had fully recognized his relationship with Col. Doron Meisel, an army medical officer, in the eight years they were together before Meisel's death from illness in 1991.

However, the ministry has refused to acknowledge Steiner's status since Meisel's death.

"I want the army to recognize me as the partner of Doron, as it recognized me when Doron was alive," he told Israel Radio. "I want to be able to attend memorial services for him, to get the benefits of a bereaved partner."

The committee accepted the ministry's argument that the legal code defining surviving spouses does not apply to same-sex partners.

It went on to say that "the cancellation of the law calling homosexual relations illegal does not make such relationships part of the value system of Israel as a Jewish state."

The panel also referred to a precedent, in which the

Supreme Court ruled that Israel's El Al Airlines had to grant the same-sex partner of a spouse the same benefits as a heterosexual partner.

But the military committee said the relationship between the Israel Defense Force and the soldier in the army is not an employee-employer relationship.

Steiner is expected to take his case to a civil court.

Amit Kama, executive director of the Society for the Protection of Personal Rights, stressed that the general trend in the Supreme Court and elsewhere in Israeli society has been one of liberalism and openness.

"This is definitely a dark moment," Kama said. But he added that the general atmosphere had changed sufficiently to ensure that a court appeal would reverse the decision. □

The October dilemma: Go to court or synagogue

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — When the U.S. Supreme Court begins its term this year it remains to be seen whether both Jewish justices will be sitting in synagogue or court.

For the first time in years, the court will hear oral arguments on Yom Kippur.

Justice Stephen Breyer has indicated that he would attend services in observance of the Jewish holiday, while Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg has not yet resolved her schedule, said a Supreme Court spokesman.

Under the high court's guidelines, justices are permitted to miss a day's arguments for religious observance, provided that they bring themselves up to speed by reviewing transcripts.

The court typically follows a preset schedule, convening the first Monday in October for three days. This year Yom Kippur falls on Oct. 4, during the court's first week.

It would be unreasonable to expect the court to call off proceedings for the day, said Jess Hordes, director of the Washington office of the Anti-Defamation League. But he said the court should be expected to accommodate religious commitments. Anything less, he added, would be "inappropriate."

Although some public schools shut down on Yom Kippur, Hordes said there is an important distinction between the practical considerations a school and an institution such as the Supreme Court must weigh.

Many schools with a large Jewish population close for the High Holidays "but they're not closed simply because it's a Jewish religious holiday," Hordes said. "They're closed because on a practical level, they're accommodating a large number of Jewish teachers," whose absence "would make it difficult for the schools to function effectively."

Congress this year will maintain its longstanding tradition of recessing on Yom Kippur to accommodate Jewish members. Whether they keep their offices open is a matter of individual choice, staffers to Jewish members of Congress said.

There are nine Jewish senators and 24 Jewish representatives.

In all, seven Jewish justices have served on the Supreme Court, starting with Louis Brandeis in 1916. Two Jews both sat on the Supreme Court at one other time, between 1932 and 1938, when Benjamin Cardozo and Brandeis served together.

Brandeis' seat, called the "Jewish seat," was handed over, in succession, to Felix Frankfurter, Arthur Goldberg and Abe Fortas, before President Nixon broke with tradition by appointing Harry Blackmun in 1969. □

Hand-delivered letter urges Costa Rica to expel accused Nazi

By Alissa Kaplan

NEW YORK (JTA) — A U.S. representative has personally delivered a letter signed by some 60 other congressmen to the president of Costa Rica, demanding that an accused Nazi war criminal be extradited to Ukraine.

Bodhan Koziy, who apparently has been living in a suburb of the capital city of San Jose for the last decade, was a Ukrainian police official during World War II.

The letter, handed to Costa Rican President Jose Figueres last week by U.S. Rep. Michael McNulty (D-N.Y.), states, "On the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, we ask our ally in fighting the Nazis to remove its sanctuary for one of the perpetrators of Nazi genocide."

"Judges in the United States and prosecutors in Germany affirmed that Koziy was a Nazi policeman in Ukraine, where he shot and killed — amongst others — a 4-year-old," the letter also said.

If the Costa Rican government does not respond to the renewed effort to extradite Koziy, a formal complaint will be registered with the U.N. Human Rights Commission, and the U.S. Congress will be approached to take diplomatic action against Costa Rica, said Elan Steinberg, executive director of the World Jewish Congress.

In the past the Costa Rican government "stonewalled us," Steinberg said.

No one at the Costa Rican Embassy in Washington was available for comment.

The letter to the leader of Costa Rica also said, "Koziy has had haven in Costa Rica for the past decade. We urge you in the strongest terms to consider how the international reputation of Costa Rica is suffering. As a country known for its defense of human rights, Costa Rica should end its sanctuary to a known Nazi murderer."

Koziy, the former owner of a motel in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., was stripped of his U.S. citizenship in 1982 after a trial in Florida in which eyewitness testimony described the murder of the girl.

The U.S. Justice Department obtained a court order to deport him in 1984, but he fled to Costa Rica.

In 1986, Costa Rica refused the Soviet Union's request for Koziy's extradition. A year later, the Costa Rican government overruled a local court order to extradite him to the Soviet Union. □

Israel asks Mubarak to condemn media attacks over POW matter

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel has called on Egypt's leaders to denounce sharp attacks against Israel that have recently appeared in the Egyptian media.

The media assaults were sparked by recent allegations that members of the Israel Defense Force had killed Egyptian prisoners of war during the 1956 Sinai Campaign and the 1967 Six-Day War.

The allegations, voiced recently by Israeli war veterans and historians, have raised a furor in Israel and Egypt. They prompted Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to call on Israel to launch an investigation into the affair.

Mubarak, who initially did not respond to the allegations, was believed to have issued the call for an investigation in Israel after Egypt's opposition newspapers pounced on the story, demanding that the country's leadership criticize Israel.

This week, an Egyptian newspaper published an article saying that Israel's ambassador to Egypt, David Sultan, killed some 100 Egyptian POWs when he was a

paratrooper commander in 1956. The report was sharply denounced by Israel. "These are all lies," Deputy Foreign Minister Eli Dayan told Army Radio.

Dayan said he would raise the allegations at a meeting this week with Egypt's ambassador to Israel, Mohammed Basiouny, and also when he travels next week to Cairo. "I intend to ask the official sources to respond to these lies, and to denounce them," Dayan said.

He also responded to the allegations by Israeli soldiers and historians that created the controversy, saying, "These incidents are exceptions and go against the ethics of the IDF."

Earlier this week, Attorney General Michael Ben-Yair said that Israel's 20-year statute of limitations for criminal acts had expired.

"As a result, there is no legal possibility of bringing to trial anyone involved in incidents that took place almost 40 years ago, or 28 years ago," Ben-Yair said in a statement. □

Left-wingers move to restore birthplace of Benito Mussolini

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — Some left-wing officials want to restore the birthplace of wartime Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini in the central Italian town of Predappio and turn it into a museum.

Two members of Parliament from the Predappio area have presented a motion that would allocate some \$11 million for the restoration of the birthplace and other sites.

The funds "would be very welcome for the restoration of the buildings associated with Mussolini," Ivo Marcelli, the ex-Communist mayor of Predappio, told the Rome daily *Il Messaggero*.

"It would be a godsend for local tourism and thus also for the local economy," Marcelli added.

The parliamentary proposal said the buildings — including the house where Mussolini was born in 1883 — were in very bad condition, adding that they would be "worth restoring and reconstructing for a new cultural and touristic use."

The officials supporting the move said their plan was not aimed primarily at right-wing Italians nostalgic for the Fascist era, but at all visitors interested in contemporary history.

They said caring for the buildings and recognizing their historical significance would attract more general tourists rather than simply right-wingers making a pilgrimage to fascist icons.

"These places have a value that goes well beyond a regional scope," Denis Ugolini, one of the parliamentarians who proposed the plan told *Il Messaggero*. "Many foreigners already come every year to visit Mussolini's tomb and birthplace."

Mussolini's tomb in Predappio has long been a place of pilgrimage for right-wingers.

On the 50th anniversary of Mussolini's death in April, black-shirted neo-fascists, many giving straight-armed salutes and wearing Nazi swastikas, gathered there to honor his memory. □

Weiss recovers from heart attack

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — N.Y. Rabbi Avi Weiss, 51, was reported to be in good condition after suffering a heart attack Aug. 22 in Israel.

Doctors at Jerusalem's Shaare Zedek Hospital said the political and social activist was in intensive care, but that he could be released this week. □