



NEWS AT A GLANCE

- **The United States extended its free-trade agreement with Israel and adopted a similar agreement with the Palestinian Authority. The U.S.-Israel agreement extends for five years the original 1985 pact that allows for duty-free imports of most goods produced by the two countries.**
- **Senior Israeli army officers told the Cabinet that the Israel Defense Force's redeployment in the West Bank could cost \$1 billion, double the amount originally set in the 1996 budget.**
- **Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics launched a census of the Israeli population. The Yesha Council, which represents settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, called on residents in the territories not to cooperate with the census takers as a means of protest against the Rabin government's peace policies with the Palestinians. [Page 3]**
- **Some 1,000 Christian pilgrims flocked to Bethlehem to demand continued Israeli sovereignty over what they termed the "biblical Land of Israel." The demonstrators expressed concern about the future of their holy sites once Israeli troops withdraw from West Bank Palestinian towns and cities. [Page 4]**
- **Israel and Jordan announced that they would present plans for joint development projects at the Middle East economic summit, which is to open in Amman on Oct. 29. The meeting of Arab, Israeli and American officials is also expected to discuss plans to establish regional development banking institutions.**
- **An Israeli support group for Holocaust survivors and their children will help Rwandans cope with the psychological effects of last year's genocide of more than 500,000 of their people. The group, known as AMCHA, will participate in a Nov. 1 conference on genocide to be held in the Rwandan capital of Kigali. [Page 3]**
- **The Israel Defense Force exchanged artillery fire with the Hezbollah fundamentalist movement in southern Lebanon. An Israeli soldier was reported lightly wounded by a missile during the exchange.**

NEWS ANALYSIS

Is outside pressure fueling Argentine probe of AMIA attack?

By Sergio Kiernan

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — After a long, uneventful lull, the Argentine government's investigation of last year's terror bombing of the Jewish headquarters here has suddenly sprung to life.

The sudden burst of activity, including a recent wave of arrests, has prompted a burning question among the Jewish community and other observers here: Did the police action stem from long months of government planning?

Or was it the result of international pressure, particularly a U.S. congressional hearing, which included sharp criticism of the Argentine government's role in the investigation and which took place only several days before the police sweep?

More than a year has elapsed since the July 18, 1994, bombing that destroyed the headquarters of the Argentine Jewish Mutual Aid Association, or AMIA, leaving 86 dead and more than 300 wounded.

Until recently, the case had settled into a quiet routine, with only one suspect in detention and the investigation providing no satisfactory explanation for the attack.

All that changed Oct. 2, when Argentine authorities suddenly launched a vast operation involving more than 400 police personnel.

Police raided 56 sites in Buenos Aires, arresting five people and confiscating cash, cars, safe-deposit boxes and several cases of documents.

The main target of the operation was Alejandro Monjo, a second-hand car dealer who owned the lot where terrorists allegedly bought the Renault van used as a car bomb in the AMIA terror attack.

Monjo avoided arrest that day, but he was nabbed by police two days later, after his cellular phone had been tapped and located.

In addition to arresting Monjo, police raided his safe-deposit box at a local bank, finding almost \$1 million in cash and bonds, as well as deeds for several properties in and around Buenos Aires.

Monjo is a business associate of Carlos Alberto Telleldin, a second-hand car dealer who had been the sole person detained in the case.

Judge Juan Jose Galeano, who is in charge of the AMIA investigation, termed Monjo's arrest an important step in solving the case.

Sources close to the investigation said Monjo's arrest had been planned for weeks. But some here doubt that the police sweep of the Argentine capital was anything but a reaction to the American congressional hearing, held four days earlier.

On Sept. 28, the House International Relations Committee held a session in which Argentine and American Jewish officials sharply criticized the Argentine government's handling of the investigation.

Argentine authorities have dismissed charges that the sudden reactivating of the AMIA bombing was a result of the congressional hearings.

Galeano said the police sweep "was planned two months ago," and was "in no way related to any hearings anywhere."

Charges of a 'reactive' investigation

Galeano's position was seconded by Luis Dobniewski, an attorney representing AMIA in the case.

Dobniewski said the judge had planned the searches some six weeks before the hearings.

But others disagree.

According to Joe Goldman, an American journalist and co-author of "Smoke Screens," a book on the AMIA case, "Galeano's is a reactive investigation, not an active one.

"Every major move came when there was a congressional hearing in the U.S. or because of the first anniversary of the bombing" earlier this year, when there was another burst of government attention and attendant police activity, Goldman said in an interview.

"They knew about Monjo well over a year ago," Goldman said, adding, "Pressure from abroad is what keeps this case alive."

Some of that pressure has come from the American Jewish Commit-

tee, the Anti-Defamation League, B'nai B'rith International, AMCHA-Coalition for Jewish Concerns, the World Jewish Congress and DAIA, the Delegation of Argentine Jewish Associations.

The groups have joined with relatives of the bombing victims in calling for more accountability from the Argentine government and for a tightening of security to protect against future acts of terrorism.

In addition to being charged with delaying the investigation, the Argentine government has been accused of acting in collusion with the foreign government believed most responsible for the bombing — Iran.

At the congressional hearing, Ruben Beraja, president of DAIA, the Argentine Jewish umbrella organization, charged that the Argentine government had "made a deal with Iran to avoid a third bombing."

An earlier attack on the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires has also remained unsolved.

The bombing of the Jewish community center in Buenos Aires has been linked to Hezbollah, the Islamic fundamentalist terrorist organization based in Lebanon, which has close links to Iran.

"There were third countries that advised Argentina not to be confrontational with Tehran," Beraja stated at the hearing. "After accusing Hezbollah and Iran of being behind the bombing and downgrading diplomatic relations with Teheran, [Argentine President Carlos] Menem's government dropped the subject. They started saying that there is no conclusive proof of Hezbollah involvement," Beraja said.

At first, Argentina hotly denied any contacts with Iranian officials. "There was no secret meetings," said Foreign Affairs Minister Guido di Tella.

But on Oct. 5, di Tella admitted meeting with Iranian official Ali Akbar Velayati in Copenhagen during a U.N. conference on social issues in March.

"We spoke about bilateral commerce," di Tella told the Argentine newspaper Clarin while on a visit to the Philippines. "He asked me to stop what he called Argentine harassment of his diplomats in Buenos Aires, and I asked him for information on Hezbollah. That's all. No appeasement policy."

Menem's cavalier attitude

Beraja, during his testimony at the congressional hearing in Washington, asked his government to declare Hezbollah illegal in Argentina.

But at a news conference, Argentina's president adopted a cavalier attitude when responding to Beraja's request.

Saying that he had "no problem in humoring Mr. Beraja," Menem asserted that "Hezbollah has neither legal status nor any effective presence in this country."

He then added, "But we could declare it illegal, no problem."

Menem's oddly jocular statement contrasted with the stand of other high-ranking officials in his administration.

Hugo Anzorreguy, the director of state intelligence, and Interior Minister Carlos Corach have informed Beraja that they would favor an Argentine statement officially declaring that Hezbollah is "an illegal terrorist organization."

Menem's statement was taken by Argentine Jewish community officials as a display of anger at Beraja's criticisms of the Argentine government before an American congressional committee.

"He did not appreciate being criticized in Washington, of all places," an official close to Beraja said of Menem, who has made close alignment with the United States a basic tenet of his government.

In the immediate aftermath of the congressional hearing, Menem was so incensed by the proceedings that he said he would instruct his Foreign Ministry to lodge a formal protest over the matter. □

B'nai B'rith provides relief to victims of Oklahoma attack

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Marking the six-month anniversary of the deadly bombing that ripped apart the Oklahoma City federal building, B'nai B'rith International presented the people of Oklahoma with \$515,000 for disaster relief at a Capitol Hill ceremony last week.

Members of Congress and B'nai B'rith officials used the Oct. 19 occasion to call for the swift passage of anti-terrorism legislation pending in Congress.

Religious leaders, rescue workers, members of Congress, and Attorney General Janet Reno gathered at the ceremony hosted by Sen. Don Nickles (R-Okla.) and B'nai B'rith to remember the victims of the bombing and to pay tribute to the heroes who worked to save lives and heal the pain.

"These brave men and women came from around the country, leaving their families for weeks at a time. They worked long hours under difficult, life-threatening conditions," Tommy Baer, international president of B'nai B'rith, said of the rescue workers.

B'nai B'rith presented Oklahoma's congressional delegation with a symbolic check representing the more than \$515,000 in contributions B'nai B'rith had collected from more than 10,000 people across the country.

Baer joined congressional leaders in calling on the House of Representatives to support anti-terrorism legislation already approved by the Senate.

"The bombing of the Murrah Building taught us — and the sabotage of the Amtrak train in Arizona confirmed — that the cancer of violence has taken root here in the United States," he said. "We have learned that the tools of yesterday do not suit the radicalism of today."

Baer urged Congress to "pass this bill before more innocent American lives are lost."

Anti-terrorism measures making their way through Congress would ban fund raising by terrorist groups, beef up criminal sentences for convicted terrorists and give federal law enforcement agencies more tools to investigate suspected terrorists.

Reno, in her remarks, called on the American people to pull together and build partnerships: "In the spirit of Oklahoma City, we must speak out against divisiveness, we must speak out against racism." □

Peacemakers receive prizes

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate last week awarded its Golden Peace Prize to Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres at a ceremony on the Mount of Olives.

The award was bestowed upon the two leaders for their efforts to advance the peace process. Jordan's King Hussein and Crown Prince Hassan as well as Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat were given awards in separate ceremonies.

The Mount of Olives ceremony took place despite Palestinian opposition. Palestinians objected to the ceremony being held at the residence of Diodorus I, in eastern Jerusalem, saying it conveyed a political message.

They had also requested that Arafat receive his prize in Jerusalem, instead of at a ceremony in the Gaza Strip. □

Israel, Jordan forge more ties as economic summit approaches*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — As the date for an economic summit of Middle Eastern and North African leaders approaches, Israel and Jordan announced that they would present plans for joint projects at the meeting.

The projects include development of the Jordan Rift Valley and other sites along the 400-mile Israeli-Jordanian border.

The economic summit, which will bring together Israeli, American and Arab officials in the Jordanian capital of Amman for meetings starting Oct. 29, follows up on a similar meeting held last year in Casablanca, Morocco.

One of the goals of the conference is to raise funds for joint regional projects.

Israeli and U.S. officials said last week that plans for the creation of two banking institutions to develop the Middle East would be announced at the Amman summit.

One of the institutions, to be based in Cairo, would reportedly be created along the lines of the regional development bank that American officials have long sought. The second institution would operate under the auspices of an economic working group established at Casablanca last year.

The Cairo-based bank was announced by Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, who traveled Oct. 18 to Amman, where he held separate meetings with King Hussein and Crown Prince Hassan to discuss the joint Israeli-Jordanian projects.

Peres and Hussein also discussed setting up an airport to serve the neighboring cities of Eilat and Aqaba, as well as a free-trade zone in Israel, Jordan and Egypt, Israel Radio reported. Peres was accompanied on the trip by Trade Minister Michael Harish, Tourism Minister Uzi Baram and Transportation Minister Yisrael Kessar.

After their meetings with the Jordanian leaders, the Israeli ministers announced that the two countries would sign a trade agreement and a transportation accord.

The transportation agreement would make it possible for Israelis to drive into Jordan in private cars. Bus lines would also operate between the two countries as a result of the accord.

The Amman summit is seen as significant because, like last year's Casablanca meeting, it confirms Israel's growing role in the world — and particularly the Middle East — economic arena. It also reflects growing recognition of Israel by the Arab world.

Palestinian officials in the Gaza Strip said last week that they would attend the Amman meeting, despite reported threats that they would boycott it. The Palestinian Authority official in charge of economic issues, Ahmed Karia, said Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat would head the delegation to Amman. □

Census workers hit the streets amid boycott from some sectors*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's fifth national census got under way last week as Central Bureau of Statistics workers began distributing questionnaires to some 1.5 million households and thousands of institutions throughout the country.

The fervently Orthodox community was expected to participate in the census, at least in Jerusalem, after a rabbinic ruling that filling out the forms does not violate halachic prohibitions.

Elsewhere, however, some rabbis called on their followers not to participate.

At the same time, the Yesha Council of Jewish Settlements in Judea, Samaria and Gaza also called on residents of the territories to boycott the census, as a means of protest against the current government.

A spokesman for the Yesha Council rejected the idea that refusing to take part was essentially cutting the Jewish population in the territories off from the rest of Israel.

"The Interior Ministry already has a pretty good sense of the Jewish population of Judea and Samaria," Yesha Council spokesman Yehiel Leiter told Israel Radio. "They don't need to know how many microwave ovens we own."

The 7,000 census takers were to hand out short demographic forms with five questions to about 80 percent of the population.

The rest of the population was to be asked to complete more extensive forms. □

Israeli support group to extend help to war-stressed Rwandans*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An Israeli support group for Holocaust survivors and their children will help Rwandans cope with the psychological effects of last year's genocide of more than 500,000 of their people.

Rwanda's ambassador to Israel, Zac Nsanga, said the group — known as AMCHA — would participate in a Nov. 1 conference on genocide to be held in the Rwandan capital of Kigali.

The conference is expected to draw experts from around the world.

More than 500,000 people, most of them members of the minority Tutsi tribe, were killed by rival Hutus during the months of civil violence in Rwanda that erupted in April 1994.

In the summer of 1994, the Israeli army flew a mobile field hospital to eastern Zaire in order to treat hundreds of thousands of Rwandan refugees.

AMCHA Director John Limberger said that even though it is impossible to draw straight parallels between the Holocaust and the slaughter in Rwanda, it is important to do something now to address the issue openly — something not done during the Holocaust, "when no one else cared."

He said the group hoped to share its expertise in dealing with post-traumatic stress.

"In addition to dealing with displaced persons, widows, orphans and relocation, the government should also take on the psychological effects of the genocide, to prevent some of the things that will happen down the road," he told Israel Radio. □

Gay Gaza man, Israeli partner reunited*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli security forces last week agreed to let a Gaza man visit his gay partner in Israel, an Israeli Jew who lives in the center of the country.

The permission was granted after the homosexual couple appealed to Environment Minister Yossi Sarid.

Israel Radio reported the permit was issued for a period of a month, but the security establishment assured Sarid that the permit would become permanent, enabling the couple to live together.

The move came after Israel last week lifted a closure that was imposed on the territories nearly a month ago.

The closure was an effort to prevent suicide terror attacks during the Jewish holiday period. □

Christian demonstrators oppose Israeli withdrawal in West Bank*By Michele Chabin*

BETHLEHEM, Israel (JTA) — Concerned about the future of their holy sites once Israeli troops withdraw from Palestinian towns and cities in the West Bank, 1,000 Christian pilgrims flocked to Bethlehem to demand continued Israeli sovereignty over what they termed the "biblical Land of Israel."

In a rally last week punctuated with singing and prayer, the Christian demonstrators expressed fear that the Palestinian Authority would not safeguard the rights of Christians to pray at their holy sites.

Many demonstrators were in Israel for the International Christian Embassy's annual Feast of Tabernacles.

Several of those interviewed said that under the terms of the Interim Agreement signed by Israel and the Palestinians in Washington on Sept. 28, authority over Bethlehem would be handed over to the Palestinians just before Christmas.

Waving banners proclaiming that "Bethlehem Will Be Jewish Forever," the pilgrims were joined by several Jewish residents of the West Bank who voiced their own concerns about an Israeli redeployment.

Said Yigal Klein, a 17-year-old resident of Gilo, located near Jerusalem, "Gilo is right next to Bethlehem, and one day very soon the army won't be here. This isn't just a Jewish issue, so I'm pleased to see Christian supporters here in Bethlehem."

Shlomo Riskin, the chief rabbi of Efrat who has led often-stormy settler protests against the Interim Agreement, told the crowd, "We welcome with all our hearts the confirmation that this is our land. The peace process has brought Jews and Christian believers closer than ever."

Although some participants called the gathering an apolitical prayer meeting, most openly expressed concern about the Palestinian Authority's ability — and desire — to safeguard Bethlehem and other West Bank sites.

"We are concerned about Christian sites falling into Arab hands," said Jim Ibale from the Philippines. "We can't be sure if they will allow us to visit them."

"As Christians, we are here today to support Israel and to pray for peace," he added. "Those who bless Israel will also be blessed."

Referring to the belief held by many Christians that Jesus' Second Coming will occur only after the Jews have returned to Zion, International Christian Embassy spokesman Jan Willem van der Hoeven said, "If we give up Bethlehem, we will not see the prophecy."

Van der Hoeven also expressed fears about the safety of the West Bank's Christian minority if self-rule is extended throughout the territories. "In Lebanon, we saw Christians murdered by Arafat's men. Thousands of Christians have been raped and killed," he said.

The Rev. Jesse Stines, from Elk Park, N.C., concurred: "I believe Christians are in danger because of Muslim attitudes. Christians are persecuted in most countries, so why should it be any different here?" □

Palestinian security agents held in connection with American's death*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Five Palestinian security officials have been detained in connection with the death of a Palestinian American who was in their custody.

Among the detainees were agents of Jibril Rajoub, head of all Palestinian security forces in the West Bank, including the police and secret service.

Palestinian officials said the body of 52-year-old

Azzam Musleh would be exhumed to determine the cause of his death.

Musleh was detained last month by Palestinian security officials on suspicion of leading a West Bank burglary ring, Israel Radio reported.

He was taken to the Jericho self-rule enclave, where he was questioned by interrogators under Rajoub's command. His body was returned 30 hours after his arrest to family members he had been visiting in the West Bank.

Witnesses who saw Musleh's body talked of signs of beatings on his face and body.

U.S. Consulate officials have demanded an investigation of the incident.

In a related development, six Palestinian security agents have been sentenced to prison for using excessive violence while questioning a detainee. It was unclear whether the detainee involved was Musleh. □

Yemen's foreign minister addresses Jewish leaders*By Daniel Kurtzman*

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A top official of the Republic of Yemen has held an unprecedented meeting with the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations in New York.

Abdulkarim Al-Eryani, Yemen's deputy prime minister and foreign minister, described the recent meeting with Jewish leaders and Yemenite American Jews as "turning a page in our relations."

He said he would support a move by the Arab League to end the economic boycott of Israel and that Yemen would establish full diplomatic relations with Israel upon completion of the peace process.

Al-Eryani also expressed his support for efforts to preserve Jewish historical sites in Yemen and his nation's Jewish culture.

"I would be sad if 5,000 years of Jewish history disappeared from Yemen," he said.

Jewish leaders praised Al-Eryani for the important role he has played in enabling Yemenite Jews to travel abroad.

"If any one person is responsible for the fact that Yemenite families have been able to be reunited with their families abroad it is Dr. Al-Eryani," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the conference. □

Swiss Jew fatally stabbed on way home from synagogue*By Tamar Levy*

GENEVA (JTA) — Nathan Kahn, a Jew from Zurich, was killed on the eve of Rosh Hashanah on his way home from synagogue.

The 55-year-old businessman was stabbed with a knife by a 46-year-old, unemployed Muslim Turk living in Switzerland since the 1970s. Kahn died of his wounds on the way to the hospital.

The motive for the crime remains uncertain, according to sources familiar with the case. It may have been a simple robbery, even though the victim carried no money, sources said.

But a link to an extremist Islamic organization has not been ruled out. The Swiss police were investigating whether the assassin was acting on orders from abroad.

The suspect was also being investigated for the alleged murder of others.

Kahn, the father of four children, was born in Haifa and immigrated to Switzerland in 1960. He worked in advertising for the Jewish weekly *Israelitische Wochenblatt*, which is published in Zurich. □