

NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **The State Department initiated steps to close the Washington office of the Palestine Liberation Organization.** The move came after the expiration of legislation that authorized the office. An Arab American leader called the move a "disgrace." [Page 1]

■ **A Jewish settler was seriously wounded in a drive-by shooting as he was traveling toward the West Bank town of Ramallah.** [Page 2]

■ **The Justice Department initiated proceedings to revoke the citizenship of a U.S. citizen living in Lithuania because of his World War II activities.** [Page 3]

■ **Albert Szabo, the leader of Hungary's neo-Nazis, went on trial to answer charges of inciting racial hatred.** Szabo's trial comes just days after right-wing demonstrators took to the streets to mark the 39th anniversary of Hungary's uprising against Communist rule. [Page 4]

■ **Five Israeli soldiers were wounded during attacks launched by the Islamic fundamentalist Hezbollah movement in the southern Lebanon security zone.**

■ **Yehuda Friedlander pleaded guilty to molesting a 15-year-old girl during a flight in late May from Australia to Los Angeles.** Friedlander, personal assistant to Brooklyn Chasidic Rabbi Israel Grunwald, faces a maximum of two years imprisonment when he is sentenced Jan. 18.

■ **Israel sent a team of medical experts to the former Soviet republic of Azerbaijan to assist in the treatment of burn victims from Saturday's subway fire in the capital of Baku.** Two Israeli doctors traveled to Azerbaijan, bringing an aid package of some \$25,000 worth of medicines, intravenous solutions and other medical materials. [Page 4]

■ **Israel allowed eight Palestinians to enter the Gaza Strip after they were expelled from Libya, which has reportedly expelled more than 1,000 Palestinians since September.** Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin made the move as a goodwill gesture in response to a request by Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat.

D.C. haggling delays aid bill, forces closure of PLO office

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A successful campaign by pro-life lawmakers to ban U.S. funds to international family planning programs that include abortions has put the \$12.1 billion foreign aid bill in a state of legislative flux.

The dispute over the foreign aid bill, which includes \$3 billion in aid to Israel, also contributed to the lapse of the Middle East Peace Facilitation Act, which allows for U.S. assistance to the Palestine Liberation Organization and permits the PLO to maintain its office here.

Without that legislation, which is known commonly as MEPFA and which officially expired midnight Tuesday, the State Department must close the PLO's Washington office and halt funding to the Palestinian Authority, which is due to receive \$75 million in cash assistance this year.

The authority, which is run by Yasser Arafat, is due to receive part of the aid in the middle of November. The money cannot be delivered if the measure is not extended. "We're going to implement the letter of the law," a State Department official said Wednesday, adding that "it just takes time."

He said the State Department would be sending a letter mandating that the PLO close its Washington office until MEPFA is extended.

The PLO office opened Wednesday for business as usual and in a terse response to the recent developments, an official there said, "We will obey whatever the law says."

By the end of the day Wednesday, PLO officials had reportedly been instructed by the State Department not to answer their phones.

James Zogby, president of the Arab American Institute, said in a telephone interview from Jerusalem that he was "stunned at the disgrace of what happened."

"The silliness is that Israel is going to continue to talk to the PLO and a superpower has just disengaged itself," said Zogby, who is also co-president of Builders for Peace, a joint Jewish-Arab group that seeks economic development for Palestinian-controlled territories.

Clinton vows to veto

The developments came after Clinton administration officials, seeing that the legislation was going to be tied up amid the foreign aid imbroglio, launched an unsuccessful campaign to convince Congress to pass a short-term extension before it expired.

But Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), wielding immense power as the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, blocked the extension. He said he was dissatisfied with unrelated negotiations with the administration over his plan to drastically reorganize the State Department.

Although negotiations continue with Helms to allow a vote for a short-term MEPFA extension, there is no end in sight to the feud over abortion rights in the foreign aid measure.

On Tuesday, the House of Representatives approved an amendment to the foreign aid bill, prohibiting the United States from spending any money on organizations that financially support overseas abortions and banning funds to the United Nations Population Fund, until it withdraws its family planning organization from China.

The Senate was expected to reject the amendment Wednesday. The entire bill is then expected to return to a House-Senate conference committee, which already failed to resolve the dispute once last week.

President Clinton has vowed to veto the measure if it includes the abortion language. Such a move would be the first presidential veto in recent memory of foreign aid legislation, according to observers.

Beyond the abortion language debate, Congress has overwhelmingly expressed support for the foreign aid legislation, which also includes \$2.1 billion for Egypt and an additional \$80 million for refugee resettlement in Israel.

Despite the delay in passing the foreign aid bill, Israel has already received 12 percent of its annual \$3 billion in U.S. aid. Congress included the money in a measure passed last month that allows the federal government to continue functioning even though the fiscal year has ended. □

Mideast economic gathering ends with Israel-Qatar deal*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Middle East and North African Economic Summit wrapped up three days of meetings in the Jordanian capital of Amman with news that Israel had signed its first major business agreement with a Persian Gulf state.

The Amman gathering, which convened under the slogan "The Middle East is Open for Business," drew 60 nations, including some 2,000 government officials and businesspeople, for a series of meetings aimed at promoting regional development projects.

A similar meeting held a year ago in Casablanca, Morocco, was a largely ceremonial affair at which Israelis found themselves able to mingle for the first time with Arab businesspeople in the name of an open spirit of cooperation. But this year, the emphasis turned from symbolism to spelling out plans for cooperative projects and concluding business deals.

The change was evidenced by the signing of an agreement in principle under which Qatar would sell \$2 billion worth of natural gas to Israel with the American company Enron acting as an intermediary.

Under the terms of the memorandum of understanding, signed on the Israeli side by Energy Minister Gonen Segev, Enron will extract the gas from Qatari oil fields. Deliveries to Israel of some 5 million tons of natural gas are expected to begin in the year 2001.

The gas shipments will initially be delivered by tanker, but officials predicted that it might ultimately be transported via a pipeline linking Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Israel.

Segev, alluding to his country's lack of diplomatic ties with Qatar, said the gas deal had bypassed politics.

He predicted that the two countries would soon establish formal relations.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, who witnessed the signing, was also optimistic. "I think it's a very important step in the normalization of the region," he said, adding that Israel and Qatar were "building an economic peace and not just a political one."

Agreement to establish development bank

The Qatar-Israel gas deal was not the only concrete achievement reached at the three-day meeting.

Despite opposition from a number of participating countries, summit delegates agreed on the creation of a regional development bank, a U.S.-backed idea that was first floated a year ago in Casablanca.

The bank, which is expected to have \$5 billion in initial capitalization to fund regional projects, will be headquartered in Cairo.

France and a number of other Western European nations had opposed the idea, saying they would prefer other channels for lending money. Saudi Arabia was also against the bank's establishment, saying that it feared that much of its funds would be used for Israeli projects.

During the three-day meeting, representatives from Middle East and North African nations presented proposals for projects whose costs would total more than \$50 billion.

Israel alone presented plans for more than 200 projects — including new rail lines, an international airport near Eilat and a "riviera" to be developed on Israeli, Jordanian and Egyptian soil near the Gulf of Eilat — whose total projected cost exceeded \$20 billion.

U.S. Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown, who attended the conference along with Secretary of State Warren Christopher, warned regional leaders that Western donor nations were dealing with tight budgets at home.

Brown, along with other officials, stressed the need for private investment in the region.

The summit's organizers acknowledged that, given the high price tag of the projects on each country's wish list, the meeting probably yielded more contacts than hard business deals.

More deals, they hoped, would be secured at next year's meeting, scheduled to be held in Cairo.

The Israeli presence at Amman — a total of some 120 government officials and businesspeople — was more muted than a year ago in Casablanca, when they numbered about 600.

Last year, some Arab officials said they felt swamped by the sheer number of Israelis, who they feared were out to dominate the Arab world financially.

The smaller numbers of Israelis at Amman this year was reportedly viewed as a concession to those fears.

Many Israeli businessmen who were unable to attend the Amman summit attended instead a separate business conference held at the same time in Jerusalem.

The Jerusalem conference drew businesspeople and representatives from investment firms in 44 countries. □

Jewish settler wounded in West Bank terror attack*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A Jewish settler was seriously wounded in the neck in a drive-by shooting Wednesday near the West Bank town of Ramallah.

Jewish settlers responded angrily to the attack. They said it was the third terrorist attack in the area since December 1993.

Noting that the attacks took place while the Israeli army still controlled the area, they warned of what could happen once the troops withdrew from Ramallah, a move called for under the terms of the recently signed accord for extending West Bank autonomy.

The accord allows for all Jewish settlements in the West Bank to remain in place. The Israeli army will maintain responsibility for the settlers' security.

Israel is building bypass roads around the major Arab population centers in the West Bank to enable Jewish settlers and the Israel Defense Force to avoid driving through the Palestinian centers.

Regional Council Member Pinchas Wallerstein warned that he and other settlers would take the law into their own hands if they felt that they were not adequately protected by the army.

The incident occurred when Rabbi Uzi Navo, 32, drove out of the Kochav Ya'acov settlement, located east of Ramallah.

Police said at least two gunmen opened fire from a stolen U.N. car, shooting Navo several times in the upper body before driving away.

He was listed in serious but stable condition after undergoing surgery.

Meanwhile, an angry confrontation was reported between Israeli and Palestinian security forces in the Gaza Strip on Wednesday, after Palestinian police blocked an Israeli bus carrying schoolchildren on their way to the settlement of Morag.

Israel Radio reported that the Palestinian police refused to let the bus pass through an intersection.

When the driver tried to drive through anyway, one of the police pointed his weapon at the bus. The driver summoned Israeli border police and troops to the scene.

A shoving match broke out between Israeli and Palestinian security forces.

A joint Israeli-Palestinian coordinating office is investigating the incident. □

Ousted House historian seeks restitution and a straight record

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Fired 10 months ago as the historian of the House of Representatives for her controversial review of a Holocaust education program, Christina Jeffrey is now seeking financial restitution and a chance to set the congressional record straight.

House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) had hand-picked Jeffrey in January but quickly dismissed her after learning that, as a consultant for the Education Department in 1986, she had criticized a junior high school Holocaust course for not presenting "the Nazi point of view."

An associate professor at Kennesaw State College in Marietta, Ga., Jeffrey has spent 10 months trying to clear her name, saying that she was falsely characterized as racist and anti-Semitic.

The Anti-Defamation League, which initially praised Gingrich for firing Jeffrey, came to her defense last August. The "ADL is satisfied that any characterization of you as anti-Semitic or sympathetic to Nazism is entirely unfounded and unfair," Abraham Foxman, ADL national director, wrote in a letter to Jeffrey.

The 47-year-old is waiting for a response from Gingrich's office about her request for \$32,000 in restitution to cover lost salary and the cost of relocating her family twice — from Georgia to Washington and back — within one month.

In a telephone interview this week, Jeffrey said Gingrich's staff would only tell her that Gingrich is considering "a list of options."

A Gingrich spokesman was not immediately available for comment.

"We don't like the idea of the taxpayers being told to foot the bill for this," Jeffrey said, but added that Congress should take responsibility for the way it handled her situation.

"It's a matter of simple justice," she said, "and if the Congress can't deal with one citizen in a just manner, how can it deal with the country in a just manner?"

Although Jeffrey said "perfect justice" would involve reinstatement as House historian with back pay, at the very least, she said, she wants the Congressional Record set straight about her dismissal.

Characterization as Klan sympathizer

Several House floor speeches in the Congressional Record, a transcript of the daily proceedings of Congress, characterize Jeffrey as sympathetic to Nazism and the Ku Klux Klan.

"Racism and anti-Semitism are heinous offenses," Jeffrey said. "And it is not fair to allow the record to indicate that I am a person who holds those despicable views, because I am the polar opposite. If I were not, certainly the Anti-Defamation League would not have come to my defense."

Responding to the latest development in her effort to clear her name, Foxman said, "I understand where she's coming from." He said he thought that it would be "appropriate" for members of Congress who characterized her as racist and anti-Semitic to "find an opportunity to set the record straight."

In her 1986 evaluation of the Holocaust course, Jeffrey wrote, "The program gives no evidence of balance or objectivity. The Nazi point of view, however unpopular, is still a point of view and is not presented, nor is that of the Ku Klux Klan."

Last August, Jeffrey wrote in a letter to Foxman: "These remarks have given rise to great misunderstanding, and I deeply regret this. I would not for the world add to

the pain of those who have suffered so much at the hands of 20th century butchers and bigots."

Foxman, in return, presented Jeffrey with a letter to help her shake what he termed the "albatross" of being mislabeled anti-Semitic.

"I reviewed [the case] and reached out to her because those of us who are in the business of fighting racism and bigotry have as great a responsibility to correct it when it's inaccurate as to expose it when it's there, otherwise we don't have credibility," Foxman said.

In addition to the ADL, Jeffrey has enlisted support from a number of Jewish colleagues and friends.

"The whole thing is a fraud," said Barry Friedman, an associate professor of political science at North Georgia College, whose mother survived the Holocaust.

"It's a disgrace that leaders of our government have knowingly perpetuated the myth" that she is sympathetic to Nazism "because it's convenient for them to do it," he said in an interview, adding, "Somehow they are getting some sort of satisfaction by using her as a scapegoat and pretending to be champions of Jewish interests by slandering her and libeling her."

Jeffrey said she regrets the review of the Holocaust curriculum, but maintains that the controversy could have been defused had she been asked at the time to clarify her views. "Someone doesn't have to talk to me very long to know that I am not a racist or an anti-Semite," she said. "For Newt Gingrich to fire me without even talking to me was just devastating. It wasn't the action I expected of a colleague and of a smart man. He should have cared about what the truth was."

Jeffrey said she is working on a book recounting her experiences in Washington. □

U.S. moves to denaturalize accused war criminal in Baltics

NEW YORK (JTA) — The U.S. Justice Department has taken steps to revoke the citizenship of a U.S. citizen living in Lithuania because of his World War II activities.

The move to strip Kazys Gimzauskas, 87, of his U.S. citizenship comes as the United States and Canada have launched proceedings against several accused Nazi war criminals from Lithuania.

The complaint against Gimzauskas alleges that from 1941 to 1944, he was a senior official in two units of the Nazi-sponsored Lithuanian Security Police, known as the Saugumas. The unit played an important role in the implementation of Nazi racial policy in Lithuania, particularly in the annihilation of the country's Jews, according to the complaint, filed in U.S. District Court in the District of Columbia.

Gimzauskas, a retired machinist, moved in 1993 or 1994 from his home in St. Petersburg, Fla., to Vilnius, Lithuania, after the Justice Department had launched an investigation against him.

The complaint also charges that he immigrated to the United States in 1956 illegally, because he had not disclosed his wartime activities, which would have made him ineligible for entry.

According to the complaint, at one point Gimzauskas was second-in-command to Vilnius Province Saugumas Chief Aleksandras Lileikis, who faces a similar denaturalization suit filed last year.

The United States has informed Lithuanian officials of Gimzauskas' residence in Vilnius and of his wartime record, said Eli Rosenbaum, director of the Office of Special Investigations. The United States reportedly has not sought Gimzauskas' extradition, but wants to prevent him from returning to the United States. □

Hungary's neo-Nazi leader put on trial for incitement

By Agnes Bohm

BUDAPEST (JTA) — The leader of Hungary's neo-Nazis went on trial this week to answer to charges of inciting racial hatred.

Albert Szabo, who fled Hungary in 1956 when the country was under Communist rule but returned here five years ago, openly declares himself the direct ideological heir of the man who led the Hungarian Nazis during World War II.

Szabo's trial, which began Wednesday, came less than two weeks after his followers joined with other right-wing groups to stage a mammoth demonstration on the streets of Budapest to mark the 39th anniversary of Hungary's abortive uprising against Communist rule.

In addition to the charges of incitement, Szabo and six of his followers are being tried for wearing Nazi uniforms and for displaying Nazi flags and other symbols at public demonstrations. But he is not being charged with organizing anti-Semitic demonstrations, because such gatherings are not illegal under Hungarian law.

At the opening of his trial, Szabo repeated a familiar anti-Semitic refrain, saying, "Jews are practicing economic and cultural terror against Hungarians."

A decision in the case is expected soon.

The continued legality of anti-Semitic demonstrations here was thrown into sharp relief last month after a massive public gathering was held Oct. 22, the eve of the anniversary of the abortive 1956 Hungarian revolt against Soviet-backed rule. The uprising was crushed by Russian tanks and troops. Different political groups attempted to use the revolt, viewed as a symbol of national unity, to further their own political platforms.

The Oct. 22 demonstration in downtown Budapest was organized by the far-right Hungarian Justice and Life Party, which was founded by Istvan Csurka, a former parliamentarian who has made numerous anti-Semitic speeches in the past, including one on the floor of the Hungarian Parliament.

Csurka's party won only slightly more than 1.5 percent of the vote in last year's general elections, but the size of the rally last month indicated that he still has a strong following. The demonstration, according to official figures, drew an estimated 20,000 to 50,000 right-wing supporters, including neo-Nazi followers of Szabo's.

The aim of the demonstration was not to commemorate the outbreak of the Oct. 23-Nov. 4, 1956, Hungarian revolt, but to attempt to remove the governing coalition of Prime Minister Gyula Horn from power.

Rhetoric included anti-Semitic slurs

Csurka used the demonstration to try to exploit growing popular discontent with the government's harsh budget-cutting measures imposed in the wake of the country's double-digit unemployment and more than 30 percent rate of inflation.

The anti-government rhetoric, as it often has in the past, included anti-Semitic slurs. In addition, leaflets that were openly anti-Semitic were distributed at the demonstration. During the rally, people could be heard chanting, "Jews should leave Hungary."

During the rally, some 100 to 150 neo-Nazis dressed in uniforms and bearing Nazi flags marched on the National Hungarian Radio building, where they gave stiff-armed salutes and sang the anthem of the Hungarian Arrow Cross Party, which collaborated with the Nazis during the war.

The following day, Hungarian Interior Minister Gabor Kuncze said he was "shocked by the Nazi sym-

bols" carried by the demonstrators, but added that he was powerless to do anything until there was "legislation to prohibit these kinds of demonstrations."

The leadership of the Hungarian Jewish community — which at about 100,000 numbers the largest in Central Europe — has written to the speaker of the Hungarian Parliament, Zoltan Gal, seeking the imposition of laws to criminalize openly anti-Semitic demonstrations.

Gusztav Zoltai, executive director of the Hungarian Jewish community, explained the difficulty of the current situation by referring to recent plans by Szabo's neo-Nazi followers to hold a demonstration in front of Budapest's Dohany Street Synagogue.

The demonstration was to be held Oct. 15 to mark the 51st anniversary of the assumption of power by Ferenc Szalasi. Szalasi was a supporter of Hitler's and was the fascist leader of the Hungarian Arrow Cross Party during the 1940s. He was executed after World War II as a war criminal.

The police turned down the neo-Nazis' request to hold the rally, Zoltai said, but only because "the demonstrators would tie up traffic." □

(JTA staff writer Mitchell Danow in New York contributed to this report.)

German religious leaders flay Protestant conversion efforts

By Miriam Widman

BERLIN (JTA) — Leaders from both the Jewish and Protestant communities here have excoriated the efforts of ministers in southwestern Germany to convert Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

"These people came as Jews and when we lose them it is a quantitative and qualitative loss to our community," said Gerrad Breibart, a member of the administrative council of Germany's Jewish community and vice chairman of the Central Council of Jews in Germany.

Breibart did not have an exact number of how many Jews from the former Soviet Union have been converted to Protestant Christianity, but said the push for conversions had been occurring for about two years.

In a statement issued Tuesday, the Central Council and Protestant representatives condemned the financial exploitation of Jewish immigrants.

Former Soviet Jews have been enticed to convert with promises of financial help, Breibart said.

The statement came after Breibart and Joel Berger, a rabbi in the southwestern region, met Sunday with senior Protestant leaders. The church also agreed that when Jewish families come into contact with Protestant ministers, they will be referred to the nearest Jewish community.

Church leaders support the Jewish community's concerns and oppose these missionary efforts, Breibart said.

"But some churches see their mission as conversion," Breibart said in an interview. He added that the problem was most severe near Stuttgart, in the southwestern German state of Baden-Wuerttemberg. □

Israelis to treat Azerbaijani burn victims

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel sent a team of medical experts Wednesday to the former Soviet republic of Azerbaijan to assist in the treatment of burn victims from Saturday's subway fire in the capital of Baku.

Two Israeli doctors traveled to Azerbaijan, bringing an aid package of some \$25,000 worth of medicines, intravenous solutions and other medical materials.

About 300 people died in the weekend fire, which also left hundreds wounded. □