



NEWS AT A GLANCE

GAO report: Arafat tried to dodge donor restrictions

By Matthew Dorf

■ The board of Congregation Shaare Zion in Brooklyn, N.Y., voted overwhelmingly to suspend Rabbi Abraham Hecht, according to an informed source. Hecht last summer proclaimed that Jewish law permitted the assassination of Israeli leaders who endangered Jewish lives by making territorial concessions. However, only the congregation has the authority to fire Hecht.

■ Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat "launched several attempts to frustrate" donor controls over money flowing to the Palestinian Authority, according to a report by the U.S. General Accounting Office. [Page 1]

■ A little-noticed provision of the emerging U.S. mission plan for Bosnia requires U.S. soldiers to apprehend indicted war criminals, said Samuel Berger, deputy assistant to the president for national security affairs. [Page 2]

■ Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres, Israeli Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi Yisrael Lau and Leah Rabin are all slated for a Madison Square Garden rally in solidarity with Israel on Dec. 10.

■ Israel carried out repeated air attacks on suspected Hezbollah bases in Lebanon in retaliation for the dozens of Katyushas rockets fired on northern Israel by the Islamic fundamentalist group. The rockets stopped, but Hezbollah reportedly threatened to continue bombarding Israel.

■ Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat sent a message to the United Nations saying that a recent vote by the Congress to transfer the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem could have a negative impact on the peace process. Arafat's message came on the 48th anniversary of the General Assembly's passage of a resolution to partition Palestine.

■ Yigal Amir, confessed assassin of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, may not have acted alone. Two police officers appearing before a commission investigating the assassination said they saw Amir speaking with someone in the parking area where Rabin was later shot.

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat has tried unsuccessfully to circumvent international restrictions on funds donated to the Palestinian Authority, according to a newly declassified report.

Arafat has "launched several attempts to frustrate" donor controls over money flowing to the Palestinian Authority, according to a report by the U.S. General Accounting Office.

The congressional watchdog agency's report, "Foreign Assistance: PLO's Ability to Help Support Palestinian Authority Is Not Clear," was intended to address three central issues surrounding the finances of the Palestinian Authority, which is headed by Arafat and governs the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank. The review, which was conducted from July 1994 to April 1995, set out to:

- determine the PLO's ability to help finance the Palestinian Authority's operations;
- review whether the international donors have effectively analyzed the authority's needs; and
- assess whether there is an adequate Palestinian accounting system in place.

The second two questions were addressed by the much-awaited GAO report, but it was unable to answer the central query posed by Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.), the chairman of the House International Relations Committee who had requested the study: Does the PLO have billions of dollars squirreled away in worldwide investments?

The "PLO was unwilling to provide us with requested accounting records and supporting documentation," the GAO said in the 14-page version of its declassified report.

The GAO was "unable to reach a definitive conclusion on PLO's ability to assist the Palestinian Authority with its operating expenses."

GAO investigators "could not verify the accuracy" of a British National Criminal Intelligence Service briefing document that stated that the PLO "constitutes the richest of all terrorist groups."

"Despite denials to the contrary, it is estimated that they have worldwide assets approaching \$8-10 billion."

GAO report accuses Arafat

The GAO presented a classified version of the report to Congress in April. The declassified version — released Wednesday — deletes all information provided by the Central Intelligence Agency.

The GAO based the declassified version on information gleaned from the State Department and GAO researchers. The GAO report accused Arafat of trying to have himself appointed the head of the U.N. agency responsible for disbursing funds to the Palestinians.

It also noted that when the Palestinian Authority spent \$2 million of donor funds to pay relatives of "martyrs," the World Bank disallowed the expense. The World Bank, which is managing the funds from international donors, also denied a request to fund the PLO's Rome and Washington offices.

In spite of these attempts, the GAO believes that the oversight mechanism to determine the spending of the hundreds of millions of dollars in donor funds is effective. In 1994, donor countries contributed \$120 million to the Palestinian Authority, representing 68 percent of its budget. In 1995, donor contributions rose to \$200 million, or 45 percent of the PLO's budget.

The United States gives the PLO about \$75 million in cash assistance each year. Another \$25 million flows to Palestinian-controlled areas through specific development projects.

Addressing concerns about the use of U.S. funds, the report states that "U.S. funds have not been used to pay PLO administrative expenses, armed militia salaries or martyr payments," referring to Palestinians killed during conflicts with Israelis. Instead, American tax dollars go to pay for expenses incurred by the Palestinian Authority.

The report was critical of the donor countries, including the United

States, for agreeing "to pay for certain costs, most notably civil servant and police salaries, without an adequate analysis of the support for such costs."

The report cited as an example the 9,000 Palestinian Authority personnel hired to replace 1,600 Israeli civil service employees.

"Nor is it clear why the Palestinian police force has grown to an 18,000-member force when the Gaza-Jericho Agreement between the PLO and Israel stipulates a 9,000-member force," the report says.

Although the donor community pays only the salaries for 9,000 police officers, the Palestinian Authority spends other money on police that "can be devoted to the expenses the donor community is willing to underwrite," the report states. In assessing the finances of the PLO, the report sought to determine whether the PLO was capable of financing the Palestinian Authority.

According to a State Department cable cited in the report, the United States had originally hoped that the PLO could operate without external assistance.

The report found that the PLO's principal income historically came from official contributions from Arab states, the Palestinian Liberation Tax Fund — a 3.5 percent to 7 percent tax on Palestinian workers in Arab states, income from investments, and donations from wealthy Palestinians and philanthropic organizations.

After the Gulf War, in which the PLO backed Iraq, many Arab states withdrew their financial support and withheld the tax paid by Palestinians.

Investigators were unable to confirm allegations that the PLO owns several national airlines.

But they did find that the PLO operated agricultural cooperatives, a film studio and a children's clothing factory. And according to the State Department, the PLO operated a duty-free shop in Tanzania. The report did not cite where the operations existed. □

U.S. official: Forces in Bosnia must apprehend war criminals

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A little-noticed provision of the emerging peacekeeping mission plan for Bosnia requires U.S. soldiers to apprehend indicted war criminals.

"It will be the responsibility of the implementation force to apprehend war criminals," said Samuel Berger, deputy assistant to the president for national security affairs.

While the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, as the U.N. war crimes court is formally known, continues to investigate and to hand down indictments, American officials remain committed to bringing war criminals to justice, Berger said in a telephone interview Wednesday.

But just how any of the alleged war criminals are to be apprehended and brought to trial remains unclear.

Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and military commander Gen. Ratko Mladic have been the two most prominent figures indicted thus far by the tribunal, which also has handed down indictments for a number of lower level officers. Although details of the specifics of the mission remain sketchy, Berger said, "We will not go on a [Mohammed Farah] Aidid search," referring to the Somali warlord hunted in vain by American forces in 1993.

The U.S.-brokered peace agreement reached this month between the leaders of Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia in Dayton, Ohio, requires the parties to ban anyone indicted by the war crimes tribunal from participating in the electoral process or in the emerging government.

Berger termed that provision "a remarkable addition" to the agreement. U.S. officials "will not

negotiate and we did not negotiate in Dayton any kind of compromise of the war crime tribunal," he said.

In fact, the tribunal praised the agreement, which calls for the establishment of a human rights court with investigative powers. "There will be a continuing effort to bring war criminals to justice. Certainly they won't be able to leave Bosnia without putting themselves in considerable risk of being apprehended," Berger said.

As details of the peacekeeping mission continue to emerge, the Clinton administration has launched an all-out campaign to win public approval for its commitment to send 20,000 U.S. troops to Bosnia. Another 40,000 troops will be provided by some 25 mostly-NATO countries.

Most Jewish organizations lined up almost immediately behind Clinton to support his effort to send troops.

"While no community is monolithic, it is particularly important that for a community that these kind of horrible atrocities have a particular resonance, speak up and say that 'never again' also means never again for Bosnia," Berger said.

Berger praised the Jewish community for its support of the Bosnian plan and called for continued activism. "Congress will hear from those who say that the risks are too great, but if they don't also hear from those who say we must do this in the interest of humanity and the interest of American leadership, they are going to get a skewed picture," he said.

"If we fail to secure the peace, the war will resume, the war crimes will resume and we will have enormous responsibility and be diminished as a nation and as a people."

Congress is expected to vote on a resolution expressing support for the deployment late next week. □

Holocaust denier loses right to airwaves of New Zealand

By Jeremy Jones

SYDNEY, Australia (JTA) — A New Zealand radio broadcaster has lost the fight to air a show promoting the denial of the Holocaust.

Fred Clements lost his final appeal earlier this month to air "Alternative News, Information and Comment," a show that includes Holocaust denial.

Clements took legal action when Wellington Access Radio in New Zealand decided earlier this year to discontinue the broadcast of the show.

Supporters of Clements argued that his show be reinstated because the opposition to his broadcasts was "Zionist-motivated."

The radio show has been in existence for 12 years.

The president of the New Zealand Jewish Council, David Zwartz, strongly rejected the claim that it was "the Palestinian point of view" that was at issue.

He pointed to New Zealand's broadcasting code, which forbids the portrayal of "people in a manner that encourages denigration of or discrimination against any section of the community."

In an interview, Zwartz said he thought that the "successful action in this case" would help "protect other minority groups in New Zealand."

In February, Clements said, "Rabbi Stephen Wise and others simply got together and conspired to invent the Holocaust story."

Wise, a U.S. rabbi and Zionist leader, sounded the first warnings of the dangers of Nazism and sought to organize opposition to it and protection for victims of Adolf Hitler.

Clements also said in February that it was "Allied lying propaganda" that exterminations took place by the use of poisonous gas. □

Peres, Leah Rabin to appear at N.Y. rally for Israel Dec. 10

By Cynthia Mann

NEW YORK (JTA) — As many as 19,000 people are hoped for at the Israel solidarity rally planned for Madison Square Garden on the morning of Dec. 10.

Slated to appear are Prime Minister Shimon Peres, Israeli Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi Yisrael Lau and Leah Rabin, widow of slain Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

The date had been held open for President Clinton, who reportedly said he wanted to attend but had scheduling problems. Nonetheless, planners decided on the 10th and said "a top administration official" will be present.

The rally is intended to be a show of unity by an American Jewish community whose fractures have only intensified in the wake of the Rabin assassination.

Organizers have framed the event with language that steers painstakingly clear of partisan politics over the peace process in an effort to be inclusive. It will be a "demonstration of solidarity with the new government and people of Israel and the pursuit of peace," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

But not everyone is buying the unity line. Morton Klein, president of the Zionist Organization of America, has said the rally will be "divisive if different views on peace are excluded."

The ZOA, a vocal critic of aspects of the peace process, has urged the organizers "to promote healing and unity" by broadening the participants to include members of the Israeli opposition.

But Leon Levy, chairman of the Presidents Conference, said he told Klein that the event "is not a political rally with a political point of view. It is a rally for unity."

"We look at Shimon Peres as the head of the government, not as voicing the position of the Labor Party," he said. "The place for debate is the Knesset and not Madison Square Garden."

The conference, the World Jewish Congress, the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York and the United Jewish Appeal-Federation of New York are convening the event.

Conference officials said a major contribution to the event would be made by WJC President Edgar Bronfman, with contributions of up to \$25,000 apiece by some of the conference's member-organizations.

For their part, WJC sources would only say there was an agreement by the co-conveners to share responsibility for the entire event.

Sources say the cost could run to roughly \$400,000. □

Police question rabbis suspected of condoning Rabin assassination

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli police have stepped up the investigation into whether some rabbis issued a religious ruling that sanctioned the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Police investigators have questioned at least three rabbis in the assassination.

At the same time, Israel's police chief, Assaf Hefetz, said investigators had so far failed to uncover evidence that any rabbi had given the go-ahead for the assassination.

He said several of the suspects detained on charges of being involved in an alleged assassination plot had approached rabbis to discuss whether Jewish law would condone killing anyone who put lives in danger — the way

some extremists accused Rabin of doing with his peace initiatives with the Palestinians.

One suspect arrested in the killing said confessed assassin Yigal Amir had asked him to get rabbinical permission for the assassination.

But, Hefetz told Israel Radio, "so far as I know, the rabbis warned them not to carry out this judgment." He added that the investigation of rabbis would continue, but that he did not yet have reason to make arrests.

Among the rabbis called in for questioning was Rabbi Nahum Rabinovich, the head of a yeshiva in Ma'aleh Adumim, outside Jerusalem. Rabinovich was named by a fellow rabbi within days after the assassination as having given religious sanction for the slaying. Rabinovich has repeatedly denied that he made any such statement.

On Sunday, police questioned two other rabbis, Shmuel Dvir, from the Gush Etzion bloc in the West Bank, and David Kav, who taught at a yeshiva attended by Amir. The two were questioned again Monday, after which Dvir was released on bail and Kav was released unconditionally.

Meanwhile, an American immigrant with reported ties to the outlawed militant group Kahane Chai was questioned by police this week about the assassination.

Boaz Silverberg, a Jerusalem psychologist, said he did not know why he had been summoned, and police would not state why they were questioning him.

Meanwhile, the Jerusalem Magistrates Court on Sunday extended by three days the detention of a minor accused of printing posters that depicted Rabin in a Gestapo uniform. The posters were distributed at an opposition rally a month before the slaying. The inflammatory posters, along with public statements that Rabin was responsible for the deaths of Israelis because of his peace policies, have been cited as contributing to a public atmosphere that made the assassination possible.

The 16-year-old suspect, who was not identified because of his age, expressed remorse for his actions during the hearing, according to Israel Radio.

In another development, the Petach Tikvah Magistrates Court on Sunday extended the detention of Margalit Har-Shefi, a 21-year-old woman believed to have known about Amir's plans to kill Rabin. Har-Shefi is one of nine people questioned in connection with the slaying.

Amir has repeatedly said he acted alone. □

Turkish government urged to condemn killing of Jew

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Anti-Defamation League has called on the Turkish government to issue a public condemnation of this week's shooting death of a Jewish businessman in Turkey.

An anonymous caller reportedly told Turkish security forces that Tuesday's killing of Nesim Malki in Bursa, Turkey, was in retaliation for last month's slaying in Malta of Dr. Fathi Shakaki, the leader of the fundamentalist Islamic Jihad movement.

Islamic Jihad leaders have blamed Shakaki's death on Israel — a claim Israeli leaders have neither confirmed nor denied.

Malki was reportedly shot by three gunmen who opened fire on his car in the western Turkish city. Malki's killing was the second attack on a Jew in recent months. In June, a militant Islamic group claimed responsibility for a car bomb attack that injured the leader of the Jewish community in the capital of Ankara.

Malki's murder prompted the ADL to write a letter to Turkey's ambassador to the United States, Nuzhet Kandemir, calling on Turkey to investigate the attack and beef up security for the country's Jewish community. □

Gingrich, Foxman to meet with ousted House historian

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Commending Christina Jeffrey for her tenacity in trying to clear her name, House Speaker Newt Gingrich agreed to meet this week with the House historian he fired in January for her controversial review of a Holocaust education program.

In a Nov. 13 letter to Jeffrey, Gingrich (R-Ga.) wrote, "I recognize it has been a long and difficult journey for you. I commend your tenacity."

Gingrich agreed to meet Thursday with Jeffrey and Anti-Defamation League National Director Abraham Foxman, who came to Jeffrey's defense in August, saying that she was unfairly stigmatized and mislabeled anti-Semitic upon her dismissal.

Gingrich said he intends to discuss with Jeffrey and Foxman "the difficult and often unfair treatment appointees receive in the political process."

He also suggested the possibility of appointing her to another official position in the House of Representatives. The position of House historian has since been abolished.

"If Newt has a position or a job for Christina Jeffrey, I would be very supportive," said Foxman. "I'm ready to give my blessing if that's what it needs."

Gingrich hand-picked Jeffrey to serve as House historian 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 the past 11 months trying to clear her name.

"It strikes me as unprecedented," Jeffrey said in welcoming Gingrich's decision to meet with her. She added that the speaker appears to recognize "we have something to learn here" about the way Washington treats people.

Although Jeffrey said full exoneration would involve her reinstatement as House historian, she hopes that Thursday's meeting will allow her to set the record straight about the facts surrounding her dismissal.

In a recent showing of what she characterized as her longtime support for Jews and Israel, Jeffrey and her husband signed a book of mourning at the Israeli Consulate in Atlanta after the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Recognized by the consul general, Jeffrey and her husband were escorted to the front of the line — ahead of such notables as Rep. John Linder (R-Ga.). They wrote, "Our condolences to the Rabin family and to Israel. We are praying for the unity and security of Israel." □

Holocaust survivors in Israel help Rwanda deal with genocide

By Alissa Kaplan

NEW YORK (JTA) — The government of Rwanda has approached a leading Holocaust survivors group for advice on the long-term effects of genocide.

"We can't turn our backs on them," said John Lemberger, director of AMCHA, an organization in Israel that provides psychosocial services for Holocaust survivors and their families.

Lemberger responded to the Rwandan appeal by attending the government-sponsored "Conference on Genocide, Impunity and Accountability," held earlier this month in the Rwandan capital of Kigali.

Legal experts and human-rights advocates from a number of countries also participated.

More than 500,000 people were killed in Rwanda in the months of brutal violence that erupted in April 1994, after the country's Hutu president died in a plane crash.

Most of the victims were members of the minority Tutsi tribe, though some Hutus also died in the ruthless clashes between the two groups that dominate this African nation. The Tutsi now control the government, and in trying to rebuild their nation they have been seeking to deal with the suffering of the country's population, particularly those who survived massacres or lost family.

In addition, the government is dealing with a massive refugee population. Currently, 2 million Rwandan refugees are outside the country's borders, said Lemberger, while within Rwanda there are hundreds of thousands of refugees, many of them widows and orphans.

Many parallels exist between the survivor populations of the Holocaust and the civil war in Rwanda, Lemberger said in a recent interview.

However, one has to be careful in comparing the Holocaust and the genocide in Rwanda, he said, adding, "We were very careful in Rwanda that the two situations were not compared in a historical sense."

The Holocaust, in terms of intensity, length and method, was "different than conflict in a country between two groups," Lemberger said.

For Rwandans, the "'Germans' aren't somewhere else," the AMCHA director said. "They're within them."

AMCHA's mission remains in Israel, but Lemberger said his group wants to help the Rwandans "move from frustration and despair to hope."

Based on the experience of Holocaust survivors, Lemberger made the following comparisons:

- The problems that Rwandan survivors face are ones that will "last 20, 30, 40, maybe 50 years." The Holocaust not only had an impact on the survivors, but on their children as well.

Parallel of proper burial

- As in the case of the Jews in the aftermath of the Holocaust, "Rwandans are not aware of what happened to loved ones," he said, stressing the importance of victims being "brought to proper burial," an issue with which the Jewish community still struggles.

- Rwandans have already formed survivors associations, whose members are from a certain town or are dealing with a particular issue. In the case of the Jews, people formed groups — even in the camps for displaced persons — according to place of origin.

- The stories and trauma itself are similar. One survivor told him about how when she was eight months pregnant, her husband and two children were killed in front of her. She was severely injured, and miscarried. "All you had to do was close your eyes and see 50 years ago," Lemberger said.

- Issues of compensation, education and remembrance are being discussed among Rwandans, as they have in the Jewish population, even today.

"For Rwandans, it's important for people to know what they have experienced," Lemberger said, adding that "legitimization justifies their survival."

"One of the worst feelings — for either a Rwandan or Holocaust survivor — is for people to think that it was their fault, that there was no way to get around it, that it was an act of God," he said.

AMCHA is the Hebrew codeword — meaning "your people" — that once helped survivors identify other Jews in war-ravaged Europe.

Other Jewish groups — such as the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee — have been active in providing humanitarian assistance to the refugees of the Rwandan civil war. □