

**NEWS AT A GLANCE**

- "Arafat has made a bit of a beginning, but we hope for more," said Prime Minister Shimon Peres, responding to reports that Palestinian police arrested three leaders of the Hamas military wing. Meanwhile, the militant Islamic group vowed to continue its terror campaign against Israel. [Page 2]
- Leaders of more than 30 countries are expected to attend an anti-terror summit in the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheik. While Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres hailed the gathering as a major step toward international cooperation against terror, Arab leaders stressed that the summit's focus would be support for the peace process.
- A Romanian construction worker died of injuries sustained in the March 3 bus bombing in Jerusalem, raising the death toll in a two-week series of suicide bombings to 58 victims. The four terrorists from the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas movement also died in the attacks.
- Israel decided to import another 16,500 workers to replace Palestinians. The Jewish state sealed off the West Bank and Gaza Strip after the first of the four suicide bombings, preventing some 60,000 Palestinians from going to their jobs in Israel. [Page 2]
- An Israeli soldier was killed and four others wounded in the southern Lebanon security zone. The Islamic fundamentalist Hezbollah movement claimed responsibility for the bomb attack. [Page 2]
- South African Jewish communal leaders urged President Nelson Mandela to reconsider his statement that he would meet with representatives of Hamas. Three former South Africans were among the 13 victims in the March 4 Dizengoff Center suicide bombing in Tel Aviv. [Page 4]
- More than 10 years after the Achille Lauro hijacking, only one of the four Palestinian terrorists imprisoned in Italy remains in jail. The man who shot and killed Leon Klinghoffer was the third terrorist to escape, prompting cries of outrage from Klinghoffer's family. [Page 3]

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES****Celebrating Shabbat in Qatar, U.S. Jews find emir backs peace***By Michele Chabin*

DOHA, Qatar (JTA) — While gathered in a hotel suite here, 24 American Jewish leaders conducted Orthodox Shabbat services on a recent Friday night and Saturday morning.

For perhaps the first time in the history of this tiny Persian Gulf nation, the portion of the week — Parshat Zachor — was read from a Torah scroll.

"We had no trouble whatsoever bringing in kosher food or a Torah from Israel," Carolyn Green of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations said of the services in the Qatari capital.

"The Qataris couldn't have been more accommodating," she said, adding that the hotel "provided us with private rooms for preparing and eating our Shabbat meals and even provided brand-new dishes and utensils."

For almost all the participants in the Presidents' Conference delegation, Shabbat was the high point of a three-day visit last week at the personal invitation of Qatar's ruler, Sheik Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani.

"This was an historic visit, and a clear sign of Qatar's growing acceptance of Israel and Jews," said Leon Levy, conference chairman. "This was a statement by the Qataris that they are firmly committed to the peace process."

As the American Jewish leaders learned, this tiny country is taking a lead among Arab nations along the Persian Gulf in developing relations with Israel, expressing support for the peace process and opposing terrorism by militant Islamic organizations.

During their red-carpet visit, which was publicized in the Qatari press, the Jewish leaders met with several government officials, most notably the emir, Hamad.

The emir, whom many consider a political maverick, recently agreed to sell natural gas to Israel — the first economic agreement between Israel and a Gulf state.

Oil-rich Qatar boasts the world's third largest natural gas reserves.

The emir also has introduced some democratic initiatives, such as a relatively free press, and has instructed Muslim clerics to denounce terrorism.

But by all accounts, Hamad is on shaky ground.

Just three weeks ago, he foiled a coup attempt by supporters of his father, Sheik Khalifa bin Hamad al-Thani, whom he deposed last June.

Bordering Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, with Iran looming just across the Gulf, Qatar is extremely vulnerable, both politically and militarily.

According to a U.S. official based in the Gulf, the emir wants American assurances that it will come to Qatar's defense should the need arise.

**'Surrounded by despots'**

Although the United States has already stationed some military equipment in Qatar and plans joint U.S.-Qatari military exercises, the emir would like more cooperation.

"You have to understand our situation," he said. "Our population is less than 100,000, and our neighbors are scared, hesitant about the peace process. We are a small nation that supports peace and we are ready to do more."

In accepting the invitation to visit Qatar, the American Jewish leaders said they had no illusions about the emir's agenda.

"The emir has made a great effort to convey to us his desire for U.S. friendship," Levy said after a meeting with the Qatari leader.

"He is surrounded by despots in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and other countries" and would like the American Jewish community "to intercede on his behalf," Levy said.

The delegation raised its own interests with the emir.

Meeting in the splendid royal palace, straight out of a fairy tale, the emir responded favorably to questions about Qatar's intention to sign a peace treaty with Israel. Qatar, he said, "has played a big role in ending" the

secondary and tertiary Arab boycotts against the Jewish state.

In October 1994, the six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council — Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain — announced an end to their participation in the secondary and tertiary boycotts.

Under the terms of those boycotts, Arab nations refuse to do business with companies that trade with Israel, as well as with third-party firms that trade with those companies.

“Here, we receive many Israelis, even those traveling on Israeli passports. As long as the U.S. supports us and we feel this support, we will continue to support the peace process,” the emir said.

Hamad said Qatar plans to exchange interest sections with Israel, but he did not offer a timetable.

“We try to do our best, although we do have some difficulties from our brothers in other countries,” he said.

In addition to their meeting with the emir, the Americans were surprised to learn that one of the country’s most influential Islamic leaders wanted to address them.

The leader, who asked that his name not be published, openly denounced recent Hamas suicide bombing attacks in Israel and assured the group that he is actively working to stop Islamic violence.

About three years ago, Qatar outlawed all charitable donations to Hamas — including funds for the organization’s extensive network of social services, he said.

The cleric said he asked the Israeli government for the names of needy Muslim families so that the donations could be sent to them directly.

“I have ties with the Hamas leadership, although they are obviously not as strong as they once were, and I have told them that there is no Islamic justification for terrorism,” he said. “I have told them that they cannot call a jihad (holy war) without all Islamic leaders calling for a jihad as well,” he said.

The cleric added that in the near future, Qatar intends to send “missionaries” to the Palestinian autonomous regions in an attempt to dissuade Muslims there from committing terrorist acts.

“Islam is a religion of peace, not violence,” he said. □

### **Hamas military wing leaders seized by Palestinian security**

*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli officials have welcomed reports that the Palestinian Authority arrested leading Hamas militants, but added that they would wait to see whether the crackdown was genuine.

A Palestinian official said Sunday that Palestinian security forces had arrested three members of Izz a-Din al-Kassam, Hamas’ military wing, including a man thought to be the terror brigade’s commander, Abdel Fatah Satari.

The head of Palestinian security forces in the Gaza Strip, Maj. Gen. Abdel Razek Majaideh, said Satari, along with Salem Marouf and Kamal Khalifa, was arrested Saturday night in Khan Yunis in the Gaza Strip.

Majaideh described the three as important leaders of the Hamas military wing, which has claimed responsibility for four recent suicide bombings in Israel that claimed 58 victims and left more than 200 wounded.

In the wake of the attacks, Israeli officials called on Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to launch a severe crackdown on Hamas.

“Arafat has made a bit of a beginning, but we hope for more,” Prime Minister Shimon Peres said in a speech Sunday in Tel Aviv.

“I don’t want to hand out grades,” said Peres, who nonetheless applauded the arrests of the three Kassam leaders and of other “top Hamas people.”

Hamas has warned in pamphlets that it will continue terror attacks against Israel.

On Sunday, the Israel Defense Force announced that it would temporarily lift a blockade imposed last week on Arab towns and villages in the West Bank in the wake of the suicide bombings to allow Palestinians to move freely between the towns in order to stock up on food.

But a separate ban imposed on Palestinians entering Israel would remain in effect, the army added.

Israel’s Cabinet approved Sunday the entry of 16,500 additional foreign workers to take jobs in the construction and agriculture sectors that were filled by Palestinians from the territories before the latest closure was imposed.

Meanwhile, Palestinian sources could not confirm a report that Mohammed al-Deif, the most wanted Hamas militant, had also been arrested.

A delegation of CIA officials, led by Deputy Director George Tenet, met over the weekend with Arafat and called for the arrests of five militants believed to have been behind the recent suicide bombings. One of the names on the list was Satari, Palestinian officials said.

Meanwhile, Israeli and Palestinian security forces continued a hunt for Hassan Salameh, who is believed to have directed the terrorist cell that recruited the suicide bombers responsible for the Feb. 25 and March 3 bombings in Jerusalem and Ashkelon.

The 24-year-old Salameh, trained in Sudan and Syria, was believed to be hiding in the Ramallah area.

Among those working for Salameh was Mohammed Abu Wardeh, who has confessed to recruiting the suicide bombers who carried out the Jerusalem and Ashkelon attacks. He was sentenced to life imprisonment by a Palestinian court last week.

Palestinian security forces have detained some 600 fundamentalist militants in a crackdown initiated after the terrorist attacks.

Israeli forces continued to raid towns and villages in the West Bank as part of Israel’s steps against militant activists. □

### **IDF soldier killed, 4 wounded**

*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An Israeli soldier was killed and four others wounded, one of them critically, in a roadside bomb explosion near the Israeli border in the southern Lebanon security zone.

The Islamic fundamentalist Hezbollah movement claimed responsibility for the bomb attack Sunday in Kfar Kila, just several hundred yards from the Israeli border.

The wounded soldiers were taken to a hospital in Israel.

After the incident, heavy exchanges of fire between Israeli and Hezbollah forces were reported.

Earlier Sunday, an Israel Defense Force soldier was wounded in a clash with Hezbollah fighters inside the zone.

On Saturday, a soldier from the Israel-allied South Lebanon Army was killed and two IDF soldiers and another SLA soldier were wounded in an attack.

Hezbollah, a militant Islamic group based in Lebanon, is the main group that launches attacks almost daily to drive Israeli forces out of the 9-mile-wide zone, set up by Israel in 1985 to ward off raids on northern Israel.

Meanwhile, the Lebanese army blocked a road leading into the security zone to thwart any repeat of Israel’s mass expulsion of Palestinian militants in 1992 to the no man’s land north of the zone. □

## Achille Lauro terrorist flees; only one remains in Italian jail

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — When Italian authorities released Mohammed Abul Abbas, the mastermind of the 1985 Achille Lauro hijacking, Lisa Klinghoffer took it as a “good hint” of what was to come.

More than 10 years later, she and her sister, Ilsa Klinghoffer, have learned that only one of the four Palestinian terrorists imprisoned for the murder of their father remains in custody.

Last week, Youssef Magied al-Molqi — convicted of shooting the wheelchair-bound Leon Klinghoffer, who was then thrown off the deck of the hijacked cruise ship — fled a church-run shelter in Italy while on a 12-day good-conduct leave from prison.

He had been serving a 30-year sentence.

“It’s like we’ve just been victimized all over again,” Lisa Klinghoffer said in a telephone interview.

“We tried very hard 10 years ago to get the terrorists extradited to the United States and we failed. We had a promise from the Italian government that they would deal with the terrorists under the fullest extent of their law, and we feel that they have totally reneged. We feel totally betrayed.”

Prison officials reportedly considered Molqi a model prisoner and told a Rome newspaper that he had been allowed out four previous times on furlough in accordance with Italian law.

“To us it just seems as if they opened the door for him,” Klinghoffer said. “They might as well have given him a parade.”

She added, “It is totally unacceptable. A terrorist does not deserve that. Everyone is so worried and concerned about terrorists’ rights, and no one is concerned about victims’ rights.”

Italian officials defended the law that permits cooperative inmates to spend time out of jail, regardless of the crime committed.

After a Feb. 7 meeting with officials at the Italian Embassy in Washington, Klinghoffer said, “They sat there with a straight face, looked us right in the eye, and still seemed to defend the Italian judgment.

“They just don’t get it. They said they would look into it. I don’t know what that means.”

U.S. State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said the United States had raised the issue of Molqi’s escape with Italian Prime Minister Lamberto Dini.

The United States is satisfied with the hunt the Italian government is conducting, Burns said.

### Celebration of wedding anniversary

“He will be hunted down and he will be captured and he will be thrown in jail,” Burns said.

“And I hope that this time the local Italian officials who have authority over his jail sentencing will understand that it is not appropriate to release a murderer from jail for whatever reason.”

Leon Klinghoffer and his wife, Marilyn, both American Jews, were celebrating their wedding anniversary aboard the Achille Lauro cruise ship when an extremist Palestine Liberation Organization faction hijacked the vessel in the Mediterranean Sea off Egypt for three days.

Klinghoffer’s murder set off an international uproar that culminated with U.S. fighters forcing an Egyptian plane carrying Abbas, the terrorist faction’s leader, to land in Italy.

The Italian government, however, prevented U.S. military personnel from capturing Abbas, ignored a U.S. extradition request and sent him to safety in Yugoslavia.

The Italian government then insisted that the four apprehended hijackers be tried in Italy because the Achille Lauro was an Italian ship.

After several years of incarceration, Ahmad Marrouf al-Assadi disappeared in 1991 while on parole, and Bassam al-Asker vanished the same year while in the care of the Red Cross.

Ibrahim Fatayer Abdelatif remains in a jail near Genoa on a 25-year sentence.

Four others, including Abbas, were convicted by an Italian jury in absentia and remain at large.

Lisa Klinghoffer said she and her sister only learned about the first two escaped terrorists last week when they heard media accounts of the disappearance of Molqi.

“Frankly, I don’t think we’ll ever see them again,” Klinghoffer said.

“I think they’re probably out there with Abul Abbas. I don’t know if he sent for them. I think they’re all joined up somewhere planning the next bit of terror, and that’s what’s so excruciating about it.” □

## Amir’s lawyers stress role of suspected Shin Bet agent

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The defense for the confessed assassin of Yitzhak Rabin tried to show in court this week that a suspected secret service informant had encouraged the killing.

In Tel Aviv District Court on Sunday, defense attorneys tried to emphasize the role of Avishai Raviv, the suspected agent who founded an extreme-right group, Eyal, with which Yigal Amir was loosely linked.

Amir, a 25-year-old religious Jew, is on trial for the Nov. 4 murder of the prime minister in Tel Aviv.

Raviv reportedly worked for Israel’s domestic intelligence service, the Shin Bet.

“He egged Yigal Amir on,” testified Eran Ojalbou, an Eyal activist and Raviv’s former roommate. “Avishai Raviv would agitate against Arabs and politicians.”

The roommate added, “He called Rabin a traitor.”

Amir, who opposes the government’s peace policies with the Palestinians, maintains that he intended only to paralyze Rabin to force him out of politics.

Earlier Sunday, Shin Bet officials testified at a closed-door session at the request of the defense.

The court also heard testimony from police officers at the Nov. 4 peace rally where Rabin was killed.

Psychiatrists who recently examined Amir and declared him fit for trial were scheduled to appear later this week.

Three state psychiatrists found that Amir was of sound mind and was not mentally distressed in any way.

Judge Edmond Levy on Sunday also ordered lawyers to be ready with their closing arguments in a week.

Last week, Amir testified for the first time that ritual Jewish law dictated that he assassinate the Israeli leader.

“It was clear from Jewish law that ‘din rodef’ applied to the prime minister,” Amir testified March 4, referring to a ritual command to kill anyone who intends to cause the death of Jews.

The confessed assassin has said Rabin’s peace policies endangered Israelis.

“I know Jewish law and ‘din rodef’ means that if you’ve tried everything else and nothing works, then you have to kill him,” Amir told the court.

In a separate trial, Amir faces charges of plotting the slaying. □

**South African Jews protest  
Mandela-Hamas meeting plan***By Suzanne Belling*

JOHANNESBURG (JTA) — Jewish communal leaders and leading South African politicians have reacted sharply to President Nelson Mandela's statement that he would meet with representatives of Hamas.

Members of the Islamic fundamentalist movement are said to be planning to attend a conference on the Middle East next month in Cape Town.

The conclave is being held under the joint auspices of the Afro-Middle East Centre for Research and Information and the Centre for Contemporary Islam.

Mandela has condemned the recent series of terrorist bombings in Israel.

But last week, he said he would be willing to meet with the Hamas representatives.

"My attitude is to see everybody who wants to see me whether I agree with his policy or not," Mandela said.

"It sometimes helps because I'm able to state my policy to them and to let them defend their own policy if they can."

Tony Leon, the leader of South Africa's Democratic Party, strongly disagreed.

"If the president believes that by meeting with Hamas he can change their views, he is sadly mistaken," Leon said.

Marlene Bethlehem, national chairwoman of the South Africa Jewish Board of Deputies, and Joe Simon, chairman of the South Africa Zionist Federation, called on "responsible politicians" not to meet with Hamas.

"We are angry that these people, whose hands are dripping with blood, intend visiting our country. Indeed, their terror deeds have been condemned by all — including our own government."

Perhaps the most poignant plea came from Robyn Lipner, whose grandmother, Sylvia Bernstein, 73, formerly of Johannesburg, and whose aunt, Gail Belkin, 48, formerly of Durban, were killed in the March 4 Tel Aviv bomb blast carried out by a Hamas terrorist.

"My family were innocent people. I believe it's absolutely disgusting and an insult that Hamas is coming to South Africa," Lipner said.

"I have tremendous respect for Nelson Mandela, but I don't think Hamas deserves to be met," Lipner also said.

A third former South African, Tali Gordon, 24, was also killed in the Tel Aviv blast.

Israeli Embassy spokesman Ze'ev Luria said the government should kick out any Hamas member attempting to enter the country.

"The Hamas is a terrorist organization, and all peace-loving states and leaders must join in the fight against this murderous movement," Luria said in a statement. □

**European Parliament adopts  
economic accord with Israel***By Joseph Kopel*

BRUSSELS (JTA) — The legislative branch of the European Union has given its formal approval to a new association agreement signed in November by Israel and the union's 15 member states.

The new accord, which was approved Feb. 29 by the European Parliament, replaces a 1975 trade and cooperation agreement between Israel and what was then known as the Common Market.

Ratified in a 265-2 vote with three abstentions, the accord will grant Israel special status to participate in the

union's scientific and technological research-and-development projects.

Israel's new ambassador to the European Union, Efraim Halevy, welcomed the Parliament's vote, calling it "a very important step for the rapprochement between Israel and Europe."

The accord, which will go into effect in January, will provide for expanded free trade between Israel and the 15 nations comprising the European economic bloc.

Israel hopes that the new accord will help lessen Israel's growing trade imbalance with the European Union, which stood at some \$7.6 billion last year.

The European Union is Israel's main trading partner, receiving some 35 percent of Israel's total exports.

The accord, which also calls for a high-level E.U.-Israeli political dialogue, is part of an E.U. strategy to create a zone of stability and a vast Mediterranean free-trade area by 2010.

The European Union signed economic accords last year with Tunisia and Morocco.

The European Commission, the E.U.'s executive body, is planning to start discussions for forging an association accord with Syria, said Hans Van den Broek, the European commissioner in charge of external affairs.

But, he told the European Parliament, before the commission went beyond the exploratory stage with Syria, it wanted to see how the Mideast peace process developed and "what contribution Syria intends to make" to it. □

**7 relatives of Israeli athletes  
slain in '72 Munich Olympics sue***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Seven relatives of the Israeli athletes killed at the 1972 Munich Olympics by Palestinian terrorists have filed suit against the governments of Germany and Bavaria.

A Munich court will next month hear the claim, in which the families demand \$27.2 million in compensation.

In October, the same court threw out a compensation suit from 22 other relatives of the athletes, ruling that their claims had been addressed in an original settlement in 1973 that provided them with some \$1 million. In that settlement, the plaintiffs agreed not to pursue any further claims in the case, the Munich judge also said in October.

On the 11th day of the Olympics in September 1972, members of the Black September movement infiltrated the Olympic village, killing two Israeli athletes and taking nine others hostage, demanding the release of 200 Arab prisoners in Israel.

In a shootout at the airport later that day when German police attempted to free the hostages, all nine hostages were killed, as were a German police officer and five of the terrorists.

Relatives of the victims have pointed to a report that surfaced in 1992 showing that the police rescue effort had been bungled. □

**3 accused of illegal equipment sale***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Three Israelis have been arrested after being accused of bribing Israeli air force personnel to sell them surplus equipment at a discount of millions of dollars.

The three suspects allegedly then sold the equipment abroad at its actual price. After appearing in court recently, the three remained in custody.

Air force officers and Defense Ministry officials are being questioned in connection with the illegal sale of equipment. □