



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ The Palestine National Council is scheduled to meet next week in the Gaza Strip to address changing its charter, which calls for the destruction of Israel. Meanwhile, Israeli officials barred one council member, former airline hijacker Leila Khaled, from entering the West Bank. [Page 3]

■ The United Nations Security Council will debate the continued Israeli closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. But the Security Council decided not to issue a formal statement or take any other formal action on the matter, according to an Israeli official.

■ An Israeli wounded in the Feb. 25 suicide bombing of a commuter bus in Jerusalem died of his wounds, bringing to 59 the number of innocent people killed in a series of suicide bombings that ended March 4.

■ More than 1,200 people gathered in Washington for an interdenominational "Summit on Ethics and Meaning" sponsored by Tikkun Magazine and other progressive groups. Organizers hope the summit will launch a progressive covenant for American families.

■ Israel's Supreme Court refused to release an elderly Israeli scientist jailed 12 years ago for spying for the former Soviet Union. The court said that Marcus Klingberg, who had asked that his 18-year sentence be reduced due to his poor health, may still remember information that could damage national security.

■ Yigal Amir, sentenced to life in prison for the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, was transferred to a maximum security prison. Amir spent the past two months in a rehabilitation center near Tel Aviv.

■ Actor Marlon Brando failed to appear at a news conference where he was expected to apologize for anti-Semitic comments he made on CNN's "Larry King Live" show. [Page 2]

■ Former JTA Washington Bureau Chief Joseph Polakoff died at the age of 87 after a long battle with cancer.

Israel vows to hit Lebanon until Hezbollah is restrained

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — With its continued air assaults and naval blockade, Israel is mounting pressure on the Lebanese government to crack down on Hezbollah operations.

Foreign Minister Ehud Barak ruled out diplomatic activity to end the operation, code-named "Grapes of Wrath," until Lebanon curbed Hezbollah operations against Israel.

"Right now, our guns and our aircraft are hitting the Hezbollah, and I believe that the time will come for diplomatic contacts only once the government in Beirut will realize its responsibility to take over Hezbollah," Barak said Sunday.

The Israel Defense Force chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Amnon Shahak, said that the massive wave of Lebanese refugees fleeing the repeated Israeli bombardments of targets in southern Lebanon would force the Lebanese government into action.

"This flood of people is going to put pressure on the Lebanese government, and in turn, on Hezbollah," Shahak said at a Sunday briefing. "These people have to decide if Hezbollah, which promises to be their protector, is really what they want."

The Israeli raids on targets in Lebanon came in the wake of repeated Katyusha rocket assaults launched by Hezbollah on northern Israeli communities. After Hezbollah unleashed a Katyusha attack on northern Israel on April 9, Prime Minister Shimon Peres responded two days later with a series of air assaults at Hezbollah positions within Lebanon.

At Sunday's weekly Cabinet meeting, Peres offered to stop the Israeli strikes if Hezbollah ceased its rocket attacks on northern Israel.

"If the Hezbollah ceases its attacks, we will cease ours," he said at the Cabinet meeting, adding that "Israel has the patience, fortitude and ability to continue carrying out the required actions until Hezbollah attacks cease."

The prime minister's remarks came as hundreds of thousands of Lebanese civilians fled north to escape the IDF raids, and as northern Israel came under a counter-barrage of Katyusha rockets.

Hezbollah continues firing rockets

Despite four days of Israeli strikes, Hezbollah units responded Sunday by firing some 45 rockets at the Galilee panhandle and western Galilee.

The Katyushas caused only light damage, and only three injuries were reported. The low casualty figure was in part attributed to the fact that residents of northern Israeli communities had heeded army directives to remain in bomb shelters and security rooms.

Another factor was that many homes were empty, after thousands of northern residents fled to central and southern Israel shortly after the hostilities broke out.

On Sunday night, one Katyusha rocket hit a shelter housing scores of people, but only two were lightly hurt. One Israeli woman was listed in serious condition from a Katyusha rocket attack last Friday.

Overall, more than 500 apartments had sustained damage in the wave of rocket attacks that began last week.

The Israeli military operation began April 11, after the Passover holiday's conclusion, when Israel launched air operations that extended to the southern suburbs of Beirut for a surgical strike against what was described as the logistics center of Hezbollah.

It marked the first time Israel targeted the Lebanese capital since the 1982 war in Lebanon.

Last week, the IDF issued a statement advising Lebanese civilians to leave four villages in southern Lebanon that Israel charged were being used by Hezbollah fighters as bases.

On Sunday, the IDF extended the warning to Lebanese residents of more than 42 villages south of the Litani River, telling them to get out of the area or risk their lives. In addition to the artillery and air strikes, Israel imposed a naval blockade on Lebanon.

On Saturday, an Israeli helicopter rocketed an ambulance near Tyre, killing four children and two women, sources in Lebanon said. Israel said a

member of Hezbollah had also been traveling in the vehicle.

On Sunday, Israeli planes rocketed a relay station in Jamhour, located south of Beirut, knocking out power in the surrounding area. Israel said the raid was in response to a Hezbollah rocket attack the previous night that had knocked out electricity in the northern Israeli border town of Kiryat Shmona.

"No place is immune," Peres told Israel Radio. "If they will hit electricity in our places, their electricity will face the same problem."

The air force also hit two targets in the Bekaa Valley from which Israel said Hezbollah transmitted its "Voice of the Oppressed" radio station.

The United States has given its support to the Israeli strikes in Lebanon.

U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher said over the weekend that the Israeli actions were a legitimate response to Hezbollah's rocket attacks on Israel. □

Supreme Court upholds ruling to dismiss anti-Semitic teacher

By Gil Kezwer

TORONTO (JTA) — The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that the need to protect young minds from teachers who purvey anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial overrides any free-speech claim such a teacher might make.

The court's resounding 9-0 decision, handed down April 3 in Ottawa, upheld a ruling by New Brunswick's Human Rights Commission removing math and remedial reading teacher Malcolm Ross from a New Brunswick junior high school classroom.

The judges said it was irrelevant that Ross never espoused his views about an international Jewish conspiracy in the classroom.

Though not officially fired, Ross, 49, is likely to lose his job since his school board will be unable to find an administrative position for him.

In four books with titles like "Spectre of Hate" and "Web of Deceit," Ross has written that a Jewish conspiracy exists to govern the world and destroy Christianity, and that the Holocaust is a hoax.

But he never mentioned his beliefs to his students.

The issue of what — if anything — to do with him has vexed the province of New Brunswick since 1985, when Julius Israeli, a retired chemistry professor, filed a complaint with the local office of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Following a 13-month police investigation, the New Brunswick attorney general decided not to charge Ross with promoting hatred of an identifiable group, an offense under Canada's criminal code, saying it would be very difficult to secure a conviction.

In 1988, David Attis — whose daughter, Yona, occasionally attended special events at the school where Ross taught — complained to the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission that the local school board was condoning Ross' views by employing him.

Attis, an officer of the Canadian Jewish Congress, claimed the anti-Jewish taunts his daughter suffered at the hands of her classmates stemmed from the presence of Ross.

The commission appointed Brian Bruce, a New Brunswick law professor, to investigate the complaint.

Among those to testify against Ross at the tribunal were Yona Attis and two classmates.

The New Brunswick Teachers Federation came out in support of Ross' right to freedom of expression.

Bruce ordered the school board to suspend Ross

immediately without pay for an 18-month "leave of absence" and to find him a non-teaching job.

He also put a gag order on Ross, forbidding him from publicly expressing his opinions about Jews. His decision was sharply critical of the school board, saying it had allowed a "poisoned environment" to develop that led to discrimination against Jewish students. □

Brando fails to make amends in public for hurtful comments

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Actor Marlon Brando failed to appear at a news conference where he was expected to apologize for anti-Semitic comments he made on CNN's "Larry King Live" show.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center hosted last Friday's media event to give Brando an opportunity to express remorse over his verbal assault on Jews in the entertainment industry.

During the hourlong interview with King on April 5, Brando said Jews "run" and "own" Hollywood, and that many films present demeaning stereotypes of ethnic minorities, with the exception of Jews.

"We have seen the nigger, we have seen the greaseball, we have seen the chink, the slit-eyed Jap," Brando told King. "But we never saw the kike, because they know perfectly well that's where you draw the wagons around."

While Jewish organizations responded with shock and outrage, the Wiesenthal Center's founder and dean, Rabbi Marvin Hier, reported that Brando called him on April 8, expressing remorse for his remarks.

Hier said that the actor would appear last Friday to tour the center's Museum of Tolerance and make a public statement.

However, instead of Brando appearing, Hier and his colleague, Rabbi Abraham Cooper, reported on a private meeting they held with the actor at the home of Jewish attorney David Ross.

Ross, identified only as a friend of Brando, released at the news conference the communique that resulted from the three-hour session.

"Brando's intent in the near future is to clarify what he feels is a misunderstanding of a statement made in an unfortunate and incorrect manner due to the pressures of appearing" on a talk show, the communique said.

"Mr. Brando is known to the Jewish community as highly supportive of Jewish culture and religion for many decades, and a profound humanitarian concerned with human rights for all people and races."

In response to questions, Hier and Ross declared categorically that Brando is not an anti-Semite.

They said Brando's comments on the King show were misconstrued, and that he never meant to imply there was a Jewish conspiracy to keep negative images of Jews out of films.

Rather, because of his great admiration for Jews, Brando would expect them to take the lead in combatting demeaning stereotypes of all ethnic minorities, they said.

Hier and Ross explained that Brando was not able to clearly express his true sentiments on the CNN program because of constant interruptions by commercials and by King himself.

They said the actor would expound on his true sentiments in print and on TV programs which allow him to speak without interruptions. When a reporter noted that Brando had made similar remarks about Hollywood Jews in an interview with Playboy magazine nine years ago, Ross replied that the author of the article had done Brando a great disservice. □

NEWS ANALYSIS**Hezbollah attacks could sway Israeli voters in May elections***By Gil Sedan*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The threat of Arab terrorism hangs over Israel's current election campaign more than ever in the past — and it may, indeed, determine its results.

But as Israeli air and naval forces pound Lebanon to try to bring an end to Hezbollah attacks on northern Israel, the government of Prime Minister Shimon Peres is displaying determination to stand firm against Islamic militants.

Terrorists have already shown their ability to influence the outcome of an Israeli election: An attack on an Egged bus in the West Bank town of Jericho on the eve of the 1988 elections cost the lives of a mother and a child, and gave Likud the edge in a close electoral race.

Most eyes have been focused on Hamas and the smaller militant group Islamic Jihad as having the power to influence the outcome of the Israeli elections on May 29.

But the Iranian-backed Hezbollah movement operating in southern Lebanon also has the power to alter Israeli voting patterns. Toward that end, Hezbollah has launched in recent weeks repeated Katyusha rocket assaults on Israel, sending residents of Israel's northern communities scurrying for shelter.

As soon as the Passover holiday ended, Israel launched a combined air and naval assault to send a strong message that such attacks would no longer be tolerated.

The Israeli military response came after a series of Hezbollah attacks that hit Kiryat Shmona and other northern Israeli communities.

The attacks, along with the provocative threats by Hezbollah leader Sheik Hassan Nasrallah after a March 30 assault on residents in northern Israel to "stay in their shelters," reflected the group's bravado.

They also indicated that the militant fundamentalist group decided no longer to honor the 1993 U.S. brokered understanding with Israel, under which Hezbollah committed not to launch Katyushas at the Galilee.

Increasingly daring and deadly

In the weeks before Israel retaliated with "Operation Grapes of Wrath," Hezbollah's almost daily assaults against the Israel Defense Force and Israeli-backed South Lebanese Army in Israel's nine mile-wide "security zone" in southern Lebanon had become more daring and deadly.

A Hezbollah suicide bomber on March 20 rushed the leading car of an Israeli army convoy, killing an Israeli officer — the sixth Israeli soldier to be killed in southern Lebanon in three weeks.

True, Hezbollah's main goal is to get Israeli forces out of Lebanon. But it also seeks to turn Israel's electoral tide in favor of the right-wing Likud Party — a development, Hezbollah officials believe, that will hasten the collapse of the peace process.

And it does so with the full blessing of its mentors in Tehran. Israeli security experts believe that Ali Falahian, the head of the Iranian intelligence service, is behind the recent Hezbollah offensive.

Falahian, who also views a Likud victory as leading to the collapse of the peace process, is the strongest supporter of Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu in the Islamic world.

Syria also has given its blessings to Hezbollah's operations.

Syria may not give the signal for each Katyusha attack, but few in Israel doubt that Damascus has the power to stop Hezbollah.

The supply lines to Hezbollah run from Iran — via Damascus — to the Bekaa Valley in eastern Lebanon, a territory under strict Syrian control.

Syrian President Hafez Assad has his own reasons for backing Hezbollah at the present time.

When the peace talks with Israel were going well, the Syrian media mentioned Israel by name and Assad reined in Hezbollah.

But now that the peace talks are stalled, Israel once again has become the "Zionist entity" in the Syrian media, and Damascus has given the fundamentalist group the go-ahead to continue its operations.

As long as Hezbollah has the backing of Damascus and Tehran, it will continue to press Israel in southern Lebanon and, possibly, within the Galilee. Nasrallah vowed last month that this is exactly what Hezbollah would do.

Israeli forces went into Lebanon in 1982 to fight the Palestine Liberation Organization. Segments of the Lebanese population regarded Israel at the time as a potential ally, and this view was shared by many Shi'ites, who disliked the Palestinians no less than the Israelis did.

When Israeli forces remained in Lebanon longer than expected, they were regarded by the local population as occupiers — and it became Hezbollah's political and religious mission to throw them out.

Hezbollah emerged in 1982 as a local product of Iranian Revolutionary Guards stationed in the Bekaa Valley. Today, Hezbollah is not only a militant group, but also a legitimate political actor, enjoying representation in Lebanon's parliament.

With Katyushas in hand, Hezbollah can hold northern Israel hostage until its main goal of an Israeli withdrawal is achieved.

The Katyushas can be launched from any truck, which can easily be moved from one hiding place to another. They have a range of about 13 miles, which covers most of the northern Galilee. □

PNC set to meet April 22; Israel bars former hijacker*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Palestine National Council is scheduled to meet next week in the Gaza Strip to address changing its charter, which calls for the destruction of Israel.

Meanwhile, council member Leila Khaled, a Palestinian terrorist known for her involvement in the 1969 hijacking of a TWA airliner, has been barred by Israel from entering the West Bank.

Khaled had received permission to attend the PNC meeting on April 22.

But Israeli officials said she was refused entry Sunday at the Allenby Bridge crossing from Jordan because they were not informed in advance of her arrival.

Israel has demanded that PNC members sign a pledge denouncing terror and expressing support for the peace process as a precondition for obtaining permission to enter the territories.

Israeli officials say that some 250 of the PNC members who live outside the Gaza Strip and West Bank have already received entry permits and about 200 have already arrived for the meeting.

Khaled, an opponent of the accords, had promised to vote against any change in the charter.

Khaled was captured in London in 1970 while trying to hijack an El Al plane. She was later exchanged for hostages taken in other hijackings.

She spent most of the subsequent years in Beirut and Damascus, but has been in the Jordanian capital of Amman since 1993. □

**A REFORMED HISTADRUT [Part 2]
Israel's federation of labor
provides vital social services**

By Tom Tugend

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Zvi Artzi, the 70-something head of the residents council at the Home for the Elderly in Ramat Efal, was clearly worried.

Rumors were circulating that the Histadrut, Israel's giant labor federation, which had built and operated the home near Tel Aviv, might sell the facility in its drive to privatize its assets. How would that affect the 1,000 residents, a quarter of them Holocaust survivors and most of them older than 80?

Helen Blaiberg, a 74-year-old South African native, said she had heard the rumors but paid no attention to them. She was too busy enjoying the concerts, music lessons, plays, Bible classes and synagogue services.

And, she appreciated the in-house medical, dental and therapeutic services.

Before there was a State of Israel, there was the Histadrut, which from the 1920s on created the framework for the nascent Jewish homeland.

The Histadrut created a virtual shadow government, kibbutzim and moshavim, industries and housing cooperatives, banks and cultural centers.

Among its crown jewels was — and in varying degrees continues to be — a social service network that in its heyday encompassed between 70 percent to 90 percent of Israel's population. The social support system rested on three main pillars: Mishan, Amal and Kupat Holim Clalit.

Mishan, which means "support," includes nine homes for the elderly — such as the one in Ramat Efal — with a total of 4,500 residents; five children's and youth villages; and senior citizen centers scattered across the country. Amal is a national network of 100 schools with 50,000 students, encompassing general and technical high schools, apprenticeship and industrial schools, junior colleges and training centers for adults.

Kupat Holim Clalit, the massive General Sick Fund, counts more than six of every 10 Israelis — Jewish and Arab — among its members. It operates 14 hospitals, 1,200 clinics and 350 pharmacies.

The Mishan and Amal networks are still wholly owned by the Histadrut, though the labor federation has drastically slashed its operating subsidies.

Last year, the Histadrut divested itself of Kupat Holim, which was an immense drain on its resources. Kupat Holim is now the largest of four HMO-like organizations operating under a government-supervised national health service. The Israel Histadrut Foundation, headquartered in New York, supports selected Mishan, Amal and Kupat Holim projects.

At the opposite end of the age spectrum from the home for the elderly in Ramat Efal lies Mishan's Max Apple Children's Village in Gan Yavne, near the Mediterranean port city of Ashdod.

'Nothing quite like it'

The 170 children — from infants to 12-year-olds — come mainly from "problem families, where there is neglect, drug or sexual abuse, or parents are in prison," said Linda Avitan, a social worker originally from New Jersey. Others are immigrant youths from Russia or Ethiopia who have no family in Israel.

"We try to give them warmth and food, keep siblings together and maintain their contact with their parents," Avitan said. The children live four to a room in small cottages.

"There is nothing quite like it in the United States," Avitan said.

At the Amal school network's Pedagogical-Technological Center in Tel Aviv, some 5,000 Israeli teachers each year are learning to navigate the information highway.

"About 70 percent of Israeli households have a computer, one of the highest ratios in the world," said Ami Salant, the center's director of information services.

The center's students and teacher trainees work with CD-ROMs instead of textbooks, and a project for putting the history of Zionism on CD-ROMs is in its final stages.

In an indication of the center's standing, both Saudi Arabia and Suriname have tried to buy the entire computer lab for reassembly in their respective capitals, Salant said.

Kupat Holim, often criticized for its bureaucracy and interminable waits, is becoming leaner and more efficient now that it must compete with three other health provider services. In addition, it remains the only "HMO" to establish clinics in immigrant centers, Arab towns and Jewish settlements in the territories.

One example is the Bridge of Peace Child Health Center in the Israeli Arab town of Taibe. It serves three Arab communities with 55,000 residents in the center of Israel.

The center is headed by an Arab pediatrician, Dr. Lufti Jaber. In addition to the usual range of children's diseases, Jaber said, his staff must deal with the genetic defects resulting from the large number of marriages among cousins and other blood relatives.

Kupat Holim doctors and nurses face other problems in serving some 700 Ethiopian immigrants at the "caravan," or trailer park, in Be'erotaim.

Among the challenges are the basic transition of the immigrants' rural culture to living in a modern urban society, and coping with a relatively high incidence of tuberculosis, parasitic diseases and sexually transmitted diseases. □

(JTA correspondent Tom Tugend was in Israel recently on a media tour sponsored by the Israel Histadrut Foundation.)

**Bombmaker seriously injured
in Jerusalem by own handiwork**

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A Jerusalem court has allowed publication of the identity of a man who was seriously injured in an eastern Jerusalem hotel when a bomb he was preparing apparently exploded prematurely.

Israeli police initially refused to identify the man, who lost both legs and his right arm in last Friday's explosion. But the Jerusalem Magistrate Court ruled Sunday on an appeal by Israel Radio and allowed identification of the man, who was traveling with a British passport under the name Andrew Neuman.

Jerusalem Police Chief Aryeh Amit said the man was handling some two pounds of explosives when they accidentally went off.

"I think he planned some kind of attack in Jerusalem, but we are still investigating," he told reporters.

Amit said the bomb was not the same kind that had been used by Hamas suicide bombers in a series of attacks on Israelis in late February and early March.

The blast occurred last Friday morning on the third floor of the Lawrence Hotel on Salah Ed-Din Street, eastern Jerusalem's main shopping street.

Neuman was taken to Hadassah Hospital. Israeli police reportedly postponed their questioning because of his condition. Neuman was posing as a London-based accountant, according to British news reports. □