

NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ A French appeals court ruled that Maurice Papon should be tried for his role in deporting Jews to Nazi concentration camps. Papon, 86, is likely to be the last Frenchman tried for crimes against humanity during World War II. [Page 4]

■ Yuli Kosharovsky, a leading candidate for the post of Israeli ambassador to Moscow, would not be welcomed by the Russians, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz. The paper said the Russians regard Kosharovsky, formerly a key figure in Zionist activism among Russian Jews, as a dissident who emigrated.

■ The Syrian media accused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of creating regional tensions that could lead to war. Meanwhile, Netanyahu met with opposition leader Shimon Peres to discuss the crisis of Syrian troop movements near Mt. Hermon.

■ Israeli opposition leader Shimon Peres announced that he would not run for prime minister in the year 2,000. His announcement came as a Labor Party report blamed Binyamin Ben-Eliezer and other Labor officials for losing the May elections.

■ Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai approved a plan to build 1,800 homes in Matityahu, a fervently Orthodox West Bank settlement, according to news reports. Mordechai's action, which was sharply criticized by Palestinians, came hours before his first meeting with Yasser Arafat to discuss the long delayed redeployment of Israeli troops from the West Bank town of Hebron.

■ Vandals broke the windows of a Philadelphia synagogue school building during the holiday weekend. Police, who are continuing their investigation, believe that the same young vandals are responsible for breaking into a church less than a mile away.

Because of Yom Kippur, the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Tuesday, Sept. 24.

FOCUS ON ISSUES**Victims of rabbinic sex abuse suffer pain of communal denial**

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — People do not want to think that their rabbi is capable of sexual exploitation.

The overwhelming majority of rabbis, of course, are not.

Yet when exploitation does occur, the women who come forward often find themselves ostracized by their religious community. And on the rare occasion that they turn to their rabbi's professional associations or their movement's congregational organization, they say they are made to feel unwelcome.

When rabbis go astrayPart 2
of a series

The result is often a conspiracy of silence that protects the perpetrators and leaves the victims feeling isolated and in pain, alienated from the very Jewish community to which they had turned for spiritual sustenance.

Members of a congregation are frequently unable to imagine that their spiritual leader, who has guided them through the most significant moments of grief and joy in their lives, could be capable of sexual misconduct.

Often compounding the difficulty is the character of the rabbi alleged to be involved.

"By and large, the people who are exploitative are charismatic and well-loved, not sleazy people on the street who we're all going to be afraid of," Debra Warwick-Sabino, an expert in clergy sexual abuse, said in an interview.

Congregants are often so deeply invested in keeping their rabbis on a pedestal that they are unwilling or unable to consider that they might do something which is so fundamentally offensive. And so they often deny it.

"When you say to someone that their rabbi is capable of this, for them to suspend their disbelief would cause such a spiritual crisis in their own lives that it's easier for them to say 'Boys will be boys' than face that faith crisis," said Warwick-Sabino.

'Congregations sometimes will line up behind the rabbi'

At the wrenching congregational meetings that increasingly follow allegations of rabbinic sexual misconduct, synagogue members will often stand up and ostracize the accuser. In some cases, the accusers have been called "liars" and "whores" — and worse.

"Even in situations where the perpetrator admits all the things the women allege, congregations sometimes will line up behind the rabbi," Marie Fortune, another expert on clergy sexual abuse, said in an interview. "It blows my mind."

Fortune, a United Church of Christ minister and the founding director of the Seattle-based Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, has been involved with numerous cases in the Jewish community and has run a seminar on the topic at a regional meeting of Reform rabbis and one for students at Los Angeles' Reform rabbinical seminary.

Denial of the problem is not unique to Jews, said Warwick-Sabino. It happens "all the time, in all religions," she said.

There is also a great deal of ignorance about what rabbinic sexual exploitation is, say those involved with the issue.

Because of the anticipated reaction, victims of rabbinic sexual exploitation and harassment rarely come forward, say these experts.

Women who have experienced rabbinic exploitation usually feel a deep and degrading sense of shame and guilt about what happened, say experts. They often feel that they have a lot to lose if they come forward — their place in their synagogue communities, respect and success in their professional lives, and even, in some cases, their marriages.

At Congregation Emanu-el in San Francisco, many in the congregation tried to discredit the women who had come forward publicly to charge their rabbi, Robert Kirschner, with sexual exploitation, according to congregants.

At an emotional congregational meeting soon after Kirschner resigned

his position, the women who had come forward were accused of wanting to ruin the widely admired rabbi's career. They were called "harlots" and "Jezebels," said some of those women interviewed.

Two women who had been Kirschner's students when he was teaching at the Berkeley campus of the University of California complained about Kirschner's harassment of them, according to a temple board member who asked not to be named.

Another two complainants — students from Berkeley's Graduate Theological Union — who had obtained advance permission from the synagogue to come to the meeting and tell the congregation about their experiences, said they were forced out of the building before they had a chance to speak.

While they were waiting on the synagogue steps, they heard one congregant say to his wife, "Boys will be boys. I don't see what the big deal is," said one of them, Debra Warwick-Sabino, who has since gone into the professional field of clergy sexual abuse.

In a letter to the dean of the Reform movement's Los Angeles rabbinical seminary, Warwick-Sabino wrote that she heard another congregant say to a friend: "If he made a pass at me, I'd be flattered, I wouldn't object."

The congregants' responses were typical for those faced with allegations of clergy sexual exploitation, say experts.

Synagogue members have been known to distance themselves from anyone accusing their rabbi of being sexually exploitative. In one highly publicized case, Michele Samit, who has not herself claimed to have suffered from rabbinic sexual misconduct, says she was totally vilified by her former community after she wrote a book about the relationship between Anita Green and her rabbi, Steven Jacobs.

Anita Green was the president of Shir Chadash — The New Reform Congregation in Los Angeles, when she was murdered at point-blank range in 1990.

Her husband, Mel Green, was convicted of ordering the killing and is now serving a life sentence without the possibility of parole.

Although Mel and Anita Green were separated at the time of her murder, her affair with Jacobs began while she was still living with her husband, according to Samit's book, "No Sanctuary: The True Story of a Rabbi's Deadly Affair."

'No one said anything'

Mel Green was an angry, jealous and violent man who had long threatened Anita, even in public, according to the book.

At Green's funeral, Jacobs, who had first denied but later reluctantly admitted his relationship with her, eulogized her not as a rabbi talking about his temple president, but as a lover, several people who were congregants of Jacobs' at the time, said in telephone interviews.

In her book, Samit wrote of the eulogy: "The rabbi recalled 'admiring or just staring at her beautiful nails and her gentle hands; those hands, her skin so very soft, so reassuring, those beautiful hands.'"

"No one [in the congregation] said anything" about it, Samit said in a recent interview, referring to what she believed was Jacob's inappropriate language.

"The reaction of the congregation was nothing. Not even discussion there."

That's what convinced Samit that she had to leave the congregation which had been her second home, and the rabbi who had been her lifelong spiritual guide, she said.

She said she was the target of a smear campaign by Jacobs and was harassed by the rabbi's supporters.

"People called me from the congregation and

harangued me. They said, 'You egomaniacal whore, you think you're better than us. How could you destroy such a wonderful man,' " said Samit in the interview.

"This was the most painful thing," she said. "Rabbi Jacobs was my hero. I had him on such a pedestal. He Bat Mitzvahed me, married me, I baby-sat his kids. We were so close."

Jacobs denied in a recent telephone interview that his relationship with Green was an illicit affair.

"She was a dear friend, my temple president, and after the fact that she was going through a divorce and I had already been divorced, there was a romantic relationship."

He described Samit's book as "full of lies" and said some have accused him of adultery because "people are angry when you achieve a lot in rabbinic life."

"I would not be in the position and stay in the position if people didn't know who I am," he said.

Samit said she believes that she and every other member of Jacobs' congregation bear some responsibility for Anita Green's murder.

"There were signs to all of us that Anita was in danger and we ignored them because we wouldn't dare cross our beloved rabbi," she said.

Another congregant, Michael Hirsch, outraged by his rabbi's behavior and his community's response, wrote to the head of the Reform rabbinical association's ethics committee in April 1993, charging Jacobs with violating the group's ethics code and demanding that it take up Jacobs' behavior.

Rabbi Jeffrey Stiffman, then the head of the committee, wrote back to Hirsch that Jacobs had agreed "to uphold all provisions of our Code of Ethics," which requires rabbis "to adhere to an exemplary moral code" and "to avoid even the appearance of sexual misconduct."

Hirsch responded to Stiffman with a letter saying that the action amounted to nothing more than "a rabbinic consent decree" for Jacobs to do it all over again.

"If there is a shanda (shame) here, it is not only in Jacobs' immoral conduct, but in your organization's complicity in covering it up," wrote Hirsch, a former investigative journalist and current television producer.

Denial among congregants can be dangerous

Jacobs remains the rabbi of Temple Kol Tikvah, the name adopted after it merged with another synagogue.

Experts in clergy sexual abuse say the denial among congregants can be dangerous because a rabbi can go on harassing and exploiting many congregants for decades without any of them knowing that the others exist, forcing each of them to bear the suffering alone.

And if a rabbi has sexually exploited one congregant, he almost always has exploited several, Fortune said, without referring specifically to any of the above-mentioned cases.

Fortune says she has worked with more than 3,500 cases of clergy sexual misconduct in dozens of different religious denominations during a 15-year period.

In the end, while the rabbinic perpetrators often move to another job within their movements or even stay in their pulpits after a slap on the wrist from their rabbinical organizations, it appears that the victims often go away.

They often divorce themselves from any connection to the Jewish community and, in some cases, go so far as to convert to another religion.

According to Fortune, denial of the problem is so pervasive because "none of us wants this to be happening."

"There is long-term damage being done here we're going to be living with for years," she said, adding, "It doesn't have to be that bad if we respond better." □

NEWS ANALYSIS

Syrian army maneuvers on eve of Yom Kippur worry Israelis

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli government leaders sought to calm a jittery public this week with reassurances that Syrian troop movements in Lebanon were mere "tactical" steps designed to exert pressure in the diplomatic process.

But Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel would not be swayed by the maneuvers, which he described Tuesday as an attempt by Damascus to pressure Israel into committing itself to a return of the Golan Heights — the key Syrian demand for restarting the long-stalled negotiations with Israel.

"We're not going to be pressured into making these unilateral concessions," Netanyahu told reporters after meeting with the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.

Foreign Minister David Levy added a note of warning to Damascus, saying, "tactical moves can get out of control."

"One should not play with fire," Levy added.

The warning was issued after Syria deployed a crack commando battalion in the foothills of Mt. Hermon over the weekend. In recent weeks, some 10,000 to 12,000 Syrian troops have been redeployed from the Beirut area to positions close to the Lebanese-Syrian border.

Coming in the period before Yom Kippur, the psychological effect of these moves has been compounded for Israelis, who recall the war launched on this holiday 23 years ago.

Israeli analysts say there is no possibility for a wide-scale Syrian attack against Israeli positions in the Golan Heights.

But the scenario of a quick Syrian attack, designed to capture a small but strategic area — such as Israel's intelligence base on Mt. Hermon — is a possibility.

A sudden Syrian strike would be designed, presumably, to rattle the international community and to shake the stalled peace process out of its doldrums.

'Taking the required military steps'

As a result, Israel is adopting its own military measures to deter it.

"We are taking the required military steps," Levy announced as a senior Israeli military official said Israel Defense Force units on the Lebanese border had been put on alert.

At the same time, Netanyahu said Sunday that Israel was sending a message to Damascus via American intermediaries that "our intentions are peaceable."

Levy said he had received messages from the Syrians through third parties which indicated that they, too, have no offensive intentions.

This dovetailed with a public statement Tuesday from the Syrian information minister, Muhammad Salman, ascribing the troop movements to the growing confidence that Syria now feels in Lebanon's security forces.

After 15 years of involvement in Lebanon designed to bring an end to civil strife there, Syria was redeploying its forces in that country, the minister explained.

Syria has been at pains in recent days to put the troop movements in a Syrian-Lebanese context, separate from Syria's relations with Israel.

Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa said last week that the troop movements "concern only Syria and Lebanon."

Israeli and American sources, however, link the movements to Damascus' concerns about the Israeli-Syrian

peace negotiations, which were broken off in March after Syria refused to condemn a series of Hamas suicide bombings in Israel.

Syrian President Hafez Assad may feel, say these sources, that while the Israeli-Palestinian track seems to be coming to life again, albeit haltingly, there is neither progress nor the prospect of progress on the Syrian-Israeli track.

The U.S. special Middle East coordinator, Dennis Ross, arrived in the region this week. Among the items on his agenda was the task of prompting this long-elusive progress, though his immediate task will be to ease the military tensions and the accompanying escalation of rhetoric.

Israeli Minister of Internal Security Avigdor Kahalani added his voice Tuesday to those searching for diplomatic motives behind Syria's military moves.

"It is hard to know why they do what they do," he said. "But apparently they want to push the diplomatic process."

Kahalani — a war hero in the 1973 Yom Kippur War, in which he served as a tank battalion commander — urged Israelis not to worry about the latest Syrian moves.

"I do not think this is an offensive deployment," he said. "We will not have another Yom Kippur 1973."

Opposition leader Shimon Peres, speaking Tuesday in the Knesset, asserted that peace in the region was impossible without peace with Syria.

The Knesset had convened for a special session during its summer recess after the opposition called for a debate on the state of the peace process.

"Why go for partial peace?" Peres demanded of the government, insisting that peace with Syria was unattainable without concessions on the Golan.

Peres spoke with withering sarcasm of Netanyahu's "Lebanon First" proposal, which the premier advanced in Washington as a way of getting the process restarted.

Under that proposal, Israel would first negotiate a withdrawal of its forces from southern Lebanon as a confidence-building measure before getting on to negotiating with Syria about the Golan.

"Brilliant," Peres said mockingly. "We have a headache called south Lebanon; Assad has a headache called the Golan. So we say to Assad: Help us get rid of our headache."

"He is not stupid, you know."

Peres warned that Israel was in danger of returning to its former position as an isolated state in the region if the peace process died.

Peres's remarks came days after Netanyahu confirmed a newly released book's claim that the late Yitzhak Rabin had made an oral commitment to withdraw from the Golan as part of a peace deal with Syria.

Netanyahu emphasized that the commitment had not been made in writing and therefore did not bind his own government to abide by it.

Bridging the chasm

In Damascus last week, Sharaa issued a statement saying that it was not possible "to resume the talks without their being based on the principles and commitments achieved in the past."

As efforts continue to reconvene the talks, Syria is demanding that they include the unwritten understandings reached with the previous Labor governments.

The task of bridging the chasm separating the Israeli and Syrian positions fell this week to Ross, who arrived Tuesday in Cairo and was scheduled to visit Israel the next day. His itinerary did not include a visit to Damascus — indicating that the task of bridge-building is not likely to be concluded soon. □

French appeals court: Papon must be tried for war crimes

By Lee Yanowitch

PARIS (JTA)— A French appeals court has ruled that Maurice Papon should be tried for his role in deporting 1,690 Jews, 223 of them children, to Nazi concentration camps between 1942 and 1944.

Wednesday's decision comes after the court in the southwestern city of Bordeaux convened in March to determine whether the 86-year-old former Cabinet minister should face charges of crimes against humanity for his actions during World War II.

The court did not set a trial date when it rendered its decision, and Papon's lawyer, Jean-Marc Varaut, said he planned to appeal the ruling, a move that would delay the trial by at least six months.

Citing Papon's age and health problems, some observers believe he will never set foot in the dock to face his accusers. Papon recently had heart surgery and was not present for Wednesday's decision.

Citing the planned appeal, CRIF, the umbrella organization of French Jewish secular groups, charged in a statement, "After 15 years of judicial procedure, Mr. Papon is attempting an ultimate maneuver before the Supreme Court."

CRIF "hopes that the Supreme Court will hand down a ruling as soon as possible so that justice is done in this case," the statement added.

Arno Klarsfeld, who along with his father, famed Nazi hunter Serge Klarsfeld, is one of several lawyers representing the 36 plaintiffs in the case, was optimistic that the Supreme Court would uphold Wednesday's decision and that the case would come to trial within six months. In an interview, Arno Klarsfeld applauded Wednesday's decision, saying it "sent the clear message that France does not forget.

"Justice has looked into the shadows of history to find truth," he added.

'Total allegiance to the Nazi state'

Michel Slitinsky, a plaintiff in the case who brought the first charges against Papon, said of Wednesday's decision, "All of the evidence confirmed Papon's total allegiance to the Nazi state."

"Papon and his administration became its instrument," Slitinsky, whose father was among those rounded up by Papon's police, said in an interview. "The ill were taken out of hospitals to lengthen his lists, as were young children."

Papon, who stands accused of complicity in crimes against humanity, kidnapping, arbitrary arrests and persecution, was secretary-general of the Bordeaux region's local government during Germany's wartime occupation of France.

Papon has denied the charges against him, saying that he used his position in the Resistance to save Jews. Papon reportedly joined the Resistance movement near the end of 1943.

After the liberation, he went on to an illustrious postwar career, serving as police chief of Paris between 1958 and 1967, then as budget minister in the French Cabinet during the 1970s.

Jewish groups, lawyers and former Resistance members have long felt that successive French governments were obstructing the judicial process, hoping that Papon would die before a trial took place that would recall a period many French people would rather forget.

About 76,000 Jews, including 12,000 children, were arrested and deported from France to Nazi death camps from 1941 to 1944. Only about 2,500 survived.

During the hearings in Bordeaux, the public prosecutor said Papon was responsible for sending Jews to the death camps on four trains.

In its decision, the court sided with lawyers for the relatives who accused him of being responsible for an additional six trains.

If brought to trial, Papon would likely be the last Frenchman to face charges of crimes against humanity for wartime actions.

In April 1994, former Lyon militia chief Paul Touvier was found guilty of crimes against humanity for his role in the assassination of seven Jewish hostages on June 29, 1944, in Rillieux-la-Pape, located near Lyon in southeastern France. Touvier died in July while serving a life sentence. □

Swiss to lift bank secrecy laws to find Holocaust victim assets

By Tamar Levy

GENEVA (JTA) — In an effort to repair its fast-tarnishing image, Switzerland has announced that it will move toward lifting its bank secrecy laws to allow an inquiry into the whereabouts of Nazi gold and Jewish assets deposited in the country during World War II.

Foreign Minister Flavio Cotti announced Monday that a panel of six to 12 historians and legal and financial experts would be formed to investigate Switzerland's financial dealings with Nazi Germany and to determine whether Switzerland was doing enough to locate the assets of Jews who died in the Holocaust.

Cotti made the announcement after the Federal Council, the country's Cabinet, approved legislation to form the investigative panel.

"Our reputation is at stake, and we must now clarify this painful matter with all the strength and competence possible," Cotti told a news conference.

The panel was expected to begin its work in April, after it gets parliamentary approval to proceed, Cotti said.

The panel will have five years to complete its report, he added.

The Federal Council called for the formation of the panel after the British Foreign Office issued a report last week alleging that neutral Switzerland had kept nearly 90 percent of the gold it purchased from Nazi Germany during the war years. At current rates, that gold is valued at nearly \$1 billion.

The Foreign Office report, which was based on documents already known to historians, revived allegations that the Swiss had given only a fraction of that sum to the Allies in a settlement reached in 1946.

"There is no doubt that these accusations have badly damaged Switzerland's image," Cotti said.

"It is therefore all the more important to investigate Switzerland's financial relations with Nazi Germany."

Swiss bankers have been accused of duplicity for having used their bank secrecy laws as a cover for keeping gold they purchased from the Reichsbank during the war despite warnings from the Allies that much of the gold had been looted from countries the Nazis occupied during the war.

Swiss National Bank President Hans Meyer attended the news conference with Cotti to address speculation that Nazi gold was still hidden in Switzerland.

"I cannot answer that with a yes or a no," Meyer said, but added that Switzerland had fulfilled all its legal obligations for returning the Nazi gold in the 1946 settlement with the Allies.

"This was not one of the best pages in the history of the national bank, and I do not hesitate to say that we regret it," he added. □