



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pressed Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat to combat terrorism after a Hamas activist bombed a crowded Tel Aviv cafe on Purim eve.** "You must prove that you are able to fight terror and that you want to," Netanyahu told Arafat in a telephone conversation. [Page 1]

■ **The three Israeli women killed in Friday's suicide bombing at a Tel Aviv cafe were laid to rest.** Twenty-six of the dozens of people wounded in the attack remained hospitalized. [Page 1]

■ **The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Bill Richardson, defended his veto of a resolution ordering Israel to stop work on the Jewish neighborhood of Har Homa in eastern Jerusalem.**

■ **A group of Orthodox rabbis is set to declare that Conservative and Reform Judaism are not Jewish, the Los Angeles Times reported.** The Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the U.S. and Canada wants American Jews to withdraw from the two movements. Reform movement leader Rabbi Eric Yoffie said the Orthodox group is "on the fringes of Jewish life in North America."

■ **Russian Jewish leaders and anti-fascist activists voiced deep concern over the Duma's defeat of a measure to bar fascist propaganda.** Some Communist and ultranationalist lawmakers, who make up more than half of the Russian Parliament's lower house, described the bill as "Zionist."

■ **French Jewish leaders voiced their sympathy to Muslims after a crude bomb ripped through a mosque run by a liberal imam in northeast Paris, slightly injuring its caretaker.** The CRIF, France's umbrella group for secular Jewish organizations, called the blast a "cowardly act." [Page 4]

■ **A former kosher butcher in Jacksonville, Fla., faces 10 years in prison after pleading guilty to planting a bomb at a local synagogue prior to a speech by former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres.** [Page 2]

Israel, Palestinians exchange blame for cafe suicide bombing

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Israeli-Palestinian peace process all but lay in ruins after a Hamas suicide bombing prompted angry recriminations from both sides.

In the wake of last Friday's bombing at a cafe in central Tel Aviv — an attack that killed three Israelis and left dozens more wounded — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu placed the blame squarely on Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat, whom the premier accused of giving the go-ahead for terrorist operations.

Palestinian officials in turn blamed their Israeli counterparts for the attack, saying that the start of construction last week of a new Jewish neighborhood at Har Homa in eastern Jerusalem had created a feeling of desperation among the Palestinian people.

Palestinian negotiator Ahmed Karia said Sunday that the "terror of the bulldozers" at Har Homa had caused the terror of last Friday.

In a telephone conversation with Arafat after the attack, Netanyahu demanded that he take concrete steps against terror.

"You must prove that you are able to fight terror and that you want to," Netanyahu was quoted as telling Arafat on Saturday night. "If not, the entire peace process is in danger."

On Sunday, Netanyahu convened the Inner Security Cabinet to discuss the Jewish state's next moves in the wake of the bombing. Senior Israeli officials said some of the negotiations with the Palestinians should be suspended, but the premier later told CNN that Israel would not end the talks entirely.

After the meeting, the Cabinet secretary, Danny Naveh, said Israel was demanding that the Palestinian Authority "fulfill its commitments to fight terrorism as an essential step to advance the political process."

"These include the arrest and trial of suspects, actions to stop incitement and security cooperation with Israel," Naveh added, referring to actions to which Arafat had agreed in the Hebron agreement signed in January. In the wake of Friday's attack, Israeli and Palestinian security forces agreed to work more closely in security matters. During the weekend, Palestinian security forces arrested about 30 Hamas activists in the self-rule areas. Israeli forces carried out searches in the territories in areas under its authority.

Two of the victims of last Friday's attack were identified as Anat Rosen-Winter, 31, a lawyer, and Yael Gilad, 32, a social worker, both of Tel Aviv. The third victim, Michal Medan-Avrahami, a 31-year-old doctor who lived in Herzliya, was 16 weeks pregnant. The three were buried Sunday.

The attack was the first Hamas suicide bombing against Israel since March 4, 1996, when a suicide bomb was detonated in Tel Aviv's Dizengoff Center, killing 13 and wounding at least 130.

Both attacks took place on the eve of Purim. In each case, the victims included young children dressed in costumes for the festive holiday.

Violence rocks Hebron

Amid warnings of possible further attacks, Israel closed off the territories, and security forces went on heightened alert. Senior security officials, echoing Netanyahu's charges, said it was up to Arafat to prevent more terrorism. "We believe that as long as Arafat does not make it clear to the terrorist groups that they do not have a green light, we can expect more attacks," said the head of army intelligence, Maj. Gen. Moshe Ya'alon.

Last week, Israeli security officials said they had information of possible terrorist violence because of increasing tensions with the Palestinians over Israel's decision to start building at Har Homa.

The Har Homa issue spilled over into violence this weekend in the West Bank town of Hebron, where Israeli soldiers clashed with rioting Palestinians, who threw stones and Molotov cocktails. The soldiers responded with rubber bullets and tear gas, but they also used live ammunition when they felt that their lives were in danger. Five Israeli soldiers were injured by stone-throwers and dozens of Palestinians were wounded.

Ya'alon charged that Jibril Rajoub, who is in charge of Palestinian

security forces in the West Bank, had staged the Hebron rioting.

In another incident Sunday, Israeli soldiers opened fire on a car and wounded two Palestinians at a checkpoint between Jerusalem and the West Bank town of Bethlehem.

The soldiers opened fire after a third Palestinian ignored orders to stop the car and tried to flee.

The third man was later found to be carrying an Israeli identity card, as well as documents issued to Palestinian residents of the territories.

Last Friday's bomber was later identified as Mahmoud Abed Al-Kader Ghonimeit, 28, a resident of the Tsurif village in the Hebron area. Ghonimeit, who was married and a father of four, had worked in two restaurants in Rishon leZion, south of Tel Aviv, and had been detained three weeks ago for being in Israel illegally.

He was released after questioning.

According to the investigation, Ghonimeit returned to Israel the night before the attack and slept at one of the restaurants before traveling to Tel Aviv, where he carried out the attack. Israeli forces sealed Ghonimeit's home shortly after the attack and ordered its demolition. The family appealed to the Supreme Court.

Israel linked the bombing with the Palestinian Authority's release from jail 10 days earlier of a Hamas leader, Ibrahim Makadmeh, and demanded his immediate rearrest. Makadmeh was arrested a year ago after a wave of suicide bombings, on suspicion of heading the fundamentalist group's military arm. On the day of the attack, he addressed a Hamas rally in Gaza that was called to protest the Har Homa project.

The Palestinian Authority attorney general, Khaled al-Kidra, denied that Makadmeh had been rearrested after the bombing. Kidra said Makadmeh was still at large, but that Palestinian officials had issued a warrant for his rearrest. □

Suicide bomber claims lives of cafe patrons on Purim eve

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — There were many customers last Friday afternoon at Tel Aviv's Cafe Apropos, including children dressed in Purim costumes, when the young man carrying a duffel bag weaved his way among the tables.

Eyewitnesses later said that the man seemed strange as he looked for an empty table, finally choosing one in the center of the sidewalk area.

He put the bag on the chair next to him. It was 1:45 p.m.

The shift manager signaled to the waitress to go take his order when the suicide bomber detonated the explosive, killing himself and three women sitting at nearby tables. Dozens of others were wounded in the suicide bombing, the first to rock Israel in a year.

Two of the women were later identified as Anat Rosen-Winter, 31, a lawyer, and Yael Gilad, 32, a social worker, both of Tel Aviv. The two friends had made a date to meet at the cafe. Gilad's twin sister, Michal, was also supposed to have met them. Minutes before the blast, Yael phoned her sister and told her to hurry because they were already ordering.

Rosen-Winter had brought along her 6-month-old daughter, Shani, who was moderately wounded in the explosion. When Rosen-Winter's parents saw television footage of the attack, they recognized their wounded granddaughter, who was dressed in a clown costume, being carried off by police. They went immediately to the hospital, where they learned of Rosen-Winter's death.

Also sitting near the blast was Michal

Medan-Avrahami, a 31-year-old doctor who lived in Herzliya. Sixteen weeks pregnant, she had gone to the cafe with her husband, mother-in-law and niece.

Taken to a nearby hospital, Medan-Avrahami later died of her wounds. Her husband, Shai, was also wounded.

Among the dozens wounded in the attack were some Israelis who had been closely touched by previous terrorist attacks in Tel Aviv. Adi Nissim, 30, a Tel Aviv resident who rides through the streets of Tel Aviv as part of his work as a messenger, survived two previous suicide bombings in the city. In both of those attacks, he was not injured, and he helped the wounded before rescue and security teams came. "Fate must be on my side, and for that reason I'm saved each time," Nissim said.

For Yaffa Levy, who was also wounded in last Friday's attack, terror had already extracted a dear price.

Her son, Yovav, was among the 13 killed in the March 4, 1996, suicide bombing at Tel Aviv's Dizengoff Center, which, like Friday's attack, occurred on Purim eve.

As a result of his death, she and her husband decided to have another child. She gave birth to a son, Matan, last Friday night, several hours after the bombing at the cafe. □

Orthodox Jew pleads guilty to placing bomb at synagogue

By June D. Bell

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (JTA) — An Orthodox Jewish man faces a 10-year prison sentence for planting a bomb in a synagogue here in an unsuccessful attempt to disrupt a speech by former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres.

Harry Shapiro, 31, entered a guilty plea last week, a day after he was officially charged in U.S. District Court in Jacksonville with using an explosive to commit a felony — threatening an official guest of the United States. The crime carries a mandatory 10-year prison sentence.

Shapiro is expected to be sentenced in about two months. He has been in custody since Feb. 24, when he turned himself in, and will receive credit for time served, said Assistant U.S. Attorney Mark Devereaux.

Prosecutors could have sought up to \$250,000 in fines but opted not to do so, Devereaux said. Had he gone to trial, Shapiro would have faced additional charges and the possibility of a 40-year prison term.

As his relatives watched, Shapiro told the court March 19: "I placed gunpowder in a pipe. I placed it in a house of worship. I threatened a life of a human being with it. I called 911 and issued a threat to keep Mr. Peres from speaking." Friends of the former kosher butcher have said he is opposed to Peres' advocacy of exchanging land for peace in the Middle East.

Shapiro admitted to calling in a bomb threat hours before Peres spoke Feb. 13 at the Jacksonville Jewish Center, a Conservative synagogue. Bomb-sniffing dogs combed the building but found nothing, and Peres delivered his speech uninterrupted.

Nine days later, children found the device, which was detonated by the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office bomb squad. No one was injured.

Shapiro's defense attorneys said Shapiro did not intend to injure the audience of 1,500 or Peres and that he had made an inoperable device.

"It was important for Mr. Shapiro to make clear that, in his mind, he never intended to hurt anybody," defense attorney Hank Coxe told The Florida Times-Union after the hourlong hearing.

The fact that the device did not explode or might not have been functional was not a factor in the federal charge, Devereaux said. □

Latest pluralism imbroglio focuses on new IDF directive*By Cynthia Mann*

NEW YORK (JTA) — Reports of new threats of a Reform boycott of Diaspora fund-raising efforts for Israel are unfounded, said the leader of the Reform movement in the United States.

The Israeli media widely reported last week that the head of the Reform movement's Israel Religious Action Center, Rabbi Uri Regev, threatened such a boycott to protest an Israeli army ban on visits to synagogues and other institutions of the Reform movement.

But Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations, said Regev's reported comments were "misquotations," which nevertheless reflected "anger and frustration" by Regev at the prospect of such a policy. Yoffie said his preliminary inquiries had shown that there is no such official army policy. "If there were to be such a policy, we would be distressed and respond in an appropriate way. But we are not inclined to make threats," Yoffie said.

The controversy comes amid growing protest by Reform and Conservative Diaspora Jews over official Orthodox domination of Israeli religious life.

It also comes as the fervently Orthodox members of Israel's governing coalition continue their efforts to prevent an erosion of the Orthodox religious monopoly.

The non-Orthodox protest here has included threats to bypass the central Jewish fund-raising campaign, which provides funds to Israel, and to give directly to Reform and Conservative institutions in Israel. The campaign is run by the United Jewish Appeal and local federations.

Yoffie himself has warned that if the mainstream Jewish establishment did not champion the struggle for religious pluralism in Israel, it would alienate many in the grass roots.

Inquired about soldiers' trip

In a clear sign of concern, the UJA recently circulated a news release reiterating that all four major streams of Judaism support the philanthropic enterprise.

"It is important for every Conservative and Reform Jew to support klal Yisrael by making a meaningful gift to the 1997 federation/UJA campaign," said the news release. It was quoting from a letter written by Conservative and Reform leaders, including Yoffie. "Their causes are ones that need and deserve our support."

The latest imbroglio started when an Orthodox Knesset member asked about a trip soldiers took to a Reform center in Haifa. Knesset member Moshe Gafni, of the United Torah Judaism party, asked the military whether soldiers are required to participate in educational trips to Reform institutions, churches and mosques.

The Israel Defense Force chief of staff responded by issuing a directive, Gideon Mark, a spokesman at the Israeli Consulate in New York, said after talking with the IDF spokesman's office in Israel. It said army units should not include in their educational programs visits to sites that cause any soldier to feel uncomfortable, Mark said.

Despite news reports to the contrary, the directive "never said anything about synagogues, Reform, Conservative, Orthodox or otherwise," Mark said.

The Israeli daily Ha'aretz said Regev responded to the directive, "If it turns out that the policy is directed against Reform Jewry, we will view it as a declaration by the state that it views our sites as ritually impure." He added, "We are wondering whether Israel is prepared for the possibility that, in parallel, the gates of the Reform community in the U.S. will be closed to their representatives it uses to gather financial and political support."

Meanwhile, the Orthodox members of the Israeli government coalition are continuing to push their own agenda. They threatened a revolt against Premier Benjamin Netanyahu if the government did not take immediate action to further legislation that would reinforce exclusive Orthodox control over conversions performed in Israel.

In New York on Wednesday, Industry and Trade Minister Natan Sharansky said his party, Yisrael Ba'Aliyah, is committed to keeping the legislation as narrow as possible.

The Orthodox coalition members are seeking a broader version that also, in effect, would not recognize the conversions of Israelis who go abroad for non-Orthodox conversions and then return.

Netanyahu repeatedly has pledged not to allow any change in the current recognition of Reform and Conservative conversions of non-Israelis performed outside Israel.

In another initiative, a Knesset member from the fervently Orthodox Shas party has submitted a bill seeking to change the status of the plaza in front of the Western Wall from a national to a religious site.

That would transfer authority for the site to the Ministry of Religion and apparently would render Orthodox practice the only legitimate practice there.

For his part, Sharansky, who is head of a ministerial committee on Diaspora affairs, downplayed the significance of the initiative and seemed to suggest that the transfer was unlikely to occur.

But any such prospect prompted an angry letter on the Internet by the International Committee for Women of the Wall, which has been fighting in the Israeli Supreme Court for the right to pray at the site as they see fit.

The court recently ordered the government to show "just cause" why the women who wish to pray could not do so as a group. The Women of the Wall fear that the legislative initiative is an attempt to pre-empt a favorable court ruling. "The Kotel is not a synagogue," the women wrote, using the Hebrew reference to the Wall. "It is a national holy site for all the Jewish people." □

British fascists sentenced for inciting racial hatred*By Deborah Leipziger*

LONDON (JTA) — Three members of the fascist group Combat 18 were jailed last week for inciting racial hatred.

The men pleaded guilty to charges of possessing "threatening, abusive or insulting material." They had literature with precise instructions for making bombs. The court ordered them jailed for between 12 and 17 months.

Combat 18 states that its aims are to "ship all non-whites back to Africa, Asia, Arabia, alive or in body bags, the choice is theirs." Another aim is "to execute all Jews who have actively helped to damage the white race and to put into camps the rest until we find a solution for the eternal Jew."

Combat 18 was involved in a campaign targeting high-profile sports and theater personalities for their friendships with Jews. Other targets had married partners of a different race. Such campaigns have given Combat 18 a higher profile in the past few months.

According to Tony Lerman of the Institute for Jewish Policy Research, Combat 18 has received a sudden "burst of publicity."

Several anti-fascist groups complained that the sentences were too lenient.

Lerman says the three arrests were significant. "Police have been taking the matter seriously," he said. "It is a difficult balance because the police do not want to make martyrs out of them." □

Survey of Russian Jews reveals division over desire to emigrate*By Lev Krichevsky*

MOSCOW (JTA) — The Russian Jewish community seems to be split down the middle when it comes to the issue of emigration, according to a recently published survey here.

While 42 percent of Russia's Jews believe that members of their community should work to preserve their identity and not emigrate, 48 percent believe that all or most Jews will eventually leave Russia and that an insignificant number will stay.

About 47 percent of the respondents believe that Israeli and international Jewish organizations working in Russia should use their funds for Jewish communal revival in Russia. But a quarter of the respondents said the funds should be devoted to promoting immigration to Israel.

Russian Jewish officials said the findings of the survey were not surprising and did not differ much from other polls conducted during the past six years.

The poll, which is the most comprehensive up-to-date survey of Russian Jewry, was conducted by Rozalina Ryvkina of the Moscow-based Public Opinion Fund last year, though the findings were just published.

Estimates of the Jewish population in Russia run between 600,000 and 2 million.

The aim of the survey was to measure Russian Jewish attitudes about emigration, the political situation in Russia and the future of their community. Another goal of the survey was to draw a portrait of the community.

About 16 percent of the respondents — some 1,000 Russian Jews in four cities were interviewed — said all Russian Jews should immigrate to Israel. Some 10 percent said Russia's Jewish community should assimilate, while 30 percent said they were uncertain about whether Jews should leave Russia. Of those who said they wanted to leave, more than half said they would do so to ensure a better future for their children. Most people said they would resettle in Israel (57 percent), followed by the United States (18 percent), Australia (5 percent), Canada (3 percent) and Germany (3 percent).

Other aspects 'troubling'

Mark Kupovetzky, Russia's leading Jewish demographer, said the findings reflected a trend in the departure of Jews. But Kupovetzky found other aspects of the survey troubling. The percentage of respondents who said they identify as Christians was "threateningly high," he said.

About 14 percent of the respondents who said they were religious called themselves Christians, while 24 percent said they were Jewish. Some 29 percent of the respondents said they celebrate Easter and 25 percent observe Christmas, in comparison with the 34 percent who celebrate Passover and the less than 15 percent who observe Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

In addition, 54 percent of the poll's respondents said they had experienced anti-Semitism at some point.

And just 22 percent said Russian authorities "strongly or somewhat" counter the activities of anti-Semitic and ultranationalist groups.

No margin of error was reported for the poll, which also found that: 75 percent of Russian Jews never go to synagogue; 15 percent of respondents received some Jewish education as children; 9 percent were raising their children in the Jewish tradition; and 34 percent felt that their Jewish identity grew stronger after the collapse of communism.

The survey was conducted in Moscow; the southern city of Rostov-on-Don; Khabarovsk, which is located in the Far East; and Ekaterinburg in the Ural Mountains. □

Jewish group condemns bombing of Paris mosque*By Lee Yanowitch*

PARIS (JTA) — France's Jewish community voiced its sympathy with local Muslims after a crude bomb ripped through a mosque in northeast Paris, slightly injuring its caretaker.

CRIF, France's umbrella group for secular Jewish organizations, said in a statement issued hours after the pre-dawn explosion last week in the Al-Dawsa Mosque that it "vigorously condemns" the attack and "expresses all of its sympathy to the Muslim community aggrieved by this cowardly act."

"CRIF hopes that the guilty" are found "as quickly as possible," the statement added.

The mosque's caretaker suffered minor hand injuries in the blast. Two other people were treated for shock.

No one claimed responsibility for the attack.

Police suspect that the bomb, a fire extinguisher stuffed with explosives, was planted either by French extremists or Algerian Islamic fundamentalists.

It was the first attack at a Paris mosque since the 1995 shooting death of an imam, or Islamic cleric.

The shooting presaged a wave of bombings in France that year by Muslim extremists who accuse the French government of backing Algeria's military rulers.

Eight people died and nearly 200 were injured in the extremists' subsequent terror campaign.

More recently, a bomb planted in an underground train killed four people last December. The explosives were of the type used in the 1995 bombings.

The head of the Al-Dawsa Mosque, Kechat Larbi, is known as a liberal who has promoted relations with other religions.

Local residents said leaflets had been distributed in the neighborhood in the week before the attack demanding that he take a more traditional stance.

While suspecting Islamic extremists, police did not rule out the possibility that the bombing was the work of racists.

The extreme right-wing National Front staged several protests in recent months against plans to build an extension to the mosque.

The anti-immigrant party advocates expelling France's 3 million mostly North African immigrants and reserving jobs and welfare benefits for French nationals.

Front leader Jean-Marie Le Pen, who won 15 percent of the vote in France's 1995 presidential elections, has made anti-Semitic remarks in past speeches.

Booth at fair ransacked

In a separate incident, some 20 unidentified protesters at the annual Paris Book Fair ransacked a booth displaying books and pamphlets written by members of the National Front.

The attack took place last week as hundreds of members of a movement called "Down With the Front" demonstrated outside the fair. No arrests were made, and no one claimed responsibility for the attack.

The party has become the focus of growing protests since it gained control of a fourth southern French town in municipal elections last month. The party said in a statement that the attack was "deliberate and scandalous" and had caused unspecified injuries.

Shortly after the attack, fair organizers ordered the stall closed as a security measure.

Before it took place, other publishers at the fair had circulated anti-Front petitions, but had stopped short of demanding that the booth be shut down. □