

NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **Top Jewish fund-raisers met with representatives of the Reform and Conservative movements to find ways to raise more money for their programs in Israel.** Under consideration is a plan to raise an additional \$20 million a year for Reform and Conservative enterprises, according to the national chairman of the United Jewish Appeal. [Page 3]

■ **Leaders of the Reform and centrist Orthodox movements joined forces to ask President Clinton to commute the life sentence of Jonathan Pollard, the former U.S. Navy analyst who admitted spying for Israel.** [Page 3]

■ **The head of Hamas' political wing met with Jordan's King Hussein a week after U.S. officials deported him to the Hashemite kingdom.** Mousa Mohammed Abu Marzook thanked the king for helping secure his release from a U.S. jail.

■ **Virginia authorities revoked a vanity license plate that read "ZYKLON B" after Anti-Defamation League officials complained that it was offensive.** The 21-year-old owner who had requested the plate was a member of a skinhead group who had spent two years in jail for defacing a black church.

■ **Israel's ambassador to Jordan announced that he was resigning after less than a week on the job.** Eran expressed anger that he was not told about last week's secret meeting between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Jordan's King Hussein. [Page 2]

■ **Israeli and Palestinian officials agreed to meet this week in an effort to resolve the impasse in negotiations.** [Page 4]

■ **A showdown erupted in the Labor Party over a proposal to name outgoing party leader Shimon Peres as honorary president.** [Page 2]

■ **The Bank for International Settlements said about 4 tons of gold it received from Nazi Germany had been looted from foreign banks.** The bank also said it would soon open its wartime files to the public.

NEWS ANALYSIS**U.N. charges of Israeli torture spur debate over painful issues**

By Cynthia Mann

NEW YORK (JTA) — Israel, more than many nations, has grappled to find a balance between its security needs and the protection of human rights and democratic principles.

The state's judicial and law-enforcement establishments believed they had more or less come to grips with that balance in a complex codification of rules governing the interrogation of prisoners. But the world in recent days has judged that balance wanting. And that has prompted painful questions about Israel's use of force on detainees and whether it is morally justifiable in the face of the ever-present threat of terrorism.

Last week, in an unusual hearing in Geneva, the United Nations Committee Against Torture accused the Jewish state of violating the international convention against torture. The Israelis responded with a categorical condemnation of torture and a vigorous denial that they practice it. They nonetheless argued that the state must take extraordinary measures to combat the extraordinary terrorist threat to innocent lives.

They said that information obtained during interrogations by the Shin Bet, the domestic security service, had thwarted 90 planned terrorist attacks during the past two years.

And they emphasized that the "moderate physical pressure" applied during interrogations is carefully regulated and does not constitute torture.

The committee has charged that Israel employs tactics such as shaking and sleep deprivation to elicit information.

The United Nations Convention Against Torture, which took effect in 1987 and which Israel signed in 1991, defines torture as "any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person" to obtain information.

It also prohibits countries from claiming that there are "exceptional circumstances" that permit the use of torture.

For their part, Israeli human rights groups say that force is not restricted to extreme cases and violence during interrogations is common.

The Geneva hearing drew an enormous amount of media coverage and criticism from some of Israel's most steadfast friends.

The New York Times columnist A.M. Rosenthal wrote: "Torture is wrong and unacceptable, any place, any time. Friends of Israel understand the terrorist danger in which it lives perpetually. They know that torture of Arabs by Arab governments is unspeakably worse. For these regimes, it is routine, always was.

"But Israel is different. Using torture demeans its most important asset next to its defense force — civilized democratic decency."

Security forces faced with a 'ticking bomb'

Rabbi Arthur Waskow, director of the Shalom Center in Philadelphia, was as unequivocal as Rosenthal. "Coming out of the Shoah," he said, referring to the Holocaust, the "conscience of the Jewish people" had been very clear that "torture is excluded under all circumstances."

Jerusalem, meanwhile, has charged that it is once again being singled out unfairly and hypocritically by an international body predisposed to judge it ill and by armchair ethicists who have the luxury of distance from the constant terrorist danger. Some analysts and religious thinkers both inside Israel and out, meanwhile, reject the absolutism of Rosenthal and Waskow and defend Israel, at the same time conceding its profound dilemma.

They say that security forces are faced with terrible calculations of whether to inflict pressure and pain on a few when faced with what many call a "ticking bomb," the prospect of mortal harm to countless innocents.

And some say that the response has been the most moral possible. They point to a system in which security officials are held accountable to the courts and detainees have legal recourse.

"Everyone understands the use of force can be highly corrupting, morally, for a civil society, but there is no alternative" when terrorism threatens a nation's existence, said Yossi Alpher. He is the director of the Israel/Middle East office of the American Jewish Committee, a human-rights

group. Stressing that he was speaking as an individual, he said he was repeating comments that he made at an AJCommittee meeting over the weekend in Washington in response to a speaker's criticism of Israeli practices.

What is unique is that "Israel decided, a few years ago, not to sweep this under the carpet and deny it, but to find a way judicially to regulate it and control it."

Alpher was referring to the Landau Commission, which in 1987 was appointed to investigate torture practices by the Shin Bet. The commission found that the use of torture had been routine, but practiced covertly.

The commission then spelled out parameters for applying "a moderate measure of physical pressure" in interrogations in certain instances.

The commission's rules, the details of which are classified, are what now guide the security establishment.

For Rabbi Elliot Dorff, rector and philosophy professor at the University of Judaism in California, Israel's challenge is to find the middle ground between the ideal of "not coercing people and being secure in the real world.

"You can't have both at the same time. You have to compromise on both and where do you draw the line?"

The Landau Commission is "a fairly reasonable attempt to draw that line," said Dorff, the vice chairman of the Conservative movement's Committee on Jewish Laws and Standards.

Being a Jewish state, he said, means "doing its best to translate ideals into reality, and that most often means compromise."

For Rabbi David Teutsch, president of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Philadelphia and a supporter of Israeli human rights groups, the balance between the ideal and the actual is painfully difficult.

"You have to weigh the obligation to protect civil rights with pikuach nefesh, the obligation to protect and save lives," he said, adding that this is "a profound moral conflict."

"We have to demand Israel do its best to live up to ideal standards while being sensitive to the very real dilemma it faces as a nation" under siege.

But it is more black and white for Joshua Muravchik, a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute who has written extensively on human rights and democracy as well as on the Middle East.

"I don't think there is such a big moral dilemma here," he said. "Every single government that's engaged in a dirty war, irregular warfare, crosses these lines.

"If you have people in your possession engaged in planting bombs in buses, you're morally justified to do almost anything you can to get the information."

On the other hand, he said, if "Israeli officialdom has a jaded attitude" toward young Palestinian men, and routinely treats them as potential terrorists, "this is wrong and impossible to defend." □

Labor Party postpones action on determining role for Peres

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A deeply divided Labor Party convened this week to decide what kind of role to give outgoing party leader Shimon Peres — and voted to put off a decision until September.

Tuesday's political showdown at the Tel Aviv gathering of 3,500 Labor delegates brought to a head a power struggle in the party as it prepares to choose a new leader in June. At that time, Peres will step down as party chairman.

Ehud Barak, a former Israel Defense Force chief of staff who served as foreign minister in the 1995-1996

Peres government, is considered the leading contender to replace Peres.

He is touted as the most likely of four candidates to defeat Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the next national elections, slated for 2000.

At issue during Tuesday's session was a proposal to create the new post of party president to honor Peres.

During the stormy session, which was punctuated by catcalls and cheers from respective camps during the speeches, Barak warned that creating the position with anything more than honorary status would lead to divisions in the party and create confusion about who was really in charge.

He urged the conference to take up the issue at its next session in September, after the party chairmanship was determined.

For his part, Peres said that unless the conference appointed him president this week, he would no longer want the position.

Alluding to his long history in the party, Peres said he was not seeking the position to build a power base and would not subject himself to the humiliation of a delayed decision.

Labor Party Secretary Nissim Zvilli, who initiated the proposal for Peres, insisted that he was only interested in honoring Peres' contribution to the party.

But observers suggested that if Peres were appointed president before the Labor primaries, he could influence those party members who had not yet aligned themselves with any of the candidates.

After members of the Barak and Peres camps were unable to reach a compromise on the post's powers, the party decided to postpone the decision. □

Israel's ambassador to Jordan resigns to protest his exclusion

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's new ambassador to Jordan has resigned his post, complaining that he was never informed about a secret meeting between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and King Hussein last week.

Oded Eran, who became Israel's second ambassador to Amman only last week, said he learned of the meeting through the media.

The meeting in the Jordanian port city of Aqaba had been hastily arranged to resolve a dispute between the countries over water allocation.

"I have no intention to be a censor or an obstacle to meetings, but there is a need to brief the embassy on actions being taken," Eran's letter of resignation said.

The resignation appeared to be part of ongoing friction between the Prime Minister's Office and the Foreign Ministry over running foreign policy.

However, Foreign Minister David Levy stressed that the secrecy surrounding the Netanyahu-Hussein meeting was not an attempt to circumvent the embassy.

"The prime minister informed me of his plans an hour before he departed for Aqaba," Levy told Israel Radio. "He requested that in order to prevent any mishaps, I maintain the meeting's secrecy."

Levy said he hoped to convince Eran to retract his resignation.

Despite Levy's assurances and similar statements from the Prime Minister's Office, Israel's former ambassador to Jordan, Shimon Shamir, said his successor's experience was indicative of the government's mode of behavior.

Shamir told Israel Radio that during his own tenure, the prime minister's senior aide, Dore Gold, was sent to Amman for talks with the Jordanian prime minister, a meeting he was informed of only after the fact. □

Reform, Orthodox groups unite in effort to free Jonathan Pollard

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — It's not every day that the heads of the Reform and Orthodox movements create shared letterhead so that they can issue a joint letter.

They have taken the unusual step, though, in an effort to free Jonathan Pollard.

Rabbis Eric Yoffie and Raphael Butler, the respective heads of the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations and of the Orthodox Union, wrote to President Bill Clinton, asking him "in the noblest spirit of biblical teaching" to "show mercy to Jonathan Pollard and commute his prison sentence."

The president has decided three times against freeing Pollard, who is serving a life sentence in prison for delivering classified U.S. information to Israel.

Life sentences have been meted out to other spies only when they were involved in espionage on behalf of one of America's enemies. Never before has someone spying on behalf of a friendly power been given such a stiff sentence. Pollard spent the first several years of his incarceration in solitary confinement, but is now living as part of the general population in the medium- to maximum-security prison in Butner, N.C.

"We realize that you are familiar with his case and have considered such appeals before," Butler and Yoffie wrote to Clinton in their April 18 letter.

"Yet we — the representatives of the broadest spectrum of the American Jewish community — come together in the spirit of unity and out of a clear sense of fellowship and brotherhood as fellow Jews to raise Jonathan's plight with you once again." The rabbis have not yet received a response from Clinton.

The letter's timing, insisted Butler, was purely coincidental. He had been working with Yoffie on it long before an otherwise little-known fervently Orthodox rabbinical group declared last month that the liberal movements were "not Judaism." The declaration illuminated deep differences between the movements and set off a firestorm of controversy.

The letter was not intended to be a show of Jewish unity, said both rabbis, but it is having that effect.

"We are Jews united in sustaining other Jews," Butler said in an interview. "When you have a Jew in captivity you expend all efforts" to help him.

While Pollard's wife, Esther, said she was pleased that the two rabbis had issued the joint letter, she was sharply critical of the organized Jewish community's efforts to free her husband. "Even such an unusual stand is not enough when you have the Jewish community in America literally funding the president and buttressing his office, but when it comes to equal justice for a Jew, they are quiet," she said when reached at the school where she teaches in Toronto.

Both Butler and Yoffie said they sympathized with Esther Pollard's feelings, but both said they feel that the Jewish community has acted responsibly on her husband's behalf. □

More for Reform, Conservative? Top fund-raisers search for a way

By Cynthia Mann

NEW YORK (JTA) — Top Jewish fund-raisers are meeting with representatives of the Reform and Conservative movements to find ways to raise more money for their programs in Israel.

Talks were held in Chicago this week, where the United Jewish Appeal is holding board meetings.

Under consideration is a plan to allocate \$20 million a year — \$10 million each "in designated giving" — to Reform and Conservative enterprises, said Richard Wexler, national UJA chairman.

That money would be "over and above" the allocations federations make for overseas needs, he stressed.

Federations allocate a portion of their campaign money to UJA for distribution overseas and keep the remainder at home for local programs. UJA and the federations' umbrella body, the Council of Jewish Federations, are in the process of forging a partnership.

The joint campaign has been under increasing pressure from the grass roots to allocate more of its money to the non-Orthodox streams in Israel, where Orthodoxy has an official monopoly over religious affairs.

Recent efforts by Orthodox parties in Israel to legislate Orthodox control have prompted some American Jews to threaten a boycott of the campaign.

UJA has responded by trying to send the message that such a boycott would only hurt the Jewish needy around the world as well as the funding for the religious streams in Israel.

For its part, CJF recently recommended doubling the spending for Reform and Conservative programs in Israel.

The system currently allocates about \$1 million each to Reform and Conservative programs there and about half a million dollars to the Orthodox.

Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations, said Chicago's meeting was the first in a series with UJA aimed at creating a "closer partnership" and finding ways to secure more funding for non-Orthodox programs in Israel.

It is "too early to tell on the basis of the meeting what will come" of the effort, but "the process will continue."

Wexler said there were plans to meet with the Orthodox Union to explore how UJA "can be of assistance" to the Orthodox in Israel.

He also said the next meeting with the Conservative and Reform leaders would be held late next month in Israel. □

Ukraine president to discuss restitution during U.S. visit

By Lev Krichevsky

NEW YORK (JTA) — Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma is expected to discuss restitution issues with Jewish leaders during his visit this week to the United States.

Accompanying Kuchma is the president of the newly formed Ukrainian Jewish Congress, Vadim Rabinovich.

The congress, created about three weeks ago in Kiev, is an umbrella organization for dozens of Ukrainian Jewish organizations. It plans to unite the disparate Jewish groups, counter anti-Semitism and seek restitution for Jewish property in this former Soviet republic.

Jewish communal leaders in Ukraine have said that they are seeking the return of more than 700 pieces of property.

During his visit, Kuchma is slated to meet with the World Jewish Restitution Organization to discuss the property claims.

Iosif Zissels, chairman of the Ukrainian Va'ad, the country's oldest Jewish organization, said that Kuchma's U.S. visit could be the beginning of a dialogue between Ukrainian authorities and the Jewish community that would lead to a full-fledged process of restitution. □

Israelis, Palestinians to meet on reviving peace negotiations*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli and Palestinian officials have yielded to American urging and agreed to meet this week to discuss disagreements that led to the current impasse in their negotiations.

U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross, now in the second week of a shuttle visit to the region, had been pressing for such a meeting to help get the peace process back on track.

Palestinian officials said they did not expect any dramatic breakthrough in the talks, which were due to be held this week at the Herzliya home of the U.S. ambassador to Israel, Martin Indyk.

News of the meeting emerged as U.S. State Department officials confirmed Tuesday that Foreign Minister David Levy was expected to travel later this week to Washington for talks with American officials.

Israeli-Palestinian talks and security cooperation have been frozen since mid-March, when Israel began constructing a Jewish neighborhood in southeastern Jerusalem and a Palestinian suicide bomber attacked a Tel Aviv cafe.

The Palestinians have demanded a halt to Israeli settlement activity as a condition for returning to the negotiations.

They also said they would demand an end to Israeli land confiscation and demolitions of Palestinian buildings in the territories. During a weekend meeting, Arafat presented Ross with a list of 1,300 notices of planned demolitions sent by the Israeli government to West Bank Palestinians.

For its part, Israel has demanded that Palestinian security officials resume sharing intelligence with their Israeli counterparts as a condition for resuming the negotiations. The Israel Defense Force intelligence chief, Maj. Gen. Moshe Ya'alon, said Tuesday that there were still no signs of renewed security cooperation.

He said that while there are no concrete warnings of terrorist attacks against Israel, Islamic militant organizations are aware that the atmosphere in the territories is conducive to carrying out attacks.

Meanwhile, Israel continued to demand that the Palestinians fulfill their obligation under the terms of the September 1995 Interim Agreement to respond to Israeli requests to extradite suspected Palestinian terrorists currently in the autonomous areas.

A statement issued by the Government Press Office on Tuesday said that Israel had asked the Palestinian Authority to hand over 11 suspected terrorists, in addition to 20 others it had already requested.

The office said that the Palestinian Authority had only responded to two requests, which it had rejected.

The list included the names of 12 Palestinians who are serving in, or about to be recruited into, the Palestinian police force.

Israel is also seeking the extradition of suspects believed involved in a series of terrorist bombings last February and March that killed more than 50 Israelis. □

Israel Prize committee revokes award to prominent journalist*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Responding to a request by Israel's High Court of Justice, the Israel Prize committee has reversed its decision to give its annual journalism award to veteran Ma'ariv columnist Shmuel Schnitzer.

The committee's announcement last month that

Schnitzer would receive the prestigious prize prompted immediate protests by the Ethiopian community.

Labor Knesset member Adisu Massala, a leader in the Ethiopian community, petitioned the High Court, saying an August 1994 column by Schnitzer was racist and therefore he should not receive the prize.

In his article, Schnitzer referred to Ethiopians who immigrated to Israel as "thousands of apostates carrying dangerous diseases," including tuberculosis and HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

The High Court asked the committee to reconsider awarding the prize to Schnitzer.

The court made the request after noting that the committee had not been aware of Schnitzer's controversial article.

The prize was revoked after the committee's three members were unable to agree on a decision.

According to reports, two members argued to give Schnitzer the prize, while the third member objected. Decisions on awarding the \$7,500 award must be unanimous.

Schnitzer earlier had refused appeals from President Ezer Weizman to offer an apology to the Ethiopian community.

As a result of the decision, the prize for print journalism was not awarded this year.

Israel Prizes for other categories were presented Monday as part of the country's Independence Day celebrations. □

Religious officials invited to monitor excavation sites*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's Antiquities Authority has agreed to allow officials from the Religious Affairs Ministry to observe excavations.

The move announced this week is aimed at easing friction with the fervently Orthodox community.

Fourteen ministry officials will be granted access to excavations that the Antiquities Authority routinely carries out before starting construction projects.

Antiquities officials hope the new arrangement will halt the sometimes violent attempts by fervently Orthodox demonstrators to prevent excavations at sites they claim contain ancient Jewish graves.

In one such incident last week, two protesters assaulted archaeologists at a site in northern Israel, even though the excavations had uncovered remains of a Byzantine-era storehouse and no bones.

Antiquities officials said that while the sides would hold consultations if burial caves or bones are found, the ministry officials would have observer status only, and no say in whether to continue the dig.

The arrangement, however, elicited criticism from some who viewed it as capitulation to religious pressure and a threat to continued archaeological research in the Jewish state.

"This agreement will bring an end to archaeological research in Israel," said Zamira Segev, director of Hemdat, the association for freedom of science, religion and culture in Israel.

"It could also have a detrimental effect on continued development of the country, which requires these excavations."

Segev added that the consultations with the ministry observers on what to do with the bones was superfluous because the Antiquities Authority officials automatically turn over bones that are found to the relevant authorities for examination, and, if required, for a proper burial. □