

**NEWS AT A GLANCE**

■ Israel said the peace process with the Palestinians was dead unless the Palestinian Authority cracked down on terrorism. Israel's stand, adopted in the wake of the suicide bombing in Jerusalem, came a few days ahead of U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's scheduled arrival in Israel. [Page 1]

■ Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned that an Israeli pull-out from Lebanon would fuel guerrilla activities. Netanyahu's remarks came against the backdrop of public debate over the Israel Defense Force's presence in southern Lebanon. [Page 1]

■ Israeli Minister of Industry and Trade Natan Sharansky pledged that he and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would do their best to see "that not one Jew would be prevented from his right or her right" to pray at the Western Wall during the High Holidays as long as "they don't incite" anybody. He made the pledge via satellite in response to questions at the Council of Jewish Federations quarterly meeting in New York.

■ The leaders of the United Jewish Appeal, Council of Jewish Federations and the Reform and Conservative movements are finalizing an agreement in which the joint federations and UJA campaign would raise up to \$10 million annually for each movement's Israeli institutions. Such donations would be in addition to those made to the regular campaign. The movements' rabbis have agreed to underscore the importance of giving to the central fund-raising campaign during their High Holiday sermons.

■ Russian President Boris Yeltsin sent an amended version of a bill on freedom of religion to the Russian Parliament's lower house. Yeltsin vetoed the original bill in July after pressure from the United States Congress and human rights groups, who called it "discriminatory" and "undemocratic."

**REMINDER: The JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Wednesday, Sept. 10.**

**NEWS ANALYSIS****Crisis control seems best hope for outcome of Albright's visit**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — If there had been modest hopes for the visit of U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, a series of devastating blows to Israel, and the government's response to them, have lowered expectations to rock bottom.

The most optimistic prognosis regarding Albright's trip, her first to the Middle East as America's top diplomat, is that if she can conduct a "crisis control" exercise, she will have succeeded in laying the groundwork for a more productive shuttle later in the fall.

Albright, scheduled to arrive Wednesday in Israel, will find a nation grieving over two tragedies that occurred within a 24-hour period.

In the first of those tragedies, three suicide bombers detonated near-simultaneous explosions Sept. 4 at Jerusalem's Ben Yehuda pedestrian mall.

Four Israelis, among them three teen-age girls, were killed and more than 190 others were wounded in the attack, which Israeli investigators have linked to the July 30 twin suicide bombing in the nearby Mahane Yehuda market that killed 15 Israelis.

The second tragic blow came just hours later, when 10 Israeli naval commandos and a doctor were killed in an unsuccessful nighttime operation between the Lebanese cities of Sidon and Tyre, north of the security zone. Another commando was declared missing and presumed dead.

The loss, the Israel Defense Force's heaviest from a single military operation in 12 years, triggered renewed calls for an Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon — even from some hawks in the Netanyahu government.

Hezbollah members were photographed over the weekend displaying body parts that they claimed belonged to the missing Israeli soldier. The group's leader, Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, said he would be willing to hand over the remains in return for Hezbollah prisoners held by Israel.

The IDF created a committee of inquiry to determine if an intelligence leak had led to the attack on the commandos by Hezbollah forces and the Lebanese army.

To cap a nightmarish weekend, another IDF officer was killed Sunday morning by a Hezbollah mortar shell in southern Lebanon.

Recognizing the profound affect last week's attack had on the Israeli public, Albright decided to add a visit to the Ben Yehuda mall to her schedule.

She had originally planned to speak to the Israeli electorate directly, sidestepping the Netanyahu government in hopes of coaxing from the public a more generous view of the endangered Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

**Can words of comfort rebuild tattered trust?**

She is expected to speak words of comfort, but it is hard to see how she can rebuild any of the tattered trust between the two peoples and their leaders or persuade Israeli public opinion, deep in national mourning, that peace still has a chance.

The government moved quickly after last week's triple suicide bombing to block any American pressure for concessions or any overtures by Washington aimed at domestic opinion here.

In a Cabinet communique, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced, in effect, the end of the Oslo peace process — on the eve of its fourth anniversary.

It was on Sept. 13, 1993, that Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat exchanged their historic handshake on the White House lawn, setting the process into motion.

Putting the brakes on that process, the Cabinet statement said there would be no further Israeli redeployments from rural areas of the West Bank, a move that was slated to take place early this month under the terms of the Hebron agreement signed in January.

The Palestinians regard this step as essential for any further progress in the peace process.

The statement appeared to imply that if the Palestinian Authority fought terrorism to Israel's satisfaction, then the peace process could be put

back on track. But top officials in the Prime Minister's Office confirmed that, as far as they were concerned, this was indeed the burial of a peace process that they had always opposed and that Netanyahu had only reluctantly acceded to on the basis of "reciprocity" — something, they insisted, that the other side had never accomplished.

The Cabinet statement also urged the start of final-status negotiations to conclude the peace process and determine the final borders of the Palestinian Authority.

But for many observers here and abroad there was little promise to that call.

The Israeli government, ready to cede at most half of the West Bank, is so far away from the Palestinian Authority, which wants at least 90 percent of it, that it is almost impossible to see Albright or anyone else launching a meaningful negotiation from those opening positions.

The leaders of Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority, meeting Sunday in Cairo to coordinate strategy before Albright's visit, issued a joint statement calling on Israel to uphold the signed agreements.

During her trip, Albright is expected to press both sides to make concessions.

The Israeli daily Ha'aretz quoted American officials as saying that the secretary of state would seek a "mini-agreement" that would oblige the Palestinian self-rule authority to take a number of concrete steps to fight terrorism and to increase security cooperation with Israel.

In turn, Israel would agree to a series of confidence-building measures, including a commitment to temporarily freeze its construction projects on disputed land.

The peace process with the Palestinians and Israeli policy in southern Lebanon were debated Sunday at a stormy Cabinet meeting.

Foreign Minister David Levy made it clear he was not in favor of announcing the death of the peace process — for both tactical and substantive reasons.

He warned that U.S. opinion, currently sympathetic toward Israel because of its suffering, would grow cold if Israel was perceived as having delivered the death blow to the peace process.

Regarding policy in Lebanon, Science Minister Michael Eitan of Likud clashed openly with Netanyahu, insisting on his own right to publicly advocate unilateral withdrawal.

#### **Hawk and dove share the same plan**

This anguished debate over the constant loss of Israeli blood in Lebanon has taken place before, but it welled up anew throughout the country in the wake of the botched commando action.

Former Labor Minister Yossi Beilin announced Sunday the creation of a new grass-roots movement committed to a unilateral withdrawal — independent of any negotiation with Syria or even Lebanon.

This move drew sharp criticism from within Beilin's own party and from within the ranks of the army.

But by the same token, there are Labor and Likud members who openly support Beilin — and many others who privately encourage him.

Among those sharing Beilin's stance was none other than Likud hawk Ariel Sharon.

Sharon was quoted in the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot as saying that Israel should consider planning a withdrawal from southern Lebanon "without any tie to talks with Syria and without paying any diplomatic or security price to Syria in exchange for our pain in Lebanon."

Netanyahu sharply criticized his government members' public statements on the matter.

He was quoted as telling the Cabinet that "the rash talk over a hasty Lebanon withdrawal, under pressure, only encourages Hezbollah." □

(JTA correspondent Naomi Segal in Jerusalem contributed to this report.)

#### **Israeli prosecutors fail to bring against officials in Bar-On affair**

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Another chapter in the Bar-On affair has come to an end.

Attorney General Elyakim Rubinstein and Israel's state prosecutors decided last week that there was insufficient evidence to bring charges against two figures close to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in connection with the short-lived January appointment of Roni Bar-On as attorney general.

The decision blocked further legal measures against Avigdor Lieberman, the director-general of the Prime Minister's Office, and David Eppel, a prominent businessman.

Rubinstein stressed, however, that his decision did not clear the two of all suspicion that they had committed improprieties in connection with Bar-On's appointment.

A three-month police investigation was launched earlier this year after an Israel Television report alleged that Bar-On was appointed as part of a deal to provide a plea bargain to Shas Knesset member Rabbi Aryeh Deri, who is on trial for corruption.

In turn, Deri allegedly promised his party's support for the Hebron agreement, which was coming up for Cabinet approval at the time, according to the television report.

Police investigators had recommended that Netanyahu and Justice Minister Tzachi Hanegbi — as well as Lieberman and Deri — be indicted in connection with the influence-peddling scandal.

But Rubinstein and State Prosecutor Edna Arbel decided in April that there was insufficient evidence against Netanyahu and Hanegbi, and that only Deri should be indicted.

That hearing has not yet been held.

Bar-On won Cabinet approval Jan. 10, but stepped down two days later amid growing charges in political and legal spheres that he lacked the experience to hold Israel's top legal post. Two weeks later, the Cabinet unanimously approved Rubinstein to serve as Israel's attorney general.

In a related development, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported last week that Netanyahu was seeking a foreign donor to pay the legal fees of attorney Ya'acov Weinroth, who represented the prime minister during the Bar-On affair.

Weinroth had submitted a bill to Netanyahu for \$50,000 after consulting with Israel's bar association, which decided that it would be inappropriate for Weinroth to waive the fees, according to Ha'aretz.

The paper added that Netanyahu asked the state comptroller for permission to seek a foreign donation to cover legal expenses. The state comptroller's office said it had not approved Netanyahu's request.

Netanyahu's media adviser, Shai Bazak, said the prime minister had not yet approached any potential donor, and that if his request was turned down by the state comptroller, Netanyahu would pay for the expenses out of his own pocket.

Sources at the Prime Minister's Office said there were previous instances in which donations covered the legal fees of public figures, including Deri's corruption trial and National Infrastructure Minister Ariel's Sharon's libel suit against Time magazine during the mid-1980s. □

## Lithuania premier wants review of war criminal pardon practice

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — Lithuania's prime minister is seeking to accelerate the annulment of pardons granted to suspected war criminals.

Coming just days before the commemoration of the 200th yearzeit of the Vilna Gaon — an event boycotted by some Jewish groups — the prime minister's call last week was viewed by some as a ploy aimed at boosting Lithuania's image.

"This should have been done long ago," Simonas Alperavicius, the chairman of the Lithuanian Jewish community, said in a telephone interview from Vilnius, the Lithuanian government.

Alperavicius said Prime Minister Gediminas Vagnorius' move was clearly timed for this week's commemoration of the Gaon, the renowned commentator on the Talmud and the Torah.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center has called for an international boycott of the commemoration, saying that participation would be seen as support for a government that has not yet atoned for the destruction of Lithuanian Jewry. Nearly 94 percent of the country's Jewish community perished in the Holocaust.

After declaring independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Lithuania issued certificates of exoneration to more than 50,000 Lithuanians who were convicted as war criminals by Soviet courts. Among those pardoned were people who allegedly helped the Nazis kill Jews.

Holocaust survivors, American Jewish leaders and the Lithuanian Jewish community have protested this practice of rehabilitation and called upon the Lithuanian government to reverse the pardons.

As a result, about 1,000 individuals were denied rehabilitation.

Several certificates of exoneration were also revoked, but authorities claimed the investigation of other war-crime suspects was hindered by the absence of authentic documentation and witnesses.

"Neither at home nor abroad should there be any doubt concerning the resolution of the Lithuanian people to create a just state," said Vagnorius.

### 17 cases before the Supreme Court

There are 17 incomplete cases involving annulment before the country's Supreme Court. A number of these cases have been transferred to the prosecutor-general's office for additional investigation.

"An open, immediate and objective investigation of these cases would demonstrate that Lithuania is adequately carrying out its international commitments and seeking justice," Vagnorius said.

Efraim Zuroff, director of the Wiesenthal Center's Israel office, said he was not surprised that the premier's statement came "on the eve of the celebration."

The Lithuanian officials "know that those few who agreed to come will be speaking about the issues of war criminals and rehabilitation," Zuroff said in a telephone interview from Jerusalem.

Last week, authorities in Vilnius were disappointed to learn that a high-ranking Israeli official who was slated to attend the six-day commemoration of the Gaon would not be coming.

Zevulun Hammer, Israel's education and religious affairs minister, said his decision was not connected with the Wiesenthal Center's call for a boycott.

Other Jewish groups, including the American Jewish Committee and B'nai B'rith, are not joining in the boycott and have helped to plan the commemoration. □

## Finance Minister faces fight over proposed austerity plan

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Abolishing religious councils and halting funding for yeshiva students under the age of 18.

These are among Israel Finance Minister Ya'acov Ne'eman's proposals to cut \$214 million from the country's religious budget — and the proposals are making Israel's religious parties bristle.

Ne'eman's plan, which would cut the religion ministry's budget by more than half, calls for the ministry to shoulder nearly one-third of his total proposed budget cuts.

Talks that Ne'eman held this week with ministry officials to discuss the proposal broke down into angry exchanges.

Deputy Religious Affairs Minister Yigal Bibi, of the National Religious Party, said that if Ne'eman's proposals were adopted, "We might as well go ahead and dismantle the Religious Affairs Ministry."

Ne'eman held meetings with several ministers last week to discuss the cuts prior to a scheduled Cabinet meeting this week that will take up the 1998 budget.

Although the Cabinet recently approved the finance minister's belt-tightening measures, it appears that few ministers are willing to see the cuts come from their own portfolios.

The health and education ministers have announced that they will not stand for substantial cuts from their respective budgets.

Ne'eman met Sept. 3 with Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai to discuss the defense budget, but the two were unable to agree on how much to cut.

The Israeli Cabinet last month approved a 1998 budget of some \$46 billion that includes more than \$650 million in spending cuts.

The halting of funds to yeshiva students under the age of 18 — who, Ne'eman argued, already receive financial support from the Education Ministry — is estimated to save about \$100 million.

The responsibilities for the religious councils — which have exclusive jurisdiction over marriage, kashrut, burial and other religious matters for all Jews living in Israel — and would be transferred to municipal councils.

This move, he said, would save about \$71 million.

Referring to the fact that Ne'eman is religiously observant, the NRP's Bibi said, "I don't know what's happened to him. I simply cannot explain it. It is too bad that a religious minister would cause the desecration of God's name." □

### Estonian capital to get synagogue

MOSCOW (JTA) — The only European capital without a synagogue.

That's how the head of Estonia's Jewish community, David Slomka, describes the country's capital of Tallinn. But that will soon change with the construction of a synagogue and Jewish community center in the city's historic center.

The four-story building received the go-ahead after the Estonian Cabinet designated a 1,200-square-yard plot in the city's historic center.

Slomka said the project will allow the community to provide care for the elderly and religious training for young people.

In the past few years, the community held services in rented space. The Jewish community in Estonia numbers about 2,000, most of whom live in Tallinn. □

## New York Holocaust museum focuses on individual victims

By Steve Lipman  
New York Jewish Week

NEW YORK (JTA) — Stanley Stern found one half of a tefillin set in a pile of refuse at the Buchenwald concentration camp and traded for the other half with a Gypsy.

So it was hard for the 74-year-old Stern, a Czechoslovakian-born survivor of Buchenwald, to part with the holy items he carried to the United States in 1946.

But he donated them to The Museum of Jewish Heritage — A Living Memorial to the Holocaust in New York for the same reason that has motivated him to deliver lectures on the Holocaust to Jewish schools for the past 40 years.

“I want to expose them to the future generations,” Stern, of Riverdale, N.Y., says of the tefillin.

The Museum of Jewish Heritage, which is slated to open Sept. 15, takes a personal approach to the Shoah, as evidenced by in the videotaped memoirs of survivors and thousands of individuals photographs, says David Altshuler, the museum’s director.

The museum’s proximity to the world’s largest Jewish community, which includes many survivors, facilitated the collecting of wartime artifacts and possessions, he says.

“The survivors have a huge voice here,” serving as trustees, historical advisers and contributors of artifacts, says Altshuler.

Contributors “were comfortable that the Jewish community would protect” their treasured items.

The museum gathered some 13,000 items, 800 of which are on permanent display in the 30,000-square-foot building.

They range from a Hitler Youth’s uniform and copies of the Nazis’ *Der Sturmer* newspaper to a Torah scroll rescued from a Hamburg synagogue on Kristallnacht and boots worn by an American soldier who helped liberate a concentration camp.

Stern, who was born into a Chasidic family, served on a work detail and lived in a “safe house” established by Raoul Wallenberg in Budapest before being shipped to Buchenwald in December 1944.

His own tefillin and prayer book were taken away immediately.

### Prisoners ‘lined up’ to put on tefillin

Within a week, walking by a pile of Judaica being burned by the Nazis, he noticed a small, black leather strap and box — half of a set of tefillin.

He put it in his pocket and hid it under his barracks mattress.

A few days later, a Gypsy inmate passed Stern’s bed, holding a similar piece of leather — the other half of a complete set of tefillin.

He bartered it for an extra sweater he wore under his shirt.

Word spread quickly. The next morning, prisoners “who were really religious” came to Stern’s bed to put on the tefillin and say a quick prayer. “They lined up, in the open,” he says.

A half dozen men borrowed the set daily until Stern was shipped to an auxiliary site of the concentration camp.

He was liberated in March 1945.

Stern had the set of tefillin inspected by a Torah scribe after he immigrated to the U.S. Waterlogged, it was deemed unfit for use. He bought a new set and kept the old pair in a suede bag sown by his wife.

Approached by the museum two years ago to donate them, he reluctantly agreed.

Now they are in a display case on the museum’s second floor, part of an exhibit titled “Living in the Shadow of Death,” accompanied by an old photograph of Stern and a label describing the tefillin’s history.

He donated the tefillin, he says, for the sake of his relatives who died in the Holocaust.

“I wanted to have something as a memorial,” he says.

The museum, whose hexagonal shape symbolizes the 6 million Jews killed in the Holocaust as well as the Star of David, presents the Shoah in a historical context, says Altshuler.

“We contextualize the story of the Holocaust by telling the larger story of Jewish life in the 20th century. And we tell the Holocaust story in a way that I believe has not been done before,” he says, “principally through the eyes of victims and survivors.”

Two of its three floors are devoted to Jewish culture — the prewar Jewish life affected and destroyed by the Holocaust and the postwar rebirth around the world.

From the museum’s top floor, visitors can easily see the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, landmarks that define New York City as the nation’s port of entry for refugees.

The building is a scaled-down version of the five-story, 80,000-square-foot structure that was first proposed in the 1980s.

A downturn in the local real estate market, many of whose executives were early supporters of the museum, led to a scaling down of the early plans.

The construction and acquisitions budget was \$21.5 million, cut from figures that had gone as high as \$70 million.

The Battery Park City Authority, to which the museum relinquished some of the rights to develop the rest of the prime land on which it is located, gave \$10 million to the museum. The remainder was raised from private donations. □

## Court in Israel rules Druse must remain in police custody

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Haifa District Court has rejected an appeal from a Druse woman suspected of spying for Syria that she be released from police custody.

The charges against Ilham Abu Salakh have the potential to harm chances for a new Israeli-Syrian diplomatic initiative.

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright is slated to visit Damascus when she makes her scheduled trip to the region this week.

Israel’s ambassador to Washington, Elisha Ben-Elissar, said last week there was “some hope” for a resumption of Israeli-Syrian negotiations, which have been suspended for more than a year, but he did not explain the basis for his optimism.

Turning down her appeal last week, the Haifa District Court judge said there were strong indications that the allegations against Abu Salakh required thorough examination.

Another Israeli court recently allowed publication of details of the arrest of Abu Salakh, who studies psychology in Damascus.

Abu Salakh and her family have vehemently denied the allegations her.

News of her arrest set off protests and a general strike two weeks ago in the Druse town of Majdal Shams, on the Golan Heights, where Abu Salakh lives. □