



## NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **The Israeli Cabinet approved Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's proposal for a further redeployment in the West Bank. But Israeli opposition figures and Palestinian leaders both criticized the proposal. [Page 1]**

■ **Members of the World Jewish Restitution Organization assembled in London in advance of an international conference on Nazi gold. Jewish officials reiterated that they would urge the international community to commit to returning Nazi-looted assets to their rightful owners and make available all relevant archives.**

■ **Israel will prosecute the builders of a bridge that collapsed during the opening ceremonies of July's Maccabiah Games. Four people died as a result of the tragedy. [Page 2]**

■ **The Polish Catholic Church designated Jan. 17 as an annual "Day of Judaism" in Polish churches. The day will be dedicated to interfaith dialogue and to teaching Polish Catholics about Judaism.**

■ **A Brazilian commission said it would investigate the origins of \$4.5 million in money and valuables that was found in a safe-deposit box opened last week. Authorities suspect the contents may have been stolen by the Nazis from Holocaust victims.**

■ **An Israeli court decided to hold a Maryland teen-ager charged with murder for at least 15 more days. During that time, the court will consider the formal request for the extradition of Samuel Sheinbein, who fled to Israel in September, claiming Israeli citizenship.**

■ **A French judge announced that the trial of former Vichy official Maurice Papon would resume sometime later this week. The trial has been suspended because of Papon's ill health.**

■ **An international commission studying Switzerland's financial dealings with the Nazis will delay issuing its report until early next year. The delay is being caused by disputes among members of the commission, according to a Swiss newspaper.**

## Israeli Cabinet sets conditions on redeployments in West Bank

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Differences between Israeli and Palestinian leaders remain wide despite an Israeli Cabinet decision approving a redeployment in the West Bank.

While the Cabinet approved the redeployment Sunday, it did not spell out the extent of the withdrawal or a timetable for carrying it out.

The proposal conditioned the handover of land to a commitment by the Palestinian Authority to crack down on terrorism and on the Palestinian leadership's agreement to proceed to final-status talks.

In what was seen as a victory for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, 16 of the Cabinet's 18 members approved the proposal. The two ministers from the National Religious Party abstained.

Conservative members of his coalition have threatened to bring down the government if transfers of additional West Bank land were approved.

But the proposal was approved only after Netanyahu agreed to several ministers' demand that it not mention the extent of the redeployment, according to the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot.

Cabinet Secretary Danny Naveh told reporters Sunday that a ministerial committee had been created to discuss Israel's position on the final-status talks and the redeployment, adding that more specific proposals could be presented to the Cabinet as early as next week.

The committee will include Netanyahu, Foreign Minister David Levy, Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai and National Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon.

Describing the Cabinet vote, Naveh said that "the government has reiterated its belief that the best approach to advancing the peace process is to move immediately to permanent-status negotiations."

Media reports last week indicated that Netanyahu planned to transfer to the Palestinians 6 to 8 percent of the West Bank in a single redeployment before moving to final-status talks.

Netanyahu, addressing Israeli news editors last week, said the redeployment would be delayed five months until the Palestinian Authority demonstrated it would crack down on terrorism.

Even before the Cabinet voted Sunday on the vaguer proposal, the Palestinian Authority had rejected the plan.

On Saturday, the Palestinian Cabinet rejected Netanyahu's proposal for a limited Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank.

A Cabinet statement reported by the Palestinian news agency called Netanyahu's offer no more than "a continuation of the Israeli government's attempt to evade the agreement on further redeployment."

Under the terms of the 1995 Interim Agreement, Israel was to carry out three redeployments by next year.

Earlier this year, Israel planned a first redeployment that would have transferred 2 percent of rural West Bank areas to Palestinian self-rule, but it was rejected as too little by the Palestinian Authority.

The redeployment, due to have been carried out in March, was never implemented.

### Opposition finds little substance

Reacting to the Israeli Cabinet vote, senior Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat said the Palestinian Authority would continue to demand that Israel carry out all three redeployments.

Israeli opposition members found little substance in the Cabinet vote. "All we heard was a list of conditions" for the Palestinians to fulfill, Labor Knesset member Shlomo Ben-Ami told Israel Radio. "What we have is that the government will sit some time, and then make a decision."

Members of the dovish Meretz Party termed the Cabinet decision a further sign of the prime minister's "fraudulent" peace policy.

Other opposition members said the fact that the Cabinet overwhelmingly approved the proposal was proof of its lack of substance.

Netanyahu has also faced strong criticism from the right wing for his proposal to transfer West Bank lands to the Palestinians.

For the first time since his election last year, right-wing demonstrators

gathered outside the prime minister's residence Saturday night, urging him not to bow to recent American pressures to advance the peace process.

About 1,000 people demonstrated, according to the Israeli daily *Ma'ariv*, which reported that the extreme right boycotted the protest because it was too moderate.

When reports surfaced last week that Netanyahu was offering a transfer of 6 to 8 percent of the West Bank, posters appeared showing him dressed in an Arab head-dress and calling him a "liar."

In the West Bank, meanwhile, Palestinians in Bethlehem, Hebron, Nablus and Ramallah took to the streets Saturday to protest Israeli policies.

Violence erupted at the Bethlehem demonstration when Palestinian demonstrators hurled stones at Israeli soldiers, who responded with rubber bullets and tear gas.

At least 25 demonstrators, including a Palestinian police officer, were reportedly hit by rubber bullets. Two Israeli soldiers were slightly injured by stones.

The clashes began when some 2,000 demonstrators marched near Rachel's Tomb to demand the release of Palestinian prisoners.

A group of about 300 Palestinians broke away from the march and started throwing stones and pieces of concrete at the Israeli troops.

The protesters shouted "Death to America" and "Revenge, revenge" and burned an Israeli flag.

In Nablus, a Hamas stronghold, about 3,000 marchers burned Israeli and American flags and blew up a wood-and-paper model of an Israeli settlement.

The demonstrations took place as Israel marked the 50th anniversary of the U.N. General Assembly resolution calling for the partition of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states.

Some 10,000 people gathered in Tel Aviv on Saturday to recall the historic vote. □

### Israel to prosecute builders of defective Maccabiah bridge

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Nov. 30 (JTA) — The contractors who built a bridge that collapsed during the opening ceremonies of July's Maccabiah Games are going to face trial.

State Attorney Edna Arbel has decided to bring charges against those responsible for organizing and constructing the bridge, Israeli media reported Sunday.

Those who will be charged include Baruch Karagula and Yehoshua Ben Ezra, the contractors; Micha Bar Ilan, the bridge's engineer; Adam Mishori, the head of Irgunit, the firm that subcontracted to Baruch and Karagula; and Yoram Eyal, the head of the organizing committee for the international games.

The decision comes just one week after more than 40 Australian survivors of the bridge collapse announced that they will sue Israeli officials and the company that built that bridge.

Two Australian athletes were immediately killed July 14 and hundreds of other participants at the Games injured when the pedestrian bridge collapsed during the opening ceremony at the Ramat Gan stadium, plunging scores of people into the Yarkon River.

Two more Australians died weeks later as a result of complications that medical officials linked to contaminants in the river water.

One Australian athlete injured in the incident, tennis player Sasha Elterman, 15, has been hospitalized with a brain abscess that doctors say may have been caused by the polluted water.

A week after the bridge collapse, an Israeli com-

mission found that the accident was caused by a chain of failures involving the bridge's planning and construction.

The commission found the engineer and contractors who built the bridge at fault for poor planning and execution.

The commission also found that the contracting company that built the bridge had no experience in bridge construction.

It also criticized Maccabiah organizers for trying to cut costs and for failing to closely supervise the construction work.

Leaders of the Australian Jewish community have expressed frustration with what they said was the slow pace of the investigation.

In recent visits to Israel and in meetings with prosecutors, they have demanded that those responsible for the collapse face charges. □

### Anti-Semitic Pamyat group resurfaces with a vengeance

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — A Russian anti-Semitic organization is again publicly lashing out at Jews.

Russian police clashed with members of the anti-Semitic group Pamyat when they staged two protests last week outside branches of the Moscow-based Alfa Bank.

Pamyat members dressed in black military uniforms shouted anti-Semitic slogans against the bank, which is headed by two Jews.

Police arrested two members of the group at both the Nov. 24 and Nov. 25 protests outside the bank's branches in Moscow.

At the second protest, Pamyat leader Dmitri Vasilyev told a crowd that Alfa has "sold off all our assets" and that the "Zionists are strangling" Russia.

Protesters carried banners proclaiming, "Don't Believe in the Zionists — Withdraw Your Deposits" and "Zionist Bank — Out of Russia."

Pamyat spokesman Alexander Potkin asserted that Alfa, which is headed by Pyotr Aven and Mikhail Fridman, have used "Jewish contacts in the government" to further the bank's interests "at the expense of the Russian people."

Fridman, who also serves as vice president of the Russian Jewish Congress, has been accused by Pamyat of using his "Jewish contacts" in the Kremlin to get privileges for his bank.

Bank officials declined to respond to the allegations.

Alfa Bank is one of Russia's leading privately owned banks.

It has reportedly been granted the right to manage \$1.5 billion on the Russian government's behalf as part of a proposed deal to build a nuclear power plant in China.

Pamyat — which means "memory" — emerged in the early 1980s as a far-right nationalist movement, registering itself at the time with the Justice Ministry as a national patriotic movement.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the group was known as one of the most active and rabidly anti-Semitic organizations in Russia, with branches all across the country.

The group has subsequently split up into several nationalist organizations.

The influence of the largest group, which retained the original name, has declined in recent years.

The group now claims 1,000 members.

One recent study of political extremism in Russia labeled Pamyat leader Vasilyev the "most well-known anti-Semite" in Russia. □

**Talks stall on compensation for Eastern Europe survivors***By Deidre Berger*

FRANKFURT (JTA) — Talks between German and Jewish officials for expanding compensation payments to Holocaust survivors appear to be deadlocked — just weeks before a final report is expected.

Two special commissions made up of German government officials and representatives of the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany failed in meetings last week to produce any recommendations.

Rabbi Andrew Baker, director of European relations for the American Jewish Committee and a member of one of the two fact-finding commissions, said he was disappointed by the latest discussions.

“After meetings in October, we felt the German government was not ruling out payments to forgotten survivors,” he said, adding, “This time, there was no discussion of any financial contribution” by Germany.

The lack of a compromise prompted Baker to question the German government’s commitment to making additional compensation available. He added that he hoped German officials would change their position at a final meeting planned for mid-December.

The compensation talks began in August with an agreement that the two commissions would make their recommendations to the German government by the end of the year.

One commission is dealing with Jewish calls that Germany pay Eastern European survivors reparations similar to those that were given to survivors living in Western countries.

Germany has paid more than \$54 billion in compensation to Holocaust survivors since World War II.

However, those living in Soviet-bloc countries were unable to apply for compensation during the Cold War, and Communist East Germany refused to make any payments. The Claims Conference and other Jewish groups are now demanding that these survivors be deemed eligible for compensation.

German officials have said Bonn is not prepared to make such payments because they could open the door to hundreds of thousands of compensation claims from non-Jewish victims of the Nazis in Eastern Europe.

The second commission was created to examine the criteria under which Holocaust survivors outside Eastern Europe are considered eligible to receive reparations.

About 27,000 survivors in Israel, the United States, Canada and other Western countries currently receive monthly reparations of about \$275. In order to receive payments today, an individual must have spent at least six months in a concentration camp or 18 months in a ghetto and have an annual income of less than \$14,000.

Meanwhile, the Israeli government has stepped up pressure on Bonn to expand the compensation payments.

During a recent visit to Germany, the speaker of the Knesset, Dan Tichon, said there has been no response by German officials to a recent letter signed by 92 legislators demanding action. □

**U.S. state insurance officials searching for survivors’ claims***By Daniel Kurtzman*

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Amid efforts to recover Jewish assets deposited in Swiss banks, pressure is mounting on European insurance companies to make good on unpaid policies from the Holocaust era.

The National Association of Insurance Commissioners has been holding a series of hearings across the

United States to seek out Holocaust survivors and the heirs of victims who have not received payouts from insurance policies held during World War II.

A special task force of the association has held hearings in Skokie, Ill., Miami and Los Angeles, and plans further hearings in Seattle, New York and Philadelphia.

Claimants are looking for assistance from state insurance commissioners, who have regulatory power over the American affiliates and subsidiaries of the targeted European insurance companies.

Earlier this year, a group of Holocaust victims and their families sued seven European insurance companies, alleging they withheld, concealed or converted the proceeds of policies sold before 1946.

The plaintiffs charged that “in many instances, proceeds from the insurance policies of the victims of Nazi persecution were used to finance and extend the war or otherwise enrich Nazi war criminals.”

The experiences of many of the claimants parallel those of depositors trying to collect on dormant Swiss bank accounts, but the sums at stake may be much larger.

Lawyers for the survivors estimate that the class-action lawsuit, now pending in New York federal court, could affect 10,000 claimants and involve billions of dollars in damages.

“We’re only at the beginning of the effort on insurance companies,” said Israel Miller, president of the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, which has been pressing the issue with the insurers.

“The fact that the state insurance commissioners are interested enough to have set up this working committee, and that they are holding these hearings to exert pressure upon the American affiliates of these companies, is of tremendous importance to us,” he said.

**Companies eager to avoid controversy**

The insurance companies, which include firms such as the Allianz AG Group of Germany and Assicurazioni Generali of Italy, have maintained that in many cases records were lost or destroyed during the war.

They have also said that benefits of policies confiscated by the Nazis were paid to Germany, and therefore nothing more is owed.

Eager to avoid the controversy that has enveloped Swiss banks, some of the companies have taken steps to address the issue.

Italy’s Generali is in the process of establishing a \$12 million philanthropic fund in Israel in memory of the company’s policy holders who perished in the Holocaust.

Allianz, meanwhile, has set up a help line and retained an American accounting firm to review its files — though it insists it did nothing wrong.

The moves, however, fall short of meeting the demands of the Claims Conference and of the World Jewish Restitution Organization, which have asked the insurance companies to:

- appoint a committee of “eminent persons,” modeled after a commission currently probing Swiss banks, to fully and objectively examine the companies’ archives and records;

- immediately pay dormant insurance policies; and
- create a humanitarian fund similar to the one set up by Swiss banks, that would benefit Holocaust survivors in general.

“We hope that we will be able to exert the same kind of moral pressure upon the insurance companies that has been exerted on the Swiss banks and Swiss government in terms of looted gold and dormant accounts,” Miller said. □

*(JTA correspondent Tom Tugend in Los Angeles contributed to this report.)*

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES**

**Attorneys invoke Jewish law in case of accused baby killer**

*By Marilyn Silverstein  
Jewish Exponent*

PHILADELPHIA (JTA) — Attorneys for a teenage murder suspect have invoked Jewish law in a bid to prevent her parents from testifying.

The action by the attorneys for Amy Grossberg raises questions about the standing of halachah vis-a-vis the statutes of a sovereign state.

Grossberg, 19, and her boyfriend, Brian Peterson Jr., also 19, are charged with first-degree murder in the killing of their newborn infant son in November 1996.

Police say the two murdered the baby and dumped his body in a trash bin behind a motel in Newark, Del. Grossberg was a freshman at the University of Delaware at the time.

In July, her parents, Alan and Sonye Grossberg of Wyckoff, N.J., were served with subpoenas ordering them to come before Delaware Attorney General Jane Brady to disclose their daughter's confidences about the case.

The action came on the heels of an ABC-TV news program, "20/20," in which Sonye Grossberg told interviewer Barbara Walters that her daughter had revealed to her why she had concealed her pregnancy.

"Why do you think Amy didn't tell you she was pregnant?" Walters asked.

"I know the answer to that," Sonye Grossberg replied, "but I'm not at liberty right now to give it."

**Enlisting ancient statutes**

Their attorneys are now trying to prevent the Grossbergs from having to give that answer — or any other testimony that might be used against their daughter in this capital case — to Delaware's attorney general.

They have enlisted the ancient halachic statutes of the Mishnah, the Code of Maimonides and the Shulchan Aruch in their effort to do so.

The Grossbergs' Nov. 21 motion to quash the attorney general's subpoenas states that they are members of the Conservative branch of Judaism and that the subpoenas would violate their right to the free exercise of religion as protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution.

Superior Court President Judge Henry duPont Ridgely will not rule on the motion until the prosecution has had the opportunity to file a counter motion.

The Grossbergs are reportedly members of Temple Beth Rishon in Wyckoff. Rabbi Kenneth Emert, religious leader of Beth Rishon, declined to comment on the case.

One of the Grossbergs' three attorneys, Jack Gruenstein of Philadelphia, said he was uncomfortable discussing anything about the case because of a gag order imposed on all parties by Ridgely.

To back up their attempt to quash the subpoenas, the defense attorneys have appended to their motion an affidavit from Rabbi Joel Roth, Finkelstein Professor of Talmud and Jewish Law at the Conservative movement's Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York.

"Under Jewish law, a mother and/or a father are not allowed to give testimony against their child in any legal proceeding," writes Roth, a member and former chair of the movement's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards.

Although Roth would offer no opinion on whether the secular court should take Jewish religious law into account in this case, several local rabbis did.

It is not appropriate to invoke Jewish law in the Grossberg case, said Rabbi Albert Gabbai, president of the Board of Rabbis of Greater Philadelphia and spiritual

leader of Congregation Mikveh Israel. "Personally, I think that we should always live by Jewish law," he said.

"Having said that, I don't know how this Jewish law is relevant there, because it is not a Jewish court where the testimony of a relative is not taken into account. It is an American court."

According to Gabbai, another Jewish law prevails: the talmudic precept "The law of the land is the law."

"If the law of the land says you must testify, there's no choice," he said.

Rabbi Morris Dembowitz, religious leader of Congregation Ner Zedek-Ezrath Israel-Beth Uziel, in Philadelphia, agreed.

"I think there is no reason to invoke Jewish law in a matter of this nature," he said. "You invoke religious law in matters of ritual. In matters of civil law and criminal law, the law of the land is the law."

Rabbi Gerald Wolpe said he sees the invocation of Jewish law in this case as a moral and understandable strategy by the Grossbergs' attorneys.

"I am not at all outraged that they've done this," said Wolpe, religious leader of Har Zion Temple in Penn Valley, Pa.

"I think it's a valid approach."

Jewish law has been invoked on many occasions in secular courts — specifically, in cases involving divorce, adoption and bioethical issues, said Wolpe, who heads the Finkelstein Institute at JTS, a center for Jewish bioethics.

"The whole question of whether American law can utilize Jewish law for purposes of adjudicating a case is not without precedent," he said.

Rabbi Ira Stone joined his colleagues in stressing the importance of abiding by the law of the land — "to the extent that it doesn't force us into an egregious collision with Jewish law and life," said Stone, religious leader of Temple Beth Zion-Beth Israel and a visiting instructor in Jewish philosophy at JTS.

"The question is: Is this a collision?"

Because this is a capital case, Stone said, the Grossbergs might argue that their testimony could contribute to the death of their daughter and that, therefore, Jewish law would permit them to violate American law.

But such an argument would raise the question of whether capital punishment is a form of murder, he said.

"These are very subtle philosophical and legal issues," Stone said. "I'm concerned that they be fully thought out." □

**Palestinians employ Jewish judge**

SYDNEY, Australia (JTA) — An Australian Jew will help the Palestinians rearrange their legal system.

The unusual pairing was created after an Australian legal group, which is headed by a prominent Jewish figure, Justice Marcus Einfeld, was appointed last week by the Palestinian Authority to overhaul its judicial system.

Australian International Legal Resources Inc., which was established four years ago, has had links with the Palestinian Authority since Einfeld visited the Middle East in 1995.

Einfeld said last week that Australians are regarded as "honest brokers" and "just people who want to help."

Einfeld told the daily newspaper The Australian that in addition to the Palestinians, "The Israelis and the U.S. negotiating team have told us that the Palestinian legal project is a most important contribution to the Middle East peace process."

The group has already helped draft guidelines for the operations of the Palestinian legislative council.

It has also helped Israeli and Palestinian police create a forensic laboratory. □