



# Daily News Bulletin

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86th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Mideast summit confirmed

President Bush is slated to meet with the Israeli and Palestinian Authority prime ministers on June 4.

White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said Bush will meet with Arab leaders in Egypt on June 3, and then head to Aqaba, Jordan, to meet with Ariel Sharon and Mahmoud Abbas.

### Bush to visit Auschwitz

President Bush will visit the former Auschwitz concentration camp during his upcoming trip to Europe.

"This visit is to honor the memory of the innocents lost in the terror of the Third Reich and the Holocaust, and to serve to remind all of us of the dangers of evil unchecked," Bush's national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, said Wednesday.

The president and first lady will visit the camp Friday on the first leg of a trip that will take him to Russia, France and the Middle East.

### Rabbis: Press Palestinians

President Bush should put the onus on the Palestinians as he presses forward with the "road map" peace plan, 375 rabbis say.

In a petition to be released Thursday, the Reform, Conservative and Orthodox rabbis urge President Bush to adhere to his speech of June 24, 2002, which is seen as more pro-Israel than the road map that was to implement it.

Specifically, the petition calls on Bush to urge the Palestinians to renounce the demand for a "right of return" for refugees who fled during Israel's 1948 War of Independence, to dismantle terrorist groups and to end anti-Semitic incitement.

### Synagogues may get cash

Historic synagogues in the United States are now eligible for federal funding.

Churches and religious places designated as historic sites are now eligible for such funding after the change in policy was announced by Interior Secretary Gale Norton on Tuesday in Boston. The change is seen as another step in President Bush's plan to allow government funding of religious organizations.

The Orthodox Union praised the decision, but the American Jewish Congress criticized it as breaching the constitutional separation between church and state.

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

### Falash Mura activists demand that Israel follow through on aliyah

By Loolwa Khazzoom

JERUSALEM (JTA) — "Every day I go to the Ministry of the Interior," says Binkito Baquaia, grasping pictures of her family.

"I have been separated from my mother, father, brother and sisters for six years. I keep trying to find out what is happening with them, when Israel will bring them," she continues. "The Ministry of the Interior staff repeatedly brush me off. They refuse to answer me.

"My mother and father are sick, but I can't help them," she says, her voice filled with pain. "I don't have money and I have two children. I send whatever I can, but it is not enough."

Baquaia is among thousands of Ethiopian immigrants demonstrating against the Interior Ministry this week, demanding that the immigration of the Falash Mura — the majority of whose ancestors converted to Christianity under social and economic pressure — be expedited.

Some 2,000 protesters marched through Jerusalem on Sunday, congregating in front of the Interior Ministry for a six-hour demonstration.

The demonstrators also threatened a hunger strike if their demands are not met.

"We are demanding the implementation of the government's Feb. 16 decision" to expedite the immigration of the Falash Mura, said Avraham Neguise, director of South Wing to Zion: The Association for the Ingathering and Absorption of Ethiopian Jews in Israel, which is organizing the weeklong protest.

The activists also are calling on Diaspora Jews to provide assistance for the Falash Mura waiting to move to Israel.

When Israel began carrying out large-scale immigration operations of Ethiopian Jews in the early 1990s, many Falash Mura attempted to join the wave, claiming they were Jewish by ancestry.

The number of Falash Mura continued to grow, leading the Israeli government to believe they were not Jews, but just people who wanted to leave Ethiopia.

Ethiopian Jewish activists have been lobbying for the Falash Mura, maintaining that many of them were forced to convert or never really abandoned their Jewish faith, and that now they are practicing Judaism.

In 1998, after bringing a group of 4,000 Falash Mura, most of whom had relatives in Israel, the government changed its policy, reviewing each Ethiopian immigration request on an individual basis. In 1999, government surveyors registered 26,000 people in camps run by international activists in Addis Ababa and Gondar. A few thousand have immigrated every year since then, but some have been waiting for up to 10 years to join family members in Israel.

The Feb. 16 decision ordered the government to immediately examine the eligibility of an estimated 18,000 waiting to immigrate and bring anyone descended from an Ethiopian Jew on the mother's side. But Neguise claimed that Interior Minister Avraham Poraz reversed the Feb. 16 decision last week, arguing that Israel does not have enough money to bring the Falash Mura.

The "economic difficulties of the state cannot be ignored," Poraz told the Knesset committee on May 19, according to the Jerusalem Post. "Every time the camps are emptied they become refilled. This is a never-ending story."

In addition, he noted, those brought to Israel might later try to bring over additional

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Israel boycotts Belgian court

Israel plans to boycott all future proceedings of a lawsuit filed in Belgium against a senior government official for alleged war crimes.

A Belgian court is set to rule next month in a lawsuit filed against Gen. Amos Yaron for alleged war crimes in a 1982 massacre by Lebanese militiamen of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps during the Lebanon War.

### Report slams Israel, Palestinians

Both Israel and the Palestinians are committing war crimes, according to Amnesty International.

The group's annual report cited what it termed Israel's unlawful killings, obstruction of medical assistance and targeting of medical personnel, extensive and wanton destruction of property, torture and cruel and inhuman treatment, unlawful confinement and the use of human shields.

The group also cited armed Palestinian groups for deliberate targeting of civilians and the Palestinian Authority for arresting scores of people for political reasons, even executing some of them.

### Israel celebrates Jerusalem

Thousands of people were expected to gather in Jerusalem for celebrations marking the 36th anniversary of the capital's reunification. Jerusalem's population currently stands at 680,000, making it the country's largest city, according to the Central Bureau of Statistics.

### Change would narrow citizenship

Top Israeli officials are backing an amendment that would prevent children with one Jewish parent and one Palestinian parent from receiving automatic citizenship. Leftist politicians and human rights organizations criticized the recommended amendment to Israel's Citizenship Law.



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relatives still in Ethiopia. In the week since Poraz spoke, Neguise said, 26 Falash Mura youth have died in Addis Ababa and Gondar of sickness and hunger.

"We never said that we are going to bring them immediately," said the ministry's spokesman, Tipi Rabinovitch. "The decision still stands that Israel is interested in bringing the Falash Mura, and that we need to establish a board, to check whether it's economically feasible to bring them."

Joseph Feit, past president of the North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry, questions that approach. Never before has Israel turned its back on immigrants because of financial concerns, Feit says.

"It was in much worse economic shape in the 1950s, but it brought in hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees," he said.

Demonstrators argued that money is an excuse for postponing the resolution of a decade-long humanitarian crisis.

Mikoyet Zagiyeh, an Israeli soldier whose father is stuck in Ethiopia, noted that Israel sends government representatives to actively scout out immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

"I serve with Russians who have no connection to Judaism whatsoever," he said, "but they were brought to Israel and they have all these rights."

Asked if the ministry considers economic factors when deciding to bring immigrants from Russia or Argentina, Rabinovitch hedged.

"Money is always somewhere in the picture," he said.

"We're talking about over 10 million shekels" — almost \$2.5 million — "for every 10,000 immigrant Falash Mura," said Arik Puder, spokesman for the Immigration and Absorption Ministry.

"Falash Mura immigrants come from another kind of culture, another kind of country and society," he said. "We need to give a lot of special programs in order to absorb them into Israeli society. They are much further away from the standards of living here than are Russian immigrants."

Demonstrators said they believe the current crisis is rooted in a much deeper problem — how Israelis view and treat Ethiopians.

"They look at us with closed eyes," said Alamu Mondevro, who is frustrated by the assumption that the cultural, spiritual and intellectual exchange among Ethiopian immigrants and veteran Israelis is a one-way street.

"We want to teach Israelis, but they don't even want to approach us, to be around us," he said.

Israeli ignorance of Ethiopian Jewish life has contributed to numerous misunderstandings regarding the Falash Mura, said Adam Baruch, Ethiopian community organizer for HILA, the Israel Association for Equality in Education.

"Christian missionary activities in Ethiopia were very, very strong," he said. "They knew how to pick on weak people. They gave money to those in need, then brainwashed them. Missionary activities were a form of war against all the Ethiopian Jews."

During times of famine and drought, Neguise said, Jews had to leave their villages in search of better land. Often they would settle in areas with an aggressive Christian population.

"If they didn't renounce Judaism they could not settle in that area," a fate often tantamount to death, he said.

Demonstrators say the Falash Mura took on Christian identities but secretly remained Jews, marrying only their own kind. In this way, Neguise said, they can be compared to the conversos of Spain.

Asked about some of the Falash Mura who continue to practice Christianity even after coming to Israel, Baruch said, "Ethiopians are feeling very alienated. They feel rejected from Israeli society."

There is a strong Christian missionary movement in Israel that sees Ethiopians as easy prey, he said.

Still, Baruch agrees that the current group is not the last.

"Other Jews will come. Nobody here can know how many Jews are in Ethiopia, how many Falash Mura," he said.

None of the demonstrators thinks that's enough reason for Israel to turn its back on the Falash Mura. □

(JTA staff writer Rachel Pomerance in New York contributed to this report.)

## JEWISH WORLD

### Jews rally against Syria

Leaders of the Washington Jewish community were denied entry to the Syrian Embassy, where they had hoped to deliver a letter denouncing Syrian support for terrorism.

Dozens of people stood outside the embassy Wednesday, calling for an end to Syria's support of terrorist organizations that target Israelis. Leaders of the American Jewish Committee and the Jewish Community Council of Greater Washington have written Syria's ambassador to the United States, Rostom Al Zoubi, seeking the arrest of terrorists and a pledge to renew peace negotiations with Israel.

### Austrians file symbolic claims

Austrian Jews filed symbolic restitution claims aimed at pressuring the government to help the community with its financial problems.

Austrian Jewish leader Ariel Muzicant filed 777 claims on Wednesday, the deadline for filing claims for money from a 2001 fund established to compensate people for property looted by the Nazis.

Muzicant has warned that without compensation for stolen property and without government financial help, the community might go bankrupt and Austria's few remaining Jews be forced to emigrate.

### Chandra Levy laid to rest

A private Jewish burial was held Wednesday in California for slain intern Chandra Levy. Between 75 and 100 people attended the service, which was held just days after Washington police turned over Levy's remains to her family.

The case of Levy, who disappeared in April 2001 in Washington at the age of 24, received widespread media attention because of speculation that she was having an affair with then-Rep. Gary Condit (D-Calif.). Condit has denied the affair. Her body was found in a Washington park in May 2002.

### JCC confab opens in Paris

A JCC conference opened on Wednesday in Paris with some 150 delegates from across the Jewish world.

"New Models of Jewish Community Centers in the 21st Century: Addressing Changing Needs" is sponsored by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the World Jewish Congress.

### Jews, Orthodox Christians meet

Jews and Orthodox Christians may form a commission to improve interfaith dialogue and discuss Jewish concerns in Eastern Europe, Rabbi Israel Singer, president of the World Jewish Congress, told The Associated Press. The commission could be formed this week during a conference in Greece between Jewish leaders and Orthodox Christian leaders.

## AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

### Canadian philanthropist wants new museum with Holocaust gallery

By Bill Gladstone

TORONTO (JTA) — A proposed human rights museum in Canada could tell the stories of both the Holocaust and of Palestinian refugees, the man behind it says.

After years of wrangling, a leading Canadian Jewish philanthropist has unveiled an ambitious plan to build a major national human rights museum in Winnipeg containing a gallery dedicated to the Holocaust.

Modeled in part on the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington and the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, the Winnipeg museum is slated to feature a 21-story Tower of Hope and multiple exhibits focusing on the theme of racial, religious and sexual intolerance.

Five years ago, the Canadian government shelved plans to build a Holocaust wing in the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa after Canadians for a Genocide Museum, along with veterans groups, voiced strong opposition to it.

But media mogul Israel "Izzy" Asper, founder of CanWest Global Communications and president of the Asper Foundation, which is spearheading the multimillion-dollar project, has made public assurances that the museum will be inclusive and historically balanced. Asper is identified with many Jewish causes and owns newspapers that take a strongly pro-Israel editorial stance.

"This museum will be totally apolitical and antiseptic in terms of trying to preach a message of one kind of inhumanity over another," Asper explained at a Winnipeg news conference.

Asked whether Palestinian organizations would have an opportunity to submit material for exhibition, Asper replied that every group would have a chance to do so.

"Let's say the Palestinians want to make a case and their case is the refugees," he said. "Well, then you'd say, 'That's fine, there were 650,000 Palestinian refugees from the war of 1948 and there were 850,000 Jewish expulsions from Morocco, Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, etc.' So we'd tell both stories."

Preliminary plans for a Holocaust gallery — which would take up 1,200 square meters out of a total of 5,600 square meters of exhibition space — have generated sharp complaints from Canadians for a Genocide Museum, a coalition of some two dozen ethnic associations representing Canadians of Arab, Palestinian, Greek, Armenian, Rwandan and other backgrounds. The coalition rejects one of the museum's fundamental premises: that the Holocaust is a unique example of genocide in history and stands as a template or organizing metaphor through which all other genocides may be viewed.

Moe Levy, the Asper Foundation's executive director, denied that the foundation will play favorites.

The proposed Canadian Museum for Human Rights will be "a signature building, an artistic icon of Winnipeg to Canada, but also of Canada to the world," Asper said.

Frank Gehry, Moshe Safdie and Daniel Libeskind are among 40 top architects who have been invited to submit designs for the museum, which foundation officials hope will become an architectural spectacle on a par with the Sydney Opera House or the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain.

Construction of the \$200 million project, the largest in Winnipeg's history, could begin as early as next spring. Located along the city's riverfront, the museum is expected to open in 2007 and draw an estimated 300,000 visitors annually.

The museum will frame the subject of human rights and tolerance in a Canadian context and offer a national narrative complete with warts and beauty marks, foundation officials say.

The museum will be the first Canadian example "of what we're calling an idea museum," Levy said. "It's a museum based not on artifacts but on ideas and history and education."

Asper has pledged to raise at least \$60 million from private sources and indicated that his foundation, which has given out more than \$100 million in recent years, will cover any shortfall. □

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

**In Auschwitz, Jews and Arabs remember pain, call for healing**

By Gil Sedan

OSWIECIM, Poland (JTA) — A Hollywood director could not have staged a more dramatic scene: In the middle of a forest, on the ruins of a former gas chamber at the heart of the Birkenau death camp, an Israeli rabbi from a West Bank settlement stood and said Kaddish, surrounded by a group of Arabs and Jews.

Birds sang along with the mourning prayer but the group listened in total silence, noting that Rabbi Avi Gisser had changed the Kaddish's traditional ending.

Instead of the usual "He will make peace upon us and upon all of Israel," Gisser said, "and upon all the peoples of the world."

It was a gesture of gratitude to the 120 Israeli Arabs who initiated this unusual visit to the death camps, an unprecedented act of Arab solidarity with the greatest tragedy of the Jewish people.

When Gisser concluded the prayer, no one said a word. People stood in silence for two or three minutes, Jews and Arabs, some weeping, some lost in thought.

One woman moved away from the group, hugging the trunk of a tree for support and bursting into tears.

Nearly 60 years after the Holocaust, the prayer in memory of the 1.5 million Jews murdered here, and the support of this unusual group of Israeli Arabs, was just too hard for the woman to take.

Gisser is the rabbi of Ofra, a Jewish settlement in the eye of the Palestinian intifada. When he goes to Jerusalem, a 20-minute drive away, he must reckon with the possibility of a terrorist attack.

The Palestinians are his enemy, and he is theirs. Yet he decided to go on this visit to Auschwitz precisely because Arabs — Israeli Palestinians, as many now call themselves — initiated it.

"I am sensitive to Palestinian pain regardless of the political dispute with them," Gisser says. "I came because they showed sensitivity to Jewish pain."

More than anything else, the visit of some 450 Arabs and Jews to Auschwitz and Birkenau was an act of courage: It takes courage for an Israeli Arab or a French Muslim to identify with the Jews' plight when it is so much easier these days simply to hate.

And yet they came — 120 Arabs and 130 Jews from Israel, as well as a delegation of 200 Jews and Muslims from France.

The visit was the initiative of a group of Israeli Arabs headed by Archimandrite Emile Shoufani, pastor of the Greek Catholic community in Nazareth, one of the foremost leaders of the Christian community in Israel.

After the October 2000 riots among Israeli Arabs, as relations between Jews and Arabs in Israel deteriorated, and after endless discussions with Jewish friends, Shoufani declared: "I understand that we did not understand."

Several months ago, Shoufani's group called a press conference in Jerusalem announcing its plan to visit the death camps in order to better understand the Jews' pain.

A group of some 150 Jewish public figures was organized to endorse the project, including Dan Patir of the Abraham Foundation, Eliezer Ya'ari of the New Israel Fund and Yeshayahu Tadmor of Jezreel Valley College. A similar group was organized in France.

On Monday, Shoufani stood on the podium at the Temple synagogue in Krakow, an hour's drive from Auschwitz, and pledged: "We are here to be with the Jewish people and its

suffering, and tell them, we are with you."

Shoufani was aware of the fire his initiative had drawn from the Arab community in Israel. In recent weeks, key Arab figures had charged that the initiative was serving Zionist propaganda.

"The Zionist enterprise uses" the Holocaust "to justify Israel's crimes today," journalist Amir Makhoul wrote.

In his address, however, Shoufani took precisely the opposite tack: He used the Holocaust to point out that pain is pain, whether suffered by Palestinians, Jews or people of any nationality.

It was a courageous act, the first time since the October 2000 riots that an organized group of Arab public figures openly raised the flag of reconciliation with the Jews.

On Tuesday they all visited Birkenau and Auschwitz, the camps where much of European Jewry was killed in the Holocaust.

The first stop was the Judenramp, the place where the trains came until May 1944, unloading thousands of Jews to face the fatal selection: Some 15 percent of them would gain additional time working in Auschwitz, but the majority would take the long walk to the nearby death camp of Birkenau.

Ida Grinspan from Paris is one of the survivors. She stood at the very ramp where she arrived 60 years ago as a 14-year-old girl on a transport from France, separated by force from her parents. She stood, remembering quietly.

Next to her stood Majid Zerouali, 23, a Muslim of Moroccan origin now living in Toulouse, France. Zerouali was one of a number of Muslim boy scouts who decided to join the visit.

"It is not just a Jewish tragedy, it is a human tragedy," he said.

The group then moved to the death camps, walking from one gas chamber to another and visiting the crematoriums and the Auschwitz Museum. There they saw the hair shaven off women, the collection of suitcases still carrying the names of their owners, the glasses, the ashes.

All that time they were saying that they could not believe what they saw. Some Arabs could not proceed. They stopped during the visit and stayed behind.

"At one point I said, 'Why did I come here, why did I not stay at home in Nazareth?'" said Tawfik, a bank manager. "I am telling you, I read books, I saw movies, but until I came here and saw this, I did not have the faintest idea of what the Shoah was like."

"We leave here not the same people that came here," said Jallal abu-Tuameh, former mayor of Baka al-Gharbiya.

Nazir Majali, one of the organizers of the group, said they were determined to enlarge the circle and call on the rest of the Arab and Muslim world to join this act of reconciliation.

The visit ended with a brief ceremony at the Death Wall in Auschwitz. After reading three chapters from Psalms, an Arab and a Jewish woman laid wreaths and the group sang a song written by Hanna Szenes. The young Jewish paratrooper, who was sent to Hungary by the British Army during the war, was caught by the Germans and executed.

"God," goes the song, "let it not end for ever, the light, the song of the waves, and the prayer of man."

Nuha Ka'awar, a poet from Nazareth, could not sing along because her Hebrew was not good enough. But in her pocket she carried a folded sheet with a poem in Hebrew.

She had written it just a few minutes earlier, on the bus from Krakow to Auschwitz: "On the banks of the Wisla river, my bones were left. On the banks of the Dead Sea I left my sisters . . . I was left alone without mother and my two brothers, and I asked about my father: Has he left without me?" □