

IN THE NEWS

Jews march for women's rights

Thousands of Jews rallied in Washington as part of the March for Women's Rights.

Jews, predominantly women, rode buses all night from across the Northeast and Midwest to attend Sunday's rally, which focused on abortion rights. [Story, Pg. 3]

Eight Palestinians killed in West Bank

Israeli forces killed eight Palestinians in counterterrorist operations in the West Bank.

Israel said all eight fatalities were terrorists, but Palestinian witnesses claimed four of the men killed in clashes outside Kalkilya and Jenin over the weekend were bystanders.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon told his Cabinet on Sunday that the operations helped prevent terrorist attacks ahead of this week's Independence Day celebrations.

Rutgers newspaper mocks the Holocaust

The president of Rutgers University is calling on editors of an alternative campus newspaper to apologize for a cartoon that mocked the Holocaust.

The cover of the *Medium*, a student-funded weekly, depicted a man throwing a ball at a man sitting on top of an oven. The caption reads, "Knock a Jew in the oven! Three throws for one dollar! Really! No, REALLY!"

Ned Berke, the paper's editor, who is Jewish and said he had relatives who died in the Holocaust, said he found the cartoon "clever."

Richard McCormick, the university president, called the cartoon "outrageous in its cruelty," according to *The Associated Press*.

The American Jewish Committee said an apology would not be enough, and called for McCormick to take further steps. "There must be zero-tolerance for finding humor in the Nazi genocidal murder of 6 million Jews," it said.

WORLD REPORT

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More aliyah from North America? It's no joke at the Jewish Agency

By DINA KRAFT

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Sallai Meridor, chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel, is on a mission to get large numbers of North American Jews to immigrate to Israel.

He dismisses any suggestion that his plan is unrealistic with a shrug and a wave of his hand.

"I think Israel is a great place," he says. "Many American Jews see Israel as a great place."

He cites the jump in aliyah figures from North America in the last three years. In 2001, some 1,500 North Americans immigrated to the Jewish state, and in 2003 the number climbed to 2,400.

"We want to help keep the momentum," Meridor said during a recent interview with JTA at his Tel Aviv office.

The tensions of life in the shadow of the Palestinian intifada and the grim economic situation that Israel has faced in recent years should not deter people from leaving comfortable homes and communities in the Diaspora, Meridor said.

"After over 2,000 years of exile, the Jewish people want to come back to Israel," he said.

The Jewish Agency is backing its initiative with new money, agency officials say. Its current \$325 million budget includes more than \$1 million to promote aliyah in North America. The total budget for aliyah in the region is some \$5 million.

But North American Jews are far from a sure bet for aliyah.

"Our experience shows that aliyah from North America has always been quite low,"

said Uzi Rebhun, who researches Jewish demographics and North American and Israeli Jewry at the Hebrew University's Institute for Contemporary Jewry in Jerusalem.

Since the founding of Israel in 1948, about 115,000 Jews have made aliyah from North America.

As long as North America remains a place where Jews thrive, Rebhun said, there never will be aliyah in great numbers from there.

However, Rebhun suggests, there are pockets within North American Jewish society that would be especially amenable to aliyah — such as families seeking affordable Jewish education for their children, former Israelis and immigrants to North America from the former Soviet Union.

Jews from the former Soviet Union are among the groups the Jewish Agency is targeting for aliyah from North America, Meridor said.

For Jews raised in a Soviet society that classified Jews as a national group, "Israel is the most important element of what being Jewish means for them," he said.

For now, the Jewish Agency is focusing on youth from the former Soviet Union in North America. Some are being brought to Israel for university study; others are coming on volunteer programs.

The Jewish Agency is hoping their strong ties to Israel via close family members who already live in the Jewish state will be a pull to get them to immigrate.

Meridor acknowledges that the task of getting North American Jews to move to Israel is "a great challenge," but he says such immigrants are critical for strengthening

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**FOCUS
ON
ISSUES**

■ *More aliyah from North America? It's no joke at the Jewish Agency*

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Israel. Meridor says that North American immigrants are of special value to the Jewish state because of their democratic values and economic know-how.

Aliyah from North America would also help boost Israel's fortunes in the demographic battle in the Jewish state. With Arab birthrates rising and Israel's final borders still open to question, Israeli leaders are keen on bolstering Israel's Jewish population.

Not long ago, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon announced that he wants to see 1 million more Jews immigrate to Israel.

For its part, the North American Jewish federation system is backing the Jewish Agency's plan.

"We continue to believe that the option of aliyah should be presented to all Jews, regardless of where they live," Stephen Hoffman, CEO of the United Jewish Communities federation umbrella group, told JTA.

"The system has always been supportive, and in many communities you have special assistance made available to olim."

North American aliyah constitutes only a small proportion of total immigration to Israel.

But other sources of olim are drying up. The mass wave of immigration of Jews from the former Soviet Union, which brought some 1 million immigrants to Israel during the 1990s, has slowed to a trickle. Some have even returned to their birthplaces.

And some Jewish immigrants from Argentina, who began immigrating to Israel in large numbers when Argentina's economy went into a tailspin, have returned to Argentina now that the country's economy has stabilized.

Historically, immigration to Israel has been marked less by ideology than by pragmatism: The Jews who came to Israel were fleeing unwelcome conditions in their home countries, either because of anti-Semitism, a weak economy or war.

Convincing North American Jews to leave their comfortable surroundings on the western side of the Atlantic always has been a largely unsuccessful endeavor.

Skeptics of the Jewish Agency's plan — among them Israelis who have worked in North America as emissaries of the Jewish state, or shlichim — say a targeted campaign only will turn off North American Jewry. They say American and Canadian Jews do not want to have aliyah marketed to them like a product.

Instead, they argue, the concept of immigration to Israel must be introduced to the North American Jewish psyche through a long-term process of Jewish and Zionist education.

The Jewish Agency has heeded that call.

The Jewish Agency recently launched an "Israel Connection" alumni club for North Americans returning from Israel trips to keep the experience fresh in their minds.

The agency also is trying to cultivate an ideological aliyah movement through small groups around the United States.

In addition, the agency is awaiting the Israeli government's passage of a funding package that will provide tens of millions of dollars for Zionist education in the Diaspora.

The money would go toward programs in Israel for Diaspora youth that last between five months and a year, said Michael Landsberg, executive director of the Jewish Agency's North American aliyah movement.

If approved, the program would begin this year with \$10 million, and \$10 million more would be added each year until fund-

ing for the program levels off at an annual \$50 million.

Officials from the Jewish Agency also tout as a major coup the support of the Orthodox, Conservative and Reform movements in America in encouraging aliyah.

Michael Jankelowitz, a Jewish Agency spokesman, said that support was a "major breakthrough," and he cited the movements' participation in an ad campaign in Jewish newspapers over Passover proclaiming "This Year in Jerusalem."

Their support is part of the Jewish Agency's overall strategy for

North American aliyah: to create a North American community friendly to the idea of aliyah — something the community historically has not been active in pushing for its own members.

"For a person to make aliyah, you need to have a supportive environment," Meridor said.

Plans are also under way to increase help for North American immigrants once they land in Israel by creating stronger support systems between veterans and newcomers from North America.

Recent government cutbacks in social spending have reduced the budget for absorbing immigrants from Western countries, but Meridor is hoping the government will restore previous allocations and add to existing ones once Israel's economy improves.

Meridor also acknowledges that new tax laws that make immigrants' assets abroad subject to Israeli taxes have become a sore point among immigrants.

Eyal Berkowitz, 28, is among the more recent of North American immigrants, having made aliyah from Toronto in January.

The security and economic situation in Israel are a concern, he said, but Israel is a place where he can feel at home.

Berkowitz worked as a management consultant in Canada and has an MBA, but he has had trouble finding work in Israel. Nevertheless, he remains upbeat.

"It's never an easy time to change countries," Berkowitz said.

(JTA Staff Writer Rachel Pomerance in New York contributed to this report.)

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THIS WEEK

MONDAY

- Israel celebrates its 56th Independence Day starting this evening. In New York, 45 Jewish and Israeli organizations will sponsor an event in New York commemorating Israel's memorial day for fallen soldiers and celebrating Independence Day.
- At the Jewish Museum in Berlin, Jewish students strategize against anti-Semitism on campus in advance of an OSCE conference later in the week on anti-Semitism.

TUESDAY

- Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) faces off against Rep. Pat Toomey in a Republican Party primary that has attracted national attention. The conservative Toomey has come within striking distance of unseating Specter, who is Jewish, by attacking him as too moderate.
- Non-governmental organizations meet in Berlin to discuss their approaches to anti-Semitism and xenophobia. The meeting is under the auspices of the American Jewish Committee office in Berlin and the Central Council of Jews in Germany.

WEDNESDAY

- U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell joins a U.S. delegation through Thursday at the Berlin conference on anti-Semitism under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Powell will also meet with representatives of the other members of the diplomatic "Quartet" shepherding the Israeli-Palestinian peace process — Russia, the European Union and the United Nations — to explain Israel's disengagement plan.

SATURDAY

- The former U.S. ambassador to Israel, Martin Indyk, speaks at World ORT's celebration in New York of its 125th anniversary, which runs through Monday. It's the first time in the group's history that its general assembly has been held in the U.S.

SUNDAY

- Jews of all denominations gather for an unprecedented summit on the aging of U.S. Jewry. "Aging and the 21st Century Synagogue: A Think Tank for Creating Positive Futures" will take place in Philadelphia, where the nearby Reconstructionist Rabbinical College recently launched Hiddur: the Center for Aging and Judaism, a think tank.
- The Anti-Defamation League holds its annual leadership conference in Washington through Tuesday. Attendees will receive briefings on the anti-Semitism conference in Berlin, Israel's planned pullout from the Gaza Strip and the fallout from the ADL's statements on Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ."

Jews join rally for abortion rights

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Barbara Goldman came halfway across the country for this week's reproductive rights rally — and she says it was worth it.

"You have to stand up and be counted," said Goldman, who came to Washington for Sunday's March for Women's Rights from Chicago with her congregation.

Goldman spoke at a Saturday night Havdalah service that the Women of Reform Judaism held on the eve of the abortion-rights rally, with the Jefferson Memorial bathed in candlelight.

Thousands of Jewish women joined hundreds of thousands of American women — and a smattering of men — rallying for abortion rights at the National Mall.

"As Jews, we know what it means to have fundamental rights and liberties stripped away," Marsha Atkind, president of the National Council of Jewish Women, told the overflow

crowd. "And today, one of our most basic rights, our right to reproductive freedom, is under attack in courtrooms and legislatures across the country."

Much has been made of Jewish support for the Bush administration's stance on Israel, the fight against terrorism and, in many cases, the war in Iraq. But for many American Jews, those positions do not counterbalance what they see as the administration's chipping away at civil liberties.

The political message from those Jews was clear this weekend. Some sported signs demonizing President Bush; others wore stickers for Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.), the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee. And all seemed to share a dislike for the policies of the Bush administration, which they see as having taken away some women's rights and other civil liberties.

"We've seen an erosion of civil rights and human rights in this country by an administration that is secretive and is afraid to hear dissent," said Sharlene Dane, who flew to Washington from Los Angeles for the rally.

Her sister, Sharon Hollander of St. Louis, said she remembered a time before abortion was legal, and she was deter-

mined to protect the right to abortion for her daughters.

"We don't want the rights to disappear and they're in danger," she said. "The government is now in the hands of people that would abolish rights we fought to maintain."

The march drew large contingents of Jewish women — and some men — young and old. Hadassah and the National Council of Jewish Women bused in delegations from around the Northeast and Midwest. Hadassah's representatives wore matching red T-shirts; the National Council of Jewish Women's delegation wore blue.

The Conservative and Reconstructionist movements were represented as well.

"It's so important that we do this under

Jewish auspices," said Roni Berkowitz, president of the Chesapeake Jewish Reconstructionist Federation, which represents the Washington area. "It's not just a matter of choice. The Talmud teaches us there are times that it is in-

cumbent on women to have an abortion," she said, referring to instances where abortion is allowed if the mother's life is in jeopardy.

Many of the groups assembled spoke out against last year's passage of the Partial Birth Abortion Ban, which outlawed an abortion procedure technically known as intact dilation and evacuation, which generally is carried out late in a pregnancy.

Some Jews also criticized Bush's signing of the Unborn Victims of Violence Act earlier this month. That legislation made attacks against pregnant women that harm embryos a separate crime.

Orthodox Jews generally differ from the other streams when it comes to abortion, and Orthodox Jewish representatives in Washington have expressed support for both acts.

But polls have shown that more Jews support abortion rights and *Roe v. Wade* than any other religious or ethnic community in the United States, according to the Union for Reform Judaism.

"We're being shouted out by the religious right," said Sandi Costello, who joined a Hadassah delegation from Albany, N.Y. "It's important for people to know that people who have a firm foundation in religion and ethics value choice." ■

A mother said she wanted to protect the right to abortion for her daughters.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Arafat not in sights . . . for now

Israeli Cabinet minister Ehud Olmert said there was no imminent plan to kill Yasser Arafat.

"Prime Minister Ariel Sharon does not intend to carry something out this week, or today or tomorrow," Olmert told Israeli Army Radio on Sunday.

The comments came after Sharon told Israeli television last Friday that he no longer is bound by a pledge to the United States not to harm the Palestinian Authority president. Israeli political commentators said Sharon's comments constituted an effort to rally Likud support ahead of a May 2 party referendum on the prime minister's plan to withdraw from Gaza and parts of the West Bank.

Meanwhile, the Bush administration has told Sharon that it believes his commitment not to harm Arafat still stands.

Israeli killed in West Bank

An Israeli was killed and two were wounded in a shooting attack near the West Bank city of Hebron.

Sunday night's shooting at the passengers in an Israeli car occurred as Israel opened commemoration of the country's memorial day for fallen soldiers.

Peres backs Arafat ouster to Gaza

Israel's Shimon Peres said he would back expelling Yasser Arafat to Gaza.

"We have to handle this matter with intelligence, and not just force," the Labor Party leader told Israel Radio on Sunday, referring to declarations by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon that Israel's pledge to the United States not to hurt the Palestinian leader is no longer binding.

Terrorist cell disrupted

Israeli police arrested three Palestinians believed to be part of a terrorist cell that killed one man and injured another.

The men arrested last Friday have admitted to the March 19 murder of George Elias Khoury, a 20-year-old student at Hebrew University killed while jogging in Jerusalem, and the shooting of Nir Gil, 20, on April 19, Israeli officials said.

Media ban lifted

Israel's High Court of Justice overturned an Israeli government ban on granting press credentials to Palestinian journalists.

The High Court on Sunday found in favor of a petition brought by Reuters and Al-Jazeera against the Government Press Office's refusal to renew the journalistic credentials of Palestinian employees, a policy that had limited their work to the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Justice Dalia Dorner said the ban was unlawful as it was applied regardless of whether the Palestinian in question was a legitimate threat to Israel's security.

NORTH AMERICA

Powell to talk to Brahimi

Colin Powell will discuss a claim that Israel is "poisoning" the transition in Iraq when he meets with the man that made it.

The top U.N. envoy to Iraq, Lakhdar Brahimi, told French radio last week that Israel's policies vis-a-vis the Palestinians are "poisoning" his attempts to transfer rule from the U.S.-led occupation in Iraq to an Iraqi civilian authority. The U.S. secretary of state said he would raise the matter with Brahimi within the next few days.

"It's his personal opinion and I look forward to exploring his personal opinion and talking to him directly," Powell said Saturday.

Bush declares Jewish Heritage Week

President Bush proclaimed this week Jewish Heritage Week to mark 350 years of Jewish life in America.

"I call upon all Americans to observe this week with appropriate programs and activities that highlight and honor the contributions Jewish Americans have made to our nation," the presidential proclamation issued Saturday night said. "This year marks the 350th anniversary of the first permanent Jewish settlement in North America, in what is known today as New York," Bush said. "As scientists, physicians, social workers, educators, artists, businessmen, and in many other professions, Jewish citizens have contributed to the strength of our country."

Bush singled out Jewish servicemen and women for recognition.

Estee Lauder dies

Estee Lauder, the cosmetics magnate and mother of Jewish official Ronald Lauder, died Saturday. She was believed to be 95, although she was reticent about giving her date of birth. Lauder founded her company in 1946.

In 2000, the firm's 18 core brands brought in \$4.4 billion in sales, Bloomberg News reported. The daughter of Hungarian Jewish immigrants, Lauder grew up in Queens.

Her uncle was a chemist who made face cream, and she learned to make the creams on a kitchen stove.

WORLD

Anti-Semitism up, down in Germany

Anti-Semitic incidents dropped dramatically in Germany last year, but violent attacks are up.

According to a report Saturday in the Tagesspiegel newspaper, government sources said there were 1,300 reported anti-Semitic crimes in 2003, down 20 percent from the previous year.

But the number of violent attacks against Jews rose from 28 to 35, including 12 incidents in Berlin. In 2001, there were 18 such crimes registered. The report said half the violent attacks in 2003 were by youths of non-German background.

Archbishop blamed Jews

The Nazi-era archbishop of Canterbury suggested Jews were responsible for their persecution by the Nazis, newly revealed documents show.

Cosmo Gordon Lang, who was head of the worldwide Anglican Church from 1928 to 1942, made the comment to American diplomat James McDonald shortly before World War II.

McDonald, who went on to become the first U.S. ambassador to Israel, encountered a similar attitude from leading British Conservative lawmaker Nancy Astor. His diary, which was presented to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum on April 22, quotes her asking him, "Did I not after all believe that there must be something in the Jews themselves which had brought them persecution throughout all ages?"

British scandal hits court

A leading Orthodox rabbinic judge is in London's High Court, accused of slandering a Jewish millionaire.

The judge claimed London businessman Brian Maccaba preyed on young married women in the Orthodox community. Maccaba is suing Dayan Ya'akov Lichtenstein of the fervently Orthodox Federation of Synagogues for slander, harassment and breach of confidence.

Maccaba, a convert from Catholicism, claims Lichtenstein told fellow rabbis and other high-profile Sephardi community members that the entrepreneur was a serial adulterer and had sexually harassed a young married woman in the community.