

## IN THE NEWS

**Protesters march  
against Sharon plan**

Tens of thousands of Israelis rallied in opposition to Ariel Sharon's withdrawal plan.

Settler leaders at Sunday night's rally in Jerusalem repeatedly denounced any use of violence, but also urged the prime minister to call for new elections.

The rally came amid increasing concern of a civil war when Israeli security forces evacuate settlers as part of Sharon's plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank next year.

**Senate adds  
non-profit security aid**

The Senate has added \$50 million for the security of Jewish sites and other non-profit institutions to its homeland security spending bill.

The Senate last Friday passed an amendment to the 2005 spending bill providing for grants to secure high-risk non-profit institutions, a move pushed by several Jewish groups including the United Jewish Communities, Orthodox Union and American Jewish Congress.

Several other Jewish groups, including the Reform and Reconstructionist movements, opposed the bill out of fear that it would breach the constitutional separation of church and state.

The homeland security bill is expected to pass the Senate next week, though it's unclear if the non-profit aid will remain in the final version.

The House passed a similar clause in a different spending bill this year.

**Synagogue opens in  
Russia's 'Jewish region'**

A new synagogue opened in an area designated by Stalin as a Jewish homeland.

Last Friday, a two-story Moorish-style synagogue opened in Birobidzhan.

The opening of the synagogue was timed to coincide with the opening of synagogues in two other major cities in the Russian Far East.



# WORLD REPORT

PUBLISHED WEEKDAYS BY JTA—THE GLOBAL NEWS SERVICE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE · WWW.JTA.ORG

## Approval, concern in France after Jewish and Muslim officials meet

By PHILIP CARMEL

**P**ARIS (JTA) — It's not every day that a radical Islamic organization whose spiritual mentor backs suicide bombings meets with a leading Jewish group.

But in a highly publicized visit Sept. 9, the Union of French Islamic Organizations, the country's largest Islamic group, met with the CRIF umbrella organization of French Jews at CRIF's offices here.

The event was not a first because officials from both organizations met secretly last year in the offices of former Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy. CRIF's president, Roger Cukierman, and the Islamic group's general secretary, Fouad Alaoui, also recently engaged in a debate on national radio.

The radio debate was largely friendly, leading Cukierman to invite the union for further talks. That invitation, according to CRIF, was followed up by a formal letter, which, after lengthy internal debate within the union, was accepted this month.

The publicity given to the meeting and the pride taken by the union at the invitation have accentuated a growing perception that the movement is moving firmly into the political mainstream.

But several groups, Jewish and not, expressed concerns about the meeting, worrying publicly that CRIF was being used by the union, and that by taking part in the meeting, CRIF was offering the Muslim group unwarranted legitimacy.

As part of a delegation from France's Muslim Council, Alaoui recently returned from Iraq, where he had traveled to plead for

the release of two French hostages currently held by an Iraqi terror group demanding that France repeal its new law banning the Muslim veil in state schools.

That trip — and the sudden dilution of the union's fervent opposition to the legislation — have won the group plaudits from many who see it as finally accepting the basic tenets of France's secular republic.

Still, it is the meeting with CRIF that represents a new seal of approval for the union, as well as recognition that it is as major a player in France's 5 million-strong Muslim population than other, less-radical groups.

According to Bernard Kanovitch, who heads CRIF's Commission for Relations with Muslim Organizations, "it is CRIF's role to speak with anyone who can help to campaign against anti-Semitism."

On that score, the union has consistently condemned anti-Semitism, although following the meeting with CRIF, Alaoui once again criticized CRIF for blaming Muslims for anti-Semitism.

"I asked CRIF to not point the finger after each anti-Semitic act as if it's of Muslim origin," he told reporters. "French Muslims have no reticence toward French Jews. Our religions were not created by God to cause social problems."

Kanovitch, for his part, said the meeting did not imply that CRIF accepted many of the views held by the union.

"We talk to the Catholic bishops as well but that doesn't make us Catholic," he said.

Kanovitch said he knew the union had links with the international Cairo-based Muslim Brotherhood. However, speaking to

*Continued on page 2*

### BEHIND THE HEADLINES

## ■ *A radical Muslim group in France may be going mainstream*

*Continued from page 1*

JTA before the meeting, he said he was “still unclear” about the nature of those links.

In his radio debate with Cukierman, Alaoui denied formal links with the brotherhood, which is banned in both Egypt and Jordan and has spawned Islamist groups including the Palestinian Hamas organization.

Just as problematic is the union's affiliation with the London-based European Council for Fatwa and Research, which it regards as its principal spiritual authority.

The council is presided over by Sheik Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, a leading Sunni cleric who has given his backing to Palestinian suicide attacks. Qaradawi currently lives in Qatar, but recently visited London to attend an international conference opposing the law banning the veil in France.

In a recent interview with the BBC, Qaradawi said “suicide bombings sanctify God. Allah gave the weak what the strong do not possess — the ability to turn the body into a human bomb, just as the Palestinians are doing.”

He also has called for all Americans in Iraq to be killed, although this week he said that should only apply to the U.S. military and not to civilians.

Those views, and the fundamentalist positions of the union on the veil ban, have concerned many Jewish observers in France.

The country's leading Jewish religious organization, the Consistoire Central, has so far held off meeting with the union de-

spite repeated requests from the Interior Ministry, JTA has learned.

Since the union is essentially a religious grouping too, the Consistoire might have appeared the logical organization to meet with it.

Consistoire sources told JTA that “there was no official boycott going on,” and that they had told the ministry that the matter would need to be discussed within the Consistoire's official structures.

What appears likely is that the Consistoire, which has a more hard-line constituency than CRIF, is happy to let CRIF take the flack for meeting with the union, which is recognized as the principal faction within the Muslim mosque-attending community.

The director general of the Consistoire, Frederick Attali, said his group preferred meeting with less-radical figures such as Muslim Council head Dalil Boubakeur.

Boubakeur, though, heads a minority faction on the council; the largest grouping is the union. He is regarded as holding little sway with Muslims in working-class suburbs around France's largest cities whom the Jewish community see as the principal cause of anti-Semitic acts.

As a result, most voices in the community accept that CRIF had little choice but to meet with the union.

Moreover, with the government accepting the union as semiofficial interlocutors in the hostage crisis and its dominant position on the Muslim Council, there is little doubt where real influence lies in France's practicing Muslim community.

According to Jean-Yves Camus, a political scientist and expert on radical Muslim groups in France, the union's recent appeals on behalf of the French hostages and their moderated approach to the veil issue mask considerably more radical views.

Camus pointed out recent statements by the union condemning Israel's targeted assassinations of Hamas leaders as well as anti-Jewish comments that regularly appear in a forum hosted on the union's Web site.

He also alluded to systemic problems

within the movement.

“It's in their mosques where they raise money for Hamas and recruit for Afghanistan,” Attali told JTA.

Nevertheless, Camus said he supported CRIF holding talks with the union since they were “very certainly” more representative than Boubakeur.

“We can deplore this, but it is a political meeting and that is CRIF's job,” he said.

“In politics you speak with your enemies.”

But not only Jewish groups were troubled by the meeting.

The Association of Secular Maghrebins urged members of the Jewish community to write to CRIF warning that the union was just “using” CRIF.

“Holding a dialogue with the union is no more a part of inter-

religious dialogue than talking to extremist Christian currents in the National Front,” the letter said, referring to a far-right political group in France.

Similar comments came from the National Association of Elected Officials in the Suburbs.

In a statement issued Sept. 9, the group said CRIF had made “a serious mistake” and had given “additional legitimacy to this Islamic movement.”

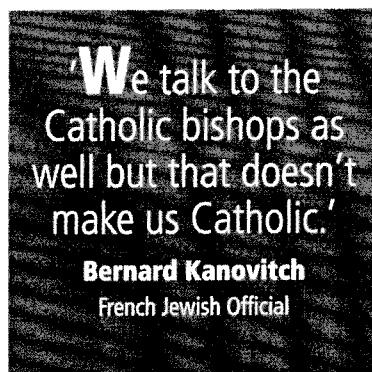
CRIF however, was unrepentant.

The group's executive director, Haim Musicant, told JTA “we know who we're talking to and I guarantee we won't be keeping our tongues in our pockets.”

Whatever the tone of the meeting — described by Alaoui as “frank and calm” — CRIF recognizes that only by monitoring the discourse of radical imams in mosques controlled by the union, can they effectively change much of the hostile climate toward Jews which exists in certain sections of the Muslim community.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Kanovitch said CRIF had asked the union to monitor the lectures given by the imams and that “they have committed to that.”

He added that there likely would be a future meeting between the groups, although no date has yet been fixed. “We will probably be invited to the union's offices and we will respond favorably,” he said.



### JTA WORLD REPORT

**Howard E. Friedman**

President

**Mark J. Joffe**

Executive Editor and Publisher

**Lisa Hostein**

Editor

**Michael S. Arnold**

Managing Editor

**Lenore A. Silverstein**

Finance and Administration Director

**Paula Simmonds**

Marketing and Development Director

JTA WORLD REPORT is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For more information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at [www.jta.org](http://www.jta.org).  
© JTA. Reproduction only with permission.

# German survivor law being read narrowly

By TOM TUGEND

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — While living in central Poland's Radom ghetto in 1942, Saul Friedman applied for work — and for the next two years cleaned a building and labored in a peat bog for the German army.

He earned no money, but received something more valuable: extra food rations.

When the ghetto was liquidated in 1944, Friedman was sent to an Auschwitz satellite camp and then to Mauthausen. After liberation he came to the United States.

Friedman and thousands of other survivors in the United States, Israel and elsewhere are entangled in a bureaucratic hassle over a recent German law meant to benefit a little-known class of survivors.

The so-called ZRBG law, the German acronym for Payment of Pensions from Employment in a Ghetto, was established two years ago to give German Social Security benefits to those who worked voluntarily, or "at will," in the ghettos of Eastern Europe.

## MONDAY

■ An exhibit exploring 60 years of Jewish immigration to America opens in New York. The exhibit, called "New York: City of Refuge — Stories from the Last 60 Years," will be on display at Manhattan's Museum of Jewish Heritage as part of the celebrations surrounding American Jewry's 350th year. It will include personal stories, film footage and artifacts from three generations of Jewish immigrants to New York.

■ The fourth general conference of the Russian Jewish Congress begins. The two-day conference will focus on the growth of Jewish professionals. Separate discussions will be held during the conference on major issues of Jewish community development.

■ The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe is hosting a conference on tolerance and racism in Brussels. In conjunction with the conference, which ends Tuesday, the Anti-Defamation League will host a side event together with its European partner, the Center for European Jewish Information, and the Belgian Center for Equal Opportunity. At the event, ADL officials will assess how educational efforts to fight racism in Europe have fared.

## TUESDAY

■ The U.N. General Assembly officially begins.

## WEDNESDAY

■ Rosh Hashanah begins. It continues through Friday.

Though the law is well meant and the benefits significant, eligible applicants are facing long delays, a high rejection rate and a bureaucratic process that critics say is highly erratic.

Mark Rothman, Holocaust services advocate for the free Bet Tzedek legal services in Los Angeles, reports that among 135 applicants there, 13 have waited for more than a year for an initial response, 47 have been waiting between six months and a year, and all but five of the rest have been rejected.

Similarly, an 80 percent rejection rate has been reported from New York and Florida.

Following protests by the Claims Conference, Bet Tzedek and a group of U.S. congressional representatives from Los Angeles, German authorities have launched an investigation to determine whether the ghetto pensions law is being interpreted too narrowly.

"This law was meant to be generous, but if the investigation shows that there has been a hiccup in the implementation, we will take corrective measures," said Michael Wolff, the German consul for legal affairs in Los Angeles.

Wolff noted that a number of applicants appeared to be confused between compensation for forced or slave labor, which is handled under a different law and by a different ministry, and voluntary "at will" ghetto labor, which is administered by the Social Security departments of individual German states.

Gideon Taylor, executive vice president of the Claims Conference, said he sees two difficulties with the ghetto pensions law, one in the way it is administered and another in the way it is written.

The case of Friedman, 85, is a good example of the perplexing administrative decisions. While Friedman's application was turned down, that of his wife, Bella, who worked in the same ghetto as a seamstress for the Germans, was approved.

She has received an \$18,000 back payment, and now gets a monthly check for \$250 from the German Social Security system.

Among the law's provisions criticized by Taylor, Rothman and Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.), is one stipulating that only

workers who were older than 14 at the time are now eligible for ghetto pensions.

That restriction caused Helen Korb's application to be turned down. As an 8-year-old in the Mir ghetto, now in Belarus, Korb worked alongside her mother doing cleaning and laundry at a German garrison.

"When I was in the ghetto they wouldn't let me be a child, and now they say I can't get a pension because I was a child," Korb said.

The ghetto pension law is the latest chapter in the history of Nazi-era reparations, but it's not the end of the book.

"We are always looking for more liberal interpretations of existing laws," said Taylor, "and we are now receiving the first allocations from Germany for home care for

elderly survivors."

In another Holocaust-related development, three Los Angeles-area survivors suffered a legal setback in their suit against an international commission dealing with wartime insurance claims.

The survivors accused the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims of, in effect, serving as a front for the Italian insurance company Assicurazioni Generali to lower or deny claims by survivors or their heirs.

The lawsuit was first filed almost a year ago in Los Angeles Superior Court under California's unfair business practices statute. At the commission's request, the case was transferred to a federal court due to claimed foreign policy aspects.

But a federal judge sent the suit back to Superior Court, where Judge William Highberger ruled last week that the state had no jurisdiction in the case.

Attorney William Shernoff, representing survivors Dr. Jack Brauns, Manny Steinberg and Roman Rakover, complained that he was caught in a Catch-22 dilemma between federal and state courts. He said he would take the case to the California Court of Appeals or state Supreme Court.

Representing the commission, New York attorney Constantinos Panagopoulos applauded Highberger's decision, saying it validated his argument that because of international political implications, the case was a matter for the executive branch of the government.

Survivors of wartime ghettos are being unfairly turned down for compensation, critics say.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### MIDDLE EAST

#### Sharon fears civil war

Ariel Sharon said threats by settlers to resist evacuation using violence risked civil war in Israel.

"These are calls that amount to civil war," the Israeli prime minister told his Cabinet on Sunday, referring to increasing pledges by Israelis slated for evacuation under the prime minister's withdrawal plan to resist violently.

The prime minister ordered security services to step up their surveillance of suspected far-right pro-settler groups opposed to his plan to withdraw all settlements from the Gaza Strip and four from the West Bank.

#### Gaza raid ends

Israeli forces pulled out of areas of the Gaza Strip seized in a bid to stop Hamas rocket attacks.

Tanks and troops left Jabalya and Beit Hanoun in northern Gaza on Saturday amid clashes that killed three Palestinians.

Hamas, which lost at least one gunman during the four-day siege on the town, vowed to continue launching its Kassam rockets into Israel. Fearing Palestinian terrorist groups would step up attacks, Israel ordered Gaza and West Bank crossings closed until after Rosh Hashanah.

#### Egyptian students charged in terror plot

An Israeli court indicted six Egyptian students Sunday on charges they planned a terrorist attack in Israel.

The students, who are not believed to be part of a terrorist organization, were arrested last month when they tried to cross into the Gaza Strip from Egypt.

#### Israel launches tourism drive

Israel's Tourism Ministry kicked off its 2004 "pledge to visit Israel" campaign.

Timed for the High Holidays, synagogues will send pledge cards to their members asking them to "Save the Date" and make time to visit Israel in the coming year.

The campaign is a continuation of the "Israel. I Care. And I'm Going" pledge drive launched in 2003.

Some 1,246 synagogues across North America participated last year, and 220,991 American Jews visited Israel in 2003, more than in any year in the country's history, according to Israel's Ministry of Tourism.

### NORTH AMERICA

#### New trial in Busch killing

A federal judge ordered a new trial in the 1999 shooting death of a hammer-wielding Jewish man by New York City police.

Gidone Busch, a mentally unstable Chasidic Jew, was shot to death by police when he brandished a hammer on a Brooklyn street.

Police said Busch had lunged at officers at the scene, but Busch's family rejected the police account and filed suit against the city.

A jury had cleared the city of responsibility in November 2003, but Judge Sterling Johnson Jr., of U.S. District Court in Brooklyn, overturned the verdict Sept. 9.

The judge said he found witness accounts credible that described Busch as standing still when police opened fire.

#### Cameron Kerry wants votes from Israel

Cameron Kerry urged Democrats with U.S. citizenship living in Israel to vote for his brother, John, for president.

The deadline for Americans living abroad to vote in the November elections is Wednesday. Cameron Kerry, a convert to Judaism, made his comments Sunday to Israel Radio.

#### Animal rights group loses in Canada

Canadian officials refused to allow an animal rights group to open a photo exhibit in Toronto that uses images of Holocaust victims.

Because the "Holocaust on Your Plate" exhibition organized by the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals uses photographic images from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in violation of the museum's Photograph Use Agreement, the Canadian Jewish Congress persuaded city and regional officials to refuse PETA a display permit.

#### Group challenges Canadian appointee

A Canadian Jewish group challenged Canada's new ambassador to UNESCO to condemn anti-Semitism and clarify his views on Israel.

Yvon Charbonneau's appointment as UNESCO ambassador "has met with considerable controversy as a result of reprehensible views concerning the Jewish community and the State of Israel," said Ed Morgan, national president of the Canadian Jewish Congress.

In April 2002, after a month in which Palestinian terrorists killed 79 Israelis, Charbonneau gave a speech in Canada's House of Commons in which he equated Palestinian terrorism with the "terror campaign waged by Israel" and accused Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's government of "turning Israel into a rogue state."

Charbonneau has not responded to the congress, but a spokesman for Prime Minister Paul Martin, who appointed Charbonneau to the ambassador post, said he "has a wealth of experience that makes him well-positioned to fulfill that role."

### WORLD

#### Israeli school invites Russian terror survivors

Child survivors of the deadly terrorist attack at a Russian school were invited to spend two weeks at a school in Israel.

The ORT Yad Lvovich high school in the Israeli seaside town of Netanya invited 20 survivors of the attack to visit the school, the World ORT organization said in a news release.

The Russian government is considering the invitation.

Of 1,200 students in the Israeli school, 400 are from the former Soviet Union, and there are 35 Russian-speaking faculty.

#### Remembering 9/11 in Jerusalem

Some 1,200 people rallied for world peace in Jerusalem on the third anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks.

Participants from 41 countries descended on the capital's Independence Park on Saturday to remember the victims of the attacks, in which terrorists piloted airplanes into New York's Twin Towers, the Pentagon in Washington and an empty field in Pennsylvania.

The rally, during which white doves were released, was sponsored by the International Federation for World Peace, and included Muslim, Christian and Jewish religious leaders.

#### Viva Italia

A U.S. rabbinical group recently clinched a deal to bring Italian teens to New York and Jewish teens to Rome.

In meetings with Father Norbert Hofmann, the Vatican's liaison to Jews, Israel Singer, head of the World Jewish Congress, and Rabbi Jay Rosenbaum, a vice president of the North American Boards of Rabbis, received approval for a 10-day exchange program with the Pius IX High School in Rome.