

Vol. 82, No. 219

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2004

IN THE NEWS

Mideast peace summit seen?

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian Authority presidential candidate Mahmoud Abbas said they would like to resume talks.

In exclusive interviews in the latest issue of Newsweek, both men called Yasser Arafat's death an opportunity for peace.

Abbas, the dominant Fatah faction's nominee to succeed Arafat, praised Sharon for his political strength and voiced hope that the Israeli plan to quit the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank next year would be coordinated with the Palestinians.

Palestinian elections are scheduled for Jan. 9.

Barghouti endorses Abbas

Marwan Barghouti said he will not run for Palestinian Authority president and instead endorsed Mahmoud Abbas.

Barghouti, serving five life sentences in an Israeli jail for his role in terrorist attacks, said in a statement last Friday night that he was ceding the field to Abbas in the Jan. 9 elections.

Barghouti, 45, is a favorite among younger Palestinians.

Protests over Paris Jewish fund-raiser

Pro-Palestinian demonstrators in Paris attempted to break through police barriers outside the location where a Jewish event is set to take place.

Police made four arrests Saturday night outside the Gymnase Theater in Paris after demonstrators from the pro-Palestinian Joint Appeal for a Just Peace in the Middle East attempted to break through to the theater.

The Theater is to be the site of a fund-raiser on Monday night that has been organized by the French branch of the Jewish National Fund in aid of social service support for Israeli soldiers. The group also appealed to a Paris court to order the banning of the event.



WORLD REPORT

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

Yad Vashem's Holocaust database part of plan to chronicle victims

By DINA KRAFT

RAMAT GAN, Israel (JTA) — Sitting in her living room in Israel, Anita Noam inches her chair closer to the computer screen and peers at a grainy black and white image of her aunt that she has never seen before.

On the wall hang oil paintings of Venice's canals and back alleys that her aunt painted so many years ago.

Noam's aunt, Lisetta Luzzatto, was killed in 1944 at the age of 51 at a concentration camp in Trieste, Italy. She died along with her husband, Cesare, a retired Italian army general who thought the Nazis would never dare come for him.

Their names, and the details of their lives and deaths, are now among 3 million entries collected in the world's largest database of Holocaust victims, created by Yad Vashem, Israel's national Holocaust memorial. The database was made available on the Internet last week and had already received some 1.85 million visitors by early this week.

For the first time, people from around the world can harness Yad Vashem's information to look up relatives and loved ones and locate family members they may never before have known existed in what the compendium's creators call a "symbolic burial place."

Yad Vashem officials are using the launch of the database as part of an 11th-hour campaign to collect additional names, photographs and details of Jewish Holocaust victims. As the generation of survivors ages and dies out, they warn, time to collect information is running short.

Her eyes locked on the picture of her aunt,

Noam, 78, finally sinks back in her chair and turns away. "It's hard to see," she said.

Her aunt was one of her favorite people growing up, Noam said. Luzzatto would host her and her sisters, who grew up in Trieste, during their visits to Venice. Sitting by canals, Luzzatto would set up a pair of easels and teach Noam how to sketch and paint.

Searching the database for information about her aunt, Noam discovered a relative previously unknown to her. A woman from Washington had submitted the photograph of Luzzatto and provided details of the couple's deportation and the years of their deaths. According to the form, this woman is a cousin of Luzzatto's and likely a distant cousin to Noam.

"It's like a riddle. Where did she get all the information from? Where did she get the photograph from?" asked Noam, noting the woman's name and address, curious to make contact.

Yad Vashem officials said they expected relatives and friends might discover each other as a result of the database going online.

Such occurrences are a fortunate by-product, they said, of the central mission of the database, which is to pay homage to the lives of those who met their deaths in the Holocaust by giving information about who they were before the Nazis came to power — to remember that behind each victim is a name and a story.

"It's to see the faces, to look into the people," said Avner Shalev, the chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate. "To see them as human beings — he was an artist, he was a shoemaker."

"Everyone again comes to a life in a cer-

Continued on page 2

BEHIND
THE
HEADLINES

■ *A Holocaust database is part of a larger plan to memorialize victims*

Continued from page 1

tain way," Shalev said. Referring to its broad reach across the Internet, he said of the database. "Now it can be everywhere.

"It's a different dimension of remembrance."

Yad Vashem began collecting "pages of testimony" commemorating the names and details of victims' lives in 1954. The process of computerizing the database began in 1994 and the project's cost was \$22 million. It will cost another \$4 million to complete the project as additional names and information come in now that the database is online, said Shalev.

Funding to date has come from private donors, in addition to the Yad Vashem budget, the Volcker Commission on Swiss bank accounts and the Claims Conference.

The cost of uploading the database was funded by businessman and high-tech entrepreneur Yossie Hollander, the son of a Holocaust survivor, and the Victim List Project of the Swiss banks settlement.

The undertaking was more enormous than anyone could have imagined, Shalev said. The biggest problem in assembling the database was the variety of name spellings — not only first and last names but place names that shifted as borders and ruling powers changed.

For the last 20 years, a team of linguists and geographers at Yad Vashem has been

assembling a comprehensive lexicon of spelling variations.

The team found, for example, that there are 1,520 different ways to spell the name Isaac in the many languages and alphabets where the name appears, including Hebrew, Cyrillic and Latin.

The database was constructed with the broadest parameters possible. Dozens of variations of each name are included, taking into account various spellings, languages and nicknames.

Overseeing the task of compiling the names was Alexander Avraham, a linguist by training, who is the director of the Hall of Names.

"I was fascinated by the challenge," said Avraham, his desk covered in a sea of paperwork. "It brings together history, language, geography, names."

"It's a puzzle," he said.

Yad Vashem has collected 40,000 different Jewish last names with 370,000 different variants.

Another challenge for those compiling the names was deciphering the handwriting of those who filled out pages of testimony. Styles of writing varied from region to region. In some areas a "P" would be written to appear like a "T." An additional hurdle was linking the Yiddish names for places often used by Jews to their official names. Often the names were entirely different.

Avraham said it was important for as many people as possible to visit the database and use it as an "interactive platform" — adding to existing information by submitting photographs or personal memories of victims.

The more information the better, Avraham said. He cited the example of a Polish painter named Joachim Weingarten, who had been living in Paris before being deported.

Initially, his page included only minimal biographical details taken from a deportation list. But now, with the addition of further information, the page about him includes examples of his paintings, including a self-portrait. "We want Jewish collective memory to remember them as they were," Avraham said. "This is our common legacy about that world that disappeared." ■

The database
'brings together
history, language,
geography, names.'

Alexander Avraham
Yad Vashem Official

For Jews, FBI hate crimes report has some good news, some bad

By CHANAN TIGAY

NEW YORK (JTA) — The incidence of hate crimes in the United States may not be rising, but religion-based hate crimes overwhelmingly are directed against Jews and Jewish institutions.

Those were some findings of the FBI's Hate Crimes Statistics 2003, released Nov. 22. The survey documents 927 anti-Jewish crimes last year — most of them classified as intimidation — comprising more than 12 percent of all hate crimes reported in America.

"There's a feeling that there's a lot of Islamophobia out there," said the national director of the Anti-Defamation League, Abraham Foxman. "While there is, anti-Jewish hate crimes predominate."

The 166-page report documented more than 1,300 religion-based hate incidents in 2003. Jews were by far the most frequent targets of such attacks, with anti-Muslim incidents trailing far behind at 149.

That was about the same number of anti-Islamic incidents as the previous year, though it was far fewer than the number of such crimes committed in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

Overall, the report found that hate crimes remained relatively steady between 2002 and 2003. The 7,489 total incidents last year were just 27 more than took place in 2002, the FBI said — and the 2002 figures were the lowest since 1994.

As a motivating factor for hate crimes, religion was a distant second — along with sexual orientation — behind race.

A total of 11,909 U.S. law enforcement agencies contributed data to the 2003 survey, a drop from the 12,073 participating agencies the previous year. More than 5,000 U.S. police departments did not participate at all.

Because so many law enforcement agencies do not take part, Foxman said, "there's this gnawing feeling that we're not getting the whole picture." ■

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

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) 543-890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.
© JTA. Reproduction only with permission.

THIS WEEK**MONDAY**

■ Ehud Olmert, Israel's trade minister, launches the \$1 million Maryland/Israel Development Fund in Annapolis, Md., with Gov. Robert Ehrlich. The fund will inaugurate development ventures between Maryland and Israel. On Tuesday, Olmert meets with U.S. trade representative Robert Zoellick in Washington, where he also will meet with Jewish groups.

■ Pro-Palestinian groups stage a day-long protest in Washington, displaying mock coffins to show the "disproportion of casualties" in the intifada, a replica of Israel's West Bank security fence and balloons showing the "disproportion of U.S. tax dollars sent to fund Israeli atrocities."

TUESDAY

■ Ehud Olmert is the keynote speaker at the 2004 Partners for Democracy Award Dinner of the America-Israel Friendship League in New York City.

■ National Religious Party leader Effie Eitam visits Washington to lobby against the Israeli government's plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip.

■ Operation Embrace, a group that raises money for survivors of terrorism in Israel, is hosting an Israeli terrorism survivor and the social worker who cares for her, launching a series of Washington-area events. Survivor Neta Zaken, 19, and Ronit Gaglin, the director of social work at Haifa's Rambam Hospital, will meet U.S. mental health professionals and students and will speak at a fund-raiser.

WEDNESDAY

■ The World Zionist Organization sponsors a weeklong seminar in Israel for English-speaking journalists in an effort to update them on all aspects of life in Israel including social, economic, security and politics.

■ The winners of the 2004 National Jewish Book Awards will be feted at the 54th Annual Jewish Book Awards at the Center for Jewish History in New York City. The awards ceremony begins at 7:30 p.m. and is open to the public.

FRIDAY

■ Distinguished literary critic and acclaimed author Robert Alter will be the keynote speaker when secular Jews from around the world gather in San Francisco for the 10th Biennial Conference of the International Federation of Secular Humanistic Jews, running from Dec. Amos Oz, an Israeli author whose books have been translated into more than 30 languages, will address the closing session of the conference on Sunday.

SUNDAY

■ World Jewish Solidarity Day. For more information check: www.worldjewishsolidarityday.com.

U.N. condemns anti-Semitism

By RACHEL POMERANCE

NEW YORK (JTA) — A United Nations resolution on anti-Semitism proves the axiom that Europe is the fulcrum about which action, or inaction, takes place at the world body.

In this case it was the former. Jewish officials praised Europeans for standing firm against pressure from the Organization of the Islamic Conference to remove a reference to anti-Semitism in a resolution condemning religious intolerance.

The resolution calling for the "elimination of all forms of religious intolerance" unanimously passed the Third Committee of the U.N. General Assembly on Nov. 22 and is expected to pass the entire General Assembly in a few weeks.

It's not the first time a U.N. committee has condemned anti-Semitism — it has been included in condemnations of religious intolerance in the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, where only 53 countries are members — but it was the first time anti-Semitism was included in the annual resolution on religious intolerance in the General Assembly's much larger Third Committee.

The committee is the assembly's social and humanitarian body, with jurisdiction over human rights issues.

This also was one of the few times European countries have stood up to the pressure of the Islamic Conference on a Jewish issue, observers said.

Attempts to obtain comment from representatives of the Netherlands, which holds the European Union's rotating presidency, were unsuccessful.

Israeli officials called the resolution a breakthrough.

Last year, Israel abstained from voting on the religious intolerance resolution at the General Assembly because it didn't mention anti-Semitism, despite a spike in anti-Semitic acts around the world.

"This is a milestone vote for Jewish issues at the United Nations General Assembly," said Amy Goldstein, director of U.N. affairs for B'nai B'rith International. "It proves that if the Europeans have the will to pass something on Jewish causes, that they have the ability to do so."

Many Jewish officials had sought a stand-alone resolution condemning anti-Semitism this year. Ireland offered a resolution singling out anti-Semitism for condemnation last year, but withdrew it due to lack of support.

The Europeans didn't think they could pass a stand-alone resolution on anti-Semitism this year either, so they offered this as a compromise, Goldstein said.

The resolution "recognizes with deep concern the overall rise in instances of intolerance and violence directed against members of many religious communities in various parts of the world, including cases motivated by Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and Christianophobia."

It comes after several conferences on anti-Semitism in the past year, including an April 2004 meeting of the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe that concluded that international developments — an oblique reference to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict — never justify anti-Semitism.

For many, the resolution was a step toward righting that history. But others called the step minuscule.

"It's one word in one paragraph in one general resolution on religious intolerance. It's a very far cry from a resolution dedicated to anti-Semitism," said Anne Bayefsky, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute and visiting professor at Touro College and Metropolitan College.

Others saw more significance in the European move.

According to Felice Gaer, director of the Jacob Blaustein Institute for Human Rights at the American Jewish Committee, the European steadfastness was due to several factors: The OSCE already had condemned anti-Semitism; there has been a palpable rise in anti-Semitism in Europe; and the U.S. government and Jewish communities have forced Europe to focus on the issue.

"When the European countries take leadership, things can change in the U.N.," Gaer said, adding that such initiative is rare.

"The pattern in the U.N. is often when controversial issues come up or when people challenge the Europeans that they stand silent or reach a compromise rather than standing fast."



NEWS IN BRIEF

WORLD

Russian sentence protested

Jewish leaders and human rights activists in Russia are outraged by a sentence handed down in the case of a publisher known for anti-Semitic views.

Alexander Brod, director of the Moscow Bureau for Human Rights, said activists would seek new opportunities to bring Viktor Korchagin to justice for activities that include the publication of a Russian edition of Hitler's "Mein Kampf."

On Nov. 24, a Moscow court found Korchagin guilty of publishing hate materials and passed a one-year suspended sentence, which was immediately annulled because of a statute of limitations.

French Socialist wants Hezbollah TV off air

The head of the French Socialist Party called for a reversal of a decision allowing the transmission of Hezbollah's TV channel.

In a letter to the country's public broadcasting authority on Saturday, party leader Francois Hollande said that "the nonstop transmission of clips inciting children toward hatred and martyrdom" is "incompatible with the values of the European Union."

The broadcasting authority agreed to license Hezbollah's Al-Manar channel on Nov. 19, a decision that will allow it to continue transmitting throughout the E.U.'s 25 nations.

Wartime 'siblings' reunite

A Holocaust survivor was reunited with a Polish woman who saved him during World War II.

Andre Nowacki, now 68, was reunited in New York on Nov. 24 with Hanna Morawiecka, 74, one of three Polish sisters whose family hid him and his mother in Warsaw during the war.

Morawiecka, the only sister still alive, was flown to New York to meet Nowacki by the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous, which honors non-Jews who risked their lives to hide Jews during the Holocaust and financially aids some of them.

The two shared a Thanksgiving meal. Nowacki told journalists, "She tells me I haven't changed since I was 9 years old."

MIDDLE EAST

Gaza unit disbanded

The Palestinian Authority announced it is disbanding a "death squad" operating against Islamic groups in the Gaza Strip.

Palestinian security chief Mohammed Abu Shbak said Saturday that the secret unit, which had operated for around a year, was being abandoned as part of efforts by the dominant Fatah faction to clean up the political apparatus in the West Bank and Gaza.

Shbak said the unit's main mission was to crack down on Hamas and Islamic Jihad, although there was no immediate evidence of such actions.

According to Israeli media, the unit also served as a bodyguard to Gaza strongman Mohammed Dahlan, who had frequently challenged the late Yasser Arafat in power squabbles.

Death certificate spat

Israel's ambassador to France demanded that Yasser Arafat's death certificate show he was born in Cairo.

Ha'aretz reported Sunday that Nissim Zvili sent a letter of protest to the French municipality of Clamart, which listed Arafat, who died at a local hospital on Nov. 11, as having been born in Jerusalem.

"I cannot understand how the French government agreed to issue

a death certificate based on false information," Zvili told reporters Friday. Arafat's claim to have been born in Jerusalem, a core element of Palestinian propaganda, is disputed by biographers and historians, who say he was born in Cairo while his father was working there.

According to Zvili, Arafat's widow, Suha, registered the Palestinian leader as having been born in Jerusalem after the birth of their daughter several years ago in Paris.

Convict cited in judge's murder

A convicted Israeli murderer is suspected of ordering the killing of a Tel Aviv judge.

Police said Sunday that the convict was believed to have paid an escaped felon to gun down Judge Adi Azar outside his home on July 19, with the intention of turning the killer in to the authorities in exchange for improved prison conditions. Five people were arrested in connection to the case and the murder weapon has been found, police said.

Safer skies for Israel

El Al reportedly will equip one of its planes with an anti-missile system next month.

The Israeli-made Flight Guard, which issues flares to divert incoming missiles, will be fitted on one of the national carrier's Boeing passenger jets, Ha'aretz reported Nov. 24.

El Al did not comment, but security sources confirmed the company planned to slowly introduce the \$1 million security measure to its fleet.

Anti-missile systems became a major project in world aviation after Al-Qaida terrorists tried to shoot down an Israeli passenger plane over Kenya in November 2002.

NORTH AMERICA

More than debate club photos

A prep school in Canada canceled its yearbooks after students placed coded messages calling for the deaths of all Jews.

Montreal's exclusive Lower Canada College recently canceled the 2003-2004 yearbooks after the messages, in what media reports called a "jumble of acronym-like e-mail shorthand," were found.

Canadian Jewish leaders said they were convinced the messages were a joke, and are pleased with the way the school handled the matter.

Ex-Middle East envoy dies

Joseph Sisco, who helped set U.S. Middle East policy in the 1960s and '70s, died Nov. 23 near Washington at the age of 85.

In 1969, President Nixon named Sisco assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs.

In that job, Mr. Sisco wrote a policy paper that became the basis for much of Nixon's Middle East policy, The New York Times reported.

In 1968, Sisco served as the chief United States mediator in the Middle East.

Arizona, Israel to better ties?

A delegation from Arizona visited Israel earlier this month as part of attempts to increase high-tech links.

A group from the university and business worlds, led by Tucson Mayor Bob Walkup, spent a week in Israel meeting with a who's who of technology experts there from Nov. 8 to 13, the Tucson Citizen reported.