

IN THE NEWS
Israel to hand over security to Palestinians

Israel approved the handover of five West Bank cities to Palestinian Authority control and the release of 900 security prisoners.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and top Cabinet members authorized the moves Thursday so they could be presented to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas as a good-will package at next week's peace summit in Egypt.

Troops are to be pulled back at two-week intervals from Jericho, Tulkarm, Bethlehem, Kalkilya and Ramallah.

U.S. to fund Palestinian relief

The \$350 million President Bush proposed in aid for the Palestinians will help develop their economy and build high-tech terminals at checkpoints and border crossings.

Proposed Wednesday night in Bush's State of the Union address, the aid is in addition to \$50 million in short-term relief that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice plans to offer the Palestinians on Monday, when she visits the region.

A senior administration official broke down the \$350 million for JTA: \$150 million would be part of the budget request for the financial year beginning in October 2005, and \$200 million would come from supplemental budget requests.

E.U. official backs Israel on suicide attacks

An E.U. official backed Jewish calls that suicide bombings be branded a crime against humanity.

"Terrorism is a crime" against "fundamental and universal rights. We believe that this crime must be fought by the law and within the law," Franco Frattini told a Brussels conference Thursday. "My opinion is that suicide bombing can be considered as a crime against humanity."

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WORLD REPORT

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



Brian Hendler

JNF forests and land stretch out from the border of Jerusalem.

Land-sale ruling is latest word in Jewish-democratic debate

By DINA KRAFT

TEL AVIV (JTA) — In 1901, the fledgling Zionist movement took one of its first major leaps — the creation of a fund to buy land to settle Jews in Palestine.

More than 100 years later, the attorney general of the State of Israel has decided that the Jewish National Fund must make its land available to all Israeli citizens, both Jews and Arabs.

Some have welcomed Attorney General Menachem Mazuz's decision last week as a step toward fuller democracy in the Jewish state, which long has struggled with the

tension of being both a homeland for Jews — with a certain amount of "affirmative action" for them — and a democracy that serves all citizens equally.

But others have condemned the decision as a surrender to a post-Zionist world view where political correctness comes before Jewish peoplehood.

"The attorney general is convinced that the Israel Lands Authority as a government body is obligated to uphold the principles of equality. This obligation includes the marketing of lands belonging to the JNF," said Mazuz's statement.

The ILA controls all government land

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HEADLINES**

■ Attorney general's decision on land sale to Arabs stirs debate

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and is responsible for administering JNF land.

Israeli Arabs and some human-rights groups took issue with the second part of the decision, which said the government will give JNF state land to compensate for any JNF land that is leased to Arabs, allowing the organization to remain true to its mission.

That provision only perpetuates discrimination against the country's Arab minority, critics say.

For Dorit Karlin, associate director in Israel of the New Israel Fund, an organization that funds democracy and human-rights projects, the decision is a watershed in the quest for an equilibrium between Israel's values as a Jewish state and a democracy.

"I think it is one of the few times that the State of Israel looked with brave eyes at its deep democratic values and what they mean, and from this perspective it reflects the new discourse in Israel — that we are not looking in terms of white or black but grays. We are looking for a solution," Karlin said. "In a sense, this discourse is part of growing up and of being over 50, when you can look at yourself less defensively and in a grown-up way and say, 'We have a conflict here and we have to solve it.'"

The JNF itself said it doesn't want Arab citizens to suffer discrimination. It welcomed Mazuz's recommendation that in cases where a non-Jew wins public bidding for land administered by the ILA

that includes JNF land, a parcel of equal value will be transferred to the JNF.

In this way, the JNF said in a statement, "Two goals would be achieved: On the one hand, the principle of civil equality would be retained, with the avoidance of potential unfairness to Arab citizens, while on the other" the JNF "will retain its land ownership scope and capacity to continue operating in accordance with its principles in the service of the Jewish people."

JNF Chairman Yehiel Leket noted in the statement that the JNF owns 13 percent of land

in Israel, and 80 percent is owned by the government. Some 6.5 percent is owned privately by Arabs and Jews.

"One ought to remember that Israel is still in its formative stage and its Jewish character is not yet assured," Leket said.

A recent JNF survey found that about 80 percent of Israeli Jews prefer to have Israel defined first and foremost as the state of the Jewish people, according to the statement.

Mazuz's decision was prompted by an appeal by human rights groups to Israel's High Court of Justice against JNF policy to lease land only to Jews. There has been speculation in the Israeli media that the government realized it would lose the case if it defended the JNF's current practices.

Hanna Swaid, executive director of the Arab Center for Alternative Planning, one of the groups that filed the appeal, found Mazuz's decision perplexing.

"The obligation to operate with equality in regard to Arab citizens in the State of Israel is an important decision, but having said that I would say that practically speaking, I don't see that it will have any effect on the ground," Swaid said, pointing to the JNF compensation provision.

Swaid said Mazuz did not go as far as a 2000 Supreme Court ruling that the state could not authorize discriminatory land distribution. In that case, the court ruled

against the ILA, the Jewish Agency for Israel and the communal settlement of Katzir for refusing an Arab Israeli who wanted to buy a plot of land there.

Eli Tsur, a historian who specializes in the history of Zionism, agreed that the Mazuz decision was not as momentous as the 2000 Supreme Court ruling.

The contradiction between Israel as a Jewish state and a state of all its citizens "maybe is impossible to solve," he said.

According to Arie Eldad, a Knesset member with the right-wing National Union bloc,

there is no moral dilemma. Outraged by Mazuz's decision, he has called for his removal.

"It's the de-Zionization of the State of Israel," Eldad said. "The Declaration of Independence defined everything exactly, that the State of Israel will be a Jewish, democratic state. Jewish first, democratic second. Whenever there is a collision between the two definitions, it was understood that first we are Jewish — and now they are trying to turn it upside down to say first of all we are democratic."

Israel long has considered itself entitled to offer a sort of affirmative action to Jews, who are a tiny minority in the Middle East, where selling land to a Jew is punishable by death in some places. In addition, in some cases where Jews have attempted to move into non-Jewish neighborhoods in Israel, the non-Jews have protested vigorously, saying they should be allowed to maintain ethnically and culturally distinct communities.

For Rachel Benziman, executive director of Association for Civil Rights in Israel and one of the petitioners in the appeal to the Supreme Court, the Mazuz decision is not perfect but is an important step toward achieving equality for all Israeli citizens.

"It's not ideal and it's not going to solve the discrimination, but right now it's the best solution," she said.

The attorney general is convinced that the Israel Lands Authority as a government body is obligated to uphold the principles of equality.'

Menachem Mazuz
Israeli attorney general

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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.
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Hamas scores big win in Gaza vote

By GIL SEDAN

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Hamas' landslide victory in the first-ever municipal elections in the Gaza Strip is seen as a bad omen for Israel, the United States and the Palestinians' ruling Fatah movement — but some say it may tie the terrorist group down by making it more responsible for Palestinian decision-making.

Israel kept a low profile in its reactions to last week's vote, but U.S. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher stressed that the U.S. still regards Hamas as a terrorist organization, despite its electoral gains.

In any case, the results must be kept in context: These were only local elections, and for less than half of the municipal councils in the Gaza Strip. Large population centers such as Khan Younis, Rafah and Gaza City did not vote this time.

But the elections could be an opportunity for the militant Islamic movement to reinvent itself as a political party sharing power and responsibility with the newly elected Palestinian Authority president, Mahmoud Abbas.

The formula is simple: The more formal responsibility Hamas has, the bigger its moral obligation to Palestinian society. A strong, post-election Hamas has more to lose.

"You can't take part in decision-making and at the same time continue terrorist activity," said Ra'anana Gissin, a spokesman for Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Labor Party legislator Ephraim Sneh, a former deputy defense minister, told Israel Radio that the Gaza voting results showed the need to work with Abbas' government to coordinate Israel's withdrawal from the strip, planned for this summer.

Some detect a softening of Hamas rhetoric. Both the movement's Gaza leader, Ismail Haniyeh, and its West Bank leader, Hassan Yousef, made statements — even before the elections — indicating that they may now change their tactics.

"If there is total Israeli withdrawal from Gaza," Haniyeh said, "the Hamas movement will be ready to halt its military action because it is important for us to put an end to the misery of our people."

However, some cautioned that Israelis desperate to find signs of moderation from an enemy dedicated to Israel's destruction

were seeing signs of moderation were there were none. On Sunday, Hamas and Hezbollah reiterated their support for the notion of violent "resistance" against Israel.

Hamas' victory in Gaza was indeed impressive, surprising even the winners and stunning the losers, Abbas' Fatah.

Hamas now controls seven out of the 10 councils in which elections were held last week.

"Our people have a consensus on the choice of jihad," or holy war, "and resistance, and the election has underscored that concept," Hamas spokesman Muhir

Al-Masri told reporters.

However, in reality the situation is more complex. Palestinian society is undergoing dual processes: Abbas largely enjoys a national consensus in his attempts to calm the situation, but the majority of Gaza voters still vow allegiance to Hamas, particularly on the municipal level.

The vote was a combination of protest against the Palestinian political establishment, run by Fatah, and a debt of honor to Hamas for developing an effective network of social services, including schools and health and welfare services in Gaza.

Most notable was the victory in Beit Hanoun, the northern town that Hamas has turned into a launching pad for Kassam rockets into Israel, and which has borne the brunt of Israel's retaliatory raids.

Hamas' victory in Gaza followed an earlier victory

late last year in municipal elections in the West Bank. Hamas is weaker in the West Bank than in Gaza, but it still won a third of the municipal councils there, including in a number of traditional Fatah strongholds.

The Islamists boycotted the P.A.'s Jan. 9 presidential election, which Abbas won on a platform of stopping violence and renewing dialogue with Israel.

Hamas has not yet decided whether to take part in parliamentary elections scheduled for July. But Sami Abu Zuhri, a Hamas spokesman, said

the municipal victory would increase the pressure to contest parliamentary elections.

The bottom line is that Fatah will need to work hard to maintain a comfortable majority in the Palestine Legislative Council.

Fatah's shock over the election results led some senior PLO officials to suggest postponing the parliamentary elections. But it may be too late: The taste of victory has increased Hamas' political appetite.

"Everybody won, those who were elected and those who were not, because the exercise of this process is more important than the winners," a Hamas leader, Mahmoud Zahar, said at a press conference in Gaza City.

'If there is total Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, the Hamas movement will be ready to halt its military action because it is important for us to put an end to the misery of our people.'

Ismail Haniyeh
Hamas leader

NEWS
ANALYSIS



BP Images

Palestinians wave Hamas flags at a demonstration in Ramallah.

For once, Jewish news becomes Russian news

By LEV KRICHEVSKY

MOSCOW (JTA) — Jewish news rarely becomes part of mainstream media coverage in Russia, but a recent case involving an anti-Semitic letter was an exception.

What captured the media's attention was a letter that was rabidly anti-Semitic — even by Russian standards — allegedly signed by a huge group of some 500 “Orthodox Christian patriotic” people, as the authors wanted to be called, including 20 members of the State Duma, the lower house of the Russian parliament.

The letter has raised the issue of whether anti-Semitism is again spreading in Russia — and how active the Jewish community should be in reacting to issues of anti-Semitism.

The lengthy document was published on the Web site of a small fringe newspaper, Rus Pravoslavnaya, or Orthodox Russia, and demanded that the prosecutor general consider imposing a ban on Judaism and Jewish community institutions in Russia, claiming they are extremist and anti-Christian.

To prove their thesis, the authors went so far as to accuse Jews of ritual murders and provided a long list of anti-Semitic quotes from sources spanning 120 years of Russian history.

The letter became a subject of widespread public debate, mainly because it appeared on the eve of the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, and because the authors claimed it was signed by a large number of Russian lawmakers.

The document put President Vladimir Putin in an awkward position, particularly because a few days after the letter was made public he visited Poland to participate in events marking the Auschwitz liberation.

Following in the footsteps of many international politicians in recent years, Putin told an international forum in Krakow he was “ashamed of the manifestations of anti-Semitism in Russia. No one has the right to be indifferent toward anti-Semitism, xenophobia and racial intolerance.”

Although Putin did not make any reference to the controversial letter, his Krakow confession was heard in Russia as a direct response to those who wrote and signed the anti-Semitic document.

All major Jewish leaders — including

the country's two chief rabbis — were quick to condemn the letter and its signatories, and many mainstream newspapers gave front-page space to the story.

Following the media attention — and the reaction from Putin, the Foreign Ministry and Russia's Security Council — the signatories promptly recalled the letter from the prosecutor general's office, and all but one of the 20 lawmakers reportedly repudiated their signatures. Some even claimed they had never signed the document and were unaware of its existence before the public scandal erupted.

On the surface, the reaction to the last week's incident was easy to predict.

Jewish officials and human rights activists were widely quoted in the media blasting the letter, and liberal mainstream newspapers echoed the Jewish indignation over the document. And some Jewish leaders continued to call on the prosecution of those responsible for the letter even though it was recalled.

“A criminal offense has been made,” Vladimir Slutsker, the Russian Jewish Congress' president, said on a radio show Sunday. “That the letter has been recalled in my opinion makes no difference.”

But major Jewish leaders did not respond when some top-ranking officials showed what some might consider to be insensitivity over the issue.

Vladimir Ustinov, Russia's prosecutor general, said the letter should be seen as a manifestation of “kitchen anti-Semitism that is hard to root out in Russia. The main thing is that it shouldn't go beyond the kitchen,” he said, speaking to the Parliament's upper house on Jan. 26.

Ustinov said the topic of anti-Semitism was not worth debating, claiming that “the more we talk, the bigger the interest is toward this topic.”

It took Israel's ambassador to Moscow, Arkadi Milman, to respond to this remark. Speaking the following day at the Holocaust Day memorial event in

Moscow on Jan. 27, Milman said that to go along “with kitchen anti-Semitism

in the hope that it remains under control would be the same thing as to agree with kitchen cannibalism hoping that this way it doesn't go out of control.”

While the origins of the controversial letter still remain obscure, theories abound.

Stanislav Belkovsky, a Jewish political analyst, wrote an article that appeared on a popular Web news portal, lenta.ru, and was widely circulated among Russian-speaking Jewish Web surfers.

In his article, Belkovsky suggested that the letter was concocted within Putin's administration in order to harm the reputations of left-wing opposition lawmakers.

All 20 lawmakers who reportedly signed the letter were members of the two Duma factions, the Motherland and the Communists, that were highly critical of the federal government's handling of social reforms.

Belkovsky said the letter was intended to show the West that any successor to Putin would be worse than the incumbent.

“Take Chechnya, or Yukos or Beslan. In none of these stories I have a sense we were told the truth,” he said, echoing a widespread attitude among many Russians that during Putin's rule the state-controlled media, especially television, has returned somewhat to the Soviet practice of reporting only one officially approved point of view on major developments.

After recent news stories on high-profile cases of anti-Semitic violence in Moscow, some Jews say they are scared.

“I'm afraid to think that every third individual in my country is an anti-Semite,” said a middle-aged Jewish woman at a Moscow Jewish community center.

She was speaking Monday night after a popular Moscow radio station conducted a call-in poll asking the listeners whether they believed that Jews' participation in politics and business should be limited by the law. Thirty percent of 6,327 callers said “yes.”

A criminal offense has been made. That the letter has been recalled in my opinion makes no difference.

Vladimir Slutsker

Russian Jewish Congress president

**BEHIND
THE
HEADLINES**

New study on UJC merger prompts reflection

By TOM TUGEND

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — American Jewish leaders who created the United Jewish Communities umbrella organization out of three separate ones in 1999 are largely frustrated and disappointed by the outcome of their labor, according to a new study released this week.

The two-year study, "From Predictability to Chaos? How Jewish Leaders Reinvented Their National Communal System," found that some top leaders of the federation system felt they had missed the chance to form a truly representative and forward-looking voice for American Jewry.

Among the apparent losers in the merger, according to the study, are Israel and overseas beneficiaries of the federation fund-raising system, as well as rabbinical, intellectual and Zionist segments of the American Jewish community.

Howard Rieger, who took over as president and CEO of the UJC last September, termed the study "constructive and useful," but questioned some points and recommendations.

UJC and federation leaders from around the country discussed the study in New York on Wednesday with its two authors, Gerald Bubis and Steven Windmueller, respectively founding director and current director of the School of Jewish Communal Service at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Los Angeles.

The study is based on written responses and in-depth interviews with 88 "stakeholders," mostly men and women involved in the merger, augmented by other prominent Jewish personalities.

As the study describes, attempts to combine the alphabet soup of American Jewish fund-raising and communal institutions date back more than 60 years. It took seven years of discussion to establish the UJC.

The merger represented the largest 20th-century effort of its kind in the American nonprofit sector, and the "most significant institutional transformation in modern Jewish life," according to the study.

One major impetus, the study notes, was the desire to streamline the entire federation system and make it more accountable.

The three constituent organizations in the merger were the Council of Jewish Federations, which focused mainly on serving the needs of some 230 local communities with federations and social welfare funds;

the United Jewish Appeal, which oversaw fund raising, mainly through the federation system, for Israel and overseas needs; and the United Israel Appeal, which monitored and distributed funds for Israel by way of the Jewish Agency for Israel and monitored U.S. government allotments for refugee resettlement.

While praising the dedication and good intentions of the organizational leaders, "the study reveals a tale of unclear expectations, unshared visions, mixed motivations and multi-layered power games," the authors say in the report.

"It is a work in progress," Bubis and Windmueller write in the report.

Toting up perceived winners and losers in the merger, the study cites local federations as coming out on top, with executives of large city federations, in particular, ending up "owning the system."

The biggest loser appears to be Israel, which is likely to lose an even bigger share of American Jewry's financial support with the ascendancy of locally oriented federations.

After the 1967 war, some 70 percent of the total pie went to Israel and overseas needs and 30 percent went to U.S. communities. Today the proportions are nearly reversed, according to UJC officials.

Rieger said that in 2004, out of a total of some \$855 million raised, 31 percent, or \$266.4 million, went to Israel and overseas needs.

The dollar flow to the Jewish state is likely to be reduced further by many large donors' desire to set up their own channels of philanthropy, including through the Jewish Funders Network, and the tendency of a new generation of Jewish philanthropists to give to general secular causes, such as universities and hospitals.

Some of the most acerbic comments by study respondents, who are not identified by name, is reserved for the new UJC structure itself, which, some say, "was pre-ordained to fail" and "produced anarchy in the name of unity."

The study concludes with 11 recommen-

dations to the UJC leadership. They include:

- Restore the traditional role of rabbis and intellectuals, now largely excluded, as one of the pillars of communal governance;

- Provide opportunities to discuss and react to Israel's policies and encourage full airing of diverse opinions on the challenges facing Jewish life in this country, now often suppressed in the name of unity;

- Expand the "old-boys" network of the wealthy in Jewish life by in-

cluding more women and young people;

- Restore the household brand name of UJA in one form or another; and

- Balance the division of power between lay and professional leadership.

Rieger noted that the interviews underlying the study concluded in December 2003, and since then UJC had stabilized itself and moved forward.

"I think today the evaluations would be a bit more optimistic," he said.

Indeed, Windmueller said in an interview, "My sense is that UJC has moved significantly from where we were in 1999 to taking steps already to try to address aspects and elements of what it needs to do to be more responsive."

Responding to suggestions that Jewish leaders should have made fundamental changes and created a more representative body, Rieger said that the overriding purpose was to "align national and local, and domestic and overseas needs. We never meant to create a representative assembly for American Jewry."

Rieger objected to classifying winners and losers in the merger talks, observing that "communal work is not a zero-sum game."

Joel Tauber of Detroit, the original chairman of the merger committee and the first chairman of the UJC executive, said the report repeated many of the concerns voiced as the merger was going forward. He cited, for example, concerns over the role of small city federations and whether there would be enough funding for overseas needs.

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

'The study reveals a tale of unclear expectations, unshared visions, mixed motivations and multi-layered power games.'

Gerald Bubis and Steven Windmueller
Study authors

Cold weather, long memories at Auschwitz

By CAROLYN SLUTSKY

KRAKOW, Poland (JTA) — It snowed in Poland last week. All over Krakow, as people flooded in for ceremonies commemorating 60 years since the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the snow fell intensely and I heard people say they expected it.

They came to Poland to remember, to honor, and they would have felt guilty if the cold and snow hadn't chilled them to the bone as it had the one-and-a-half million people who died in Auschwitz, and all those who survived. Snow is an inevitable part of the Polish winter, but still I felt disappointed.

For a year and a half I've been living in Krakow, learning and writing about the Jewish past and the growth of the contemporary Jewish community. The historical relationship between Poland and its Jews has been complicated and multifaceted, and I often find myself in the position to dispel myths about how strained things were, and how damaged they are today.

Because of its central location in occupied Europe and its extensive rail connections, and because it had the largest prewar Jewish population in Europe, Poland was an easy choice as the site of the worst of the Nazi death camps — home not only to Auschwitz, but also to Treblinka, Majdanek, Sobibor, Belzec.

For many Jews, Poland is the focal point of their Holocaust anger. Their wrath hurled here; after all, it was on this ground

that their parents suffered, on this ground their grandparents died.

They don't separate out the Nazi crimes from the largely unwilling country that hosted them — and the fact that some Poles did greet the Third Reich and its Final Solution with open arms doesn't help.

Trudging through the endless snow and watching the ceremonies last week, I was happy with what I saw. Poland stood up and acknowledged the vast Jewish loss, something it didn't do at the 50th anniversary or any other before that.

In his speech, Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski said of Auschwitz, "This place is the terrible truth about the abysmal fall of humanity. We must find the strength to face up to this truth."

The memory here about the Jews of Poland is long. Today you can still find people who believe the stereotypes that Jews control the media and business, people who willingly would turn in their neighbors if the Nazis came through again and asked.

But you can find this minority everywhere, throughout Europe and in the rest of the world, too, people who can't stand to see the Jewish nation succeed, people who want to stomp us out.

Poland has been a cold country, but I see signs of warmth all the time. There is now a renovated synagogue in Oswiecim, the Polish name for the town of Auschwitz, attached to the Auschwitz Jewish Center, a museum and information center about the history of Jews in that city.

In Krakow, there is a center for Jewish culture, an annual Jewish festival that attracts thousands and a Jewish studies department at the Jagiellonian, Poland's oldest university.

And the healthiest sign of life, the crocus-heralding spring, is the re-emergence and revitalization of the Jewish community itself. In Warsaw there is a new progressive synagogue, Beit Warszawa, in addition to the Orthodox Nozyk synagogue. Young people with Jewish heritage meet for Shabbat dinners in several cities, tentatively

exploring their Judaism.

The Holocaust damaged the Polish Jewish community irreparably. Last week, we all stopped to consider the scope of this damage, but also to remember how Poland is picking itself up from the ashes and building again. Jews are returning to Jewish religious and cultural life, and their Polish counterparts are offering a thumbs-up from a distance, and sometimes an

'I often find myself in the position to dispel myths about how strained things were, and how damaged they are today.'

FIRST PERSON

up-close helping hand.

Living here, I realize that being a Jew in Poland will never mean going to services on a Saturday morning and hitting the kosher deli for a corned-beef sandwich or the Chinese restaurant for some moo shu chicken, watching "Seinfeld" and playing tag between the rows of seats at synagogue, as I grew up doing. The Jewish community in Poland stopped at Auschwitz, and any remaining pieces were trampled by 40 years of communism.

Yet Judaism held on to its little slice of Poland. The commemorations stressed nothing if not the vital importance of teaching about tolerance and about the right for Jews to exist not only in Israel but in any homes in any homelands they choose.

Poland is beginning to heed this lesson. Auschwitz is remembered here as a "killing factory for the murder of our people," as Israeli President Moshe Katsav said at Auschwitz, and Polish-Jewish dialogue is flourishing all over the country.

What most amazed me this week were the survivors, from Poland and throughout Europe, who journeyed back to hell and walked out again alive.

Trudy Spira, who was 12 at liberation and was returning to Auschwitz for the first time in 60 years, said she brought her son because together they were living proof that Hitler did not achieve his goals.

The world has heard Trudy's words, and the words of so many other survivors. I hope there is no chance of ever forgetting them.

Still, the loss is unfathomable, unforgivable. Still it breaks my heart. ■



Courtesy of Carolyn Slutsky

Carolyn Slutsky, JTA's correspondent in Krakow, Poland.

COMMUNITY

TRANSITIONS

■ Seymour Reich, former two-term president of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and former president of B'nai Brith International and the American Zionist Movement, was named president of the Israel Policy Forum.

■ Bernie Farber, the executive director of the Canadian Jewish Congress' Ontario region, was named CEO of the Congress.

■ Ellen Heller was elected president of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's board of directors.

■ JTA Washington Staff Writer Matthew Berger was named to the board of the Washington chapter of the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association, a group that works to advocate for gays and lesbians in the newsroom and strives for accurate portrayal of gays and lesbians in the media.

■ The American Jewish Congress appointed Rabbi Eugene Korn as national director of Jewish affairs.

■ New Jersey real estate developer David Halpern was selected to lead the 2005 Israel Bonds campaign.

■ The Abraham Fund Initiatives appointed Amnon Be'eri-Solitzeanu director of Israel operations.

HONORS

■ The Consulate General of Israel in New York, the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York and the Jewish National Fund honored Madeleine Moore and New York City Comptroller William Thompson at a tribute to the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

■ Dr. Dominick Purpura, dean of Yeshiva University's Albert Einstein College of Medicine, was honored with the university's presidential medallion.

■ U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback (R-Kan.) received the Zionist Organization of America's Defender of Israel Award. Israeli legislator Uzi Landau received the ZOA's Judah Macabee Award, and Mideast scholar Daniel Pipes received the group's Ben Hecht Award.

■ The Shalom Center gave its first-ever Menorah Awards to Ruth Messinger, president of the American Jewish World Service; investigative reporter Seymour Hersh; and folksinger Peter Yarrow.

■ The Canadian Zionist Federation-Eastern Region and the World Zionist Organization awarded the Jerusalem Prize to McGill University professor Gil Troy.

■ The Baltimore Zionist District gave its Louis D. Brandeis Award to pro-Israel activist Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi.

■ The Ford Foundation gave Vic Rosenthal, executive director of Jewish Community Action in St. Paul, Minn., a Leadership for a Changing World Award.

CIA withholds Nazi-era files

By CHANAN TIGAY

NEW YORK (JTA) — The CIA's apparent refusal to divulge information about America's "cozy relationship" with some Nazis after the Holocaust has outraged legislators, Jewish officials and members of a government task force looking into Nazi war criminals.

"Even the KGB has opened up their files," Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-N.Y.) told reporters during a news conference Monday.

"Our government has protected its cozy relationship with the Nazi war criminals for far too long," she added.

The CIA and other national agencies are required under the Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act of 1998 to release classified information pertaining to Nazi war criminals to a working group investigating the subject. The group would then make the materials available to the public at the National Archives in Washington and in reports.

So far, the State, Justice and Defense departments and the FBI and National Security Council all have given the Nazi War Crimes Interagency Working Group some 8 million pages of formerly classified material, in what group members say is the largest governmentwide document declassification since the Kennedy assassination.

But Maloney and members of the working group say that although the CIA has released 1.2 million pages, largely from its predecessor organization, the Office of Strategic Services, otherwise the agency has harmed their efforts to achieve an accurate historical record of the period.

A CIA spokesman told JTA that the agency had acknowledged having maintained relationships with war criminals and "provided a general description of the operational tasks those individuals were asked to perform."

The "CIA has not withheld any materials identified in its files related to the commission of war crimes," the spokesman said, requesting that his name not be used.

But Maloney said the CIA is keeping what could amount to hundreds of thou-

sands of pages of relevant documents under wraps.

The CIA is "thumbing its nose at Congress, at the survivors of the Holocaust, at Americans who despise and abhor everything that the Nazis stood for," said Elizabeth Holtzman, a former member of Congress who is a working group member.

Members of the group — which includes, among others, representatives of the CIA, FBI and Defense department — would not speculate about the reasons behind the CIA's apparent noncompliance, nor would they say how many names were on a list of Nazis they

presented to the CIA on Feb. 10, 2004.

The 1998 legislation offers agencies certain exemptions that would allow them to withhold documents. In such an instance, the agency would be required to let Congress know why it was not divulging particular documents. The CIA, working group members said, has not done so.

The CIA spokesman said the agency expects to report to Congress soon.

Thomas Baer, a former federal prosecutor and a member of the working group, said information pertaining to U.S. recruitment of war criminals could have very practical applications today.

America is "now recruiting a lot of spies," he said. "But the character of the person that is being recruited — his or her motivations, their integrity — must play a role in making a determination with whether to use them.

"Here, they consorted, dealt with, paid, used, some of the lowest forms of humanity in world history. And you know, when you lie down with dogs, you get up with fleas."

Michael Miller, executive vice president of the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, said the working group's demand for documents is an effort to "bring some closure, not only in terms of justice for those who were wronged during World War II, and of course for the 6 million Jews and others who perished during the war, "but also some closure to this ugly period in world history."

'Our government has protected its cozy relationship with the Nazi war criminals for far too long.'
Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-N.Y.)

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

Abrams named to post

President Bush promoted his top Middle East adviser.

In a statement Wednesday, Bush named Elliott Abrams deputy national security adviser for global democracy strategy as well as deputy assistant to the president.

That places Abrams, who is Jewish, at the forefront of Bush's second-term strategy to democratize the Middle East.

Since 2002, Abrams has been Bush's senior National Security Council adviser on the Middle East.

There was much speculation about Abrams' second-term role; naming him to a post that would have to be confirmed by the Senate — such as ambassador to Israel or deputy secretary of state — was seen as unlikely, given that he was convicted in 1991 of misleading Congress about his role in the arms-to-Iran scandal.

Bush's father later pardoned him.

Bush cites Jewish tsunami relief

President Bush touted a Jewish organization's work in providing tsunami relief in a speech at the National Prayer Breakfast.

Bush used the speech Thursday morning to acknowledge the faith community's "spirit of prayer and service," and acknowledged the work that several religious groups, including the American Jewish World Service, have done in raising money for relief from December's tsunami.

"Look at the list of organizations bringing relief to the people from Indonesia to Sri Lanka," Bush said. "They're full of religious names."

Immigration bill would ban PLO

A provision buried in proposed immigration legislation that is garnering support in the U.S. House of Representatives would designate any PLO official a terrorist.

Introduced last week by Rep. James Sensenbrenner (R-Wis.), the legislation is best known for its proposal to standardize the issuance of driver's licenses as a means of limiting illegal immigration.

Deep in the lengthy bill is a provision that would consider "an alien who is an officer, official, representative, or spokesman of the Palestine Liberation Organization" as "engaged in a terrorist activity."

That effectively would keep Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas from visiting the United States, as he is also chairman of the PLO.

The proposed legislation so far has garnered 125 sponsors in the House and has received much positive media attention.

Washington paper apologizes for ad

The Washington Times apologized for an ad that denigrated Israel and non-Christians. The newspaper's vice president and general manager, Richard Amberg, apologized in a letter to the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington after the ad appeared Jan. 20, the Washington Jewish Week reported.

The ad, paid for by Stan Rittenhouse, author of "Fear of the Jews," said "Israel and her Zionists are not a friend to Christianity, Christians or Christ!" Amberg said procedures in place to screen sensitive ads were not followed.

College, JTS link up

A U.S. liberal arts college established an alliance with the Jewish Theological Seminary.

Dickinson College in Pennsylvania will allow students to take classes in Jewish studies at JTS in New York.

The program was developed on the initiative of Yale Asbell, a Dickinson trustee and member of JTS' board.

Dickinson also has been a pioneer in offering scholarships to promising Jewish students from South America.

MIDDLE EAST

A farewell to arms?

Israel and the Palestinian Authority could declare an end to four years of fighting at next Tuesday's summit in Egypt.

"I hope that there will be an official declaration of an armistice, on the cessation of all acts of violence," Israeli Vice Premier Shimon Peres told Army Radio on Thursday, referring to the upcoming meeting in Sharm el-Sheik between Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.

Palestinian officials echoed Peres' call. "God willing," the declaration "will happen," Abbas told reporters in Ramallah.

Israeli soldiers attacked

Four Israeli soldiers were wounded in a drive-by shooting in the West Bank.

One of the soldiers injured in Thursday night's attack near Heron is in moderate condition, the Jerusalem Post reported.

Earlier, a Palestinian was killed by soldiers after he threw hand grenades and shot at an Israeli vehicle traveling on a road in the Gaza Strip.

Israeli soldiers also arrested a Palestinian teen carrying a suicide-bomb belt.

Tomb access OK'd

Israel's top court backed a road linking Jerusalem to a Jewish shrine in Bethlehem.

On Thursday, the High Court of Justice rejected a petition by Palestinians in the West Bank city arguing that the secure highway Israel plans to build between the capital and Rachel's Tomb unjustly blocks off access to their lands.

The High Court said that the safety of Jewish pilgrims seeking to pray at the shrine in north Bethlehem took precedence over the convenience of the residents.

Rachel's Tomb has been a regular flashpoint of violence.

WORLD

Synagogue vandalized in Ukraine

Several windows were shattered and a swastika was spray-painted on a synagogue in Ukraine.

No one was hurt in Tuesday's attack in Ivano-Frankovsk.

Local police are investigating the case, but no arrests have been reported.

According to leaders of the local Jewish community, it wasn't the first act of anti-Semitic vandalism in Ivano-Frankovsk in recent years.

Local leaders protested the police description of this week's incident as a case of minor hooliganism.

Prime minister of Georgia mourned

Chabad mourned the loss of the prime minister of the former Soviet republic of Georgia.

Zurab Zhvania, who had Jewish roots, died Thursday in Tbilisi, apparently from gas leaked from a faulty heater.

One of Georgia's leading rabbis, Avraham Mikhailashvili, met with Zhvania's mother, who is Jewish, to express his condolences.

Zhvania was known as a supporter of religious freedom.