

## IN THE NEWS

**Syria's hand seen in blast**

Israel linked Syria to a Palestinian suicide bombing that killed four people last Friday in Tel Aviv.

The Palestinian terrorist group Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the bombing. [Story, Pg. 3]

**JCPA plenum opens in Washington**

The outgoing director of a Jewish umbrella organization said she wants "a lot more outrage."

Speaking at the opening of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs' plenum in Washington on Sunday, Hannah Rosenthal said the Jewish community must speak out more about injustices.

"When self-interest or powerful interests try to silence you, it is safe to assume that it is the most important time to speak up," said Rosenthal, who will leave the organization next month. "We must continue to speak up for prophetic values."

The three-day conference of the umbrella group of federation-affiliated Jewish community relations councils is expected to focus on social action issues.

Several senators, including Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.) and John McCain (R-Ariz.), will address the conference Tuesday.

**Russian cleric reassures Jews**

The head of the Russian Orthodox church said the Jewish community can count on his support in the fight against anti-Semitism.

Patriarch Alexi II made his comments to Rabbi Zinoviy Kogan of Moscow in the wake of recent developments — including an anti-Semitic letter from Russian lawmakers and controversial national TV shows with an anti-Semitic tone — that heightened fears among Russian Jews.

"We will do whatever it takes to make sure that these winds no longer blow" in Russia, Alexi II told Kogan, president of the Congress of Jewish Religious Organizations and Communities of Russia.



# WORLD REPORT

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

## Argentine officials to admit that AMIA probe was botched

By LARRY LUXNER

**B**UENOS AIRES (JTA) — More than 10 years after the headquarters of Argentina's largest Jewish center was destroyed by a car bomb, the Argentine government will admit that previous administrations mishandled the initial investigation and may even have destroyed key evidence in the case.

Foreign Minister Rafael Bielsa, Justice Minister Horacio Rosatti and other top officials designated by President Nestor Kirchner are to travel to Washington to testify March 4 before the Organization of American States' Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

A day earlier, Kirchner is to hand-deliver top-secret files from SIDE, Argentina's equivalent of the CIA, to Alberto Nisman and Marcelo Martinez Burgos, prosecutors leading the AMIA investigation, in an elaborate ceremony at the Casa de Gobierno in downtown Buenos Aires.

The files reportedly contain evidence never before seen by prosecutors attempting to get to the bottom of the July 1994 bombing of the AMIA headquarters, which killed 85 people and wounded some 300.

"This is unprecedented," AMIA President Abraham Kaul told JTA last Friday. "This is the first time in history that any country will declare itself guilty for not having investigated a terrorist attack properly. They're also going to blame the ex-president for covering up."

Sources told JTA that the officials will acknowledge that the government of former President Carlos Menem botched the probe.

In doing so, Kirchner hopes to differentiate himself from Menem, who categorically denied all accusations that the investigation was a farce.

The Kirchner government has established a special investigative unit under Justice Ministry official Alejandro Rua. That will open the way for eventual compensation for victims and their families.

Nevertheless, "there's a lot of skepticism in the Jewish community," Kaul said.

"The people don't believe in anything," he said. "Many feel that they'll never find those responsible for the attack."

The skepticism arises from a series of blunders — some intentional, some not — that have been associated with the probe since the beginning.

Last September, after a three-year trial, five police officers were freed after the court determined that they were not involved in the AMIA bombing and that evidence against them had been obtained illegally by Judge Juan Jose Galeano.

Galeano was suspended from his duties as a magistrate and now faces a trial of his own for mishandling the investigation.

"The police had nothing to do with it," said Kaul, who is convinced there was an Iranian and/or Syrian connection to the attack.

Separately, Kaul and other Jewish leaders were outraged last October, when Interpol suspended its search for 12 Iranian suspects believed to be linked to the bombing, even though the Argentine government had requested their capture.

"Interpol said there wasn't sufficient  
*Continued on page 2*

**FOCUS  
ON  
ISSUES**

## ■ *It botched AMIA probe, Argentina will admit*

*Continued from page 1*

proof, that it was all a lie, so AMIA denounced the fact that Interpol had stopped looking for them," said Kaul, interviewed at the office of his Buenos Aires travel agency. "Last week, I told reporters that the Foreign Ministry wasn't making much of an effort to look for the Iranians, so Bielsa told Pagina 12," an influential Buenos Aires daily, "that I tell lies and that I do it only to appear in the newspapers."

Investigators are pursuing more than a dozen lines of investigation, including possible links to alleged Hezbollah terrorist cells in the notorious "Triple Frontier" area where Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay meet.

Another hypothesis concerns Mohsen Rabbani, the former cultural attache at the Iranian Embassy in Buenos Aires, and Samuel el-Rida, a Colombian convert to Islam who was married to Rabbani's private secretary.

"I agree more with the idea that officials of the Iranian Embassy were responsible, along with other people in Argentina," Kaul said. "They were involved not only in the AMIA attack but also the bombing of the Israeli Embassy" in 1992, in which 29 people died.

Burgos, who along with Nisman is acting as an independent prosecutor in the case, said the Triple Frontier theory "is only one of the lines of investigation" his office is pursuing.

"For more than 10 years a series of irregularities was committed that finally culminated in an oral trial in

which the court found that things were done wrong, evidence was planted and people who had nothing to do with the attack were blamed," Burgos told JTA.

"We answer to the judicial branch, and Rua answers to the executive branch. We understand that under Argentina's national constitution, the only ones who should be in control of this investigation are us."

Pablo Jacoby, a Buenos Aires lawyer who represents Memoria Activa, a victims' association, first brought a petition before the OAS in 1998, along with fellow attorney Alberto Zuppy. He expects to attend the early March hearing in Washington.

"We went to an outside forum because we could see that the case was going nowhere with the Menem government," said Jacoby, who took over as principal lawyer for Memoria Activa after Zuppy left Argentina in 2002. "In succeeding governments there was little change in the investigation, so we have continually pursued the case."

The OAS had an observer at each session of the three-year AMIA trial, he said.

"We do note a change in the Kirchner government. They have responded slowly but positively to a number of our requests," Jacoby told JTA.

"However, I still say we'll have to take a wait-and-see attitude to the form in which the government makes its mea culpa to the commission. We are hopeful, but I think it's too early to say that we'll

drop our official presentation before the OAS."

According to local media, the Argentine government is said to be considering a total revamping of the nation's security services in order to prevent new terrorist attacks, as well as compensation to victims and their families under new legislation, which will be called the AMIA Victims' Law.

*(JTA Correspondent Joe Goldman in Buenos Aires contributed to this story.)*

**'This is the first time in history that any country will declare itself guilty for not having investigated a terrorist attack properly.'**

**Abraham Kaul**  
AMIA President

## Canadian court backs Zundel deportation

TORONTO (JTA) — A Canadian federal judge upheld the validity of a Cabinet document deeming Holocaust denier Ernst Zundel a threat to national security, clearing the way for his deportation to Germany.

Justice Pierre Blais determined that Zundel is "one of the world's most prominent distributors of revisionist neo-Nazi propaganda" and a dangerous mentor for "the violent, racist, right-wing movement."

In a 63-page ruling released Thursday afternoon, Blais blasted Zundel's credibility and declared that his intention, reflected in many documents over the years, is "to destabilize the legal and legitimate democratic government of Germany."

A long-time resident of Canada, Zundel moved to the United States in 2000, but American immigration officials deported him back to Canada in February 2003 and he has been in detention since. He faces outstanding charges of inciting hatred in his native Germany.

"I think the Jewish community breathes a sigh of relief today because one of its long-time anti-Semitic tormentors will finally be ejected from this country," said Bernie Farber, CEO of the Canadian Jewish Congress, which long has pursued Zundel through the legal system.

"It is time for Zundel's plane to take off," said Frank Dimant, executive vice-president of B'nai Brith Canada.

**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) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at [www.jta.org](http://www.jta.org).  
© JTA. Reproduction only with permission.

**THIS WEEK****MONDAY**

■ The World Jewish Congress hosts a two-day Jewish-Catholic conference. The academic symposium at New York's Museum of Jewish Heritage will be followed by a tour of Jewish organizations in New York.

**TUESDAY**

■ Jews around the world gather for Daf Yomi's Siyum HaShas, which marks the culmination of the seven and a half year cycle of daily Talmud study. The celebration will take place in some 75 communities around the world. To coincide with the siyum, Jewish unity will be promoted through celebrations around the world. Jewish Unity Live 2005 will provide entertainment and speakers to gatherings of Jews in North America and beyond. The unity celebration is chaired by Mortimer Zuckerman. It honors the Jewish people's commitment to a shared heritage, discovered through Jewish learning and exploration.

■ Bnai Zion honors the Israel Women's Network, an advocacy group that works for women's rights in Israel, as an Israeli delegation of high-profile politicians and leaders arrive in New York for the 49th annual UN Commission on the Status of Women.

**WEDNESDAY**

■ The U.S. Supreme Court considers two cases dealing with the public display on government property of the 10 Commandments. Jewish groups are watching the case, with many concerned about the impact the ruling will have on other displays around the country.

**FRIDAY**

■ The National Jewish Outreach Program's Shabbat Across America/Canada estimates that it will bring Shabbat to tens of thousands of people at about 600 places across North America, as well as to U.S. soldiers on active duty around the world.

■ Nearly 300 young Jewish leaders, from 25 to 45 years old, convene in Atlanta for the three-day United Jewish Communities Eastern Leadership Conference. The young leaders, members of Jewish federations in the northeast, southeast and central United States, will learn leadership skills and fund-raising tactics.

**SUNDAY**

■ Mercaz USA holds its biennial general membership meeting, the General Council, in Houston, in conjunction with the annual Rabbinical Assembly convention and quarterly United Synagogue Board meeting. Mercaz USA is the Conservative movement's Zionist arm.

# Ties strain after blast in Tel Aviv

By DAN BARON

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Israeli officials talked tough in response to a suicide bombing in a Tel Aviv nightclub, but they resisted declaring an end to a cease-fire.

Last Friday night's attack on the Stage killed four people and wounded more than 50, turning the usually raucous Tel Aviv beachfront promenade into a nightmare of blood and debris.

"Quiet — Blown Apart," was the headline in Israel's leading daily Yediot Achronot. That "quiet" was the calming of violence ushered in by the Feb. 8 cease-fire declared by Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.

"While the State of Israel seeks to advance toward an accord with the Palestinians, there will be no diplomatic progress — I repeat, no diplomatic progress — until the Palestinians take robust action to wipe out the terror groups and their infrastructure in the Palestinian Authority's territory," Sharon told his Cabinet on Sunday.

Israel's restraint stemmed, in part, from the outrage shown by the Palestinian Authority at an attack whose origins were abroad.

The bomber was a 21-year-old Palestinian from the city of Tulkarm, acting in the name of Islamic Jihad.

But the terrorist group's own leaders in the West Bank and Gaza Strip denied any involvement in the bombing, which violated their truce talks with Abbas. Then came a claim from Islamic Jihad's Beirut branch, a proxy of its Damascus headquarters.

"Syria continues to give amnesty to terror groups and encourages them to carry out attacks, which endangers the peace process with the Palestinians and regional stability," Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz said after meeting with security chiefs.

Syria denied any involvement in the attack.

In apparent agreement with Mofaz, Abbas blamed a "third side" for the bombing

and vowed a crackdown by the Palestinian Authority.

"We will bring them to justice. We will not allow anyone to sabotage the ambitions of our people. Those who carried out the attack are terrorists," Abbas told reporters. "There is a third party which wants to sabotage" the peace process.

Despite Abbas' strong language — the word "terrorists" is rare in Palestinian rhetoric — Sharon hinted that his patience was limited.

"Recently, the State of Israel has shown restraint in order to facilitate progress," he said. "But it is clear that if the Palestinians do not begin to take robust action against terrorism, Israel will be compelled to step up military activity that is designed to protect the lives of Israeli citizens."

The attack could also hinder any ad-

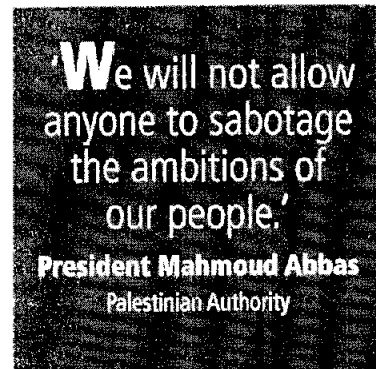
ditional release of Palestinian prisoners. Israel recently released 500 of them and has said it would free another 400, but Israeli Cabinet minister Tzipi Livni told Palestinian officials that Israel did not want another meeting of the joint committee that sets the criteria for releases.

President Bush reacted strongly to the bombing as well. "Such brutal attacks that kill and wound innocent Israelis cannot be tolerated by the Israeli people," he said.

"Nor should they be tolerated by the Palestinian people, for such attacks undermine their hopes for a better future."

Israel's deputy defense minister, Ze'ev Boim, said Israel could resume its assassinations of Islamic Jihad leaders — a move that most Palestinians would view as a violation of the truce — or even strike Syria, as it did when it bombed a terrorist training base outside Damascus in October 2003 in response to a Palestinian suicide attack.

"Action by us against Syria is certainly a possibility," Boim told Israel Radio. If Syria's president, Bashar Assad "needs another hint from us, then he will get it, of course."



## NEWS IN BRIEF

### MIDDLE EAST

#### Abdullah to visit Israel?

Jordan's King Abdullah may visit Israel soon.

Abdullah intends to visit with both Israeli and Palestinian officials in the coming weeks. Israeli officials told Israel Army Radio that a visit has been discussed but a date has not been set.

#### Syria to withdraw troops

Syria said it would redeploy troops as calls mount for an end to its occupation of Lebanon.

Israel long has called on Syria to end its occupation of Lebanon, and Lebanese opposition figures and world leaders have increased such calls since the assassination earlier this month of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, which Lebanese opposition figures blame on Syria.

No timetable was given for the pullback, and it remains unclear whether the redeployment to eastern Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, near the Syrian border, is the first stage of a full withdrawal.

The move came as a United Nations team began an inquiry Friday into the assassination.

#### Sharon to visit Tunisia

Ariel Sharon accepted an invitation to visit Tunisia.

Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali invited the Israeli prime minister on Friday, and Sharon accepted.

The November trip would be the first trip by an Israeli leader to the North African country, which for years hosted the Palestine Liberation Organization.

#### Shabbat not OK for Iraqis

Iraqi students protested getting a second day off from school that coincided with the Jewish Sabbath.

"We don't want Saturday. It's a Jewish holiday," the students chanted last week in a rally in Bakouba, northeast of Baghdad, The Associated Press reported.

Many groups are calling for Thursday to be the second day off.

In many Shiite districts of Baghdad, schools were filled on Saturday, the AP said.

#### Ex-Cabinet minister admits smuggling

A former Israeli energy minister confessed to trying to smuggle drugs.

Gonen Segev admitted trying to bring 32,000 Ecstasy pills into Israel under a forged diplomatic passport as part of a plea bargain Sunday, and will be sentenced to five years in prison.

Segev, who was arrested last year, previously had denied the smuggling charge.

He was prosecuted separately for credit-card fraud.

Segev was a member of a right-wing political party that joined the government of Yitzhak Rabin in the 1990s.

#### Israeli named 'Mrs. World'

An Israeli was named the world's most beautiful married woman. Sima Bachar, 28, was crowned "Mrs. World" on Saturday after beating 54 other beauties with wedding bands at the contest held in India.

When asked during the final round if she found anything about the pageant to be difficult, the acting student from Tel Aviv said, "Not having my daughter, Leah, with me."

### NORTH AMERICA

#### Canada renews funding for war crimes program

Canada's new federal budget renews the country's commitment to a program to identify, denaturalize and deport Nazi war criminals.

The budget outlines an investment in the War Crimes Program of U.S. \$12.6 million annually for the next five years.

Ed Morgan, national president of the Canadian Jewish Congress, applauded the move and urged the government to proceed with more WWII-era cases "while the window of opportunity still exists."

The Jewish group also commended the government for allocating U.S. \$45 million over the next five years for an Action Plan Against Racism.

"We expect that this initiative will include an action plan to deal with anti-Semitism, which, sadly, is the blueprint for racism to this very day," Morgan said.

The government also announced it will spend U.S. \$20 million over the next three years for commemorative and educational programs aimed at teaching Canadians about dark episodes in the country's history involving ethnic or cultural communities.

The group called for an historical marker to be placed in Halifax harbor commemorating Canada's refusal in 1939 to allow the St. Louis, a ship carrying 937 Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany, to land.

The ship returned to Europe and most of the passengers eventually died in the Holocaust.

#### Neo-Nazis to have new day in court

Canada's Supreme Court ordered a new trial for six members of a neo-Nazi and white supremacist group.

The Canadian Jewish Congress said it was "very pleased" about developments in what has become known as the "Roma Case."

The accused held a demonstration outside a Toronto motel in 1997 to protest the presence of a group of recently arrived Roma, or gypsy, refugees from the Czech Republic who were being housed by Canadian immigration authorities.

The defendants were charged with promoting hatred against the Roma, but were acquitted after the defense argued that the evidence presented referred only to gypsies and not to Roma.

The acquittals were upheld in two higher courts in 2002 and 2003.

"We felt very strongly from the beginning that a dramatic change was required in this case, and believe that the Crown will easily prove in a new trial that hate was a motivating factor for the defendants," said Joel Richler, chairman of the congress' Ontario region.

### WORLD

#### German right-winger gets probation

A right-wing extremist politician in Germany who said the Talmud condones sex with children recently received probation.

Claus Cremer, deputy chairman of the North Rhine-Westphalia branch of the National Democratic Party of Germany, was sentenced to three years of probation for anti-Semitic agitation.

Cremer had demonstrated against the construction of a new synagogue in Bochum last summer, repeating the falsehood that the Talmud condones sexual relations with 3-year-old girls.

The Information Service Against Right-Wing Extremism reported that Cremer said, "If that's what's being taught in synagogues, I don't want to have synagogues either in Bochum or anywhere else in the world."

Prosecutors had hoped for an 18-month jail sentence, but in the end the court chose probation.