


**IN THE NEWS**
**Gaza for the Galilee**

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said Israel's planned withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and northern West Bank will further Zionism.

"Leaving Gaza is the future of Zionism," Sharon said Thursday at a conference on fostering development in the Galilee and other underpopulated areas of Israel.

"The disengagement plan does not just entail withdrawing from Gaza, but also strengthening settlement in the Galilee, Negev and greater Jerusalem."

The 8,000 settlers slated for removal this summer from Gaza and four West Bank settlements have been encouraged to relocate to the Galilee and Negev.

**Rockets are fired on Sderot**

Palestinians in the Gaza Strip fired rockets into an Israeli border town.

There were no casualties from Thursday's salvo on Sderot, but one rocket hit a town square and another damaged a truck.

Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility, saying the rockets were revenge for Israel's arrest of two Islamic Jihad terrorists in the West Bank city of Jenin.

**Hamas gets Europe's ear?**

The European Union reportedly is holding low-level contacts with Hamas.

Ha'aretz reported Thursday that E.U. representatives had informed the United States of the change to a longstanding policy of officially shunning the Palestinian terrorist group.

There was no immediate comment from Brussels, but Hamas confirmed that junior E.U. diplomats have met with its politicians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Visiting Israel early this month, British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said his country would not hold talks with Hamas as long it continues to seek Israel's destruction.

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# WORLD REPORT

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Dina Kraft

Dr. Shulamit Levenberg examines samples of embryonic stem cells in her lab at the Technion.

## Stem-cell researchers in Israel warily eye debate in Washington

By DINA KRAFT

**H**AIFA (JTA) — Dr. Shulamit Levenberg pulls out a dish of human embryonic stem cells from an incubator and carefully places them under a microscope to see how they are beginning to take form as human tissue.

Levenberg, a researcher at the Technion University in Haifa, is working on cutting-edge tissue engineering research with the help of human embryonic stem cells — research that she hopes will eventually lead to the creation of lab-manufactured tissues and organs for transplants.

These days, Israeli scientists who have helped pioneer the field of embryonic stem-

cell research are warily eying Washington, where a showdown is brewing between the U.S. Congress and the White House over federal policy on research in the field.

A bill passed in May by the U.S. House of Representatives seeks to expand government funding for embryonic stem-cell research and now is set to go to the Senate. President Bush has threatened to veto the legislation, which would expand the number of research lines of stem cells eligible for federal funding.

According to current law, funding is available only to research lines that existed in 2001 and before.

Developments in Washington are a cause of concern for Israeli scientists because if

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**BEHIND THE HEADLINES**

## ■ Washington's stem-cell debate could have repercussions in Israel

*Continued from page 1*

research funding in the United States decreases, there will be less of a pool for funding worldwide.

"It may affect progress in the field if Bush stopped the process of more liberal funding," said Dr. Binyamin Reubinoff, who heads the Hadassah Embryonic Stem Cell Research Center. "It has an influence on scientists and the availability for money for research."

In the United States, there has been opposition to embryonic stem cell research from some Catholics and conservative Christian groups who link it to human cloning and abortion.

Furthermore, Bush and his supporters claim that life is being destroyed by using the stem cells because embryos are destroyed in the process of the research.

American Jewish groups across the religious and political spectrum have joined together to advocate for more stem-cell research.

And in Israel, following the dictates of Jewish law that do not view the embryo as potential life until it is inside the uterus of an expectant mother, such research is not controversial.

"In Israel the attitudes are much more positive," said Levenberg, who herself is an observant Jew. "Here it is not thought of as killing the cells but of using them to save life."

Researchers are eager to use embryonic stem cells, which appear just days after fertilization, because the cells have the ability to develop into body tissue.

Theoretically, once the DNA of such cells is successfully manipulated in the lab, they can one day be transplanted into humans to help treat a wide range of diseases, among them neurodegenerative disorders such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases and Multiple Sclerosis, as well as heart failure, diabetes and other conditions.

In Israel funding for research is scarce and researchers rely heavily on grants from abroad.

The Hadassah Embryonic Stem Cell Research Center has been one of the leading labs for stem-cell research internationally. Hadassah, in cooperation with universities in Australia and Singapore, was the second group in the world to derive stem cells from human embryos.

The group produced six of the human embryonic stem-cell lines that are currently available for federally funded research in the United States. Some of these lines are among those that are distributed to labs researching stem cells around the world.

In Jerusalem, Reubinoff's team at Hadassah found that by implanting human stem cells into the brains of rats, some symptoms of Parkinson's disease are alleviated. The discovery, announced last year, gives some hope to the millions around the world who suffer from the disease because it may pave the way for using embryonic stem cells as a treatment.

Along with the Technion and Hadassah, the Hebrew University is the other cutting-edge research leader in the embryonic stem-cell research field in Israel.

Recently, Hebrew University's Dr. Nissim Benvenisty went to Capitol Hill together with several other U.S. researchers to brief lawmakers in the House and the Senate about embryonic stem-cell research.

A professor of genetics and the head of the stem-cell unit department at the life sciences institute at Hebrew University, Benvenisty presented new data from his lab as he tried to convince the lawmakers that embryonic stem-cell research, properly regulated, was the responsible scientific way to go.

Benvenisty's research team was the

first to genetically manipulate human embryonic stem cells and in doing so, found that such cells have a lower chance of being rejected by the body than other cells, he said.

His lab is also involved in taking diseased embryos that were discarded during in vitro fertilization treatments and studying them in order to better understand the diseases they carry.

He recalls getting word that he and his lab would be able to use human embryonic

stem cells for the first time. Previously they had been limited to the embryonic stem cells of mice.

"I literally could not sleep at night," said Benvenisty. "We are in special days where we can do real pioneering research; we call it 'the cell that can do everything.'"

"It can generate every cell in our body," he said, while at the same time it is involved in so many aspects of human medicine.

"I am sure it will revolutionize the way we will do research and also transplantation medicine."

In her lab at the Technion in Haifa, Levenberg describes the process she and her team are undertaking to help create human tissue — a technique she learned while doing post-doctoral work at M.I.T. in Boston.

They have created sponge-like structures out of biodegradable scaffolds made from a combination of polymers. On those scaffolds they attach cells and by exposing them to certain hormones, are trying to grow specific types of tissues, including skin and cartilage.

Levenberg and other researchers credit Israel for quickly assembling regulations and guidelines that helped enable their research.

In 2001 the Bioethics Committee of the National Committee of Science wrote the regulations that now govern the research in Israel. It stipulates what kind of embryos could be used for research and how consent should be procured from families who were no longer using the embryos as part of in vitro fertilization treatments.

Since then, the guidelines have been studied around the world by other countries attempting to set their policies for such research.

**'We are in special days where we can do real pioneering research; we call it "the cell that can do everything."**

**Dr. Nissim Benvenisty**  
Hebrew University

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# Beslan survivors find R&R at Jewish summer camp

By RUTH ELLEN GRUBER

SZARVAS, Hungary (JTA)— In T-shirts, jeans and sneakers, the children chowing down on kosher chicken in a brightly decorated dining hall looked like kids at any other Jewish summer camp.

They clowned a little, linked arms and swayed to after-lunch songs and cheered when a teenage girl was hoisted on a chair to celebrate her birthday.

But these kids were different.

The 75 boys and girls were survivors of the bloody terrorist siege and massacre last September that took the lives of more than 300 people at a school in the town of Beslan, in southern Russia.

Aged 7 to 18, most of the kids had lost a brother, sister or parent in the carnage, and many had themselves suffered serious injuries during the three-day ordeal.

None of them was Jewish, and few even knew anything about Jews or Judaism.

But thanks to the initiative of one of Russia's two chief rabbis, Adolf Shayevich, they were brought to Hungary this month for a week of rest and recuperation at the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation/American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee International Jewish Summer Camp at Szarvas.

Hosted by the JDC, they participated in a specially designed program that integrated traditional summer camp activities such as sports, arts and crafts and informal education with ongoing post-trauma therapy.

"We are trying to make them feel normal again," said Sasha Piatigorsky, program director of the Moscow Jewish Religious Community, who accompanied the children and helped coordinate their stay. "The best thing that happens is when they smile."

The children don't want to talk about what happened during the siege, he said, but they're still coping with its aftermath.

"They behave normally and feel good, but sometimes you will see them crying for no reason," he said. "And some of the girls don't smile, because they lost their teeth in the attack."

The Beslan crisis erupted on Sept. 1, 2004, the first day of school, when terrorists stormed the school and took more than 1,000 people hostage, including students, parents and teachers.

They wired the building with explosives, murdered some of the hostages and herded

hundreds more into a gymnasium, where they were held under appalling conditions.

The siege ended in a bloody shootout that left at least 330 dead, more than half of them children.

The Szarvas trip was part of a broader program called Jewish Families for the Benefit of the Children of Beslan, which was initiated by KEROOR, the Congress of Jewish Religious Organizations and Communities of Russia soon after the massacre.

JDC's involvement is part of its ongoing non-sectarian programs, which have included coordinating visits to Beslan by Israeli trauma specialists.

Piatigorsky said arrangements for the trip to Szarvas had been underway for months.

"After meeting with people in Beslan we realized that the main thing the children needed was to be in a safe place, where they can feel that there are more good people than not-so-good people in the world," he said.

The largest Jewish camp in Europe, Szarvas opened in 1990 and now hosts about 2,000 children from dozens of countries each summer.

Owned by the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation and operated by the JDC, it has developed rich programming, infrastructure and a trained professional staff. Piatigorsky himself worked for several years as a madrich, or counselor.

Funding for the trip came from a variety of sources, including donations from some 250 Jewish families in Russia. Several Russian singers cut a special CD, which was sold to raise money for the trip.

Each day in Szarvas, the children took part in a range of activities that taught them about different cultures and countries, from Japan to Egypt to Israel.

"I loved the Japanese evening," said Marina, 14, who was sporting big hoop earrings.

"I feel much safer here,

and am finding many friends," she added. "It helps me forget what happened."

Ina, 16, agreed that the week at Szarvas was helping her cope.

"I wish no kid anywhere in the world would even see what we saw," she said. "Szarvas is making me feel much more comfortable and to realize that life can go on. Here, we are not thinking about what happened there."

Rita Kusova, an adult leader who accompanied the children, agreed that the combination of

physical and mental stimulation at Szarvas, and the structured programming, were extremely beneficial to the children.

"It's helping them get healthy again, not with medicine but with programs and rehabilitation," she said.

She said going back to school next fall would be a big hurdle for the kids.

"This will be very, very problematic for the kids — and it will be very difficult, too, for the whole city," she said.

Kusova, like the children, had virtually no knowledge or contact with Jews or the Jewish world before the trip.

"Now I hope that we can keep the connection and broaden it," she said. "Because we really feel that we've known each other for a long time. We feel like family now and we don't want to lose the connection."

'I wish no kid anywhere in the world would even see what we saw.'

Ina

Teenage Beslan survivor



Ruth Ellen Gruber

Survivors of the Beslan school terror attack sing songs during a meal in the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation/American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's summer camp in Szarvas, Hungary, on June 8.

# Burying the dead: Volunteers join chevra kadishas

By CHANAN TIGAY

NEW YORK (JTA) — The call came in the late afternoon: A Jew has been killed in a car crash. The body is lying in a nearby funeral home, waiting to be prepped for burial. Can you get over here tonight?

Jackie Stromer remembers his first glimpse of the victim.

"He looked totally serene," said Stromer, who works with a New Jersey Jewish burial society. "Like he was taking a nap."

What Stromer could not see was the massive trauma the impact had inflicted beneath the surface.

"We were told in no uncertain terms that if we removed his jeans, we'd take off a leg," Stromer said.

That raised a question: According to Jewish custom, a person should not be buried wearing or bearing any of their possessions.

The deceased are normally clothed only in traditional, pocketless burial garments known as tachrichim.

But Stromer said the decision was simple: The man was buried in his dungarees, with traditional burial pants laid over them.

"If by the removal of their clothing you're going to, in fact, dismember the body, you don't do it," he said.

That was in keeping with what's known as kavod ha'met, or respect for the dead, which those involved in chevra kadisha burial societies say is their primary concern.

"The considerations are generally as follows," Stromer said. "You want to gather up any blood that came out at the time of death" and bury it along with the body. "You want to bury as intact a body as you possibly can, and you want to follow all the prescribed rituals as closely as you possibly can. That's the hierarchy in which you operate."

Whether they're Orthodox, Reform, Conservative or Reconstructionist, Jews across the board are forming a growing number of chevra kadisha groups throughout the United States and Canada.

According to several participants at a recent chevra kadisha conference organized by Kavod v'Nichum — a group whose name is Hebrew for Respect and Comfort — Judaism's divergent streams, at odds on myriad issues of theology, ideology and practice, are finding common ground when it comes to caring for corpses between death and burial.

Indeed, participants say, the primary differences in ritual burial preparation — known as tahara — lie not between Orthodox and non-Orthodox chevras, but between groups from disparate geographic and ethnic backgrounds.

"I think it's one of the few areas of Judaism where Jews are pretty much united in practice," said Ira Feigenbaum, who is part of a chevra kadisha group in Hartford, Conn.

Hundreds of volunteer burial societies exist throughout North America, from small towns to big cities. Some are multid denominational, both because basic practice varies little between the denominations and, in the case of smaller locales, because there simply are too few Jews to be picky.

Participation in a tahara is considered to be among the highest forms of mitzvah, because recipients of the service can't thank those carrying it out.

"That's why it's chesed shel emet, the truest act of kindness," said Rabbi Joseph Ozarowski, the incoming rabbinic chaplain of the Jewish Healing Network of Chicago and author of "To Walk in God's Ways: Jew-

ish Pastoral Perspectives on Illness and Bereavement."

Taking part in a tahara is "intensely spiritual," said David Zinner, executive director of Kavod v'Nichum, which provides assistance, training and resources about Jewish death and bereavement practices throughout the United States and Canada.

"It connects people with a life-and-death process in a very intimate way and really helps them get in touch with God and with their own spirituality and mortality," he said. "It's the ultimate reality check."

In addition to spiritual concerns, tahara practitioners must deal on a frequent basis with the most practical — sometimes gruesome — elements of working with the dead. That was highlighted by a sampling of questions asked during a seminar on "Advanced Tahara" at the conference:

- If a bandage seems likely to rip the skin if it is removed, can it be left on the body?
- If a person has been killed in an auto accident and broken bones are protruding from the skin, can the burial garments be altered to fit around misshapen limbs?
- If a Foley catheter, held in place with a water-filled balloon in the bladder, remains fitted in a dead body, but proves tough to remove because it is still inflated, can it be left in for burial?
- If it seems likely that removal of a feeding tube or a tube in the neck will lead to bleeding, can it be left in?

"As far as I'm concerned, there is only one halacha when it comes to chevra kadishas, only one guiding principle: kavod ha'met," or respect for the dead, Stromer said. "Having treated that as your guid-

**P**reparing a body for burial is 'the ultimate reality check.'

**David Zinner**  
Kavod v'Nichum

**FOCUS ON ISSUES**



Chuck Chatlyne

Bruce Bloom, a chevra kadisha member from Los Angeles, demonstrates how to tie bows on traditional Jewish burial garments at the chevra kadisha conference in New York on June 6.

ing source, everything else is common sense.”

Each of these scenarios, in other words, ought to be dealt with on an ad-hoc basis, with respect for the deceased primary in the decision-making process.

For many years, chevra kadisha groups and taharas primarily were the domain of the Orthodox. But that has begun to change over the past 30 years — since the publication of Arnold Goodman’s “A Plain Pine Box” — as burial societies from across the religious spectrum have emerged.

In the past five to 10 years, insiders say, the number of non-Orthodox chevras has greatly expanded.

Some 170 people attended the Kavod v’Nichum conference, hailing from 25 U.S. states and three Canadian provinces. About 10 percent to 15 percent were Orthodox, 20 percent Reform or Reconstructionist, and about 50 percent Conservative, organizers said.

The rest were funeral directors, Jewish Family and Children’s Service workers, hospice representatives and the like.

While the figures don’t reflect the overall make up of North American chevras, which remain overwhelmingly Orthodox, insiders say they do reflect the growth of non-Orthodox chevras.

“The American funeral industry has not responded consistently well to the

ritual needs of American Jews in many ways,” said Rabbi Linda Holtzman, director of the department of practical rabbinics at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College near Philadelphia and leader of the local Reconstructionist chevra.

“What we have done as a Jewish community is take a ritual that we as a community used to be in control of and hand it over to outside professionals,” she said. “Doing taharas seems to be a way of reclaiming the community’s responsibility and role in taking care of someone, not just throughout his or her life but after death as well.” ■

For further information on chevra kadishas, visit [www.jewish-funerals.org](http://www.jewish-funerals.org).

## The many steps of preparing a body for Jewish burial

By CHANAN TIGAY

NEW YORK (JTA) — Aspects of tahara, the ritual burial preparation of a Jewish corpse, are drawn from the Bible, the Talmud, the Kabbalah and 17th-century Jewish manuals on dealing with the sick and dying.

Many of today’s chevras, or burial societies, use Rabbi Mosha Epstein’s “Tahara Manual of Practices,” about to come out in its third edition, as a guide.

But practitioners say the process is guided as much by tradition and local custom as by Jewish law.

Most taharas include several common elements. A chevra is most likely to perform a tahara in a funeral home, though some are done in houses, hospitals and elder-care centers.

First, any clothing remaining on the body is removed, along with other extraneous items, from medical tubes to bandages to nail polish.

The body is then washed. The head is cleaned first, followed by the person’s right front side, left front side, right back side and left back side.

Next comes the washing of the hands and feet, much as Jewish priests washed their hands and feet before entering the biblical tabernacle or offering sacrifices.

The actual ritual cleaning follows. Known as the tahara or the tisha kavim, it’s carried out in one of four ways: the body either is left lying down and propped up with boards; angled on a tilting table or held upright as chevra members pour three buckets of water onto it, starting at the head and running downward; or dunked in a mikvah.

At this point, some chevras will rub wine or vinegar into the corpse’s scalp and eyebrows. Some chevras, particularly older ones, will wet the hair with a beaten egg and work it in. These practices may originally have been used to enable the identification of bodies as Jewish prior to burial, and also could be rooted in kabbalistic symbolism.

Finally, the body is dressed in ritual burial garb — a hood, pocketless pants, a shirt, kittel, socks, a sash around the midsection — and placed in the casket. As it is being dressed, the Metaharim, the Hebrew term for those carrying out the tahara, will often sprinkle earth from Israel over

the body’s eyes, mouth, heart and genitals.

This practice is based both on the biblical axiom “Dust thou art and to dust thou shall return,” and on the age-old Jewish connection to Israel.

A number of prayers are said during the process, and the body is kept covered as completely as possible throughout. Once the tahara is done, the metaharim ask their subject’s forgiveness in case they’ve offended them or hurt them in any way.

Ideally, the body is not left alone between the time of death and burial. Shmira, or guarding the corpse, is another function often performed by members of a chevra kadisha. ■



Chuck Chatlynne

Louise Chatlynne and Rena Broditsky demonstrate the beginning of the tahara procedure on a live volunteer at the chevra kadisha conference in New York on June 6. During the actual prepping of the body for burial, the deceased’s face would be covered.

# Israel, U.S. clash on arms sale to China

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Israel's close defense ties to the United States could be harmed by a little-noticed provision, buried in a defense appropriations bill passed overwhelmingly last month by the U.S. House of Representatives, that penalizes nations that sell arms to China.

Pro-Israel and Israeli officials insist that the provision, which bans procurement for five years of defense items from any country that sells arms to China, targets European nations courting Asia's pre-eminent military power.

"Israel should not be a target of that legislation," said Tom Neumann, executive director of the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs.

But that doesn't mean Israel shouldn't be concerned, given the bill's broad language and Israel's status as the No. 2 seller of arms to China after Russia, according to a 2004 report by the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review.

A ban could cripple Israel's defense industry, which deals extensively with U.S. interests and which is a mainstay of Israel's economy.

Indeed, some say U.S. pressure over Israeli arms sales — such as to India, another source of contention — is motivated less by security concerns and more by fear that Israel might take arms business away from U.S. firms.

"It's more about competitiveness and less to do with China," Neumann said of the U.S. pressure on Israel.

Israel already is paying a price for its relationship with China: In April, it was frozen out of access to information about U.S. plans for its Joint Strike Fighter, a state-of-the-art combat aircraft due for production by 2012.

In a series of high-level meetings between the countries' defense establishments in recent months, Israeli officials have scrambled to assuage recent U.S. anger at Israeli deals with China.

"There's an ongoing dialogue taking place right now to resolve whatever outstanding issues exist, which we hope will be resolved very soon," said an Israeli spokesman who did not want to be further identified because of the sensitivity of the dialogue.

The spokesman pointed to a defense relationship that is thriving in many areas,

especially in the manufacture of the Arrow anti-missile missile.

Boeing and Israel Aircraft Industries toasted the Arrow's success this week at a cocktail party on Capitol Hill, an event attended by members of Congress who two weeks earlier had approved the controversial provision.

Pro-Israel lobbyists have a consistent track record of getting Congress to double administration funding requests for the Arrow project, the centerpiece of U.S.-Israel defense cooperation.

That would seem to underscore the claim that the House was aiming for Europe when it referred the bill to the Senate on May 25 in a 390-39 vote. Still, Israel would be unwise to ignore the consequences of continuing to deal with China, experts said.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

"Israel's policy of arms sales to China is disgraceful. This has always been a situation where Israel acts like France," said Danielle Pletka, a vice president of the American Enterprise Institute and for 10 years a senior staffer for Republicans on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

"We all understand their motivation: A homegrown defense industry is tough to finance, staying on the cutting edge is hard to pay for. But by the same token we could arm Syria and Lebanon or Iran," she said.

In fact, Israel long has complained about U.S. arms sales in the Arab world, but its concerns generally are overruled.

Michael O'Hanlon, a defense analyst at the Brookings Institution, echoed Pletka's remarks on Israel's relationship with China.

"Israel's actions are contributing to a reduction in U.S. security, and if that were ever widely perceived it would so radically change the Israel-U.S. relationship," O'Hanlon said.

The unanimity of anger has allowed the Pentagon in recent months to take punitive steps, including freezing Israel out of the Joint Strike Fighter project.

"There are some types of technology and information we're not comfortable sharing, while some issues can be worked out," Pen-

tagon spokesman Lawrence DiRita said in April.

Other measures include making Maj. Gen. Amos Yaron, the executive director of Israel's Defense Ministry who is seen as driving Israel's China sales, persona non grata.

Shaul Mofaz, the Israeli defense minister, flew to Washington in March to try to put out fires. He didn't get far: Instead of helping Yaron, he made Maj. Gen. Herzl Bodinger, a former air force commander, his point man with the Pentagon.

A central issue of contention was Israel's agreement to upgrade Harpy attack drones that it sold to China in the mid-1990s. The unmanned aircraft "detects, attacks and destroys enemy radar emitters, hitting them with high hit accuracy," the IAI boasts on its Web site.

What the site does not say is that China tested the weapons last year in the Taiwan Strait, the likeliest venue for a U.S.-China confrontation should the Chinese decide to take action against Taiwan, an island that Beijing sees as a renegade province.

The prospect of Israeli technology resulting in American deaths should rattle Israel, experts say, but it doesn't. Israel, they say, still hews to the coziness of its relationship with the Pentagon during the Cold War, when the United States encouraged Israel to sell arms to China as a means of isolating the Soviet Union.

"It's rarely recognized in Israel that the disappearance of the 'Evil Empire' also meant Israel losing some of its relative importance to the U.S.," P.R. Kumaraswamy, an Israel expert at the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, wrote last month in the Power and Interest News Report.

Israel and the United States came to an agreement on the Harpy last month, according to various reports. Israel would repair but not upgrade the weapons; in exchange, the United States would drop its demands that Israel "confiscate" the weapons that China has owned since the mid-1990s.

That did not end the matter and the bans are still on, though Israeli officials have suggested they could be resolved by year's end.

The prospect of Israeli technology resulting in American deaths should rattle Israel, experts say, but it doesn't.

## OP-ED

## At West Point, Hillel offers taste of Jewish life

By JEFF RUBIN

**W**ASHINGTON (JTA)—No Hillel director could be more devoted to graduating seniors than Maj. Carlos Huerta, the Jewish chaplain at the U.S. Military Academy.

"You can't imagine how I feel," Rabbi Huerta said recently. "They're not going to work for a corporation. They will be on a battlefield in 12 months."

Rabbi Huerta was presiding over the Jewish baccalaureate service that preceded the cadets' graduation ceremony on Memorial Day weekend. The service was held in West Point's stately Jewish chapel, a towering building with a commanding view of the Hudson River below.

But from the security checkpoint at the school's entrance to the cadets' starched uniforms, the atmosphere is strictly army. Hillel at West Point is an Army-sponsored group affiliated with Hillel through the Soref Initiative for Emerging Campuses.

The 19 graduating seniors — 16 men and three women — are departing for posts across the United States and around the globe. They have chosen careers in everything from the military police to air defense, the infantry to the medical corps. One graduate was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship, one of the first two cadets ever to be so honored.

Keynote speaker Ari Fleischer, a former spokesman for President Bush, praised the young people for performing a "double mitzvah" — engaging in profound service to their country and demonstrating a deep commitment to their Jewish heritage.

When the West Point Jewish Choir performed during the baccalaureate service, they sang an English-language version of the Hebrew song Machar, a hopeful song of peace. On the eve of their becoming military officers, this is what they sang: "Machar [tomorrow] we'll put away our uniforms and be warriors no more." ■

*(Jeff Rubin is associate vice president for communications of Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life.)*

## Exhibit sparks war of words

By BRAM EISENTHAL

MONTREAL (JTA) — When last seen in the neighborhood, Stephan Hachemi was furiously dragging the boxes containing photos by his mother, the late photojournalist Zahra Kazemi, into a taxicab.

The city of Cote St. Luc, a mostly Jewish municipality that is part of Montreal, took down an exhibit containing Kazemi's photos earlier this month, just days after it opened.

The exhibit, featuring 23 of Kazemi's photos from Iran, Afghanistan and Palestinian areas, was created in Montreal in 2003 as material for a documentary film festival. It already has been shown in Paris.

The Iranian-born Kazemi, a Canadian citizen who lived in Montreal, made news internationally when she allegedly was tortured to death by security officials in an Iranian prison in July 2003. Her son has been on a crusade to have her killers brought to justice.

Hachemi's taxi ride ended a week of controversy and mud slinging focusing on whether several of Kazemi's photos and their accompanying texts were anti-Israel, and whether Cote St. Luc's public library had the right to censor what it considered offensive material.

Hachemi has filed a complaint against the borough with Quebec's Human Rights Office and says that he plans to sue.

■  
The saga began May 31 when the exhibit opened in a Cote St. Luc library located in City Hall.

At the opening, a Cote St. Luc resident complained that a portion was anti-Israel and offensive, and demanded that those photos be removed. Further complaints were received later that week, and on June 3 the librarian took five pictures down.

Hachemi was furious and demanded that Mayor Robert Libman take action. The council met and offered to keep the exhibit open, but with the controversial photos and text removed.

Hachemi demanded that the exhibit run in its entirety or not at all. Cote St. Luc complied and the exhibit, scheduled to run for six weeks, lasted less than one.

Then things really got ugly. Hachemi walked into borough manager

David Johnston's office with a camera crew, threatening a lawsuit, Libman told JTA.

"I have been receiving the most vile, anti-Semitic messages and e-mails you could possibly imagine, from all over. I have never experienced this in all my years in politics," Libman added.

■  
The sequence of photos, joined by the accompanying text, sought to weave a narrative which unfavorably compared the State of Israel with the oppressive regimes of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Mullahs of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

"The accompanying text that was submitted by Mrs. Kazemi's son at the very last minute states that her photos depict women

'whose lives are taken hostage by despicable, unscrupulous men who claim the right, in the name of the State or God, to destroy them because they do not share their ideology of domination,'" said a June 9 statement from the borough council.

Hachemi stressed that the controversial caption cited in the borough's

statement "refers to my mother's work and how she was close to the victims of injustice," and noted that it doesn't specifically mention Israel.

The nastiness could have been avoided with an apology from borough officials, but they resisted, Hachemi said.

Libman said he "was never asked for an apology per se, only publicly," as Hachemi was blasting the borough in the media.

"This exhibition is an attack on the State of Israel," Libman said. "I don't feel in the least bit compelled to give an apology to someone who would put on something like that."

Council member Dida Berku, a lawyer, said it was clear from the start that the exhibit was problematic.

"When you walked in, on one wall you had a pastoral scene of women in Iran and Afghanistan, and then on the other side unsettling images involving Palestinians, with that text. It was difficult not to experience a knee-jerk reaction," she said.

Told that Hachemi insisted the offensive caption didn't necessarily refer to Israel, Libman responded that Hachemi "may just be naive and we may have misread his character. That's completely possible." ■

**'This exhibition is an attack on the State of Israel.'**

**Robert Libman**

Mayor of Cote St. Luc

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## MIDDLE EAST

### Peres leads the pack

Shimon Peres is likely to retain the chairmanship of Israel's Labor Party in an upcoming primary, a poll found.

According to the Ha'aretz survey published Thursday, Peres has 26 percent of Laborites' votes ahead of the June 28 party poll, followed closely by former Histadrut trade union chief Amir Peretz at 24 percent.

Former Prime Minister Ehud Barak has vowed to retake Labor's helm and then challenge Prime Minister Ariel Sharon for Israel's top office, but his popularity in Labor is just 14 percent.

Weaker still are the two other candidates in the Labor primary, Matan Vilnai and Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, Ha'aretz reported.

### Slowdown for settlers

Settler leaders called on Israelis to slow down traffic for 15 minutes to encourage the government to reconsider the upcoming Gaza Strip withdrawal.

The Yesha settler council called Wednesday for demonstrations along major highways at 6 p.m. on June 27.

The council called on motorists to stop and for businesses to suspend their work "to demand that the government think again and stop the disengagement plan."

## NORTH AMERICA

### High-caliber charity

An American Jew donated 100 rifle sights to an Israeli army regiment.

The advanced laser sights, worth over \$50,000, were received by Israel's 101st airborne regiment this week from a New York benefactor, military sources said Thursday, declining to give the man's name.

The donation was brokered by Ephraim Sneh, a Labor Party lawmaker and retired army brigadier general.

### L.A. anti-Semite arrested

A Los Angeles man charged with sending a string of hate letters to Jewish households, businesses and community institutions has been arrested.

The U.S. Attorney's office said Monday that Stanley Jaroszinski, 64, sent 56 large manila envelopes, addressed to "Jew Murderer" or "Jew Child Molester," containing slurs such as "Die, Jew, Die," "Jew Murderer Whorehouse" and "A Good Jew is a Dead Jew."

Most of the envelopes, mailed between February and April, also contained hypodermic syringes with needles, and pamphlets denouncing Chinese, Koreans, Latinos and Muslims as murderers, spies, terrorists and purveyors of weapons of mass destruction.

Additional threatening letters were sent to the field office of a Latina congresswoman and to the Childrens Hospital of Los Angeles, forcing its temporary evacuation.

### Senators join Helsinki panel

Several U.S. senators have joined the Helsinki Commission, a Congressional body monitoring European anti-Semitism.

Sens. Richard Burr (R-N.C.) and David Vitter (R-La.) were named to the panel Wednesday, and Sens. Gordon Smith (R-Ore.) and Saxby Chambliss (R-Ga.) were re-elected.

### Bush suspends embassy act

President Bush again postponed moving the U.S. Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem for six months.

Bush on Wednesday suspended the Jerusalem Embassy Act of

1995, keeping the embassy in Tel Aviv for six additional months.

The act mandates the president to move the embassy to Jerusalem, but presidents consistently have postponed the move, citing national security concerns.

"My administration remains committed to beginning the process of moving our embassy to Jerusalem," Bush said in a statement, echoing comments he has made throughout his term.

When he ran for office in 2000, Bush said moving the embassy would be among the first things he did in office.

### ADL presses Air Force reform

The Anti-Defamation League called on Congress to address charges of religious intolerance at the U.S. Air Force Academy.

The organization expressed support Thursday for the current language of the Defense Department Appropriations Bill, which acknowledges the recent charges and calls on the Air Force to develop a plan to address the matter.

"We strongly oppose any effort to change or weaken the current Appropriations Bill language," ADL officials said in a statement, reiterating that the House of Representatives should "go on record in support of accountability and appropriate corrective action" to complement action already being taken at the Colorado Springs campus.

The Air Force Academy has been under fire in recent weeks due to allegations of religious intolerance, including religious-themed e-mails to students.

The Pentagon has appointed a panel to assess the charges and is set to release a report in coming weeks.

## WORLD

### Wiesenthal Center: Remove monument

The Simon Wiesenthal Center asked the mayor of San Salvador to remove a monument honoring Yasser Arafat.

Shimon Samuels, the center's international relations director, and the group's Latin American representative, Sergio Widder, wrote to Mayor Carlos Rivas Zamora that "from a humanist perspective it is intolerable that such a tribute is being paid to someone who actively boycotted the road to peace in the Middle East.

"Your tribute to a godfather of international terrorism such as Arafat legitimizes and promotes a culture of death that, in the era of international terrorism, can strike anywhere."

They also noted that the "act goes against the history and tradition of friendship between El Salvador and the State of Israel."

### British cemeteries desecrated

Two British Jewish cemeteries were desecrated within 72 hours of each other.

In the latest incident, approximately 100 gravestones were pushed over and damaged in a Jewish graveyard in the West Ham Jewish Cemetery in London.

Two inverted swastikas were drawn onto four headstones, the door of the mausoleum of the Rothschild family was smashed and anti-Semitic, pro-Nazi graffiti were daubed at its entrance.

The attack follows damage to some 80 gravestones in a cemetery in Prestwich, Manchester.

Jon Benjamin, chief executive of the Board of Deputies, the representative body of Anglo Jewry, labeled the attacks "deplorable acts by mindless cowards, deeply distressing to those directly affected, and abhorrent to the rest of the community."

A spokesman for the Community Security Trust, the body that monitors threats to Anglo Jewry, called on the courts to hand down sentences strong enough to deter future vandals.