

IN THE NEWS

Peres ousted as Labor chief

Shimon Peres was ousted as chairman of Israel's Labor Party in a major electoral upset.

Trade union chief Amir Peretz won 42 percent of votes in a Labor primary Wednesday, beating Peres' 40 percent and defying expectations that the 82-year-old incumbent would easily retain the party helm.

"I expected a better evening," Peres, Israel's vice premier, told reporters.

Peretz, 53, has said he will take Labor out of Ariel Sharon's coalition government, a move that would usher in early elections.

Israeli, Palestinians killed in Amman bomb

An Israeli Arab and three Palestinian Authority officials were among those killed in Wednesday's bombings in Jordan.

The Israeli, a 40-year-old businessman from the Galilee town of Umm el-Fahm, was staying at the Hyatt, one of three Amman hotels struck by suicide bombers.

Also among the 57 dead were two Palestinian Authority security chiefs from the West Bank and a staffer from the Palestinian Authority mission in Cairo.

Al-Qaida claimed responsibility.

Hezbollah ties to blast in Argentina?

A Hezbollah terrorist carried out the 1994 bombing of a Jewish community center in Buenos Aires, an Argentine prosecutor said.

In a television interview Wednesday, Alberto Nisman named a 21-year-old Lebanese suicide bomber as having carried out the attack that killed 85 people and injured some 300.

Nisman said the man belonged to Hezbollah.

According to Nisman, relatives identified the man from photographs.

The probe into the bombing, he said, had not ruled out an Iranian connection.

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WORLD REPORT

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GPO/BP Images

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice meets Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on July 22 at Sharon's ranch in the Negev Desert.

In Mideast, Rice seeks 'first downs' rather than immediate touchdowns

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The Bush administration isn't expecting any miracles in the Middle East, but the momentum started by Israel's pullout from the Gaza Strip must be kept going, senior officials say.

Condoleezza Rice, the U.S. secretary of state — who once said her dream job is NFL commissioner — used football terminology last week when she met with leaders of the Israel Policy Forum to discuss her visit next week to Israel and the Palestinian areas.

"She didn't anticipate a breakthrough" in time for January elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council, "but she was hoping for

'first downs,' " said Seymour Reich, president of the forum, a group that promotes greater U.S. engagement in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Rice especially emphasized the need for Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to crack down on terrorism, Reich told JTA.

"The emphasis was on performance by Abbas and the critical time between now and the January elections," Reich said. Rice believes

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon "wanted to move forward, but would not do so unless there was an effort made by Abbas to clamp down on terrorism."

Rice can elaborate on her gridiron meta-

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NEWS
ANALYSIS

■ Momentum from Israel's Gaza withdrawal must be maintained, U.S. officials say

Continued from page 1

phors when she meets separately Monday with Sharon and Abbas in Jerusalem and Ramallah. It's her fourth visit to the region this year, underscoring the Bush administration's increased investment in the peace process as it weathers scandals at home and chaos in Iraq.

One measure of the administration's seriousness is that it persuaded James Wolfensohn, the top Western envoy to the region, to postpone for several months his new job as head of the Citigroup banking group.

Rice's representatives continue to insist that the most pressing issue is Abbas' failure to contain terrorism.

"We have talked about the importance of the Palestinian Authority acting to stop violence, to stop terror, to dismantle terrorist organizations," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said last week.

For Israelis, the issue is pressing because of an increase in terrorist attacks in recent weeks, including a suicide bombing in Hadera that killed six Israelis and rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip.

But Israeli officials are frustrated that the Americans speak of Palestinian responsibilities only in vague terms, without setting specific markers for Abbas.

"What does she expect from him?" one senior Israeli official asked.

U.S. officials suggest that the answer is "not much," given Abbas' capabilities right now.

"While there is a commitment on the part of the Palestinian Authority" to pursue negotiations and call for an end to violence and terror, "their intention and their capabilities are quite a bit different," David Welch, Rice's top envoy to the region, said Wednesday at a briefing on her trip.

Israelis are beginning to lose faith in Abbas. Moshe Ya'alon, the former Israeli military chief of staff, said Abbas hasn't lived up to the hopes created when his predecessor, Yasser Arafat, died last year. Israel and the United States isolated Arafat in his final years because of his ties to terrorism.

"I really wanted to believe that Abu Mazen would want to go to a compromise," Ya'alon, using Abbas' nickname, said last week in an address to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "That is not the case so far."

P.A. officials counter that they must be able to show Palestinians further dividends — beyond Israel's recent Gaza withdrawal — to make the case for peace.

Disarming terrorist groups "won't happen with no evidence of a peace process," said Hind Khoury, the P.A. minister for Jerusalem. She was in Washington last week meeting with officials in the administration and Congress and outlining what she described as Israel's slow strangulation of Jerusalem.

The security barrier Israel is building around Jerusalem cuts off Palestinians from their commercial and cultural capital, Khoury contended. She said restrictions keep most West Bank health workers and teachers from making it into the city, which has the largest Palestinian population in the area.

In contrast with the general expectations of the Palestinians, McCormack set out in great detail U.S. expectations of Israel, especially when it comes to easing Palestinian living conditions.

Rice would seek "ways to address some of the concerns that the Palestinians have about transportation of goods at crossings points; how through the use of technology the two sides can work to modify the existing system," he said, while "maintaining

the security that the Israelis rightly want to ensure."

Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz got the point loud and clear at a meeting with Rice last week in Washington.

"We will do our best to ease conditions for the Palestinian system, in order to help Abu Mazen win elections," Mofaz told reporters.

That made explicit what U.S. officials have only suggested: The demand that Israel ease conditions is linked to hopes that Abbas, a relative moderate, will triumph in the January elections.

Mofaz also pointedly said that Israel would not interfere with the elections, resolving another issue that had unsettled the Americans. Sharon previously had suggested that Israel could hinder the elections if Hamas or other terrorist groups participate.

U.S. officials have said they're uncomfortable about Hamas' participation, but fear that trying to stop terrorist groups from running could end up strengthening them.

Khoury is concerned that Israel will stick to 1996 rules that allowed only 5,000 Palestinians in Jerusalem to vote at four polling stations. Mofaz would not commit to a modality for elections in Jerusalem.

There was one bright light: Mofaz said Egypt has clamped down on arms smuggling along the Egypt-Gaza border, which could accelerate a reopening of the Rafah crossing. Palestinians want to assume control of their major outlet into the Arab world.

"There is still much to do" on the crossing, he warned, but some progress was marked this week when the European Union, Israel and the Palestinians agreed that E.U. officials would monitor the crossing.

A senior Israeli official said Israel will offer to accelerate the reopening and upgrade of crossings into Israel at Karni and Erez. Rafah is the more symbolic crossing, linking the Palestinians with the Arab world, but Israeli officials will tell Rice that Erez and Karni have more practical applications, with increased commercial activity translating into more jobs.

Condoleezza Rice's visit will be her fourth to the region this year.

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Interfaith group rallies against Iran

By CHANAN TIGAY

NEW YORK (JTA) — Two weeks after Iran's president called for Israel to be "wiped off the map," American Jews have joined forces with leaders from other faiths to demand that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad be held accountable for his remarks.

The Ad Hoc Coalition for Justice, a fledgling interfaith group formed in the aftermath of Ahmadinejad's controversial comments, held a news conference and rally Wednesday across from the Iranian Mission to the United Nations.

The mostly Jewish crowd of 250 or so people heard speakers — ranging from Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel to Richard Holbrooke to leaders representing Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities — slam Ahmadinejad, drawing parallels between his call for Israel's destruction and Hitler's effort to wipe out European Jewry.

That connection was highlighted by the fact that Wednesday was the 67th anniversary of Kristallnacht, the night in 1938 when German and Austrian thugs set synagogues and Jewish businesses ablaze, heralding the approaching Holocaust.

"As everyone in this audience knows, too many Jews in Germany did not think Hitler meant it. Too many foreign observers thought he could be contained. They made excuses," said Holbrooke, the former American ambassador to the United Nations who brokered the Dayton Peace Accords in 1995 between warring Bosnian factions.

"When a leader of a country says something as outrageous and as vile as what his been said by the Iranian president — or by Hitler — we must take notice and we must tell them that he and his government must retract it, and they must apologize," Holbrooke said.

Wiesel sounded a similar theme.

"We shall remember you alongside the other mass murderers who have killed and killed and killed," he said. "Shame on you, President Ahmadinejad of Iran, for your revolting statement and ugly aspiration of destruction."

Chants of "Shame on Iran" went up throughout the crowd as students from a local Jewish day school, some sitting on each other's shoulders, waved Israeli flags and cheered speakers.

Others in the crowd held aloft Iranian flags, while some called for Iran to be kicked out of the United Nations.

The event, organized by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, with support from several other groups, was put together in 24 hours.

Protests against Ahmadinejad's comments already had been held in Los Angeles and abroad.

On Sunday, some 3,000 members of the Iranian Jewish community demonstrated in front of the U.S. Federal Building in Los Angeles, likely the biggest rally this community had ever held. They held placards along with American and Israeli flags, and heard speeches.

In the past, American Jewish leaders have struggled with how to protest anti-Jewish activity by the Iranian government because of concerns that strident criticism could lead to a backlash against Iranian Jews.

But Morton Klein, president of the Zionist Organization of America, said such concerns should be subsumed by the danger inherent in Ahmadinejad's remarks.

"When the head of a sovereign country calls for the destruction of Israel, meaning the murder of the Jews of Israel, all bets are off for other concerns — that overrides any other concern," he told JTA. "Iran and the rest of the world must know that the Jewish community will no longer stand idly by."

Ahmadinejad called for Israel's destruction Oct. 26 in a televised anti-Zionist rally in Tehran, setting off a round of condemnations from around the world. Israel said Iran should be expelled from the United Nations, and U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan postponed a trip to Iran.

Iran's Foreign Ministry released a statement saying that the government's official stance "is that the occupation of Palestine should end, refugees should

return and a democratic state should be formed with Jerusalem as its capital."

Ahmadinejad has refused to back down from his comments.

"I can't explain to you how appalled I was when I heard his statement," Mohammed Razvi, of the Pakistani-American Council of People's Organization, said at the New York rally.

Amcha: The Coalition for Jewish Concerns was planning a rally Wednesday evening by Iran's U.N. Mission to com-

memorate Kristallnacht.

Sister Ruth Lautt, national director of Christians for Fair Witness on the Middle East, condemned Ahmadinejad's comments, classifying them as part of a larger effort to discredit Israel.

"We are equally concerned with more subtle attempts to delegitimize and demonize Israel," she said. Among those attempts, she said, is an effort by Israel's detractors to vilify the West Bank security barrier, which has taken some land that Palestinians claim but which has proven effective in reducing terrorism.

Rabbi Michael Miller, the executive vice president of the New York JRCR, lauded the interfaith nature of the coalition at Wednesday's rally.

"We need individuals beyond ourselves to speak out when there's an outrage that needs to be addressed," he said.

Ira Stoll, managing editor of The New York Sun newspaper, who spoke at the rally, sought to distinguish between the violent rhetoric of the Iranian government and sentiments among the Iranian populace.

"It's time to send this Iranian government to the archives of history," he said.

Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Presidents Conference, said organizers didn't want Iran's leaders to think that outrage had dissipated after the spate of condemnations immediately following Ahmadinejad's comments.

"We will not be silent," Hoenlein said. "These protests will continue until the threat is over." ■

'When a leader of a country says something as outrageous and as vile as what his been said by the Iranian president — or by Hitler — we must take notice.'

Richard Holbrooke

Former American ambassador to the U.N.

Jewish freshmen seek community

By SUE FISHKOFF

AUSTIN, Texas (JTA) — It's "move-in" weekend at the University of Texas at Austin. First-year students and their parents are busy unloading clothes, boxes and electrical appliances. Most are too rushed to notice a Hillel table set up outside the dorm, with its blue-and-white poster, brightly colored brochures and a smiling young woman handing out lollipops.

But Julie Unger, 22, is persistent. A recent graduate herself, Unger is a Jewish Campus Service Fellow hired for a year by Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life to reach out to Jewish students. Her business card sports her phone number and the message, "I'll take you out for ice cream."

"It's part of my job," Unger says, as she flashes a smile at a crowd of passing students. "I have my first coffee date Monday. I'm real excited!"

Austin, with 37,000 undergraduates, is the campus of choice for young Jewish Texans. The Towers dormitory, where Unger has positioned herself, is close to 60 percent Jewish. Many incoming freshmen are already running into friends from their Houston or Dallas high schools right there in the lobby.

"There are 4,000 Jewish students here, and 500 to 1,000 come to our events," Unger says. "But there are 3,000 others who don't come. They think Hillel is just for religious students; it has some kind of stigma. Those are the ones I'm trying to reach."

There are about 250,000 Jewish undergraduates on American college campuses, according to the 2000-2001 National Jewish Population Survey. Twenty-seven percent of them attend Hillel activities. Since Hillel's umbrella includes nearly every on-campus Jewish student group, except Chabad and Jewish fraternities, that means close to two-thirds of Jewish college students are not part of Jewish life on campus.

That has Jewish professionals — and Jewish parents — worried.

Largely to address those concerns, the Hillel staff in Washington embarked a year ago on a strategic planning effort to find out who these Jewish students are, what they want and how campus Jewish organizations can better serve them.

Hillel, which provides services to students at more than 500 colleges and universities in North America, will release those findings at the annual gathering of

North American federations next week in Toronto.

JTA asked those same questions of more than 75 first-year students at four U.S. campuses this fall — the University of Texas at Austin, New York University, the University of California at Los Angeles and Santa Clara University, a Jesuit college near San Jose, Calif.

From the informal survey, students overwhelmingly say they are looking for a Jewish social circle.

In Austin, Frances

Shwartz

is one of the first students to stop by Unger's table. A Dallas native, she finished 12 years of Hebrew school at her Conservative synagogue, was active in the movement's United Synagogue Youth, in BBYO, the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization, and she went on a teen trip to Israel.

"They forced me all the way," she laughs.

Shwartz says she'll "definitely" come to Hillel activities because she likes Friday night services, and "likes being surrounded by Jewish people; it's really comfortable."

Shwartz' comments reflect what students on these four campuses most say they want from Jewish organizations: Jewish friends and a place to go for holiday services when they can't get home.

"I'm not terribly religious, but it's a good place to connect with like-minded people," says Houston native Jonathan Graber, who graduated from his Conservative synagogue's Hebrew high school.

"I have tons of Christian friends, but it's nice to have that Jewish connection — it's one less obstacle to overcome."

Some Jewish freshmen, like Graber and Shwartz, want to join Jewish groups to continue the Jewish social life they knew in high school. Others, who were active Jewishly in high school, get burned out by the time they hit college, and don't want anything to do with campus Jewish life, says junior Mimi Hall, an activist in Texas for Israel, a campus pro-Israel group.

Unger, the Hillel representative, says

Austin is "a big party school," unlike her alma mater, the University of California at Berkeley. Whereas Israel activism is high on the Jewish agenda at Berkeley to counter the large pro-Palestinian presence there, Unger is focusing more on social programming at Austin — bagel brunches, barbecue get-togethers, ice cream socials.

At the group's first such event, a welcome brunch, first-year student David Auslander is one of four dozen new and transfer students to attend.

"I thought it would be a good way to meet

people," he says, adding that he thinks the synagogue his family goes to in Poquoson, Va., is Reconstructionist.

For some students, college is their first opportunity to be in a strong Jewish social environment.

"There aren't a lot of Jews in Baton Rouge, and I thought I'd like to meet some," says freshman Carrie Binder of Louisiana, who says she's not interested in Israel or religious services.

"I want to hang out with Jewish people," she says simply.

Hanging out with Jewish people is no big draw at the University of California at Los Angeles, which has more than 3,000 Jewish students, about 10 percent of the student body. The percentage is the same as at Austin, but Los Angeles itself is a more "Jewish" city, students say, so they don't need a campus group to meet their fellow Jews.

Still, most freshmen interviewed said they want to go to Jewish events to meet others like themselves. And with such a large Jewish student population, there's the luxury of dozens of organizations to choose from, each catering to a specific ethnic, religious or political interest. Such groups range from the Progressive Jewish Students Association to the Persian American Student Organization, which serves UCLA's large Iranian population, about 25 percent of the Jews on campus.

Freshman Mor Toledano, from Sacramento, Calif., says he chose UCLA partly because of its large Jewish student population. He's interested in Hillel because "they

I have tons of Christian friends, but it's nice to have that Jewish connection — it's one less obstacle to overcome.

Jonathan Graber
University of Texas at Austin

WHAT DO STUDENTS WANT?
(First in an occasional series)

have a lot of meals on Friday and it's really social."

Some students who were active in their high school Jewish groups said they want to continue in college. Amy Katznelson was social action vice chair of her Reform congregation's youth group in Tarzana, Calif., and says she "definitely" wants to stay connected at UCLA.

She says she plans to get in touch with the Muslim student group. "I want to get people from the different religions together, because indifference and intolerance stems from misunderstanding, from not realizing what we have in common."

Many of those who stopped by Hillel's table came from intermarried families.

"I want to get more involved in Jewish culture," says one such student, Danielle Cohen, from Orange County in California.

"My heritage is Jewish. My grandpa is a Holocaust survivor, and it would mean a lot to him if I learned more about it."

UCLA's Hillel president, Andy Green, says he's trying to make Hillel more welcoming to non-Orthodox students.

Like other schools with large, active Orthodox populations, Green says UCLA Hillel can be "intimidating" to a non-observant kid who walks in for the first time "and sees all those students in yarmulkes."

To attract less Jewishly connected students, UCLA Hillel hosts barbecues and ice cream socials like other campus Hillels, but also brings Jewish life right to the students, throwing parties in freshman dorms and bringing in kosher food.

Even those tactics don't attract everyone. Jane Levich of Lafayette, Calif., was one Jewish student who walked right by the Hillel table at the UCLA fair. She says she goes to synagogue on the holidays, but isn't interested in campus Jewish life.

"I'm not against connecting, but I don't think I'd necessarily seek it out," she says. "The Jewish community is kind of overbearing. You're either committed, or you're kind of shunned."

Santa Clara University is a far cry from UCLA, even though it's just a five-hour drive north. Nestled in the hills outside San Jose, it's a private Jesuit college. Most of the 4,700 undergraduates are Catholic; 163 are Jewish. There is no kosher food option, no Torah classes and no on-campus Shabbat services.

"The students who come here are not

looking for a Jewish environment," says Vanina Sandler, director of student life for Hillel of Silicon Valley, which runs Jewish activities at four area colleges, including Santa Clara, through each campus' Jewish Student Union.

On such campuses, Sandler says, some students prefer to blend in with their non-Jewish peers, while many others seek out Jewish affiliation for the first time in their lives, precisely because they're at an openly Christian campus.

Those students who stop by the Jewish Student Union table at Santa Clara are often quite tentative, even shy, about asking questions. Many of them aren't even Jewish. Sandler says of 55 students who signed her contact list one particular day, only 12 were Jewish.

"The Jewish students don't want to 'come out' on a Jesuit campus until they see their non-Jewish friends sign up," she says, adding that the non-Jewish students "like to come to our Shabbatons," but don't tend to become active in the organization.

The co-president of the Jewish Student Union, Katie Wampler, says she chose Santa Clara because "it's a good school," and only developed her Jewish identity after arriving on campus, when she started going to the local Chabad house.

Chabad outreach on U.S. college campuses has

grown dramatically in recent years.

More than 70 campuses across the nation currently have active Chabad houses.

Now possibly the only Shabbat-observant student at the school, Wampler says she met lots of Jewish freshmen the first week of classes.

"They didn't come here with the intention of being Jewish. They want to suppress that. But once they're on campus, they'll start to seek us out."

Cassandra Schwartz has stopped by the table to ask about birthright Israel, the program that sponsors free trips to Israel. Wampler hands her a brochure, saying, "You're part Jewish, right?"

"Half," Schwartz says. "But it's not my mom, so it doesn't count."

"Of course it does," chimes in Sandler. Wampler and Sandler take turns tell-



Sue Fishkoff

Jewish Campus Service Fellow Julie Unger, right, explains Hillel activities to first-year students at the University of Texas in August 2005.

ing Schwartz about Shabbat services, the Birthright program and Jewish holiday parties planned for later in the semester.

"What do we get Friday night?" Schwartz asks skeptically. As Wampler rattles off the list — roast chicken, pizza, matzah ball soup — Schwartz breaks in, "Oooh, I love matzah ball soup. In December do we get latkes?"

As she walks away from the table, Schwartz shakes her head and says, "It's so sad, I'm learning more about this here than I ever learned at home."

Across the country, at New York University in Manhattan, many Jewish students feel that because they are in such an overtly Jewish city — and because the 6,500 Jewish undergraduates make up one-third of the study body — they don't need to affiliate in order to "do Jewish."

"It's tricky just getting them in the door," says NYU senior Isaac Rothbart, president of Keshet, the Reform movement's campus organization. Most Jewish first-year students at NYU who do get involved are looking for services, especially for the holidays, he says.

"Others are just looking for friends, and some want to learn about Judaism," he adds.

Dyanna Loeb was raised as a Reform Jew in Oakland, Calif., and seems excited about campus Jewish life.

"I am trying to get involved with the Bronfman Center," she says of the Jewish center there. "So far we had lunch with Holocaust survivors, and other than that, social gatherings."

Would she go to Jewish lectures? Depends on the topic, she says. How about Shabbat services, or meals? Maybe, she's not sure.

"I'm just here to find out more," she says. ■

Counting American Jews is a contentious matter

By RICHARD ASINOF

BOSTON (JTA) — Some 4,000 years ago, when the ancient Israelites were wandering in the Sinai wilderness, there appeared to be more certainty than today about the size of the Jewish population.

As recounted in Numbers 1:2, a census of the Israelite community by the clans of each ancestral house counted 603,500 males aged 20 or older who were able to bear arms.

Scholars may argue about the accuracy of the biblical number, but there's no argument that counting the number of Jews in 21st-century America has become the focus of a contentious dialogue on the methodology, the numbers and the meaning of those numbers.

There's no simple dichotomy, nor is it an easy task — as comedian Lenny Bruce once did — to divide the world into Jewish and goyish.

Is a person born of Jewish parents, but who now practices Buddhism, Jewish? It depends on who asks the question and how the question is asked.

According to the National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01, there are about 3.9 million Americans who identify themselves as Jewish by religion, and about 5.3 million who identify themselves as Jewish using broader criteria such as ethnicity or ancestry.

However, a new meta-analysis — a synthesis that combines the results of more than 20 existing national surveys with reliable data about religious identity — suggests that the NJPS numbers may be too low.

Results of the new study, unveiled Nov. 3 at the inaugural conference of the Steinhardt Social Research Institute at Brandeis University, say about 4.5 million Americans identify themselves as Jewish by religion. As many as 6.5 million may identify themselves as Jewish using broader criteria, the research found.

Leonard Saxe, director of the new institute as well as Brandeis' Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, told JTA it's the first time that meta-analytic methodology has been applied to the question of how many Jews live in the United States.

The methodology offers a new paradigm for studying the country's Jewish population, Saxe believes.

"It allows us to estimate the size of the Jewish population without our contacting

hundreds of thousands of households to find out if there is a Jewish member," he said.

The methodology means the Jewish community can invest its limited resources in studies that delve more deeply into more substantive questions and specific subgroups, Saxe said.

Glenn Rosenkrantz, a spokesman for the United Jewish Communities federation umbrella group, said no decision has been made about whether or not to do a new NJPS — which could cost more than \$10 million — in 2010.

If there is a new NJPS, the efforts of

Saxe and his Steinhardt institute team to arrive at an accurate, ongoing count of U.S. Jews could change its contours.

"If we can come up with the basic numbers, we can undertake a different set of studies to develop better information about issues that are more important to the Jewish community," Saxe said.

Saxe currently is working with Boston's Combined Jewish Philanthropies to map the Jewish population of Greater Boston, developing an innovative tool drawn from the databases of more than 80 local Jewish communal organizations.

The one-day conference at Brandeis, titled "By The Numbers: Understanding American Jewry," brought together many of the leading scholars in the world of Jewish demographics, including members of UJC's NJPS team.

Sergio Della Pergola, professor of population studies at the Hebrew University's Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, presented his findings on "Community Implications of U.S. Jewish Population Change, 2001-2051."

DellaPergola suggested that the greatest factor for the future size of the American Jewish population would be the fertility rate of Jewish women, showing projected changes based on birth rates of 1.9, 1.5 and 1.1 children per woman.

Based on those different rates, the projected American Jewish population in 2051

would be, respectively, about 5 million, 4.3 million or 3.6 million, he said.

DellaPergola then detailed the projected changes in the American Jewish population by age, with the elderly Jewish population growing and children diminishing.

His most surprising number was that there potentially were 10 million Americans who would qualify for Israeli citizenship under the Law of Return, which includes anyone with a Jewish grandparent.

Bethamie

Horowitz, who directed the 1991 New York Jewish Population Study for the UJA-Federation of New York and now is research director of the Mandel Foundation in Israel, argued that the context is as important as the numbers.

Horowitz, whose "Connections and Journeys" study in 2000 looked at how the meaning of Jewishness shifts over individuals' life spans, talked about how changes in the Jews' role in American life have changed the way of counting Jews.

In the past, she said, counting children's absences from New York City public schools on Yom Kippur might have been an accurate means of tallying the Jewish population.

With Jews no longer on the margins of society, it's not surprising that membership boundaries also have blurred, Horowitz said. She cited the fact that just a century ago, intermarriage between Christians and Jews in America was so rare that it made the front page of *The New York Times*.

The Steinhardt Social Research Institute was established and underwritten by a \$12 million gift from philanthropist Michael Steinhardt, who attended the conference and who has not been shy in criticizing Jewish communal organizations for what he calls their "astounding lack" of high-quality data.

The conference focused on new methodology and narrative, but a strong undercurrent of Jewish population studies — how policy decisions are made and who makes them — kept bubbling to the surface. ■

'If we can come up with the basic numbers, we can undertake a different set of studies to develop better information about issues that are more important to the Jewish community.'

Leonard Saxe

Steinhardt Social Research
Institute at Brandeis University

FOCUS
ON
ISSUES

OP-ED

Darfur visit shows need for Jewish action

By RABBI DAVID SAPERSTEIN

WASHINGTON (JTA) — It was Sukkot without a lulav or etrog, but with a vibrancy and authenticity etched into our memories.

We stood on Sukkot amid the Darfur refugee camps in eastern Chad along the Sudanese border on a trip organized by the American Jewish World Service. Together we traveled to assess the needs of the quarter-million refugees who fled the terror and persecution in Darfur to these camps.

Ethnic cleansing, and the slaughter of more than a quarter-million people, led the U.S. Congress and President Bush to declare Darfur a genocide.

In the face of such tragedy, one would expect refugee camps of bleakness and despair. It's a tribute to the resilient spirit of the people of Darfur, and the dedication and talents of the non-governmental humanitarian groups serving them, that the camps aren't bleak or desperate.

We returned with a clearer sense of the urgent response needed from our community. First, we must support the NGOs doing such extraordinary work. Second, we must urge Congress and our administration to keep up pressure on the international community and the Sudanese government; Congress must pass the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act immediately.

Third, the United Nations Security Council must expand the mandate of the African Union troops in Darfur to include protection of civilian populations. Fourth, NATO, the European Union and the United States must step up to the plate with expanded funding, air support for peacekeeping troops and provision of peacekeeping forces themselves.

Finally, we must do everything possible to urge our government and the United Nations to assist in negotiations for a real peace treaty among the Darfur parties.

The refugees dream of that day and look to us for help. If we succeed, maybe these refugees can rest, and their sukkot will be called, in the words of our tradition, truly sukkot of peace. ■

(Rabbi David Saperstein is director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.)

U.S.-donated Torah stolen

By SUE FISHKOFF

OAKLAND, Calif. (JTA) — A Torah donated from a U.S. temple to a congregation in Ukraine has been stolen.

In April 2004, three members of Temple Emanu-El in San Jose, Calif., carried a historic Torah scroll from their congregation to Odessa, Ukraine, where they handed it over to that city's tiny, financially struggling Reform congregation in a festive ceremony.

Right before Rosh Hashanah this year, the Torah scroll disappeared, stolen right out of the ark in what is apparently being investigated as an inside job.

"The congregation is in shock," says Rabbi Alexander Dukhovny, head of the Reform movement in Ukraine. "You can imagine what Rosh Hashanah services were like."

Most Torah scrolls in the former Soviet Union are either donated from abroad, or newly written with funding from foreign supporters.

The World Union for Progressive Judaism has a twinning program to match up Reform congregations in the West with needy congregations in the former Soviet Union, Israel and elsewhere. Donating a Torah scroll is often part of the arrangement. ■

Julia Grishchenko, spiritual leader of the Odessa congregation, which is now also known as Emanu-El, discovered the theft on the eve of Rosh Hashanah when she opened the ark to prepare for services. She had seen it two days earlier during Shabbat services. Police found no evidence of a break-in, and suspicion quickly fell on a former congregant. Dukhovny says the president of the congregation called the woman and "gave her a chance to repent" for the 10 days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur.

Instead, Dukhovny reports, the woman offered to return the Torah for \$5,000. Police were listening in. They detained her for two weeks of questioning, but finally released her, apparently for lack of evidence.

Dukhovny says the Odessa police wanted to set up a sting operation to entrap the

suspect, but she told the congregation's president the Torah was in Kiev, where Odessa police don't have jurisdiction. Dukhovny says the case seems to have come to a standstill.

"The police aren't telling us what's happening," he says. ■

San Jose marketing consultant Jonathan Hirshon spearheaded the original donation project, and was part of the group that took the Torah scroll to Odessa last year.

"We just found out about this, and we're in shock," he says. "To steal a Torah is bad enough, but to think it's a Jew who did it. We feel punched in the gut."

The Odessa congregation did not tell Temple Emanu-El about the theft until this weekend, to spare them distress during the Jewish holidays.

Emanu-El has sent photos of the Torah to the Odessa police to aid in their investigation. The Torah scroll

was written in 1948 to commemorate the founding of Israel, and was restored by Emanu-El before it was taken to Ukraine as a gift to their twin congregation there.

Dukhovny says this is the first Torah scroll theft he's heard of since the fall of the Soviet Union 14 years ago.

Temple Emanu-El has produced a DVD about the Torah's journey to Odessa, and is now selling it for a minimum \$25 donation to raise money for the Odessa congregation.

Dukhovny hopes that another U.S. congregation may step in and donate an extra Torah scroll to Odessa, perhaps during the upcoming biennial of the Union for Reform Judaism later this month in Houston.

Dukhovny recently went to Odessa and delivered a Shabbat sermon to the congregation.

"I told them that no one can steal a Torah," he says. "Even without a physical Torah, they can have Torah in their hearts. With the help of their sister congregation and world Jewry, they are not alone." ■

'To steal a Torah is bad enough, but to think it's a Jew who did it. We feel punched in the gut.'

Jonathan Hirshon
Marketing consultant

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

Religious act gets House hearing

A U.S. congressional panel heard testimony on a bill to increase religious freedom in the workplace.

"Nowadays we have a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week work environment that clashes with religious observances," Rep. Carolyn McCarthy (D-N.Y.) said at Thursday's session of the U.S. House of Representatives' Subcommittee on Employer-Employee Relations.

"We as members of Congress have a responsibility to ensure people are able to freely practice. Asking a person to leave their religion at their door is impossible, and something they should not be asked to do."

Backers of the Workplace Religious Freedom Act say it will restore religious liberties that have been eroded in recent years by court decisions having to do with appropriate dress and time off for religious holidays.

California gets new textbooks

The state of California adopted new textbooks that clarify Jewish issues.

Elementary and middle school social studies textbooks were adopted this week.

Soon sixth-graders in the most populous American state will learn that Romans, not Jews, crucified Jesus; that the biblical Exodus commemorates national liberation, not Jewish tribal unity; and that the Jewish God is a god of justice and mercy, not just reward and punishment.

These are some of the nearly 1,000 edits and corrections textbook publishers have agreed to make in their instructional materials as a condition for adoption by California.

At its meeting Wednesday, the state board of education voted unanimously to adopt 10 publishers' educational programs, including textbooks and related materials, and rejected two.

Sex-sting rabbi resigned from rabbinic group

Rabbi David Kaye resigned from the Rabbinical Assembly shortly before a television news program depicted him allegedly seeking a sexual encounter with an underage boy.

Rabbi Joel Meyers, executive vice president of the assembly, the rabbinic arm of the Conservative movement, told JTA that Kaye's resignation was tendered five days before the "Dateline NBC" segment aired Nov. 4.

No charges are expected to be filed against Kaye, the Washington Jewish Week reported.

Meyers said Kaye cannot be defrocked because rabbinical ordination cannot be undone if it is earned honestly, but added that Kaye is "clearly not going to be able to function as a rabbi again after this incident."

Reform condemns Texas gay vote

The Reform movement condemned Texas voters for denying protection to gays and lesbians.

"Yesterday's vote by the state of Texas to amend its constitution to prohibit same-sex marriage, the 19th state to take such action, is another obstacle in the way of gay and lesbian Americans seeking to share in the same personal and legal privileges of marriage afforded heterosexual Americans," the movement's Religious Action Center said in a statement.

The RAC also praised Maine for preserving laws that protect the gay community.

MIDDLE EAST

Bush names Baker to Rabin commemoration

President Bush named James Baker to lead the U.S. delegation commemorating the 10th anniversary of the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin.

Baker, who was U.S. secretary of state under Bush's father, reportedly had a tense relationship with Rabin's predecessor, Yitzhak Shamir, but got along well with Rabin.

Other members of the delegation named Wednesday include Condoleezza Rice, the current secretary of state; Dick Jones, the U.S. ambassador to Israel; David Welch, the top State Department envoy to the region; and Elliott Abrams, deputy national security adviser to the White House.

An extremist Israeli killed Rabin after a peace rally on Nov. 4, 1995.

The 10th anniversary commemoration on Monday marks the anniversary of the murder on the Hebrew calendar.

P.A. security forces collapsing?

Palestinian Authority security forces are near collapse, a group of P.A. security officers said.

In a letter to P.A. President Mahmoud Abbas, the officers said corruption within the security apparatus and increasing anarchy have left the forces at the edge of collapse, the Jerusalem Post reported.

The letter is being seen as an effort to embarrass Abbas by portraying him as weak, and some P.A. security officials said it was written by "disgruntled" officers.

Hamas terrorist killed on Gaza border

Israeli troops killed a Palestinian terrorist along the Gaza Strip border.

The Hamas man was shot Thursday while trying to plant a bomb on the border fence near the Kissufim crossing. A second terrorist was wounded in the incident.

WORLD

Russian Jewish leader quits

The president of the Russian Jewish Congress resigned.

Vladimir Slutsker quit Thursday at a meeting in Moscow of more than 100 donors and leaders of the RJC who were set to vote on whether to replace him.

Many leading members of the group were unhappy with how Slutsker ran the organization.

The RJC leaders then unanimously elected Vyacheslav "Moshe" Kantor, a Russian Jewish businessman based in Switzerland.

Poll: Jews closer to blacks, Hispanics on race

Jews are likelier to agree with black and Hispanics than with whites when it comes to race, a survey found.

Conducted in September and October by the Global Strategy Group for the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding, the survey found that Jews and Hispanics are likelier than whites to see immigration as a positive; and that Jews join Hispanics and blacks in believing that ethnic groups do not mix enough, and that race relations are poor.

Solid majorities of Jews, black and Hispanics believe President Bush has done too little to improve race relations, while only 45 percent of whites believe that's true.

"The response of American Jewry reaffirms that this community is more sensitized and more realistic than is white America about the realities of racism and discrimination," the foundation said in a statement.

The foundation, led by Rabbi Marc Schneier and hip-hop impresario Russell Simmons, promotes intergroup relations.