

## IN THE NEWS

**High court rules against Palestinians**

The U.S. Supreme Court let stand a \$116 million judgment against the PLO and Palestinian Authority.

The high court Monday chose not to block the judgment in favor of the family of an American citizen and his Israeli wife who were killed in 1996 in the West Bank.

A federal court in Rhode Island had found the ruling Palestinian organizations responsible for the attack because they gave safe haven to Hamas.

**Relief agencies seal their deal**

Israeli and Palestinian ambulance services signed an agreement they hope will ease Israel's accession to the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement.

Under Monday's pact signed between Magen David Adom and the Palestinian Red Crescent in Geneva, Palestinian ambulances are guaranteed speedier passage through West Bank checkpoints.

The move is seen as key to mollifying Arab signatories to the 1949 Geneva Conventions who might otherwise have voted against a resolution, to be discussed next week, that would introduce a nondenominational red diamond emblem to the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement as Muslim states refuse to recognize the red Star of David.

**Kadima accepts Palestinian state**

Ariel Sharon's new political party accepts that a Palestinian state will arise alongside Israel.

The Kadima party platform, published Monday, calls for "maximum security and assuring that Israel be a Jewish national home and that another state that shall arise be demilitarized, with terrorists disarmed."

The Israeli prime minister long opposed the idea of a Palestinian state before accepting it in recent years.



# WORLD REPORT

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## Church reaches out to Spanish Jews, seeking allies against prime minister

By JEROME SOCOLOVSKY

**M**ADRID (JTA) — Earlier this month, the archbishop of Madrid set foot in the city's main synagogue for the first time, joining Spanish Jewish leaders in marking 40 years since the Vatican opened the door to contact with Judaism and other faiths.

The gesture to commemorate the 1965 papal decree known as Nostra Aetate comes as the Catholic church in Spain is trying to gain allies in its growing conflicts with Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero's Socialist government.

Though Zapatero is better known abroad for his military pullout from Iraq, in Spain he has angered conservatives and the church by legalizing same-sex marriage, easing regulations on divorce and abortion and authorizing stem-cell research.

The latest controversy is over Zapatero's proposed new education law that would make religious instruction optional, and non-gradable, for students in public elementary and high schools.

The church wants classes in religion — or an alternative course in ethics, morality and world religions — to be required in public schools, and to count toward students' grade point averages. Hundreds of thousands of parents, clergy and other demonstrators marched through Madrid recently to voice their opposition to Zapatero's proposed law.

Spain's estimated 35,000 Jews are a negligible electoral quantity in this country of more than 40 million people. In theory, they might be swayed by the government's threats to end the church's historic privileges, particularly

the \$35 million it gets annually from the state Treasury.

But the Jewish leadership has sided with the church in the gay marriage debate — and the cardinal's overtures to the Jewish community in the midst of the religious-education debate reinforces the church's claim that

Zapatero is out of touch with a broad sector of Spanish public opinion on moral issues.

"I do think it's important for the state to support religious education," said Jacobo Israel Garzon, president of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Spain. "Religious education means a certain moral education for the young, and I think that's good for society."

Still, despite the appearance of ecumenism in Cardinal Antonio Maria Rouco Varela's visit to the Bet Yacob synagogue in Madrid, some Catholics and Jews say the four decades that it took for a Spanish cardinal to make the visit underscores the reluctance with which Spanish bishops still view dialogue with Judaism and other faiths.

"They still think as if they're in the 16th century," said Father Mariano Perron, a delegate to interfaith gatherings who sat in the first row as the archbishop spoke at the synagogue.

Perron was referring to a time in Spanish history when the bishops wielded considerable political might — after Jews had been expelled from Spain, Muslim armies had been defeated and Catholicism was all that existed in Spain.

Despite Nostra Aetate, "it's been very difficult for bishops to find a way to relate" to other relations, Perron said.

Varela is a former president of the Spanish bishops conference. For many liberal Catho-

*Continued on page 2*

AROUND  
THE JEWISH  
WORLD

## ■ Spanish Jews and Catholics form a common front against the country's prime minister

*Continued from page 1*

lics in Spain, he symbolizes the arch-conservative flank of the church hierarchy in this country.

Varela made no mention of the tragic history of Jews in Spain during his groundbreaking visit to the synagogue. Neither did he express any regret over the church-sponsored anti-Semitism that produced countless pogroms in the run-up to the 1492 expulsion, and that continued with teachings on the supposed perfidiousness of Jews imbibed by Spanish children in Catholic and public schools as late as the Franco dictatorship that ended in 1975.

Many Spanish Jews today are descendants of those who fled the Inquisition. The families began returning in the 19th century.

Still, Garzon told JTA, the cardinal's presence at the synagogue said enough.

"I think the church is aware of the harsh history it has had toward the Jewish people," he said. "And I believe that a big part of the church today feels that they should be close to the Jewish people."

"I wouldn't say it's a majority," Garzon added. "But we have to make an effort to promote the ideas of" Nostra Aetate. That encyclical repudiated anti-Semitic teachings in the Catholic tradition.

In his speech at the synagogue, Varela called Nostra Aetate "a beautiful, profound declaration of the rich spiritual patrimony" that Jews and Catholics share.

However, he conceded that the document has been the victim of "forgetfulness" and said Spanish Catholics need to be reminded of its importance.

In his own speech, Garzon acknowledged that Nostra Aetate had jolted many Spaniards "who thought their world was just, even though it excluded others." But he added that "soon it was forgotten by many ... and hardly anything was done so that the whole of the population would understand the encyclical."

In fact, Spain didn't recognize the State of Israel until 1986 — and then primarily to gain admission to the European Union.

Still, Garzon called the bishop's visit "a symptom of a normalization" in relations between Jews and Catholics in Spain.

Indeed, both faiths have found lately that they have more and more in common, at least politically. Earlier this year, Garzon endorsed a church-sponsored statement criticizing the government's gay marriage

law. On the issue of religious education, Garzon is in favor of public funding.

Nevertheless, he would not endorse the church position entirely. The proper place to learn about one's own faith is in Catholic, Jewish or other religious schools, "not in public schools," he said.

Despite his harsh criticism of the bishops, Father Perron believes

they are "absolutely right" on the issue of religious education.

He pointed out that Spanish Catholics do not send their children to Sunday schools for religious instruction, as many do in America. They rely on schools, whether public or private, to provide it.

"Here in Spain, it's a tradition," he said, comparing it to having wine with lunch. ■

**The Jewish leadership has sided with the church in the gay marriage debate.**

## Jews mixed on new Polish leader

By DINAH A. SPRITZER

PRAGUE (JTA) — The new president of Poland was elected with the backing of anti-Semitic supporters.

But not all Polish Jewish officials believe that Lech Kaczynski, who will take office in December, should be criticized for his extremist bedfellows.

Kaczynski, the former mayor of Warsaw, was elected last month. He replaces outgoing President Aleksander Kwasniewski. Barred from running again under Poland electoral law, Kwasniewski is popular with Jews inside and outside Poland.

The Catholic-oriented Law and Justice Party of the incoming president governs Poland in coalition with two extremist parties, Self-Defense and the League of Polish Families, "whose members have frequently expressed anti-Semitic sentiments," according to Tel Aviv University's Stephen Roth Institute, which monitors national attitudes toward Jews all over the world.

When he became mayor of Warsaw in 2002, Kaczynski accepted the demand of the LPF to build a monument to Roman Dmowski, according to the Stephen Roth Institute. Dmowski was the chief ideologue of the nationalist anti-Semitic movement Endecja in the 1920s and 1930s.

Andrzej Lepper, the leader of Self-Defense, has repeatedly made enthusiastic

references to Goebbels' "propaganda skills" and Hitler's "economic policy," according to the Stephen Roth Institute.

But some Jewish officials in Poland say they have no reason to believe Kaczynski will be unfair toward the Jewish community, which numbers an estimated 8,000.

"President Kaczynski in all of his dealings has been forthcoming, fair and respectful of the needs of local Jews and their role in Poland. Any rumors about him being anti-Semitic are unfair. I think he will actually be a very strong ally against anti-Semitism," said Poland's chief rabbi, Michael Schudrich.

The rabbi interacted with Kaczynski when the latter was the minister of justice, responsible for investigating the case of Jedwabne, where hundreds of Jews were massacred in 1941 by fellow Polish townspeople.

The case was hushed up until a book published in 2000 put the blame squarely on the residents, not on the Nazis.

As the minister in charge of the case, Kaczynski had the unenviable job of organizing the exhumation of victims' bodies, which is against Jewish law. He eventually reached an agreement with Jewish leaders in which the dead were not disturbed.

"I met with him several times and he was a man of his word, even though he had far more reason to placate the rightists than to stick to Jewish law," Schudrich said. ■

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# Russian bill could harm Jewish organizations

By LEV KRICHEVSKY

MOSCOW (JTA) — Some Russian Jewish activists are concerned that a new bill on nonprofit organizations may harm their operations.

But larger Jewish nonprofits working in Russia remain calm about the legislation, which could limit the ability of nongovernmental organizations, or NGOs, to accept foreign funds.

The bill received preliminary approval in the State Duma, the lower house of the Russian Parliament, last week.

Much of the criticism comes from the human rights community, which blames the Kremlin for pushing amendments to the bill through the State Duma. The amendments are widely seen as targeting human rights organizations that often criticize federal and local authorities.

"The authorities are often irritated by the criticism that is coming from NGOs," said Alexander Brod, head of the Moscow Bureau on Human Rights, a group that monitors anti-Semitism and xenophobia in Russia. "The new law will help the authorities to use registering organs when they want to shut down the activities of the NGOs that criticize the authorities."

The bill would place nonprofits under stricter state control and could shut foreign nonprofits currently operating in Russia or indigenous nonprofits that use foreign funds. The State Duma approved it by a 370-18 vote Nov. 23.

In its current version, the bill requires nonprofits to re-register with the Justice Ministry and empowers authorities to check that nonprofits do not use foreign grants to finance political activities.

Some foreign nonprofits — especially those that promote a civil society in Russia — have warned that the bill would shut them down.

The bill must pass two more readings in the State Duma — expected by the end of the year — before going to the upper house of Parliament, a body controlled by supporters of President Vladimir Putin. After that step, the bill would go to Putin to be signed into law. Some have speculated that Putin could veto the legislation to raise his standing in the eyes of the international community.

On Nov. 24, Putin responded to worries of a looming crackdown on nonprofits by saying that foreign funding of any political

activity in Russia must come under state control. But he stressed that the legislation must not damage civil society.

Backers of the bill say it's aimed at fighting extremism and money-laundering by nonprofits, and deny that it seeks to clamp down on the groups.

But critics insist that the bill was proposed by a Putin administration seeking to minimize ways for foreign money to finance political activities in Russia, a sensitive issue for the Kremlin after three former Soviet republics — Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan — changed their leadership as a result of mass public protests using pro-democracy slogans.

Brod said he wasn't ruling out the possibility that officials may create an unofficial blacklist of nonprofits — especially from the human rights sector — and deny them re-registration. His own group may be at risk, he said, since it receives most of its funding from foreign sources, particularly the European Commission.

"They may reject the financial paperwork we provide during re-registration on some formal grounds and eventually close us down, along with dozens of other groups," he said.

Most Russian nonprofits that provide services to the Jewish community are not involved in direct political or human rights activism. But the lion's share of current funding for Jewish causes in Russia comes from overseas charities.

Does the proposed legislation endanger these groups? For two of the major Jewish organizations operating in Russia, the ten-

tative answer would appear to be no.

The Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia, whose American fund-raising branch recently made it onto a list of the 400 largest philanthropies in the United States, operates in Russia as an indigenous nonprofit organization.

For its part, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee uses different statuses for its work in Russia,

including as a representative office of the American JDC. Still, its financial activities in Russia usually are managed by another Russian nonprofit that uses the JDC's name but is formally unrelated to its overseas parent group.

None of the major Jewish groups that work with foreign donations — including the local branches of the JDC and the Jewish Agency for Israel — agreed to comment publicly on the new law.

JAFI has long operated in Russia as a local nonprofit called the Jewish Agency in Russia, which at least on paper is not linked to the Israeli-based organization.

Officials at some smaller Jewish nonprofits say they're worried about the bill.

"Our organization was founded by foreign founders. How should we operate now?" asked Svetlana Muterperel, general manager of an independent, Moscow-based charity that spends much of its funds on Jewish causes.

"I'm sure the law will multiply the difficulties of the NGOs here," said Muterperel, who asked that her group's name not be used. "The Russian legislation provides no financial incentives for charity giving. If this law is enacted, many of us will find it even more difficult to operate."

**The authorities are often irritated by the criticism that is coming from NGOs.**

**Alexander Brod**  
Russian Jewish official

## ACROSS THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

## Oligarch plans political party

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A Russian Jewish billionaire plans to establish a new political party in Israel.

Arkadi Gaydamak, who came to prominence in Israel recently by buying Jerusalem's Beitar soccer team, told Ha'aretz on Monday that his new party would be set up in time for March 28 national elections.

The provisional name of the party is

Beitar, and Gaydamak said it would appeal to the Israeli mainstream despite his natural following among immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

Gaydamak, who made his fortune in diamonds and arms trading, said that if elected to political office he would seek to improve cooperation between Israel and the Arab world.

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## MIDDLE EAST

### Israel, U.S. resume dialogue

Israel and the United States renewed their strategic dialogue.

Tzachi Hanegbi, the Cabinet minister who heads the Israeli team, joined the directors general of the foreign and defense ministries in Washington on Monday to meet with U.S. counterparts.

The United States suspended the dialogue in recent years because of Israeli arms sales to China.

### Olmert meets Abbas

Israeli Cabinet minister Ehud Olmert met with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.

The two held talks Sunday on the sidelines of the Euro-Mediterranean summit in Barcelona.

Olmert, an Israeli deputy prime minister, reiterated Israel's objections to Hamas participation in January parliamentary elections in the Palestinian Authority as long as the group refuses to give up terrorism.

Abbas said Palestinians would never give up on their demand for a state in all of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The Palestinian issue seemed set to deadlock efforts to draft a summit resolution condemning terrorism.

Arab participants want to distinguish between terrorism and "resistance against occupation," while Israel and European Union delegates oppose any such qualification.

### Bomber's siblings cleared

The brother and sister of a British terrorist were cleared of complicity in his plan to blow up an Israeli nightclub.

Zahid and Parveen Sharif, whose brother Omar was one of two Britons who attacked Mike's Place bar in Tel Aviv in April 2003, were acquitted Monday by London's Old Bailey Court.

Sharif's partner blew himself up, killing three Israelis, but Sharif's bomb failed to detonate and he fled the scene.

He was discovered several days later drowned at sea.

The British court found that there was insufficient evidence that e-mails sent by Sharif to his siblings constituted advance notice of a terrorist plot, and they therefore couldn't be convicted of failing to inform authorities.

### Vanunu loses libel suit

Israeli nuclear whistleblower Mordechai Vanunu lost a lawsuit against a newspaper that reported he had advised Hamas terrorists on building bombs.

Tel Aviv Magistrate's Court on Monday found against Vanunu's claim that Yediot Achronot falsely and injuriously reported in 1999 that he was caught passing notes with advice to the Palestinians, who were jailed with him in Ashkelon.

The court noted Vanunu's insistence that as a peace activist he would do no such thing, but said Yediot's report was based on a senior security source and thus did not violate Israel's libel laws.

Vanunu, who went free last year after serving an 18-year prison term for sharing Israeli nuclear secrets with a British newspaper, was ordered to pay \$7,700 in court costs.

## WORLD

### Europe, Iran to discuss nuclear program

European Union foreign ministers agreed to meet with Iranian officials to discuss the country's nuclear program.

Officials from England, France and Germany, as well as the E.U.'s foreign policy representative, Javier Solana, offered to start a dialogue with Iranian officials.

There has not been international consensus about censuring Iran for its nuclear development, officials told the Financial Times after last week's meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

### BBC criticizes own

The BBC criticized one of its reporters for saying she cried at Yasser Arafat's decline.

The BBC Governor's Program Complaints Committee said in a statement Saturday that Barbara Plett had "breached the requirements of due impartiality" in an Oct. 30, 2004, story describing the ailing Palestinian leader's departure to a French hospital, where he later died.

"When the helicopter carrying the frail old man rose from his ruined compound, I started to cry," Plett said in a report broadcast on the "From Our Own Correspondent" program.

Stung by criticism that the British broadcaster is biased toward the Palestinians and against Israel, the BBC panel, which said it had received hundreds of complaints against Plett, noted that she also had mentioned Arafat's "obvious failings."

### Rabbis call for boycott of Zagreb Jews

The Conference of European Rabbis urged members to boycott the Jewish community of Zagreb, Croatia.

The boycott would stand until the dismissal of Zagreb's former chief rabbi, Kotel Dadon, is resolved.

The conference's standing committee, meeting in Rome this week, issued a strong statement of support for Dadon.

He served as Zagreb's rabbi for seven years, but the community leadership refused to renew his contract this summer.

Dadon contested his dismissal and has remained in Zagreb with the support of a number of Zagreb Jewish community members.

The conference called on other rabbis not to apply for the Zagreb post until the Zagreb community leadership explains to a rabbinical court why it dismissed Dadon.

## NORTH AMERICA

### Jewish baseball card set released

A new Jewish baseball card set is being released.

The 2006 edition features 55 cards, including "newly discovered" Jewish players and Jewish players from the 1940s women's league.

There also are cards for each of the 13 Jews who played in the major leagues in 2005, believed to be the largest number of Jewish players in history.

The set costs \$36 and is available at ajhs.org or by calling 866-740-8013.

### Ingathering of Chabad emissaries

More than 2,000 of Chabad's worldwide emissaries gathered in New York.

The annual International Conference of Shluchim concluded Sunday evening with a gala dinner, keynoted by one of Russia's chief rabbis, Berel Lazar, and addressed by Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz.

Chabad's force of emissaries, comprising some 4,000 families in 70 countries, is "the most powerful Jewish organization in the world," said Rabbi Moshe Kotlarsky, the conference's director.

The audience gave a standing ovation to Rabbi Yossi Turk, an emissary to Argentina, who along with his wife, Chana, recently adopted three Jewish children who were about to be placed in an Argentinian monastery, although the family already has eight children of its own.