

IN THE NEWS

Ariel Sharon breathes on his own

Ariel Sharon began breathing on his own and reacted to pain after doctors reduced his sedatives.

The Israeli prime minister remains connected to a respirator and in critical condition, but doctors described his reactions Monday as an encouraging first sign.

Sharon has been in deep sedation since undergoing surgery for a massive brain hemorrhage last week.

U.S. officials visiting Israel

Two top U.S. officials are headed to Israel to discuss the peace process.

David Welch, the State Department's top envoy to the region, and Elliott Abrams, the deputy national security adviser to President Bush, will leave for Israel on Tuesday, the State Department said. Welch and Abrams were scheduled to go last week, but postponed their visit after Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon suffered a massive stroke.

They are expected to press the Palestinians to keep Jan. 25 legislative elections on track and Israel to open up commercial passages from the Gaza Strip.

Limited campaigning allowed in Jerusalem

Israel decided to allow some Palestinian Authority parliamentary candidates to campaign in eastern Jerusalem.

Internal Security Minister Gideon Ezra said Monday that Palestinians from eastern Jerusalem who want to campaign ahead of the Jan. 25 vote will receive permission if they are proven to have no terrorist ties.

"It has been decided to allow electioneering in Jerusalem by candidates who do not represent groups still carrying arms, such as Hamas," Ezra told Israel Radio. It was not immediately clear if voting would also be allowed in the district. Hamas vowed to defy the ban.

WORLD REPORT

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As number of Jews shrinks, Miami community has foreign

By LARRY LUXNER

AVENTURA, Fla. (JTA) — Paris restaurant owner Philippe Goldenstein was walking to synagogue one day when an Arab threatened him in the street, shouting "dirty Jew."

That's when Goldenstein decided it was time to say au revoir to France — and bienvenidos to Florida.

In October 2003, the Goldenstein family — Philippe, his wife, Katia, and their two small children, Joshua and Noemi — moved into the upscale Miami suburb of Aventura, opening the area's first kosher French restaurant.

Named Weber Cafe after the restaurant Goldenstein ran in Paris, the waterfront eatery was an immediate hit, with its salad nicoise, crepes, pastas, quiches and other dairy dishes.

On a typical evening, diners at Weber Cafe can be heard chatting in English, Spanish, French, Russian, Yiddish and Hebrew.

"We had been here on vacation before, and liked it," said Goldenstein, the product of a Polish father and an Algerian mother.

"Here in Miami, we have everything — the beach, palm trees, synagogues and Jewish schools. The Jewish community has taken very good care of us."

Less than a mile from Goldenstein's restaurant is the cheerful three-bedroom apartment of Gisela, a Uruguayan Jew who asked that her last name not be used because her family's immigration status hasn't been finalized.

Gisela and her husband, Miguel, owned a shirt factory in Montevideo, where they had

a beautiful apartment and a summer beach home.

But when the Uruguayan economy collapsed in 2000 following a massive currency devaluation in nearby Argentina, the family had to close the factory and leave.

"We first went to Atlanta, where we had three kiosks in shopping malls selling leather belts, but our children weren't adapting there," she told JTA.

"They said they felt like the only kids in the world who were Latin but not mestizo.

"There were no Jews where we were living, and they couldn't integrate into any group. So after three years we decided to come here."

These days Gisela works as a teacher's assistant at Toras Emes Academy, an Orthodox Jewish day school in North Miami Beach.

She isn't thrilled with South Florida — the locals are disrespectful and unfriendly, she says — but her kids are much happier here, and her husband has found a good job selling motorcycles.

Gisela and the Goldensteins are two examples of the influx of foreign-born Jews flooding Miami-Dade County, even as the county's overall Jewish population continues to shrink.

According to a recent demographic study by University of Miami researcher Ira Shekin, Miami-Dade has 113,000 Jews, down from a peak of 218,500 in 1975.

Since then, thousands of Miami-Dade residents have moved north to Broward and Palm Beach counties, though immigration from outside the United States has helped stabilize the Miami community.

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**FOCUS
ON
ISSUES**

■ *Miami's Jewish community is shrinking and increasingly foreign-born*

Continued from page 1

The study found that 31 percent of Miami-Dade's adult Jews were born outside the United States.

That's a higher percentage than any other Jewish community in the nation, and it's up from 23 percent in 1994.

Some 7 percent of those foreign-born Jews came from South America, while 5 percent were born in Central America and another 5 percent in the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

"By far, the biggest reason" for the Jewish population decline "is the age of the people who settled here originally," says Jacob Solomon, executive vice president of the Greater Miami Jewish Federation, which commissioned the study.

"As the population swelled from the late 1960s to the late '70s, those who died were replaced by new immigrants, mostly retirees. But as Broward and then Palm Beach and Florida's West Coast became more popular, the whole complexion of Miami in general changed, from being a sleepy retirement community to a vibrant, international business center."

Since 1994, the number of foreign-born Hispanic Jewish adults in Miami-Dade has doubled to around 9,000; they now account for 10.3 percent of the county's total adult Jewish population.

Of those 9,000 who consider themselves Hispanic Jews, 29 percent come from Cuba, 18 percent from Argentina, 16 percent from Colombia and 15 percent from Venezuela — though the vast majority of Cuban-born Jews arrived immediately af-

ter the 1959 revolution that brought Fidel Castro to power.

Helping ease the transition for more recent arrivals is Graciela Chemerinsky of the Latin American Migration Program, a division of the Jewish Community Services of South Florida Inc.

Between July 2004 and June 2005, Chemerinsky says, LAMP received 174 new cases, of which 55 percent came from Argentina.

The remaining 45 percent were from Venezuela, Uruguay, Brazil, Mexico and Colombia.

"Some of these people come with money, and most of them are professionals. They're educated and bilingual.

"Most of them don't ask for financial help, but rather information, orientation and jobs," said the Argentine-born Chemerinsky, who estimated that 92 percent of her clients are in the United States legally.

"We receive them, give them all the information they need and put them in contact with immigration attorneys, public schools and synagogues."

Solomon said that in addition to the "extraordinary influx of Jews from Latin America" — which has eased considerably since a new U.S. visa program took effect in 2002 — "we've also been dealing with a rapidly aging Jewish population here, many of whom were European refugees who came to New York and then migrated again to South Florida. They've outlived their resources and have come to rely not just on public support but also federation-funded services."

Miami Beach, which once was the center of Jewish life in South Florida, has seen its Jewish population dwindle from 80,000 at its peak to around 20,000 today.

Solomon said the two core areas for new immigrants today are Aventura, which is adjacent to North Miami Beach on the border with Broward County, and

the Pinecrest neighborhood of Kendall in South Dade.

Interestingly, 46 percent of Miami-Dade's Jewish children younger than 12 are enrolled in Jewish day schools — the highest percentage of any community in the United States — while the rate of intermarriage is an unusually low 16 percent.

"The exciting thing about Miami is watching a community in high-speed transition," said Solomon, who's been at the Miami federation since 1981.

"South American Jews came by the thousands over a few short years, while Jews from

France are still coming. The Israelis are increasingly involving themselves in organized Jewish life. Many of them have made substantial amounts of money and have been successful."

With rising anti-Semitism in France, "we're going to see substantially more immigration from France, and we're going to see it soon," Solomon predicted.

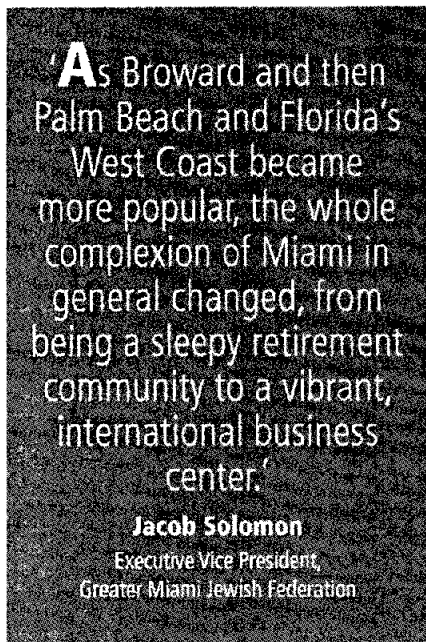
On the other hand, Rabbi Yisroel Frankforter, director of the Miami Semicha Program, says French Jews haven't had such an easy time relocating to South Florida.

"The Latinos who come find a Latino infrastructure already here, so they can go shopping, look for houses and everybody speaks Spanish," Frankforter said.

"But that doesn't help French people." Just ask Herve "Eli" Karsenty, a waiter at Goldenstein's Weber Cafe.

The native of Lyon lived in French Guiana and the Caribbean island of Martinique for several years before deciding to try his luck in Miami.

"I came with no money, no job, nothing," he said. "My first job here was a dishwasher in a restaurant. When the boss asked me for a fork or a spoon, I didn't understand. But when you need money, you learn very fast."



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Abramoff's Jewish ties come to the fore

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Reading the indictment against Jack Abramoff, one might not know that he was prominent in Washington Jewish circles.

But in coming months, his ties with Jewish and Israeli organizations may play a large role in the web of illegal activity to which the lobbyist has pled guilty.

While Abramoff has been portrayed as a man willing to do nearly anything to further his political goals and wallet, he also has been an idiosyncratic player in the Jewish community of the nation's capital, starting several short-lived, money-losing ventures to fill religious gaps he saw in the city's Jewish world.

He also used his largess to further Israeli businesses and charities that appealed to his conservative worldview.

Specifically, Abramoff is accused of using money from a Washington charity he oversaw to fund military-type programs in the West Bank.

Indian tribes donated money to tax-exempt charities, believing they were supporting anti-gambling foundations, but the money was redirected to help a "sniper school" in the West Bank, operated by a friend of Abramoff.

According to congressional documents, Abramoff sought night-vision goggles and a vehicle for the sniper-training facility.

Abramoff also allegedly worked on behalf of an Israeli firm that sought to wire the Capitol for cellular phone use.

While leading cell phone manufacturers in the United States favored JGC Wireless to install antennas in repeaters in House buildings, an Israeli company with ties to Abramoff, Foxcom Wireless, ultimately won the bid.

The switch is allegedly linked to Rep. Bob Ney (R-Ohio), chairman of the House Administration Committee, who accepted numerous favors from Abramoff over the years, and placed comments in the Congressional Record favorable to Abramoff's ventures.

Foxcom didn't pay Abramoff to lobby for the House job, but it did donate \$50,000 to the Capitol Athletic Foundation, an Abramoff charity, *The Washington Post* reported.

Foxcom has changed its name to MobileAccess and moved its headquarters to

Virginia. A spokesman did not respond to requests for comment.

Abramoff also has been tied to two rabbis, the Lapin brothers from South Africa, who aided his political and personal ventures.

David Lapin was hired to run a Jewish school Abramoff created in suburban Maryland to teach his children and others.

Lapin also received close to \$1.2 million to promote "ethics in government" to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, one of Abramoff's clients. Officials on the island said Lapin did little for the money.

His brother, Daniel Lapin, is president of Toward Tradition, a conservative group. Abramoff allegedly asked him to create an award to bestow upon Abramoff to help him get accepted into Washington's Cosmos Club.

Abramoff suggested he could be a "scholar of talmudic studies" or a "distinguished biblical scholar."

Lapin said yes, according to e-mails obtained by congressional investigators, and asked whether Abramoff needed a letter or a plaque.

Lapin told *The Washington Post* he meant the exchange to be tongue-in-cheek and never produced an award for Abramoff. Two other Abramoff aides moved to Israel last year as investigators continued their probe.

Sam Hook and his wife, Shana Tesler, both worked at Abramoff's law firm and had been cooperating with investigators before moving to Israel in July, according to *The Hill*, a Washington newspaper.

The Orthodox Jews had long planned to move to Israel, their attorney said last year.

Abramoff also made contributions to several Jewish lawmakers, among numerous congressmen Abramoff and his associates help finance. Rep. Eric Cantor (R-Va.) donated \$7,000 — the amount he received from Abramoff — to charity last week.

A spokesman for Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) did not respond to questions about the \$1,000 he received from Abramoff, ac-

ording to Federal Election Commission filings. In Washington, Abramoff was best known for his eclectic use of his money.

He shunned other religious schools in the area, choosing to open Eshkol Academy specifically for his children's education. The school closed within two years, and several teachers say they are owed back pay.

David Lapin, the school's dean, was not an active administrator, former teachers said.

Abramoff also opened several kosher restaurants that failed quickly. Stacks, a deli, was welcomed by the city's Jewish community, but never made money.

A more formal restaurant upstairs, Archives, never stayed open for more than a few weeks at a time.

Some Jewish professionals found it noteworthy that the Abramoff that appeared outside a Washington courthouse Jan. 3 — with a long, double-breasted black coat and black hat — resembled a devout Jew on his way to Shabbat services.

As Abramoff faces more political trouble, he may continue to foster ties to the Jewish world.

In a New York Times interview last year, Abramoff compared himself to the biblical character Jacob, saying his involvement in lobbying was similar to Jacob's taking the identity of his brother, Esau. A spokesman for Abramoff later told JTA his client was misquoted.

BEHIND
THE
HEADLINES

Abramoff redirected money intended for anti-gambling foundations to a 'sniper school' in the West Bank.

Libby joins institute

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Lewis Libby joined a conservative think tank.

Libby, who is Jewish, was a top adviser to Vice President Dick Cheney but now is under indictment on charges of obstructing justice. Libby joined the Hudson Institute as a "senior adviser," an announcement said Jan. 5.

Libby, an architect of the Iraq war, told reporters that the wife of a prominent war critic was a CIA operative. He quit his government post in October after a grand jury indicted him on charges that he lied about his role in the leak.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Israeli Arab arrested as Iran spy

An Israeli Arab was charged with spying for Iran. Jaris Jaris was indicted by Haifa District Court on Monday for contact with foreign agents and conspiring to give information to the enemy.

He was arrested Dec. 12, but the arrest was cleared for publication only last Friday. In a related story, Iran said it had arrested an Israeli agent in Tehran. Israeli officials have not responded to that report.

Hadassah leader visits with Sharon family

Hadassah's national president visited with members of Ariel Sharon's family at one of the organization's Jerusalem hospitals.

Sharon is being treated at the hospital in the Ein Kerem neighborhood after a serious stroke. "They're saddened, they're afraid and they're coping," June Walker, president of the women's Zionist organization, told JTA on Monday.

"It's a very close family. I spoke with his son Omri, who thanked Hadassah for the care and the caring that Hadassah is giving his father."

Hamas launches TV station

Hamas launched a television station in the Gaza Strip.

The Palestinian terrorist group is launching Al-Aksa Television just a few weeks before the Palestinians hold elections on Jan. 25. The station broadcast for half an hour Sunday before it went off the air because of technical difficulties, The Associated Press reported.

Jewish lawmakers visit Sharon

Jewish legislators from abroad visited Ariel Sharon in the hospital.

The 50-person delegation, including Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) and Lord Greville Janner of the British House of Lords, arrived at Jerusalem's Hadassah-Hebrew University Medical Center at Ein Kerem on Monday in what they described as a show of Diaspora support for the ailing Israeli prime minister. Rabbi Israel Singer, chairman of the World Jewish Congress, led the lawmakers in prayer for Sharon's recovery.

The lawmakers are in Israel for a meeting of The International Council of Jewish Parliamentarians, which runs through Tuesday.

Soccer rumble in Israel

A Jewish-Arab soccer game in Israel turned violent.

At least 10 fans were injured Sunday during a fight that followed a match between Betar Jerusalem and the predominantly Arab soccer team Bnei Sakhnin.

The game ended in a 0-0 draw. There is a history of bad blood between the teams. Members of Betar Jerusalem, which is identified with the Israeli right-wing, are known to harass and even attack rival fans, especially Arabs. But two residents of the Galilee venue, Sakhnin, were arrested on suspicion of provoking the confrontation after the game.

Center hopes to encourage Israel immigration

The Jewish Agency for Israel opened a center in Jerusalem aimed at encouraging aliyah.

The Global Center for Israel, which opened Sunday, will provide information ranging from employment possibilities to how to buy an apartment, the Jerusalem Post reported.

The center will have an around-the-clock call center staffed by bilingual professionals.

WORLD

Muslim cleric's trial to begin

The trial of a Muslim cleric in Britain accused of inciting murder against Jews and others is set to begin.

Abu Hamza al-Masri faces eight charges of soliciting murder against "non-believers," including four against Jews.

He also is charged with possessing video and audio recordings that he intended to distribute to foment hate. The trial is expected to last at least three weeks. He has pleaded innocent to all charges.

Arrests made in cemetery vandalism

German police arrested three teenage males for allegedly vandalizing a Jewish cemetery.

The arrests are in connection with an attack that took place in September. The suspects were freed on bail, pending trial.

Neo-Nazis charged in Serbia

Serbian prosecutors charged 18 neo-Nazis with inciting hate for allegedly disrupting an anti-fascist meeting.

The men, believed to be members of the National Order group, are believed to have disrupted a Nov. 9 meeting organized to mark the anniversary the 1938 Kristallnacht pogrom.

NORTH AMERICA

Clinton on Sharon: God's test?

Former President Clinton suggested that Ariel Sharon's health crisis is a test from God.

"His illness, just as 10 years ago Yitzhak Rabin's death, puts yet another obstacle on the path of the peacemakers. It's almost as if God was testing them one more time to rise again and to keep on," Clinton said Monday after meeting French President Jacques Chirac in Paris.

"This is the only answer in the Middle East: reconciliation of the Palestinians and the Israelis based on the sharing of a small piece of land and an enormous potential future," he said.

Historical group sells paintings

The American Jewish Historical Society's sale of historical paintings could be illegal.

The New York Jewish Week reported that the sale of the paintings could be illegal under New York law if the proceeds are used for operating expenses.

Kenneth Bialkin, AJHS chairman, said that for five years he had wanted to sell the six paintings that belonged to the Franks, a prominent colonial Jewish family. "They're no Rembrandts," he said, adding, "We also needed money."

It is believed that the Walton family, owners of Wal-Mart, purchased the paintings and intends to display them in a museum being constructed in the company's headquarters in Arkansas.

Jewish groups consolidate

Women's American ORT and American ORT are consolidating operations.

The consolidated group will hope to better support World ORT's training and educational operations worldwide.

The new operations will be under the direction of Hope Kessler, who has served as executive director of Women's American ORT.

Interfaith effort focuses on shelter

Muslim and Jewish girls are working together to support a homeless shelter in New Jersey.

The girls raised \$12,000 for a family shelter scheduled to open in Union City, N.J., Newsday reported.

The project is the brainchild of the Jewish executive director and a Palestinian volunteer at the Palisades Emergency Residence Corporation.