

## IN THE NEWS

**Hamas chooses  
P.A. prime minister**

Hamas chose Ismail Haniyeh to be the next Palestinian Authority prime minister. Haniyeh is seen as a relative moderate within the terrorist group.

He headed the group's list in parliamentary elections last month in which Hamas scored a surprise triumph.

Also Thursday, Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz proposed barring all Palestinians from crossing Israel to travel between the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Mofaz also said Israel should freeze all transfers of tax revenue now that Hamas is leading the Palestinian government.

**House passes  
Hamas ban resolution**

The U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution recommending no dealings with a Hamas-led government.

The non-binding resolution, which was passed unanimously by the Senate two weeks ago, was approved by the House on Wednesday in a 418-1 vote.

The resolution recommends a ban on direct aid to the Palestinian Authority as long as parties calling for Israel's destruction control a majority of seats in the Palestinian legislature.

Another bill currently in Congress would legislate such a ban.

**Hillel: NYU has  
most Jewish students**

New York University has the most Jewish college students of any U.S. school, according to Hillel.

It's the first time the national Jewish student organization has put together such a list. NYU has 6,500 Jewish students, followed by University of Florida in Gainesville and University of Maryland at College Park.

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**REMINDER:** The JTA World Report will not be published on Monday, Feb. 20.

# WORLD REPORT

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Uriel Heilman

Falash Mura practice wearing téfillin in a Gondar, Ethiopia, class during a United Jewish Communities' mission visit on Jan. 24.

## Ethiopians wait to immigrate as Israel, U.S. Jews plot their future

By URIEL HEILMAN

**A**DDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (JTA) — Just outside the gates of the Jewish aid compound in this city, a shantytown of decrepit tin shacks, overcrowded homes and debris-filled byways beckon the reticent visitor.

Barefoot children stumble amid the flotsam, part of the milieu of stray dogs, mule-drawn carts and mendicants that comprise the dusty street scene in this part of Addis Ababa.

Here, among the fetid smells and homes fashioned from scrap metal, live several thousand Falash Mura — Ethiopians linked to Jews whose progenitors converted to Christianity but who now are returning to Judaism

in a bid to immigrate to the Jewish state.

They've come here and to slums in the city of Gondar from their rural villages, abandoning their farms and occupations as blacksmiths, potters and weavers to live near the aid compounds and, more importantly, to be close to the Israeli officials in whose hands their fate rests.

Every month, some 300 of the luckier ones are selected to be taken to Israel. Once there, they are granted Israeli citizenship, taught Hebrew and Judaism while residing in absorption centers. In due

course, they are provided with about 90 percent of the funds they need to buy a home.

It is a generous package, and one that has more than a few Israelis and American Jews

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**THE  
FALASH  
MURA'S  
FATE**

## ■ Many Ethiopians leave home to increase their chances of immigrating to Israel

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concerned there will never be an end to Ethiopian aliyah.

This fear — and stories of Ethiopians perpetrating deceit to escape Africa's desperate poverty by way of a visa to Israel — has stalled plans to end mass Ethiopian immigration to Israel by the end of 2007.

The Israeli Cabinet decided back in February 2003 to bring up to 26,000 Falash Mura remaining in Ethiopia to Israel. A year ago, Israel agreed to expedite the pace of aliyah for the 20,000 the state was told remained, setting in place detailed procedures for an operation that would double the rate of aliyah to 600 persons per month, bringing all those eligible by the end of 2007.

But so far none of the plan's key phases have been put in motion, a fact many attribute to the disappearance of the plan's key political champion: Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

"Sharon was the engine behind this. He pushed this through. He took the decisions. He set the timetable," said Ori Konforti, the senior official in Ethiopia for the Jewish Agency for Israel, which is responsible for immigration to Israel. "Now there is no engine for this."

A 36-hour visit last week to Ethiopia by a delegation of some 70 American Jewish federation leaders aimed to change that.

The mission to Ethiopia came five months after the umbrella group of the North American federation system, the United Jewish Communities, launched Operation Promise, a \$160 million cam-

paign for overseas needs. Of that total, \$100 million is to go for Ethiopian aliyah and absorption; the other \$60 million is designated primarily for elder care in the former Soviet Union.

The goal of the five-day trip to Ethiopia and Israel was to motivate federation leaders to go out and raise the money needed to reach the \$160 million goal. UJC's hope is that moving forward on that pledge will prompt Israel to begin expediting Ethiopian aliyah. So far, more than \$45 million has been raised for the operation, according to UJC officials.

"The money needs to be there, and all the rest flows," Howard Rieger, president and CEO of UJC said in an interview at the time the pledge was made.

"Frankly, I think we came to the conclusion on this subject that we need to hold up our share of the bargain, so to speak, and by moving forward and taking this action — which we very much plan to implement — at least we've carried out our responsibility," Rieger said. "Will the government carry out theirs? I hope and expect they will."

Even if the \$100 million for Ethiopian aliyah is raised quickly, the lion's share of the burden of absorbing the Ethiopians will continue to rest squarely on Israel. On average, each Ethiopian immigrant costs the state approximately \$100,000 over the course of his or her lifetime, according to Israeli government estimates. And more money for Ethiopian immigration means less money for Israel's other pressing needs.

"It's very difficult to absorb them, and there are so many poor Israelis who need help, too," said Nachman Shai, director general of UJC Israel. "This will happen, but it will take time."

Money will not solve some of the most significant problems that have riddled Falash Mura aliyah since its inception in the early 1990s, after the final group of practicing Ethiopian Jews were airlifted to Israel en masse in Operation Solomon in 1991.

The conundrum of Falash Mura aliyah

is tied up with the questions of how many potential immigrants exist among Ethiopia's 70 million citizens, how to stymie unqualified Ethiopians from immigrating to Israel and the cost of absorbing the immigrants.

The most important piece of the puzzle, by many accounts, is nailing down the final list of who is and who isn't eligible for aliyah. That would enable Israel and American Jewry to close the chapter on mass Ethiopian aliyah and get a real sense of the total cost and scope of the project.

Without such a list, officials fear, the number of Ethiopians seeking to emigrate to Israel will continue to grow and there will be no end to Ethiopian aliyah.

"If you ask me today how many people are waiting for aliyah, I can't tell you how many," acknowledged an Israeli Interior Ministry official working in Ethiopia.

The Interior Ministry is the Israeli government body charged with determining who is qualified to immigrate to the Jewish state. "It's hard for us to bring an answer. People are still in the villages who have not yet come," the official said.

In the hovels of Addis Ababa and the mud-and-straw tukuls of rural Ethiopia, it's difficult to sort out exactly who is and who isn't Falash Mura.

The Ethiopians seeking to emigrate today call themselves Beta Israel, a caste designation associated with the smithing trades the Ethiopian Jews — known pejoratively as Falashas — traditionally performed during centuries of prohibition against land ownership.

While the Jewish state decided in the early 1980s to welcome Beta Israel who had kept their Jewish faith and identities — and facilitated their aliyah in Operations Moses and Solomon in 1984 and 1991 — Israel turned away the Beta Israel who had abandoned Judaism generations ago when their ancestors converted. These people are called Falash Mura.

Israel's policy on the Falash Mura changed in the 1990s, largely due to advocacy by American Jews and vocal protests by relatives of the Falash Mura who had

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**'It's very difficult to absorb them, and there are so many poor Israelis who need help, too.'**

**Nachman Shai**

Director general,  
United Jewish Communities Israel

### JTA WORLD REPORT

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made it to Israel.

In the countryside of Gojam province, the Falash Mura can be found in clusters of mud-and-straw huts built amid eucalyptus trees. In one village, a pair of women are bent over incipient clay pots, their mud-covered hands shaping the wet earth into new jugs. Not far away, a few dozen men work barefoot in the field, cutting hay for the roof of their church.

Though they pray in a Christian church and hang pictures of the Virgin Mary in their home, these people call themselves Beta Israel. Many of them have relatives who have gone to Gondar and Addis, some of whom have made it to Israel.

Those who have left their villages and gone to live in the cities, closer to where Israel's representatives in Ethiopia work and live, say they have ceased their Christian practices. Some of them don yarmulkes while in the Jewish aid compounds, many take lessons in Judaism and all hope that embracing the Jewish faith will help get them to the Jewish state.

Abeyna Worku, 33, came to Gondar from the nearby village of Alefa four years ago. Most of Alefa's residents have left for Gondar, but some 200 remain in the village, he said.

"Most of my relatives are in Israel and I want to join them," Abeyna says. "Israel is good since it's the promised land from our grandparents."

It is difficult to prove the Jewish heritage of these Ethiopians, most of whom were practicing Christians until they were told they needed to embrace Judaism to be eligible for aliyah. As a result, they are not petitioning to immigrate to Israel under the Law of Return, which grants automatic citizenship to anyone with a Jewish grandparent.

Rather, Israeli officials are verifying whether the Falash Mura qualify for aliyah under Israel's Law of Entry, a humanitarian law designed to enable relatives of Israelis to immigrate to the Jewish state. So rather than having to come up with documents proving they are Jews, which nobody in Ethiopia has, these Ethiopians are trying to prove they are the immediate relatives of Ethiopians

already in Israel.

That also means that some of those seeking to qualify under the Law of Entry are not Jews at all, but Christian relatives of Jews. Some estimate these Christians constitute up to 30 percent of Ethiopian olim.

**'The worst thing that happens is they take them out and there'll be another 20,000.'**

**Barry Shrage**

President,  
Boston's Combined Jewish Philanthropies

Habtu Gidyalew, 32, is one of those people. He married an Ethiopian Israeli six months ago and now hopes to join her in Israel. She moved to Israel 15 years ago, and the couple met during her visits back to Ethiopia.

"I met her three years ago," Habtu

said. "I want to be with her because I love her."

The eligibility verification process for Ethiopian aliyah is slow and painstaking, and it is plagued by the problems of trying to verify who is related to whom when there are no birth certificates or written records. It also requires running an operation simultaneously in Israel and Ethiopia and weeding out the liars from the truth-tellers among people who know that demonstrating one's ties to Jewish kin is a way to get a free ticket out of Africa, automatic Israeli citizenship and access to a broad array of social services in Israel.

More than 75,000 Ethiopians have immigrated to Israel since the early 1980s.

Because it is so costly to absorb these immigrants in Israel, this means the stakes are extremely high both for Israel and for the Ethiopians seeking aliyah.

At the moment, it is American Jews like the federation leaders on the mission here who are trying to grease the wheels of the aliyah operation.

"I think the government plan that was approved was a good plan, and I think it needs to be implemented," said Barry Shrage, head of Boston's Combined Jewish Philanthropies.

"The worst thing that happens is they take them out and there'll be another 20,000," Shrage said. "But I'm not going to be suicidal if in the end it's 40,000."

That sort of attitude is precisely what worries officials in Israel, who will have to bear the burden of absorbing the immigrants.

Some of the Falash Mura's advocates — namely, a few American Jews and Ethiopian family members and community leaders already in Israel — accuse the Israeli government of indifference or racism in dragging its feet on accepting these Ethiopians as immigrants.

There are Ethiopians who have been waiting in Addis Ababa and Gondar for as long as eight years.

One thing seems certain: The longer it takes to close the chapter on mass Ethiopian immigration to Israel, the more olim, or immigrants, there will be.



Uriel Heilman

Young Falash Mura gather in the Israeli Embassy in Addis Ababa for pre-departure orientation on Jan. 23.

# Mission confounds, commits federation leaders

By URIEL HEILMAN

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (JTA) — Perhaps no single party outside the Israeli government is as vital to Ethiopian aliyah as the American Jews committed to help paying for it.

So when the United Jewish Communities decided to bring a 100-person group from America's wealthiest Jewish communities to the straw-and-mud huts of one of the poorest countries on earth, it constituted both a singular logistical challenge for the federation umbrella group and a signal to the Israeli government that American Jewry is serious about facilitating Ethiopian aliyah.

Now the question is what the members of the mission — including 70 or so federation leaders, their staffers and family — are going to do with their newfound, hands-on familiarity with the issue of Ethiopian aliyah.

"Operating here in Ethiopia is extremely complex," said John Fishel, president of the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles. "I think UJC's role is to think about how we go out and assist the necessary means. Doing the aliyah is a whole other issue that I'll leave to the experts."

Many fund-raisers said the trip helped them to tell the kind of story that could touch donors' hearts.

Nevertheless, the picture painted for the group was amply complex, and Israel's

management of the process appeared sufficiently problematic, that the national chairman of the campaign, Joel Tauber, felt compelled to address publicly the question of what would happen if Israel reneged on its decision to bring the Falash Mura remaining in Ethiopia to Israel.

He spoke about the issue on the group's last night in Ethiopia, at a festive dinner at Addis Ababa's Sheraton Hotel.

## THE FALASH MURA'S FATE

"This one is a 70 percent possibility," Tauber said. "There's a 30 percent chance that they're going to revoke this decision," he said of the Israeli government decision to expedite the aliyah of up to 20,000 additional immigrants from Ethiopia. "We'll know within six months."

In case they do renege, added Tauber, "I'd go back and talk to donors."

Tauber's cautionary note, along with the knotty problems with the aliyah that many observed in Ethiopia, prompted some federation fund-raisers to say they would focus on UJC's absorption programs in Israel when pitching Operation Promise to donors rather than the idea of

bringing more Ethiopians to the Jewish state.

"I'll go back and raise money only for the absorption programs in Israel, not aliyah," said one federation donor and fund-raiser, who asked not to be identified. "We don't want to pitch major donors on something that might not happen."

Another federation fund-raiser said she would raise funds only for absorption because of personal misgivings about Israel's criteria for immigrants from Ethiopia and management of the aliyah verification process.

"We're asking people to make really unfair choices: Basically, come to Israel and convert to Judaism and we'll make things happen for you. Anybody in Africa would choose that," said the federation official.

"I'm not sure I agree with, 'Once a Jew, always a Jew,'" she said. "I just have questions about the Falash Mura and whether or not we're overstepping our bounds a bit here."

So far, UJC has raised more than \$45 million in pledges for Operation Promise, a \$160 million campaign that includes \$100 million for Ethiopian aliyah and absorption. Participants on the mission pledged an additional \$873,000 on the mission's last day, bringing their total Operation Promise commitment up to a collective \$4.1 million.

Even with all the problems riddling Falash Mura aliyah, many federation executives said the operation to bring the Ethiopians was justified simply on humanitarian grounds.

The key to the operation's success, suggested Barry Shrage, president of the Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston, is not only bringing the Ethiopians quickly from Africa, but making sure they are given the right kind of assistance once they arrive in Israel.

"It would be such a tragedy if this group of people lost faith in the Jewish identity and the Jewish state," Shrage said. "We can produce out of this group many great Israelis, many great Jews. This does not have to end up a permanent underclass."

**UJC has raised more than \$45 million for Operation Promise, a \$160 million campaign that includes \$100 million for Ethiopian aliyah and absorption.**



Uriel Heilman

American kids traveling in a mission to Ethiopia last month mingle on Israeli embassy grounds with Falash Mura who are going through pre-departure briefings.

# Final list of olim hampered by inefficiency, abuse

By URIEL HEILMAN

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Three years after Israel decided to bring the remaining Falash Mura in Ethiopia to Israel, the number of Ethiopians petitioning for aliyah continues to grow.

The question now is figuring out who among the masses of people waiting to emigrate meet Israel's criteria for aliyah.

That has made finalizing the number and names of those qualified to immigrate to Israel the key element to the closing the chapter on three decades of Ethiopian aliyah.

There have been problems finalizing that list, however, and as a consequence Ethiopians have continued to exploit the situation to try to get a free ticket out of Africa. That, in turn, has made closing the list all the more difficult.

"I cannot tell you how many are on the list," acknowledged an official from Israel's Interior Ministry, which is charged with determining who is eligible for aliyah. "Right now, we estimate that 85 percent of those waiting in Gondar are eligible, and 40 percent of those waiting in Addis Ababa are eligible. But we just don't know for sure."

The Interior Ministry says it will have a final list of eligible Ethiopian émigrés by the end of 2006; previously, officials had said the list would be ready by June.

Until a few months ago, there was only one Israeli Interior Ministry official in Ethiopia conducting the background checks to determine whether an estimated 20,000 petitioners actually were the relatives of Ethiopian families already in Israel. Now there are three.

Critics say the Interior Ministry's slipshod and slack management of the verification process has left the door wide open both for abuse of the system and for endless additions of Ethiopians claiming Jewish ties.

"It's important for me to convey that something illogical has been happening here for years," said Ori Konforti, the senior Jewish Agency for Israel official in Ethiopia. "The Ethiopians are playing us, and they're a lot better than us at this game because it's their home turf."

As a result of the problems, well-meaning American Jews have been maneuvered into supporting even more Ethiopian ali-

yah, Israeli taxpayers have had to foot the bill, and some Ethiopians with legitimate Jewish links have been forced to wait in Ethiopia for years in squalid conditions, uncertain whether their dream of reaching Zion will ever come true.

Christian Ethiopians

pay Ethiopians in Israel to say they are their relatives, background checks sometimes are con-

ducted with little more than a couple of phone calls and Israel's Interior Ministry has yet to compile a final list of names of those eligible to immigrate.

"We want to know names," Konforti said. "Don't tell me we have 15,000 people, and let's start the operation. Give me 15,000 names. I think if we don't close the list we may well still be here in another 10 years."

It's difficult to estimate how many Falash Mura remain in Ethiopia.

In 1999, an Israeli government census headed by David Efrati counted 26,700 Ethiopians with legitimate claims to immigrate to Israel. Since then, roughly 18,000 Ethiopians have made aliyah, according to the Interior Ministry official, who asked not to be identified.

But rather than there being close to 9,000 remaining, this official says there are 19,000 left.

An Interior Ministry spokeswoman in Israel says there are 13,000 potential olim, or immigrants. Jewish Agency officials in Ethiopia say they are dealing with 15,000 people. Local Ethiopian community leaders say there are more than 17,000. American Jewish officials with aid programs in Ethiopia say the number may far exceed the 20,000-person cap the Israeli government decided upon a year ago. And Israeli scholars

say the number may climb by the tens of thousands.

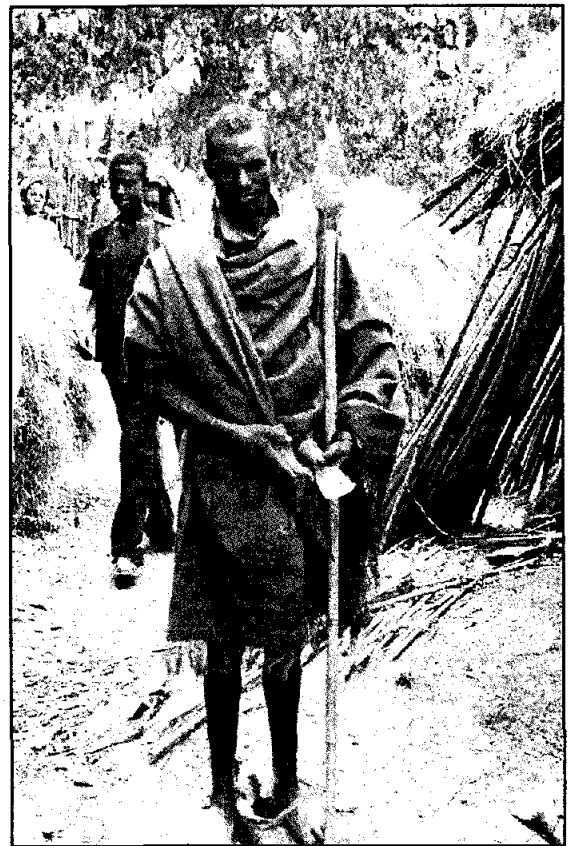
If Ethiopian aliyah is ever to end, some officials warn, some sort of arbitrary ending point will have to be set.

As long as eligibility remains an open question, there are opportunities for Ethiopians to exploit the system.

Mazal Rada, an Ethiopian Israeli who was in Ethiopia's Tigray province last week visiting her birthplace, told JTA she was propositioned by a stranger who offered to pay her to tell the Israeli authorities he was her husband.

"It's preposterous. I was 3 when I left," said Rada, who made aliyah with her family in the early 1980s and now lives in Kiryat Gat. "I hear that guy tries to connect himself to all the Israelis who visit here."

**An Ethiopian Israeli visiting Tigray was offered money by a strange man to tell Israeli authorities he was her husband.**



Uriel Heilman

This villager and many others in his remote village in Ethiopia's Gojam province are among the thousands of people that might stake a claim to Falash Mura status but have yet to contact the Israeli government.

# European Jewish leaders confront apathy

By DINAH A. SPRITZER

PRAGUE (JTA) — Hans Vuijsje, general director of the Jewish Social Work Foundation in the Netherlands, is worried that the nursing home he runs is suffering from schizophrenia.

"We don't have enough Jews so we fill the home with non-Jews," he says regretfully.

"It's a matter of money. In fairness, we have to have a Christmas tree for the non-Jews, and that means having two recreation rooms, one for those who want the tree and then another without the tree. But sometimes the Jewish elderly, they like the way the tree looks and end up wanting to be in that room. So how do we keep the nursing home Jewish with a declining Jewish population?"

Vuijsje was sounding off to a sympathetic audience, 34 other European Jewish leaders of communities and organizations who spent three days last week contemplating their obstacles, which ranged from the high cost of kosher food in Eastern Europe to the record number of French Jews making aliyah.

The First Forum of Directors, put on by the European Council of Jewish Communities and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, was a nuts-and-bolts pan-European workshop held for top Jewish professionals.

Intended to improve participants' fundraising and management skills, the forum also provided a snapshot of difficulties faced by beleaguered executives who were thrilled to hear they were not alone.

"I know this might sound silly, but it was so wonderful to hear that other people struggle with my problems," said forum attendee Elma Groen, executive director of the Netherlands' Union of Progressive Jews, who elicited chuckles when describing how her congregation's rabbi told her she should be sweeter when pushing members for dues.

But just how similar are the problems facing Jewish leaders in, say, Stockholm and Warsaw?

Daniel Koverman, leader of the 1,000-member Malmo community in Sweden noted a challenge many European Jewish leaders face.

"More than 65 percent of our members

are over 65 and the younger ones are disappearing to Stockholm, Gotenberg or Israel. For every Jewish birth we have 30 deaths per year," he said.

About 1.6 million Jews live in Europe; 66 percent live in Western Europe and 34 percent in Eastern Europe and the Balkan countries — including the Asian territories of the Russian Republic and Turkey.

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

Koverman's lament resounded with Petr Papousek, who heads a community of only 150 in Olomouc, Czech Republic.

"There are at least 10 young

Jews in Olomouc that are not members of the community and nothing I say to them convinces them to join.

They tell me they don't feel any identity at all with Judaism," he said.

Alex Sivan, executive director of Fedrom, the Romanian umbrella organization that includes about 10,000 Jews, offered some inspiration.

"We opened computer classes because young people in Romania can't afford the computers. The average monthly wage is \$95. Let me tell you, we have attracted lots of young people."

The intermarriage rate in Europe is on average 50 percent to 70 percent, and much higher in Eastern Europe.

A divisive issue among European Jewry is how to accommodate, or exclude, such mixed families.

In the United States, congregations or movements must tackle this thorny issue. But in Europe, it is whole communities that often decide who may take part in official Jewish life.

Lina Filiba, executive vice president of the Jewish Community of Istanbul, provoked a stir among forum attendees when she said that her community actively seeks to involve non-Jewish spouses in community life by offering "neutral programs that they can feel comfortable participating in."

Meanwhile, there is no collective European approach to defining who is recognized as a Jew.

In Helsinki, couples that include a non-Jewish mother can get their children into a Jewish school and the community as long as they sign a document that promises the children will convert at the same time as having a bar or bat mitzvah. But in Italy, such conversions were banned a few years ago, leaving some families with Jewish and non-Jewish siblings.

Discussions over how to treat these families in Western Europe amused Andrej Zozula, executive director of the Polish Union of Religious Communities. "We have a problem finding anyone who is not in a mixed marriage in our country," he said.

Tomas Kraus, executive director of the Czech Federation of Jewish Communities, noted an increasing number of conflicts that were dividing European communities, some having to do with orthodoxy, some with the rise of Chabad.

"We as institutions have to take a some kind of stance

on this challenge," he said, referring to Chabad.

Kraus outlined challenges that were particularly resonant for Jews in Eastern Europe, such as who would care for all their cemeteries and synagogues. "Do we invest in stones or in people?" he said.

Poland's Zozula spoke of the impossible task of caring for 1,300 Jewish cemeteries.

"Rebuilding our cemeteries is part of showing our young people our traditions," he said. Although communities in the former Eastern Bloc have substantially caught up to their Western counterparts in terms of cultural offerings and education, they still operate in a post-Communist milieu where a Jewish stigma and financial hardship are everyday facts of life.

"Each year I get a bunch of people in their 70s walking into the community for the first time, quietly admitting that they are Jewish, so they can be buried in a Jewish cemetery," said Sivan of Romania.

**'We have a problem finding anyone who is not in a mixed marriage in our country.'**

**Andrej Zozula**

Executive director  
Polish Union of Religious Communities



# In Turkish film, some see anti-Jewish feeling

By TOM TUGEND

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — A Turkish movie featuring a Jewish U.S. army doctor who cuts out the organs of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib and sells them to wealthy foreign clients is breaking all box office records in Turkey.

"Valley of the Wolves: Iraq" is set for release in a dozen Arab and European countries, and the producer is at the current Berlin International Film Festival to find distributors for the United States and additional markets.

The film's arch villain is a rogue American officer, played by Billy Zane, who is a self-professed "peacekeeper sent by God." He and his men shoot up an Iraqi wedding party, killing the groom and his little brother in front of their mother and the bride.

An Op-Ed in the New York Sun characterized the storyline as "Rambo" as written by Jane Fonda and Michael Moore.

The executive and associate producers have expressed concern about the reaction of Jewish viewers. At one point, a doctor, played by Gary Busey, scolds American soldiers for shooting up the wedding guests "because it ruins their organs." In another scene, a group of apparent organ buyers includes a man clearly dressed as an Orthodox Jew.

Zane's character, Sam William Marshall, is depicted as a psychopathic Christian fundamentalist who may be kind to an Iraqi one moment and kill him the next.

Some have asked if the hostile depiction of Americans and Jews reflects a rise in nationalist-

tic and Islamist feelings in Turkey, the one Muslim nation considered a friend of both the United States and Israel.

The depiction of a Jew cutting out the organs of innocent people "wasn't created out of thin air. It is a revival of the ancient blood libel against the Jews," said Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

"There is something in this country called the First Amendment that protects freedom of expression," said Vicki Roberts, Busey's attorney. "I hope we are not returning to the McCarthy era."

A Turkish diplomat who asked not to be identified offered a more benign interpretation of the film's plot and popularity. While noting rising nationalism in Turkey and opposition to the war in Iraq, the diplomat mentioned two incidents insulting to many Turks.

One is the 1978 film "Midnight Express," in which an American caught trying to leave Turkey with hashish is thrown into prison and viciously mistreated. One Turkish newspaper wrote that "Valley of the Wolves" is our revenge for "Midnight Express."

The other was a July 4, 2003, incident in northern Iraq in which troops from a U.S. airborne brigade raided and ransacked a Turkish special-forces headquarters, handcuffed and threw hoods over the heads of 11 officers, and held them for two days. American officials later said that the Turkish officers were mistaken for insurgents because they did not wear uniforms.

Turkish public opinion was outraged and did not accept the American explanation.

"Valley of the Wolves" opens with the 2003 incident and then veers into fiction. Unable to bear the shame of the hooding, one of the Turkish officers commits suicide. His farewell letter reaches Polat Alemdar, a legendary Turkish intelligence officer and James Bond-like character, who sets out to avenge the suicide.

(JTA Correspondent Toby Axelrod in Berlin contributed to this story.)

ARTS  
&  
CULTURE

One Op-Ed called the movie 'Rambo' as written by Jane Fonda and Michael Moore.

## After quarter-century, military chaplain's chaplain retires

By AVIGAIL SCHWARTZ

NEW YORK (JTA) — Losing Rabbi David Lapp to retirement is "like losing someone on the battlefield, someone who suffered the mud and the pain and the loneliness with you," says Maj. Rabbi Carlos Huerta, the Jewish community chaplain at the U.S. Military Academy.

Jewish military chaplains are preparing to feel some of that pain and loneliness with the announcement of Lapp's retirement as head of the Jewish Welfare Board's Jewish Chaplains Council after 24 years.

Lapp, who's married and the father of three children — "six children, since they are married," he says — and grandfather of 10, will retain his duties until his replacement is found.

Lapp's proudest achievement from that period, he says, is his transdenominational prayer book, first produced for the U.S. Army in 1982.

Before then, "there was a siddur that the armed forces pro-

duced, but it had sections for Reform, Conservative and Orthodox," he says.

That's part of Lapp's modus operandi of supporting all Jewish chaplains in the military, and through them, Jewish soldiers — no matter their denomination. There are 28 Jewish chaplains on active duty in the Army, Air Force and Navy, and 43 reservists — a number that has been steady for the past decade.

During his stint at the Chaplains Council, Lapp has also helped the army provide ready-to-eat kosher meals to soldiers in the field since 1990.

Born in Austria in 1931, Lapp immigrated to the United States with his family at the age of 9. After the Anschluss in 1938, restrictive laws were placed upon Austria's Jews quickly, he says.

He studied political science and religious education at Yeshiva University and was ordained at the Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary in 1957. He studied chaplaincy at Command and General Staff College at Ft. Leavenworth, Kan., and the Army War College in Carlisle, Pa.

APPRECIATION

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### MIDDLE EAST

#### Hamas: U.S. should talk to us

A Hamas official called on the United States to take his group off its list of terrorist organizations.

Mousa Mohammed Abu Marzook said the United States should deal with Hamas without any preconditions.

U.S. officials have insisted they won't talk to Hamas unless it renounces terrorism and recognizes the State of Israel.

#### Saudis, Pakistan press Hamas

Saudi Arabia and Pakistan urged Hamas to meet international requirements, including recognizing Israel's right to exist.

Turki al-Faisal, the Saudi ambassador to the United States, described a joint communique to Hamas by Saudi King Abdullah and Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf.

"They must commit to the commitments of the Palestinian Authority, because the Palestinian Authority, its *raison d'être*, its legitimacy derives from the Oslo Agreements with Israel," al-Faisal said this week at a meeting of the Council on Foreign Relations in New York. The message also urged the international community not to prejudice Hamas until it assumes government, al-Faisal said.

#### Israel releases Hamas politician

Israel released a senior Hamas politician from prison. Ahmed Ali, a leading West Bank imam, went free Wednesday after five months in Israeli administrative detention, a form of custody usually applied to terrorism suspects.

Israeli officials had no immediate word on why he had been held, or the reasons for his release. Ali is one of 74 new lawmakers from Hamas in the next Palestinian Authority Parliament, following the radical Islamic group's election win last month.

Another 14 Palestinian lawmakers remain in Israeli custody — 11 from Hamas and three from the previously dominant Fatah faction.

#### Israel protests after Turkey hosts Hamas

Israel expressed dissatisfaction with Turkey for hosting Hamas.

Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal arrived Thursday for talks in Ankara, the first visit by an official from the radical Islamic group in a non-Arab country since it won last month's Palestinian Authority election.

Meshaal was scheduled to hold talks with officials from the Turkish Foreign Ministry and the ruling Justice and Development Party.

The Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem issued a protest, saying the Turkish overture was inconsistent with a Western consensus that Hamas should be isolated until it renounces terrorism and recognizes the Jewish state's right to exist.

Turkey said in turn that it intended to try to soften Hamas' hard-line stand.

#### Anti-Semitic cartoon contest in Israel

An Israeli artist launched an international anti-Semitic cartoon contest. Yediot Achronot cartoonist Amitai Sandy announced his initiative this week, saying it aimed to offset an Iranian newspaper's recent calls for submissions satirizing the Holocaust.

"We will show the world we can do the best, sharpest, most offensive Jew-hating cartoons ever published," Sandy wrote on his Web site, [www.boomka.org](http://www.boomka.org). "No Iranian will beat us on our own home turf."

#### Israel goes green for Tu B'Shevat

The Jewish National Fund marked Tu B'Shevat by planting hundreds of thousands of trees throughout Israel.

The JNF said this week that on Jewish Arbor Day its volunteers, led by acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, planted 640,000 trees at public parks and nature reserves.

### NORTH AMERICA

#### Rice: We're keeping money from Hamas

The United States is trying to prevent money it already granted the Palestinian Authority from reaching a Hamas-led government.

"We are making some efforts already to secure funding that may have been already granted," Condoleezza Rice, the U.S. secretary of state, said Wednesday in Senate hearings.

The Bush administration set aside \$50 million last year for Palestinian Authority projects.

The money does not go directly to the Palestinian Authority and is administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development.

The United States has already made clear it will not deal with a government led by Hamas, which won a landslide legislative election victory last month, but this was the first time Rice said money already in the pipeline would be restricted.

#### Israeli Consulate launches video blog

The Israeli Consulate in New York launched an online video blog.

The Web site, which went live Thursday, will allow Israelis and visitors to Israel to post videos about life in the Jewish state, and will allow others to comment on them.

The site, [www.israelvideoblog.org](http://www.israelvideoblog.org), is an effort to highlight a side of Israel not often seen in the mainstream press to an English-speaking audience, the consulate says.

#### Israel, U.S. Jews help Africa

Israel and American Jewish groups have contributed more than \$100,000 as part of a U.N. relief effort for starving Africans.

The Israeli government said in a statement this week that \$118,000 collected in the Jewish state and the Diaspora will be distributed by the World Food Program to drought-struck Mauritania, Malawi and Kenya.

Israel was among the first countries to respond positively to African relief appeals from the United Nations secretary-general, Kofi Annan, and the food program.

Also enlisted were the UJA-Federation of New York, the American Jewish Committee, the United Jewish Communities of MetroWest New Jersey and the UJA Federation of Northern New Jersey.

#### Rabbi dies at 106

Rabbi Yehuda Chitrik, a Chabad-Lubavitch scholar known for his sharp memory, died Tuesday in New York at 106.

Chitrik was known for his legendary ability to recount tales.

"He can recount stories word for word that he heard 50 years ago," his great-grandson Eliezer Zalmanov told The New York Times in 2004. A book of translations of his stories, "From My Father's Shabbos Table," was published in 1991.

### WORLD

#### Anti-Israel conference at Oxford

An "Israeli Apartheid Week" is being held at England's Oxford University.

The local Palestinian Society is sponsoring the week, which was approved by Oxford's student union.

Israeli anti-Zionists are among those speaking at the event, the Jerusalem Post reported. Jewish students at Oxford are handing out protest literature.