

IN THE NEWS

Arrest made in killing of French Jew

Police in the Ivory Coast arrested a suspect in the case of a French Jew who was tortured and murdered.

The man, identified as Youssef F., was arrested Thursday. After initially saying anti-Semitism played no role in the killing of Ilan Halimi, French authorities now say the killing was motivated by hate.

The crime has angered the French Jewish community.

Saudis won't cut aid to Palestinians

Saudi Arabia rejected a U.S. call to cut aid to a Hamas-led Palestinian government.

Condoleezza Rice, the U.S. secretary of state, is touring the Middle East this week in an attempt to persuade Arab nations to join the West in isolating Hamas, a terrorist group that won a landslide victory in the Palestinian elections last month.

Rice says she wants humanitarian aid to continue, but wants other assistance cut until the group renounces violence and recognizes Israel, but wants other assistance cut until the group renounces violence and recognizes Israel. "How do we distinguish between humanitarian and non-humanitarian aid?" Prince Saud al-Faisal, the Saudi foreign minister, said Wednesday.

Evangelical group to lobby for Israel

A new evangelical group is planning a pro-Israel lobbying bid in Washington on July 18-19.

Christians United for Israel, led by the Rev. John Hagee, was formed earlier this month.

The executive committee includes prominent evangelists the Rev. Jerry Falwell, Gary Bauer and the Rev. George Morrison, who founded the Christian group Promise Keepers.

The Israeli Embassy in Washington welcomed the news.

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WORLD REPORT

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Brian Hendler

A Hamas activist holds an election flier with a photo of Hamas founder Sheik Ahmed Yassin, top, and Ismail Haniyeh, the new P.A. prime minister-designate, on Jan. 25 in the West Bank.

Isolation of Hamas tops agenda at AIPAC's upcoming conference

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Activists attending this year's American Israel Public Affairs Committee policy conference will pause briefly to savor Iran's long-awaited isolation — and then get to work making sure the Palestinian Authority gets the same treatment.

A central focus of this year's conference will be legislation that includes the toughest conditions to date for U.S. assistance to the Palestinian Authority in the wake of Hamas' landslide victory in Palestinian legislative elections last month.

"The Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act (H.R. 4681) will ban direct aid and severely limit

indirect assistance to the P.A. until the president certifies that the P.A. is not controlled by a terrorist group and until Hamas agrees to fight terrorism and recognize Israel's right to exist," AIPAC spokesman Josh Block said this week in a statement. "Similar legislation is currently being worked on in the Senate."

The policy conference, taking place this year from March 5-7, draws between 5,000 and 6,000 activists to Washington and is the annual centerpiece for the pro-Israel lobby. The final day of the conference is reserved for lobbying on Capitol Hill.

Vice President Dick Cheney is headlining

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**BEHIND
THE
HEADLINES**

■ AIPAC's conference will focus on isolating Iran and Hamas

Continued from page 1

the conference. He will speak to the activists on Tuesday morning, just before they head over to Capitol Hill for their lobbying day, where the Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act will top the agenda.

That presents a change from recent years, when the principal focus of such lobbying was Iran's nuclear program; last year, the conference featured a virtual tour of an Iranian nuclear weapons lab.

Iran will still play a major role at the conference. The opening plenary, featuring former nuclear inspector David Kay and John Bolton, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, is on "How the International Community Can Stop Iran."

The very title suggests the sea change in recent months: There is no longer any question that the international community wants to stop Iran. And with the Islamic republic referred this month to the U.N. Security Council for possible sanctions, AIPAC's long and at times lonely fight seems vindicated.

Now the focus is on Hamas. Last week, AIPAC distributed talking points to Congress members promoting legislation initiated by Reps. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.) and Tom Lantos (D-Calif.) that would stifle aid for the Palestinian Authority and for non-governmental organizations.

The Palestinian Authority would have to prove it is not employing a single member of Hamas or any other group on U.S. terrorism lists; dismantle all terrorist groups; halt all anti-Israel incitement in any sector it controls and replace it with materials

promoting coexistence and ensure democracy and financial transparency.

Those certifications go beyond the reporting requirements in place under current U.S. legislation. For instance, the Palestinian Authority would have to prove that it is a transparent democracy before the first dollar arrived, instead of merely showing progress. It would have to show that incitement had been crushed and replaced by coexistence, instead of simply pulling occasional inciting school texts and broadcasts.

The provisions are also much tougher because they extend to indirect assistance, cutting off non-governmental organizations. The only exception is for humanitarian assistance. It also reduces U.S. payments to the United Nations commensurate with the percentage of the U.N. budget that goes to the Palestinian Authority.

The legislation also tightens President Bush's options for circumvention. It omits any national security waivers related to aid, and requires a 15-day waiting period before humanitarian aid goes forward.

The administration is fighting the bill, partly because it impinges on Bush's protection of his foreign policy prerogative.

"Of course, the White House would like to have more waivers in the bill because of national security concerns," Ros-Lehtinen acknowledged in a Feb. 2 news conference announcing the bill.

In an attempt to slow the bill, the administration got its friends in Congress to rush through a non-binding resolution that calls for a ban on direct aid to the Palestinian Authority as long as a party calling for Israel's destruction controls more than half the legislature.

Under the provisions of the resolution, which passed both houses overwhelmingly, the simple ouster of Hamas would be enough to allow direct aid; indirect aid would not be affected at all.

The resolution was initiated two weeks ago by Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.) and shepherded through the House of Representatives this week by Rep. Henry Hyde (R-Ill.), the chairman of the House International Relations Committee.

Voting for the resolution could provide

a degree of cover for members of Congress when AIPAC activists swarm congressional offices next month pressing the much tougher Ros-Lehtinen-Lantos bill.

In a Feb. 15 floor speech, Hyde suggested he would use his powers as committee chairman to slow down the other bill.

"Tying the hands of this administration is not in the interests of national security," he said. "Hurting the Palestinian people will reward terrorist regimes like

Syria and Iran, which seek to exploit the suffering of the Palestinians for their own selfish reasons."

In any case, Hyde said, Ros-Lehtinen's bill would not be considered "in advance of the formation of the new Palestinian Cabinet."

By then the bill could be significantly transformed, as negotiators address elements that the administration considers impractical. For instance, should an earthquake hit the Palestinian ar-

eas Bush would have to wait 15 days before he could fly in humanitarian assistance.

Another administration worry is that the bill seems aimed less at Hamas than it is at tying the administration's hands, no matter who runs the Palestinian Authority.

Existing law on terrorist groups already bans aid to any Hamas-led government. And the Palestinian Authority has not received direct aid for years, a consequence of its pervasive corruption. Funds are currently administered solely by the U.S. Agency for International Development, and paid only to non-P.A. contractors.

"The administration has a whole range of problems with the Ros-Lehtinen bill, ranging from all stick, no carrot to it being a blanket lifetime ban of aid even if reforms are enacted," said one senior congressional staffer who asked to speak anonymously.

The bill's proponents say its toughness is proportional to the failure to contain Hamas by leaders that the United States considered moderate, including P.A. President Mahmoud Abbas.

"Things keep getting worse which is why congressional conditions keep getting more stringent," said a senior staffer for a Democrat in Congress who strongly favors the bill. "You now have a terrorist organization running the Palestinian Authority." ■

**'Hurting the
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Rep. Henry Hyde
(R-Ill.)**

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European and Jewish leaders differ on Iran

By DINAH SPRITZER

VIENNA (JTA) — The European Union is trying to reassure European Jewish officials that it will stand tough on Hamas and Iran, but so far it isn't having much luck.

Speaking this week to the leaders of 40 European Jewish community federations at the general assembly of the European Jewish Congress, the European Union's foreign affairs commissioner, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, tried to strike a note of solidarity with the Jewish leaders, but the leaders weren't buying into the notion.

The disagreements reflect the tensions between the European Union and the continent's Jewish community over how to deal with the thorny issues of Iran's nuclear program and the rise of Hamas to the leadership of the Palestinian Authority.

They also come as cracks are emerging between the United States and its European allies over how to deal with Hamas' ascension.

Ferrero-Waldner prefaced her comments on Hamas to the delegates gathered in Vienna on Sunday with an emphasis on compromise: "Israel must do more to ensure the peaceful coexistence of two viable states, such as ending the new construction of settlements."

She urged Israel not to withhold tax revenues from the Palestinian Authority, as the Israeli government has said it would.

But she promised Sunday that before engaging the new Hamas government, the European Union would stick to the requirements laid out on Jan. 30 by the "Quartet" for Middle East peace, made up of the European Union, Russia, the United Nations and the United States.

These requirements state that Hamas must renounce terrorism, recognize Israel and adhere to all previous agreements made under the rubric of the road map for Middle East peace.

"We hope we can continue to work with the Palestinian Authority to build up the infrastructure of democracy and work towards building a state," she said. The ball is in Hamas' court, she added, although she did not specify which moves the European Union wants Hamas to take.

Ferrero-Waldner never said the European Union would not "talk to" Hamas,

only that the European body would not "work with" Hamas if it did not adhere to the Quartet principles.

This distinction has become crucial since Russian President Vladimir Putin invited Hamas leaders to Russia for talks. Ferrero-Waldner said Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has promised the talks are in keeping with the Quartet's guidelines, but many Jewish leaders

view any engagement with Hamas as a betrayal.

The prospect of E.U.-Hamas talks angered Pierre Besnainou, president of the European Jewish Congress, who grilled Ferrero-Waldner on the E.U.'s stance.

"I just saw a woman from the Hamas election list on Israeli television saying that she was proud that her son killed Jews. Now you say that you feel Russia holding talks is consistent with your policy. Do you mean the E.U. will have discussions with the Hamas government? Should we imagine you will have discussions with such terrorists?" he said.

Urging patience, Ferrero-Waldner responded that the European Union has been very clear about its requirements. But she added: "We have to see what happens with the new Hamas government. Israel has elections coming. Both sides have to be tough right now, but then after I hope there will be a positive direction."

In addressing the Iranian nuclear issue, Ferrero-Waldner, Austria's former foreign minister, said, "Tehran should have no illusions about the international community's resolve."

If Iran does not change its stance and continues its nuclear program, the matter will definitely be dealt with by the U.N. Security Council, she said. "Of course what happens at the Security Council is another matter entirely."

Russia and China, two members of the council, are known to be reluctant to pass any resolution criticizing Iran on its nuclear program.

During her speech, Ferrero-Waldner

condemned Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's recent denial of the Holocaust, his statement that Israel should be wiped off the face of the earth and an Iranian newspaper's Holocaust cartoon contest, which she referred to as "a race to the bottom for religious intolerance."

Despite such assurances, Ariel Muzicant, president of the Austrian Jewish community, warned Ferrero-Waldner that

Europe's 2.5 million Jews, as well as Israel, would act if the European Union did not stand fast on Iran and Hamas.

"We expect the E.U. not to move one single inch. Until Hamas recognizes Israel and renounces violence, no talking," he said.

"I am telling you it is Europe this time, not the U.S., that is the

key player."

In a weekend meeting involving Besnainou, Muzicant and Austrian President Wolfgang Schussel, the latter told Muzicant that an "armed solution" was not possible in Iran.

Stephan Kramer, general-secretary of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, summed up the emotional tenor of the Jewish community leaders when he nearly shouted at Ferrero-Waldner, "We will not accept an Iran with nuclear weapons, Israel will not accept this, all there has ever been from the E.U. on this is appeasement."

An Iranian newspaper's Holocaust cartoon contest is 'a race to the bottom for religious intolerance.'

Benita Ferrero-Waldner
E.U. foreign affairs commissioner

Terror Tees blasted

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Denmark cracked down on a clothing company that sold T-shirts with the logo of a Palestinian terrorist group.

Danish police said Tuesday that four people connected with the firm Fighters and Lovers, which offers shirts with the insignias of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, have been charged with supporting terrorist groups.

Authorities confiscated almost \$4,000 from the company and shut down its Web site. The European Union considers the PFLP and FARC to be terrorist groups. ■

AROUND
THE
JEWISH
WORLD

Miles to go: The journey from Africa to Zion

By URIEL HEILMAN

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (JTA) — Indalo Tegudabaso wore a wide smile on his face as he sat in the departures hall of Bole International Airport in Addis Ababa.

Dressed in a crisp yellow shirt and seated beside his wife and infant son, Indalo had waited many years for this moment, the beginning of a new life far from the poverty of Africa and close to his family in Israel.

A few hours later, exhausted but happy, Indalo would sit clutching a miniature Israeli flag and munching on his first Israeli meal: an egg-and-cheese sandwich with bite-sized tomatoes of a shape and variety he had never seen before.

"I am very happy because my parents are living in Israel," Indalo told JTA en route to his new home in Israel.

Indalo — Ethiopians are known by their first names — is one of the lucky ones among thousands of Ethiopians seeking to immigrate to Israel from one of Africa's poorest countries.

■
Their journey from the remote Ethiopian countryside to absorption centers in the heart of Israeli cities like Netanya, Lod and Ashkelon is a long one.

Most of the Ethiopians coming to Israel today grew up in farming villages in rural

provinces in northwest Ethiopia. Born in straw-and-mud tukuls where animals often jockey for space with humans in the one-room huts, these Ethiopians, known as Falash Mura, worked as farmers, blacksmiths, weavers or potters in their native communities.

The places they come from are uniform in their simplicity: no electricity, no running water, often little

more than a cluster of huts standing among a few eucalyptus trees. Some live many miles from the closest city — places residents have heard of but have never visited. Others live just a couple of hours' walking time outside mid-sized Ethiopian cities like Gondar, a grimy metropolis of some 165,000 people.

The men work in the fields during the planting and harvesting seasons or make metal tools to sell at market. The women tend to large numbers of children and take care of household chores, including making pottery and winnowing teff to prepare the Ethiopian pancake-like staple of injera. Children work too, shepherding herds of sheep, cows or goats once they reach the ages of 4 or 5.

THE FALASH MURA'S FATE

The Falash Mura
come from very rural
areas, with no running
water or electricity.

Over the years, many of these Ethiopians gradually have developed links with the outside world through relatives who have immigrated to the Jewish state.

For those seeking to leave, relatives in Israel advise moving to the cities of Gondar or Addis Ababa, where Israeli government representatives screen applicants for aliyah and where American Jewish aid groups offer assistance to the Falash

Mura — Ethiopians linked to Jews whose ancestors converted to Christianity but who now are returning to Judaism in a bid to immigrate to the Jewish state.

"I came to Gondar to go to Israel," said Tareken Wolde, 62, a weaver who migrated

from the village of Quara to the city five years ago.

One of Tareken's two ex-wives lives in Israel, and she occasionally sends him money to help him out. The other ex-wife lives in Quara; his current wife works alongside him in the embroidery workshop of a Jewish aid compound in Gondar. Tareken has six children.

For people like Taraken who have moved to Gondar, the aid compounds run by the North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry provide some embroidery work, Jewish education, schooling for children and some free food — all much appreciated by country people who have been impoverished by their move to the cities and loss of their rural livelihoods.

■
One recent afternoon at the Gondar compound, 8- and 9-year-olds performed somersaults and cartwheels in their makeshift gymnasium — a large open room that doubles as the community's synagogue.

In another room, scores of women sat with their children eating modest portions of mashed potatoes, carrots, beans, eggs and other gruel-like substances out of little red plastic bowls.

On the other side of the compound, young instructors stood in packed classrooms teaching about Hebrew, Judaism and Israel.

A similar compound for the Falash Mura in Addis Ababa has been closed for

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Uriel Heilman

Falash Mura in Gondar wait in line for food distributed by a program funded by the North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry.

Continued from page 4

the last year and a half, since NACOEJ ran afoul of the law in Ethiopia's capital, so the Falash Mura there have had to make ends meet without special assistance.

Soon, Israeli officials hope, the Jewish Agency for Israel will take over these compounds from NACOEJ's administration.

The success of that plan depends in large part on whether the Israeli government implements its decision to accelerate the aliyah of the Falash Mura remaining in Addis Ababa and Gondar. Already, Israel has increased the number of Interior Ministry officials working in Ethiopia to screen the aliyah petitioners.

In Gondar, one of those officials works out of a modest building on a dirt road not far from the center of town. He interviews Ethiopian families to try to determine whether or not they are related to Ethiopians in Israel.

Experience, he said, has taught him to be cautious.

"Until now we see that when someone from the city marries someone from a village, they separate once they are in Israel and the city person tries to bring his whole family here," the official said by way of example, suggesting that these marriages of convenience actually are ploys to enable urban Ethiopian Christians to escape Africa for Israel.

"We also don't accept marriages conducted at any time during the aliyah application process," the official added.

Some aliyah petitioners have been waiting in Gondar or Addis up to eight years to emigrate.

While they wait, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee ensures the petitioners receive medical care at clinics the group operates in Gondar and Addis. The JDC, the humanitarian relief agency that gets funding from the North American federation system, also runs a feeding program for young mothers and their babies.

Some Ethiopians develop HIV while in the city — thanks to the easy availability of prostitutes and the plethora of Ethiopians eager to develop intimate relationships with people who have the potential to get them a free ticket out of Africa. The JDC's chief physician in Ethiopia, Richard Hodes, says staff members at his clinics routinely enact dramatic skits to try to teach community members about the importance of using condoms.

Medical conditions are not taken into

consideration when determining eligibility for aliyah, Israeli officials say.

Every month, the Jewish Agency gets the names of 300 Ethiopians the Israeli Interior Ministry has identified as eligible for aliyah.

In the final two to four weeks before they are brought to Israel, the future olim, or immigrants, are given the vaccinations they need for life in Israel, undergo a crash orientation course to learn how to live in a Western country, and are housed in a JDC residence adjacent to the Israeli Embassy in Addis Ababa.

Israeli officials said they have discussed plans with the Ethiopian government to help resettle in Ethiopia those who have been denied entry into Israel.

For those lucky enough to get a ticket to Israel, the night flight on Ethiopian Airlines to Tel Aviv is an exciting and bewildering experience. Wearing Western clothes provided for them by the JDC, they move through the airport lugging children and small bags, skipping the mystifying escalators — the only ones in Ethiopia — for the more familiar stairs.

Wearied eyes suddenly grow wide as the plane takes off, necks craned to catch a glimpse of the lights of Addis disappearing below.

When the plane lands in Israel, the immigrants are taken to the old terminal at Ben-Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv, where they are given Israeli flags and food and processed as new Israeli citizens. Some are met by relatives already living in Israel.

The absorption centers to which Ethiopian immigrants are sent today, though modest by Israeli standards, are a strange luxury to them. Many have to be reminded time and again to turn off the gas stoves, and living in a place with no animals takes some getting used to.

Kasahun Ballata arrived in Israel with his wife a month ago. He now lives

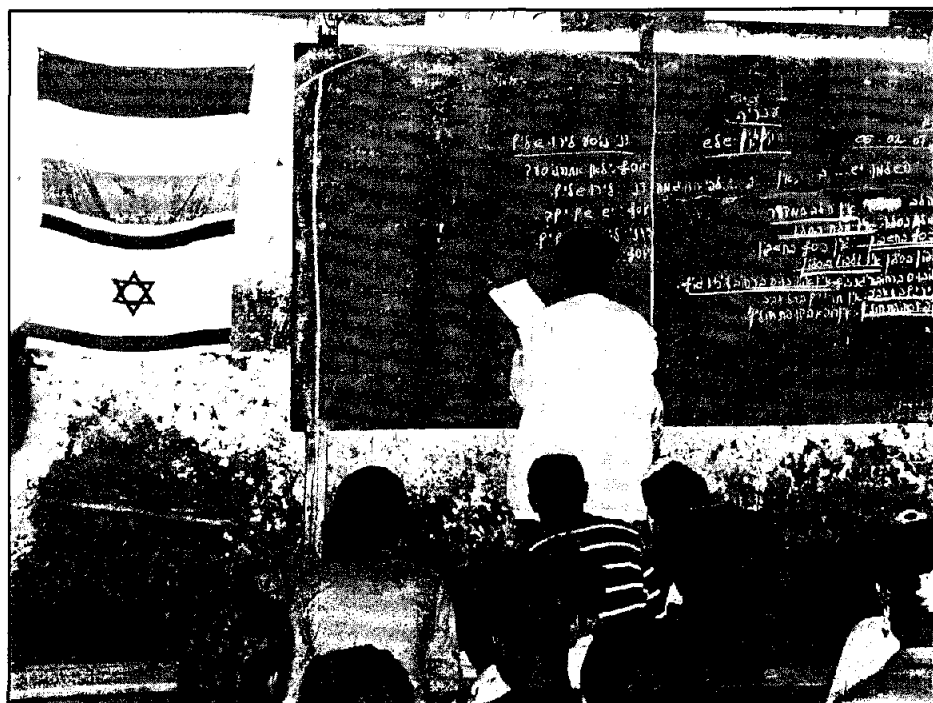
in Lod. Through an Amharic translator, he said he's still adjusting.

Asked what he planned to do once he had completed his intensive Hebrew language study and his conversion course and had moved out of the absorption center, Kasahun said he hoped to find a job.

What kind?

"Whatever I can get," he said.

Some contract HIV while waiting in the city for permission to emigrate.



Uriel Heilman

Falash Mura kids take a Hebrew class in the Gondar compound; many of the teachers know little more of the language than the students, and are expected to be replaced by Ethiopian Israelis once the Jewish Agency for Israel takes over the compound.

A more potent weapon than censorship

By DEBORAH LIPSTADT

ROME (JTA) — David Irving's arrest and three-year jail sentence for having denied the Holocaust has been met with a chorus of cheers in the Jewish community. A notorious liar, he was once considered a prominent historian. Many people were delighted that prison would now house a man who has called Jews cockroaches, believes black newscasters should be relegated to reading news of criminals and drug busts, and asked a survivor how much money she had made from having a number tattooed on her arm.

At long last, justice seemed to prevail. In the immediate aftermath of the verdict, my blog (Lipstadt.blogspot.com) was flooded with expressions of delight. Most people assumed I was dancing the hora.

But I was not.

I fought this man's libel charge against me for six years. For more than three months I had to silently sit in court in London listening to him say the most horrible things about Jews, people of color and survivors. He made fun of those who talked about gas chambers and sneered at survivors' accounts of what they endured. He was full of bluster about how he was going to demolish the myth of the Holocaust.

Quietly and meticulously, relying on the stellar work of a dream team of historians, we showed that every one — not many, not most, but all — of David Irving's claims were complete rot. They were based on lies, distortions and fabrications. They were, as the prominent historian Richard Evans and the leader of our research team, said, "A tissue of lies."

In no way, Evans continued, could this man even be thought of as a historian.

Some people have argued that since he has written more than 30 books on historical topics, he is a historian. If I wrote books on building bridges that would not make me a structural engineer. Irving has been dubbed by some people on the Internet as a "distorian."

During my trial, Irving kept trying to introduce evidence of a world Jewish cabal or global conspiracy against him. He described me as "the gold-tipped spearhead of the enemies of truth," his euphemism for the Jews. He laughed at survivors, declaring them liars or psycho-

paths. And he called the judge — in a very telling slip, "Mein Fuhrer."

He suffered an overwhelming loss. When the judge, in a 350-page judgment, said he "perverts," "distorts," "lies," and that his conclusions are a "travesty," Irving's reputation was left in tatters. When two different courts of appeal concurred, he faced financial ruin.

OP-ED

Why then was I not delighted with the court sentence handed down in Vienna on Feb. 20? I am writing this sitting in the shadow of the Vatican, preparing to teach

a course on the Holocaust at the Pontifical Gregorian University, the Jesuit university affiliated with the Vatican. For centuries the church censored Jewish books, forcing Jews to remove anything the church authorities deemed objectionable to Christianity. Even prayers were censored.

We Jews, who have suffered from censorship, should not be supporting it. Moreover, I don't believe censorship is efficacious. It renders the censored item into forbidden fruit, making it more appealing, not less so.

Here in Europe, as in many quarters in the United States, this discussion has been joined with the debate over the Danish cartoons. Various Jewish organizations have pointed out — and rightfully so — that the Islamic world, which is so vigorously protesting the insult they perceive in these cartoons, is ignoring its own double standard. It has lived quite comfortably for many years with a spate of anti-Semitic cartoons. Some are well nigh pornographic and worthy of what

one might find in *Der Sturmer*, the Nazi anti-Semitic newspaper.

While it is legitimate to argue that there is a difference between cartoons and the murder of millions of people, it is hard to argue for laws against Holocaust denial but demand that the Danish cartoonists' freedom of speech be protected. It suggests a double standard.

More importantly, there is a far better way to fight Holocaust denial than to rely on the transitory force of law. When David Irving forced me to go to court to defend my freedom of expression, my most

important weapon was historical truth. We have truth and history on our side. From both an ideological and strategic perspective, those are far more powerful weapons than laws, especially laws

that seem to counter the ideal of freedom of expression.

The best way to counter Holocaust deniers is to teach as many people as possible this history. That is why courses on history of the Holocaust have proven so popular and important. Students who take those courses will never fall prey to the David Irving-like distortions.

Jewish tradition teaches that the word *emet*, truth, composed as it is from the first, middle and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet, encompasses everything. The truth of the Holocaust is terrible and painful, but it is the truth and that is the most potent weapon anyone could want.

(Deborah Lipstadt teaches at Emory University and is the author of History on Trial: My Day in Court with David Irving [Ecco, 2005] and is a winner of the National Jewish Book Award.)

We Jews, who have suffered from censorship, should not be supporting it.

Austrian magazine profiles Jews

PRAGUE (JTA) — One of Austria's leading magazines ran a cover story on Vienna's young Jews.

The headline for the story in *Profil* provides insights into young Jews from Reform to fervently Orthodox and how they balance their commitment to Judaism with their participation in Austrian society.

Responding to the unusual breadth of coverage, Ariel Muzicant, president of Austria's Jewish community told JTA, "It's a nice article and gives the impression of what's going on in Vienna, which is a lot of Jewish life, and not only looking into the past but looking into the future." Vienna is home to approximately 10,000 Jews.

Palestinian film's Oscar designation under debate

By TOM TUGEND

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — When the controversial film "Paradise Now" is introduced at the Oscar ceremony on March 5, the live and television audiences may wonder not just whether it will win, but exactly where it came from.

In the listing by countries of the five nominees for foreign language film honors, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences gives "Paradise Now's" origin as "Palestine." In various academy news releases, the designation has been "Palestinian Authority."

The final word isn't in yet, but academy decision-makers are "leaning toward" the term "Palestinian Territories," said John Pavlik, the academy's director of communications. The alternatives reflect the geopolitical uncertainties and sensitivities of the Middle East, as well as the flexibility of academy rules. As in the Olympic Games, only internationally recognized countries are eligible to enter the foreign language film competition, but this year's list of 58 entries includes Hong Kong, Puerto Rico and Taiwan, none of which have universal acceptance.

On the basis of such inclusiveness, the academy two years ago accepted the film "Divine Intervention" as the entry of "Palestine."

The Israeli Consulate in Los Angeles has been caught up in the controversy about the film, which explores the motivations and doubts of two would-be suicide bombers assigned to blow up a Tel Aviv bus. Its director, Hany Abu-Assad and leading actors are Israeli Arabs.

Israeli daily Yediot Achronot published an article summarized in a paragraph below the headline: "Powerful Israelis and Jews in Hollywood exert pressures on American

members of the academy in a bid to prevent 'Paradise Now' from winning Oscar. Meanwhile, Israeli diplomats get academy's commitment not to present film as representing Palestinian state."

Turkish newspaper Zaman reported that two Israeli diplomats "have already been guaranteed by the academy that it will not show the Palestinian film at the Oscar ceremony," apparently referring to brief clips used to introduce nominated movies.

The original Israeli article identified the diplomats as the consul general, Ehud Danoch, and Gilad Millo, consul for media and public affairs, both of whom deny the report. It also cited sources at the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem who "condemned

attempts to hinder 'Paradise Now's' chances in the Oscars, saying these efforts may tarnish Israel's international reputation as a state that advocates freedom of speech."

American Jewish organizations, with few exceptions, have stayed away from the controversy. One reason may be that few persons, Jewish or otherwise, have actually seen the film. Furthermore — politics aside — the film is generally considered to be of high quality, has received excellent reviews and was crowned with a Golden

Globe as best foreign film of the year by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association.

One reason for the generally cautious approach by Jewish groups may be the lesson drawn from Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ," suggested Jewish Journal

reporter Marc Ballon.

Conventional wisdom has it that the persistent attacks on the movie, particularly by the ADL, kept "Passion" in the headlines and contributed to its box-office success.

One observer noted the additional irony that Israel's official Oscar entry, "What a Wonderful Place," presents a considerably worse picture of Israelis than does the Palestinian film. The Israeli entry did not receive a nomination.

ARTS & CULTURE

A previous, lesser-known film was listed as the entry of 'Palestine.'

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Hadassah hospital chief in limelight with Sharon's illness

By AVIGAIL SCHWARTZ

NEW YORK (JTA) — Dr. Shlomo Mor-Yosef's trip to New York was supposed to happen six weeks ago, but then disaster struck: Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon suffered his second stroke and went into a coma.

"I took it upon myself to be spokesman of the hospital" because "I thought it's very delicate and a huge responsibility, and thought it should be handled by a doctor and not by a professional in PR or press department," Mor-Yosef, the director general of Hadassah University Medical Center in Jerusalem, told JTA in an interview on Feb. 16.

And handle it delicately he did. Everything was cleared first with the family, and a strategy was decided upon from the beginning. "It's a problem, an ethical problem, how much you can disclose, how much you can say about a patient who is also the prime minister," Mor-Yosef says.

"But we agreed after the first hospitalization what we'd say.

We consulted with the sons and took the decision to give only data without any evaluation and leave the evaluation to the journalists, to the doctors from other hospitals."

Though his role has expanded to become so public over the past weeks, he downplays it, shifting focus to the hospital.

"Hadassah got huge exposure, the hospital got huge exposure, we had journalists, reporters, TV crews, radio crews for a week, day and night in the hospital, and they broadcast from there."

His old-school gentleman demeanor does not crack when the possibility of ending Sharon's life is broached, but he is quietly and calmly adamant.

"First of all, he's not under any life-support machines. In order to stop his life you have to kill him. Not to disconnect him from a machine. And no one is expecting us to kill him — as a patient, not as the prime minister.

"Secondly, it's a family issue. We are not in this stage at all. We think we have to fight for his life and recovery, and the family thinks it," he said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Palestinian killed in West Bank clash

Israeli soldiers killed a Palestinian during a West Bank clash. The Palestinian was shot dead Thursday as troops tried to disperse a crowd in Nablus that had attacked them with rocks and Molotov cocktails.

Another five Palestinians were reported wounded.

There were no Israeli casualties. Israeli forces have been scouring Nablus for Palestinian terrorists since the weekend, arresting at least 10 suspects and demolishing a bomb lab.

Sharon has stomach procedure

Ariel Sharon had fluid removed from his stomach.

The minor procedure occurred Wednesday at the Hadassah Hospital where Sharon has been in a coma since Jan. 4, when he suffered a major stroke.

Otherwise, Sharon's condition remains unchanged.

Israeli general reprimanded

An Israeli general was reprimanded for comments that caused a diplomatic squabble with Jordan.

Israel's military chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz, rebuked Maj. Gen. Yair Naveh on Thursday for saying that Jordan's King Abdullah "could be the last Hashemite king."

After the remarks, Israel's Foreign Ministry scrambled to assure Jordan, one of two Arab countries with which Israel enjoys full relations, that the comments did not reflect government policy of the State of Israel.

Report: Palestinians overcounted

The Palestinian Authority overcounted Palestinians by more than a million, a team of demographers concluded.

The American-Israeli Demographic Research Group, presenting its findings at the American Enterprise Institute on Thursday, said the 3.8 million figure for 2004, published by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, was off by 1.3 million.

The researchers said the Palestinian statisticians based their figure on mid-1990s projections that counted on massive immigration after the establishment of a Palestinian state, then projected for 1999; counted Palestinians who had been outside the region for more than a year, and who had a legal right to return; and failed to count emigration.

The research group also discounted projections that Arabs would outnumber within a generation Jews in Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, saying Arab birthrates were high, but declining.

Palestinian-only roads planned

Israel plans to pave a network of West Bank roads that would be used exclusively by Palestinians.

Security sources said Thursday that the new roads, which have yet to receive government approval, are aimed at improving access to Palestinian communities.

While Israelis will be barred from the Palestinian-only roads for safety reasons, there is no plan to restrict Palestinian traffic on the existing infrastructure, the sources said.

El Al petitions rejected

Israel's High Court of Justice rejected petitions that would have prevented another Israeli airline from flying to New York.

The court rejected Thursday the appeal by El Al against a Tourism Ministry decision that granted Israir the ability to fly from Tel Aviv to New York regularly.

Israir will able to fly the route daily.

NORTH AMERICA

Two U.S. hearings set on P.A. aid

Congress is holding two hearings on aid for the Palestinians next week. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.), the chairwoman of the Middle East subcommittee of the House of Representatives Committee on International Relations called the first hearing for Wednesday.

She is sponsoring a bill that would legislate the toughest ever restrictions on aid to the Palestinians in the wake of Hamas' landslide victory in Palestinian legislative elections last month.

Her bill would eliminate presidential national security waivers on all but humanitarian aid and even in that case would require a 15-day delay while Congress considered the request.

Rep. Henry Hyde (R-Ill.), the chairman of the full International Relations Committee, has called a hearing for Thursday.

Hyde opposes Ros-Lehtinen's bill, saying it is too restrictive.

Group presses Senate on immigration

The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society called on the U.S. Senate to consider humanitarian concerns when addressing the issue of undocumented immigrants.

In a letter sent Wednesday to the Senate's Judiciary Committee, HIAS called for comprehensive legislation that would allow illegal immigrants the opportunity to become lawful residents and reduce waiting times for separated family members to become reunited with their loved ones.

Jewish and American values both emphasize the importance of "welcoming the stranger," the group said.

Father, daughter win book awards

A father and his daughter are among the 19 winners of the 2005 National Jewish Book Awards.

Rabbi David Ellenson, president of the Reform movement's Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, grabbed the top award in the category of modern Jewish thought and experience for his work, "After Emancipation: Jewish Religious Responses to Modernity," a documentation of how modernism revitalized Judaism.

Ellenson's daughter, Ruth Andrew Ellenson, earned the top honor in the category of women's studies.

Her work, "The Modern Jewish Girl's Guide to Guilt," is a collection of essays by prominent women on the existential issues that preoccupy them. Israeli writer Amos Oz won this year's top prize, the Everett Family Foundation Jewish Book of the Year Award, for his memoir, "A Tale of Love and Darkness."

WORLD

Jewish group visits Denmark

An American Jewish Committee delegation visited Denmark on a solidarity trip in the wake of the Mohammed cartoon controversy.

This week's two-day visit was led by David Harris, the executive director of the AJCommittee.

Israeli group awarded peace prize

An Israeli activist group is being honored by a Japanese peace foundation.

The Niwano Peace Foundation announced Tuesday that it will award its 23rd annual peace prize to Rabbis for Human Rights of Israel. The group will be given a medal and the equivalent of \$169,000 in a May 11 ceremony.

Founded in 1988, Rabbis for Human Rights is a pluralistic group of some 90 rabbis. In March 2005, its leader, American-born Rabbi Arik Ascherman, was convicted of standing in front of an Israeli bulldozer that was about to demolish a Palestinian structure.