

## IN THE NEWS

**Abbas warns of Al-Qaida gains**

Mahmoud Abbas said there is an Al-Qaida presence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"We have indications about the presence of Al-Qaida in Gaza and the West Bank. This is intelligence information. We have not yet reached the point of arrests," the Palestinian Authority president told the London-based Al-Hayat newspaper in an interview published Thursday.

"This is a very serious matter," he added.

The Palestinian Authority previously had denied Israeli charges that Osama bin Laden's international terrorist network was making inroads in P.A. territory.

**Israeli firm endorses port deal**

Israel's largest shipping company endorsed a bid by a United Arab Emirates-based company to control six U.S. ports.

"We are very comfortable calling at DP World's Dubai ports," Idan Ofer, chairman of Zim, wrote in a letter to Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.), who has led criticism of the Bush administration for making the deal.

"We have not experienced a single security issue in these ports," he said.

**Anti-Semitism in U.N. ranks?**

The United Nations is investigating allegations of anti-Semitism in its security service.

The Associated Press on Wednesday quoted an internal U.N. memo saying that a probe was under way following the reprimand of a security guard who made a Nazi-like salute to an Israeli coworker and drew swastikas on a log sheet.

In a separate incident, the world body is checking whether an Israeli security guard who said she was assaulted while working in Vienna was the victim of anti-Semitism.

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# WORLD REPORT

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## 'Ride 'em Jewboy': Kinky Friedman takes aim at governor's job in Texas

By RUTH ELLEN GRUBER

**M**EDINA, Texas (JTA) — Kinky Friedman is the only candidate for Texas governor whose campaign material includes a 13-inch talking action figure and bumper stickers that read "My governor is a Jewish cowboy."

The 61-year-old singer, author and satirical gadfly is also the only candidate who has written a country song about the Holocaust — it's called "Ride 'em, Jewboy" — and the only one who aims to place a mezuzah on the door of the governor's mansion.

"Sure I will, why not?" he said, in a raspy Texas twang at the ranch in central Texas where he lives with five dogs — whom he calls "the Friedmans" — and a cat. "I'll even get a rabbi there to help."

The former front-man for the flamboyant 1970s country group called Kinky Friedman and the Texas Jewboys, Friedman formally entered the gubernatorial race a year ago, stumping under the slogan "Why the hell not?" in a bid to unseat incumbent Republican Rick Perry.

At the time, most observers dismissed his run as a joke. Increasingly, however, the Kinky campaign has gathered force as a serious quest to shake up Texas politics, break down traditional party machines and reach out to a dramatically disaffected electorate.

"In the last election for governor, only 29 percent of eligible voters went to the polls," Friedman, known far and wide as "the Kinkster," likes to point out. "Seventy-one percent didn't vote — they didn't like the choice between paper and plastic."

Chomping his ever-present cigars, sport-



Ruth Ellen Grube

Country singer and Texas gubernatorial candidate, Kinky Friedman.

ing his trademark mustache and soul-patch and signature black cowboy hat and outfit, Friedman has crisscrossed the state in recent months, speaking at schools, campaign events and fund-raisers and giving interviews to local, national and even international media.

"Sometimes what starts out as a joke has a nasty little habit of sailing dangerously close to the truth," he wrote recently. "Now, running as an independent, I intend to demonstrate that even though the Texas governor does no heavy lifting, he can still do some spiritual lifting, that is, inspire people, especially young

*Continued on page 2*

PROFILE

## ■ Friedman wrote songs such as 'They Don't Make Jews Like Jesus Anymore'

*Continued from page 1*

people, to get involved in the health, education and welfare of their state."

Friedman's message is largely driven by a "throw the bums out" populism whose main targets are lobbyists and political hacks. Chutzpah is part of his pull, and he employs a stream of one-liners the way mainstream politicians use talking points.

"Trust me, I'm a Jew — I'll hire good people," he says.

He also highlights a few key issues, such as upgrading the educational system and backing the renewable energy industry. He is angered by the Texas penchant for capital punishment and says one of his first acts as governor would be to pardon Max Soffar, a Jew on death row he believes was incorrectly convicted of triple murder.

■  
Friedman's new-broom-sweeps-clean appeal has struck a chord. Thousands of volunteers have signed up to help with the campaign. Strangers come up to him on the street to declare their support.

Celebrities such as country star Willie Nelson have joined the bandwagon, and campaign advisors include consultants who worked on pro-wrestler Jesse Ventura's surprise win as Minnesota governor in 1998.

"The Democrats and Republicans are not putting up any decent candidates," said Fort Worth lawyer Herman Morris, 78. Referring to Texas' capital, he says, "We need a breath of fresh air in Austin, not just someone who will march in lock-

step with the national parties."

Despite the apparent momentum, Friedman's campaign, financed on a shoestring, still faces an uphill battle.

The first hurdle is simply to get on the ballot. Texas law requires independent candidates to file a petition signed by 45,000 registered voters. All the signatures must be gathered in the two months following the Democratic and Republican primaries, which will be held March 7. Each signature must be notarized, and no one who voted in a primary may sign.

"The Kinkster" is confident that the signatures are there.

"We're getting strong grassroots support all over Texas," he says. "As I travel around the state, we find angry, disgusted people. It could be that we're just a little cult, but I don't think so anymore. I think it could be a real interesting race."

■  
Friedman's run for governor marks the latest twist in the long and checkered career of a man who views himself as "a serious soul whom no one takes seriously."

Born Richard Friedman in Chicago in 1944, he moved with his parents to Texas as a baby and earned his nickname in college from his "Jewfro" hair. His parents were educators who ran a summer camp for mainly Jewish children at Echo Hill Ranch, the 400-acre spread where Friedman lives today in a small but rambling lodge crammed with photographs, posters and other memorabilia.

"We had services every Friday night, and Kinky would play the guitar," recalled Herman Morris' daughter, Ellen St. Clair, a 50-year-old banker, who spent four summers at Echo Hill. "I'll probably vote for him," she added, "he can't do worse than any of the others."

Both of Friedman's parents are now deceased, and his brother runs the camp. The property is also home to the Utopia Animal Rescue Ranch, a home and adoption center for abused and abandoned

dogs that Friedman helped found — about 50 dogs are currently housed there.

Friedman served in the Peace Corps in Borneo in the late 1960s; after he returned, he formed Kinky Friedman and the Texas Jewboys. The band was notorious for satirical songs such as "They Don't Make Jews Like Jesus Anymore," a raucous send-up of racism, and "Get

Your Biscuits in the Oven and Your Buns in Bed," which poked fun at women's lib. "Ride 'em Jewboy," — which Willie Nelson has also recorded — is a haunting elegy on the Holocaust, and other songs dealt with social issues such as abortion and commercialism.

The Jewboys broke up in the mid-1970s and Friedman spent much of the next decade in a haze of drugs. In the mid-1980s he cleaned up, moved back to Echo Hill and began writing a series of suc-

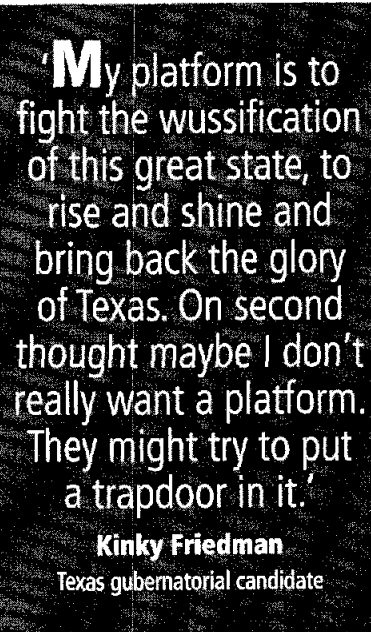
cessful, raunchy, comic mystery novels whose main character is himself. He's written about 20 so far, using a manual typewriter — he refuses to get a computer or Internet access.

■  
He confesses to being concerned that, if and when he does get on the election ballot, opponents will try to nail him by publicizing politically incorrect passages from his songs and novels.

Friedman's personal heroes include Mark Twain and Will Rogers, and in his recent writings and campaign persona he clearly tries to emulate the mix of folksiness and wit those two great humorists embodied.

"My platform," he wrote recently, "is that I'm not a politician. My platform is that I'm not a bureaucrat. My platform is that I'm a writer of fiction who speaks the truth. My platform is to fight the wussification of this great state, to rise and shine and bring back the glory of Texas."

"On second thought," he added, "maybe I don't really want a platform. They might try to put a trapdoor in it." ■



**'My platform is to fight the wussification of this great state, to rise and shine and bring back the glory of Texas. On second thought maybe I don't really want a platform. They might try to put a trapdoor in it.'**

**Kinky Friedman**  
Texas gubernatorial candidate

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# Tour for non-Jewish students strengthens ties

By DAVID J. SILVERMAN

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Bryan Hair says he traveled thousands of miles from the Christian college he attends in Tennessee to learn “the true meaning of the word courage.”

Hair had his epiphany atop a hill in an Israeli army base, peering at a Hezbollah tower less than a mile away in Lebanon.

“People live in fear there of a 9/11 every single day,” said Hair, who leads a pro-Israel advocacy group at Carson Newman College.

The American Israel Education Foundation, an affiliate of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, hosted 43 students from 40 different colleges on a first-time tour of Israel last month.

The students — from Ivy League schools, state universities, major Christian and historically black campuses — visited Christian and Jewish holy sites, army bases and tourist destinations.

The 10-day trip, the first of its kind underwritten by AIPAC, also involved meetings with policy makers, ambassadors, journalists and other opinion leaders. Other U.S. Jewish groups have sponsored tours for non-Jewish students in the past.

AIPAC says the mission is part of the pro-Israel lobby’s recent efforts to reach beyond the Jewish community to American communities not traditionally known for pro-Israel activism.

The students, all non-Jewish student leaders known for their pro-Israel sympathies, said they returned more passionate than ever before about advocating for the Jewish state.

“All these years I’ve been advocating for Israel and speaking about the U.S.-Israel relationship,” said Jamal Sowell, former student-body president at the University of Florida and now a graduate student in higher education at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. “But now that I had the chance to see firsthand what I’ve been advocating for, it takes my passion to a whole other level.”

That was the reaction AIPAC officials were hoping to hear.

“These students are America’s future leaders, and these missions give them the tools they need to become more effective advocates for a strong U.S.-Israel relationship,” AIPAC board member Barry Silverman said. Most of the students previously

had attended AIPAC student policy conferences in Washington.

Sowell, an African American, says he has been working hard to expand pro-Israel outreach to different cultures, a goal he shares with AIPAC.

“It steps up advocacy to a whole other level,” he said.

The case for Israel needs to be made by people of various cultures “because what happens in Israel is going to come back to affect all of us here in America,” he said. “I’ve tried to stress it’s not a Jewish issue — it’s a human issue.”

Many participants say they intend to pursue careers in policymaking. Brian Colas, a junior at Liberty University, a small Christian school in Virginia, is considering joining the State Department after graduation.

“Going on the trip gave me a better ability to articulate to others why it is in America’s best interests to have a strong relationship with Israel,” said Colas, the president of Liberty’s Stand with Israel club.

“Having an ally we can work with in the Middle East is the best way to achieve our long-term goals in the region of stopping terrorism, establishing democracy and getting rid of tyranny,” he said.

Colas cited a poll he read indicating that Palestinians would model their ideal government on Israel’s.

Other participants said they better understand Israel’s security situation after visiting an army base along the border with Lebanon.

Seeing firsthand how small Israel is, and how close it is to its enemies, conveys the sense of urgency, said Grant Woodard, a senior at Grinnell College in Iowa and the national president of College Democrats in America.

“It makes you understand why it is so necessary to take security measures such as building the fence,” he said.

Woodard joined Paul Gourley, a graduate of the University of South Dakota and current chairman of the College Repub-

lican National Committee, as honorary chairs of the AIPAC mission.

The two issued a joint resolution urging the United States and its allies not to deal with Hamas, the terrorist group that won a landslide victory in legislative elections last month, unless it disarms, renounces violence and recognizes Israel’s right to exist. The resolution also endorsed legislation that would tighten sanctions on Iran until it complies with nuclear inspectors.

“Israel is a beacon of freedom and democracy in the Middle East,” said Gourley, who was joined by several of his Republican board members.

Some of the more religious Christians on the trip said they always had been interested in Israel because of the Bible

and the covenant between God and the Jewish people.

“My love for Israel is genuine,” said Hair, a Baptist. “Following the political situation the last few years and going to Israel have added a different viewpoint on why I love it, without forsaking my old opinions.”

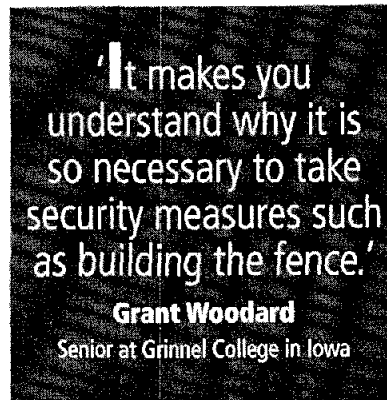
Hair expressed regret that many in the world consider Israel overly dependent on the United States.

“The world must see that Israel can stand on its own,” said Hair, as a strong, vibrant, and self-sustaining democracy.

On two occasions in Israel, the non-Jewish students joined with 84 Jewish students who were on a separate AIPAC-sponsored mission. They met with Richard Jones, the U.S. ambassador to Israel; Avi Granot, President Moshe Katsav’s top adviser; and attended a roundtable discussion with Steven Erlanger of The New York Times, Joel Greenberg of The Chicago Tribune and former CNN Middle East correspondent Jerrold Kessel.

Jewish students on the separate AIPAC tour were heartened to join non-Jewish students on some events, said University of California-Berkeley junior Marissa Matthew, who attended AIPAC’s Jewish trip.

“It makes you that much more excited to support Israel when you see that you’re not alone in the fight,” she said.



# Aliyah stalled by doubt over Jewish identity

By URIEL HEILMAN

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (JTA) — With the key parties saying they are ready to accelerate the pace of Falash Mura aliyah, why has the effort remained stalled since Israel's Cabinet voted to bring these Ethiopians to Israel?

The holdup stems from lingering doubts about the Jewishness of the Falash Mura, especially among officials charged with implementing the Israeli government decision, concerns in Israel over the cost of absorbing another 13,000 to 20,000 Ethiopians, and apprehension that aliyah of the Falash Mura from Ethiopia will never end.

For Israelis concerned about the cost and prudence of Ethiopian aliyah, the questions of whether or not the Falash Mura are Jews, and under what circumstances their progenitors converted to Christianity, are of paramount importance.

Unlike the Beta Israel, who maintained a distinct Jewish identity in Ethiopia for centuries, epitomized by their observance of Shabbat and their rejection of Jesus as the messiah, the Falash Mura converted to Christianity in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Though many advocates of Falash Mura aliyah maintain that the conversions resulted from economic and social pressures, scholars of Ethiopian Jewish history find little evidence of this.

Social ostracism may have prevented the Falash Mura from intermarrying with Christians, allowing them to maintain a largely undisturbed Jewish bloodline until recent times.

This is partly why Israel's Chief Rabbinate decided to apply to the Falash Mura the Jewish legal principle of, "A Jew, even though he has sinned, is still a Jew."

However, there is considerable debate over the degree to which the Falash Mura intermarried.

To complicate matters further, the application Falash Mura is applied today not only to Christians of Jewish descent, but to full-blooded Christians who have married into families of Jewish descent.

Even among the Falash Mura who have some biological link to Ethiopian Jewry, few if any seemed to have been aware they were Jews until they were told as much by American Jewish advocacy groups.

In interviews in the Ethiopian province of Gojam with Beta Israel peasants who had not yet migrated to the cities, villagers demonstrated no knowledge of Judaism whatsoever.

For these reasons, Israel requires that all Falash Mura immigrants undergo a

comprehensive conversion course once they arrive in the Jewish state, culminating in ritual conversion. This is not something that was required of the Ethiopian Jews who came to Israel between 1984 and 1991.

Before their arrival in Israel, the Falash Mura learn about Judaism in the compounds administered by the North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry.

Many veteran Ethiopian immigrants in Israel resent the Falash Mura, partly because their aliyah carries a cloud of religious illegitimacy that affects all of Israel's Ethiopian community. It doesn't help that at the current aliyah rate, the size of Israel's Falash Mura community will eclipse that of Israel's veteran Ethiopian Jewish community some time this year, according to the

Immigrant Absorption Ministry.

"The veteran community is not always so happy with what is going on with the new one," said Mirla Gal, director general of the ministry.

Aside from the murky issue of religion, the cost of absorbing the Falash Mura has caused many an Israeli official to balk. Though many critics say racism plays a role in Israel's reticence to accept the Ethiopians, pointing by contrast to Israel's much easier acceptance of Russian immigrants of dubious Jewish origin, it is an economic fact that Ethiopians cost Israel far more than do Russian immigrants.

According to the Immigrant Absorption Ministry, Ethiopian immigrants receive grants for some 90 percent of the funds needed to purchase a home; 80 percent of the immigrants are welfare dependent; and their average stay in absorption centers is 18 months, much longer than other immigrants.

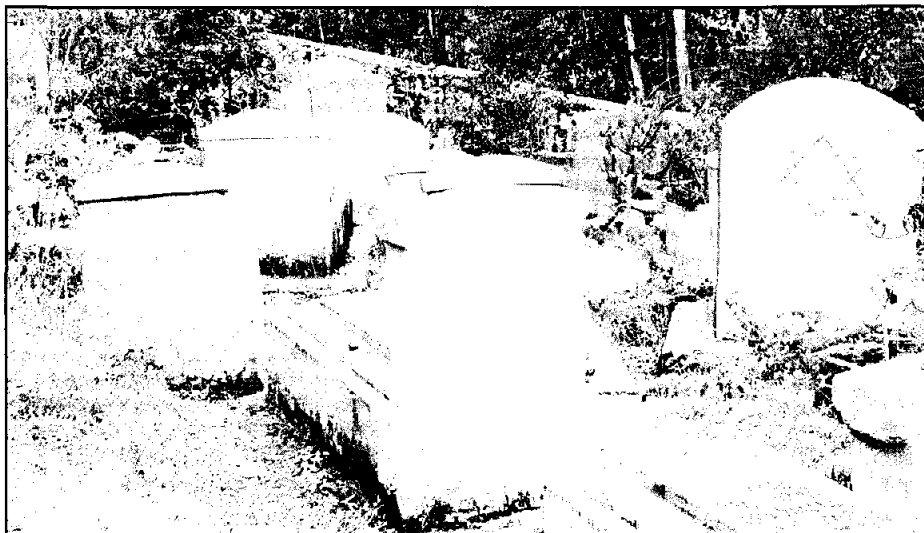
Finally, lingering fear in Israel that the aliyah of Falash Mura will never really end plays a significant role in the holdup over bringing to Israel the current group of 16,000 or so Falash Mura waiting in Gondar and Addis Ababa.

In a country of 70 million, it's possible that the Beta Israel left in Ethiopia number in the hundreds of thousands, not the thousands, and that Israel has seen only the tip of the iceberg of Ethiopian aliyah. ■

## THE FALASH MURA'S FATE

The veteran  
community is not  
always so happy with  
what is going on  
with the new one.

Mirla Gal  
Immigrant Absorption Ministry



Uriel Heilman

An Ethiopian cemetery outside Gondar in January 2006, used by Falash Mura. The only tombstones are those erected by family members who have returned to visit after moving to Israel. Ethiopians do not have a tradition of putting up tombstones.

# Ethiopians flee famine, fighting to get to Israel

By URIEL HEILMAN

SHIRE, Ethiopia (JTA) — Until the late 1970s, very few Ethiopian Jews had ever wandered beyond the borders of their country and made it to Israel.

But in 1979, an insurgency in northern Ethiopia opened an exit route to Sudan, and thousands of Ethiopian Jews — who called themselves Beta Israel but were known to outsiders as Falasha — began fleeing the famine and war of northern Ethiopia on a journey they hoped would end in Jerusalem.

Along with thousands of other Ethiopians fleeing their country, which at the time was ruled by Communist dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam, the Jews settled in refugee camps in Sudan and waited for Mossad operatives to take them out.

For the first few years, those who were taken to Israel left in one of three ways. Some were given forged documents and put onto planes in Khartoum bound for Athens. Once in Europe, they then were quietly put onto planes to Israel. Others were moved from their Sudanese refugee camps at night to Port Sudan, where Israeli naval commandos put them onto clandestine naval vessels and then transferred them onto ships headed for Israel. A few were airlifted directly to Israel from the Sudanese desert on illicit flights.

A famine in Ethiopia in 1984 lent great urgency to the effort to rescue Ethiopia's Jews, many of whom were dying of starvation and disease in refugee camps in Sudan while they waited to be taken to Israel.

In the covert maneuver Operation Moses, Israel began airlifting large numbers of Ethiopian Jews from Sudan's desert beginning in November 1984. Leaks about the operation and growing risks forced its early end in January 1985, after more than 8,000 Jews had been brought to Israel in the space of just six weeks.

Thousands more remained stranded in Communist Ethiopia.

For those left behind, life was harsh. During Mengistu's 17-year reign, Ethiopian city streets were left riddled with corpses as a warning against opposing the government, bereaved parents were forced to pay for the bullets that killed their sons, and suspected political opponents were imprisoned and tortured.

The Jews suffered no more than or-

dinary Ethiopians, but anyone who was suspected of trying to flee to Zion was tortured, imprisoned and often killed.

In the early 1990s, the tide turned in the war between the rebel Tigrean People's Liberation Front and the government, known as the Derg, and in May 1991 rebel forces surrounded the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa.

Israel, which had clandestine ties with Mengistu's regime, feared that the TPLF's anti-Zionist rhetoric and hostility toward Mengistu could lead to massacres of the Jews when the rebels took Addis, and quickly put together a plan to rescue the country's remaining Jews. Israel pressed the United States to persuade the rebels to hold their positions on the hilltops around Addis for 36 hours while Israel airlifted more than 14,000 Jews out of the country.

The fall of Addis came just hours after the completion of Operation Solomon, on May 24, 1991.

In the end, it turned out that Israel's fears were unfounded: The new regime in Addis Ababa proved itself friendly toward the Jews and forged strong ties with Israel.

After Operation Solomon, the only Ethiopians with Jewish ties left behind in Ethiopia were the Falash Mura — Ethiopian Christians whose progenitors were Jews who had converted to Christianity. Many of them sought to return to Judaism in a bid to emigrate, but Israel's then-prime minister, Yitzhak Shamir, instructed his government not to accept them.

Israel's policy gradually changed, however, and since the early

1990s, tens of thousands of Falash Mura have moved to Israel.

During these last 15 years, Ethiopia's government has maintained a policy of open emigration.

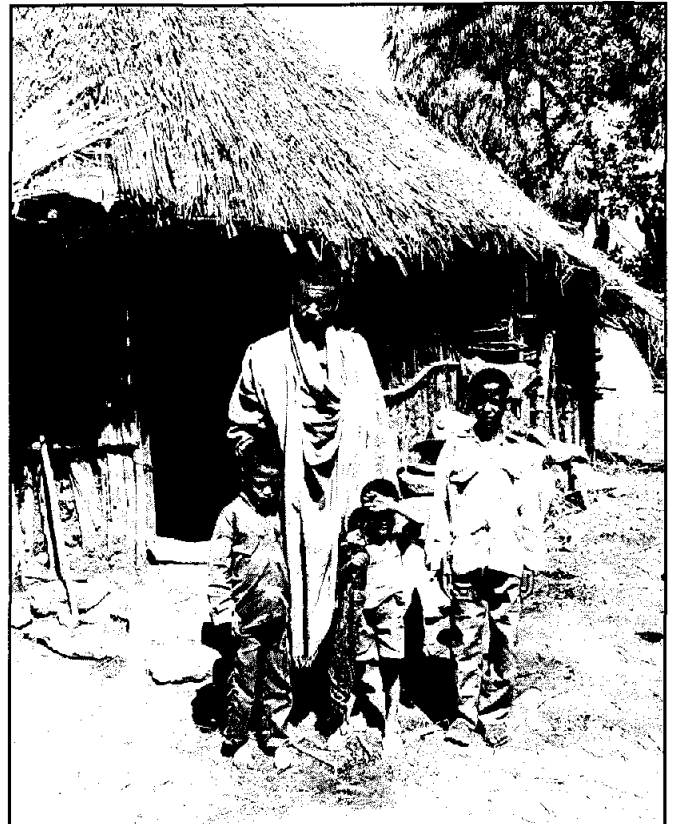
In the last decade and a half, led by rebel-turned-head-of-state Meles Zenawi, Ethiopia's government has accelerated the pace of the country's industrialization, improved its economy.

But since last May, when government forces shot dead dozens of people in Addis Ababa protesting disputed election results, there have been growing tensions between the Amhara elite who live in the center of the country, around the capital, and the Tigrean minority that runs the government.

But recent political tensions notwithstanding, experts on Ethiopia say there is little danger of imminent collapse for the current regime. ■

## THE FALASH MURA'S FATE

After Operation Solomon, the only Ethiopians left with Jewish ties were the Falash Mura.



Uriel Heilman

A Falash Mura family stands in front of their hut in the countryside near Gondar, Ethiopia, in March 2005, where they live while waiting to immigrate to Israel.

# Petition protests Oscar nod for Palestinian film

By RACHEL SILVERMAN

NEW YORK (JTA) — There are many backstage elements of Oscar night you won't see: The dress fittings, jittery practice speeches, last-minute makeup mishaps.

And this year, add political tensions in the Middle East.

"Paradise Now," which is up for an Oscar on Sunday night in the foreign language film category, has enraged some Jewish activists with its depiction of suicide bombings.

The film, directed by Israeli Arab Hany Abu-Assad, follows two terrorists as they prepare to detonate explosives on a bus in Tel Aviv.

Representatives of The Israel Project, an international non-profit devoted to educating the media and public about Israel, condemned the nomination this week and initiated an effort to revoke the honor.

"People don't watch the Oscars for a political statement," said Jennifer Laszlo

Mizrahi, the Israel Project's founder and president.

"But these are very important messages to be sending to society about what is acceptable and what is not acceptable.

"When a culture gives awards to people who humanize terrorists, it puts others at risk for future terrorist acts," she said. "It's a message that terrorism should be tolerated and embraced."

A petition seeking to revoke the nomination ([www.petitiononline.com/060201/petition.html?tr=y&aid=1431368](http://www.petitiononline.com/060201/petition.html?tr=y&aid=1431368)), distributed by The Israel Project, has garnered more than 33,000 signatures to date.

In addition, the group will stage news conferences this week — one in Jerusalem and one in Los Angeles — and run a full-page ad in the Hollywood news magazine Variety.

The Israel Project's offensive also includes reprinting a letter by Yossi Zur, whose 16-year-old son Asaf was killed by a suicide bomber March 5, 2003 — exactly three years before the awards show.

In his letter, Zur questioned the implications of the film's selection.

"What exactly makes 'Paradise Now' worthy of such a prestigious nomination?" Zur asked. "What sort of message would an Academy Award triumph send to more than one billion viewers around the world?"

He added: "This movie attempts to deliver the message that suicide bombings are a legitimate tactic for those who feel they've exhausted all other means of resistance."

The nomination of "Paradise Now" has also raised issues of Palestinian statehood, as only internationally recognized countries may compete in the foreign language category.

On the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Web site, the film's country of origin is listed as "Palestine." In other news releases, however, the academy refers to the designation as the "Palestinian Authority."

Officials at the academy couldn't be reached for comment.

ARTS  
&  
CULTURE

# Costa Rican election results may affect Jerusalem embassy

By BRIAN HARRIS

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica (JTA) — Official election results have given 1987 Nobel Peace Prize laureate Oscar Arias a narrow victory in Costa Rica's presidential elections, throwing the future of the country's embassy in Jerusalem into doubt.

Three weeks after voting, the country's Supreme Electoral Tribunal announced last week that Arias had scored nearly 41 percent of the vote, defeating his closest rival in the 14-man field by slightly more than 18,000 votes.

Arias, who previously served as president from 1986-1990, has said he would move the embassy out of Jerusalem, leaving El Salvador as the only country with an embassy in the disputed Israeli capital.

However, Arias has not commented publicly on his stance on Jerusalem for more than six months, leading some to believe he may flip-flop on the issue.

Deputy Aida Faingezich is the only Jewish member of the current Legislative Assembly, which leaves office in May. She said pressure from Christian groups may press Arias to back down from moving the embassy, though she admitted she is uncertain where the embassy will be when Arias' four-year term expires.

Two members of the small Jewish community, Clara Zomer

and Masha Ofelia Taitelbaum, won election to the next Legislative Assembly on his National Liberation Party's slate and another member, former deputy Sandra Piszcz, is widely rumored to be in line for a seat in Arias' Cabinet.

National Liberation has traditionally enjoyed support from the Orthodox and staunchly Zionist local Jewish community since it was founded in the 1940s.

The embassy was not a factor in the race. Voters, who were expected to hand Arias a landslide, instead gave lukewarm backing to the former president, who made his support of the U.S.-Central America Free Trade Agreement the focus of his campaign.

Arias' stance on the embassy has gotten the most attention in the Jewish community and among Israeli officials, who fear that since El Salvador's president, Tony Saca, is of Palestinian descent, he would likely follow Costa Rica's lead if Arias moves

the embassy.

The Costa Rican embassy has been in Jerusalem since 1982, and during his first administration, Arias left it there. El Salvador's embassy has been in the city since the mid-1980s, a gesture of gratitude by the right-wing ARENA Party for Israel's military aid to the government during its bloody civil war with the leftist FMLN.

Costa Rica is the only country other than El Salvador with an embassy in Jerusalem.

# Orthodox contestants pray they'll avoid Trump's wrath

By STEVEN I. WEISS

NEW YORK (JTA) — Viewers of this week's premiere of "The Apprentice" didn't see any yarmulkes, but they did witness the debut of two Orthodox Jews on the reality television series.

Daniel Brody, 31, and Lee Bienstock, 22, are both members of the "Gold Rush" team on the show featuring Donald Trump. The first episode of the show's latest season was aired Monday.

## ARTS & CULTURE

Their appearance on the 16-week show, in which young people try to win a job with the headline-grabbing real-estate mogul through a series of business tryouts, has the Orthodox world abuzz.

Discussion about Brody and Bienstock has reached a fever pitch in many areas, with many wondering how their Orthodox Judaism will come into play in the series.

"It's interesting to consider how the show adapted to Dan's Sabbath observance," said blogger Greg Gershman.

No mention was made of the contestants' Orthodoxy in the first episode, so no one outside the show — whose cast is committed to iron-clad non-disclosure agreements — knows how, and if at all, their religious identities will be portrayed.

Of particular interest is how the show will portray the High Holidays, given that filming started before Rosh Hashanah and concluded at some point after Sukkot.

Rumors persist that a separate kosher George Foreman grill was kept in the luxurious apartment in Trump Tower occupied by the contestants during filming.

But people close to Brody and Bienstock express confidence that viewers won't see them choosing success on The Apprentice over their own religious values.

"All I know is Daniel would in no way compromise the holidays or Shabbos for the show," said the New Yorker's brother Steven, adding, "how the show's going to portray that or ignore that, I don't know."

Though Brody's biography on the NBC Web site details his business experience — including owning the bakery Grandma's Cookie Jar, which serves the community of his alma mater, Yeshiva University — his only identification on the show was as having "two boys in my family."

Those boys, Gavriel, 6, and Natan, 4, live with Brody and his wife, Amy, in New Jersey. Brody was the first teammate chosen on "Gold Rush" and the second overall.

Brody and family belong to Keter Torah Synagogue, and Brody regularly attends a class with the rabbi, Shalom Baum. Before

Monday night's premiere, the class met at the local kosher pizzeria, E.J.'s, where the community was invited to watch the episode.

Brody has a bit of experience in show business, according to his brother.

"He's done stand-up in some of the different nightclubs in New York," Steven said, adding that Brody's also done some work on soap operas. Steven describes his brother as a sort of jack-of-all-trades who is "successful in whatever he chooses to do." That seems to have included quite a lot, from designing and building his home kitchen to launching a successful kosher cookie-dough line.

But that showmanship wasn't always around. Steven Brody recalled that at Brody's bar mitzvah, he suddenly went missing before it came time for him to ascend to the dais.

"Everyone's in shul, shul's about to start, we can't find him," Steven Brody recalled. When his brother eventually was discovered, his family realized he had stage fright. Nevertheless, Daniel Brody eventually came out and read Torah beautifully, his brother said.

Bienstock, at 22 the youngest member of the cast, has less in his biography, but his friends say what's there is strong.

Simone Greenbaum, a student with Bienstock at Cornell, recalled in an interview that on the occasion of a grandparent's *yahrzeit*, which she'd been hoping to spend with her family, there was "a typical Cornell

snow blizzard" with no chance for her *flight home* to make it.

Bienstock, "without even batting an eye, said, 'I'll take you home,'" Greenbaum recalled, adding that Bienstock explained "You know I'm a second-semester senior, I can afford to miss one or two days of school, but you can't miss this."

Bienstock's choice to stick with what he felt was right led the team organizer to bring him into the famed Apprentice boardroom, where he could have heard Trump's famous phrase, "You're fired," directed at him.

For the moment, though, Bienstock has avoided termination.

## COMMUNITY

### TRANSITIONS

■ Dr. Allen Spiegel was appointed dean of Yeshiva University's Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

■ Stacy Kass was named the new executive director of the National Council of Jewish Women.

■ Gideon Aronoff was named the president and CEO of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society.

■ David Gappell was named director of programs and grantmaking in Israel for the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation.

■ Robin Gilbert, a longtime employee of World ORT, died in Geneva at 76 after a long illness. Gilbert organized the group's world congresses from 1960 through 1997.

### HONORS

■ The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding honored congressional Reps. Elijah Cummings (D-Md.), Raul Grijalva (D-Ariz.), Steve Israel (D-N.Y.), Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.) and David Wu (D-Ore.) with its Interethnic Racial Harmony Award.

■ The American Jewish Congress honored Clarence B. Jones with the Isaiah Award for community service. Jones has been previously honored by President Clinton and Time Magazine for his civil rights work.

■ The Young Jewish Leadership PAC honored Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein for his Israel advocacy work. Eckstein is the founder and chairman of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews.

■ Israel's consulate general in New York honored Coretta Scott King for her contributions to the civil rights movement.

■ A children's book about Sholem Aleichem won a Jewish children's book award. Erica Silverman and Mordicai Gerstein, the author and illustrator of "Sholom's Treasure: How Sholom Aleichem Became a Writer," won the 2006 Sydney Taylor Book Award.

'It's interesting to consider how the show adapted to Dan's Sabbath observance.'

Greg Gershman

Blogger

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## NORTH AMERICA

### Dems target UAE for boycott

Three Democrats in Congress are circulating a letter expressing "deep concerns" about a Dubai-based company's proposed management of six U.S. ports.

The letter to President Bush, drafted this week by Reps. Alcee Hastings (D-Fla.), Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) and Rahm Emanuel (D-Ill.), warns that the United Arab Emirates pledged millions last month to help the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority and is enforcing an Arab League boycott of Israel.

The letter so far has been signed by 41 Democrats, but no Republicans.

### Israeli company under scrutiny for sale

U.S. authorities are closely reviewing an Israeli high-tech company's bid to buy a U.S. firm.

Check Point wants to buy Sourcefire, a Maryland-based software firm that does business with U.S. security agencies.

The revelation in Thursday's Washington Post comes as the Bush administration is under fire for its decision to authorize the sale of management of six U.S. ports to a company based in the United Arab Emirates.

The Check Point sale is undergoing deeper scrutiny because of its owner's ties to Israeli military intelligence and ties between Sourcefire's founders and the U.S. National Security Agency.

### ADL resigns from hate panel

The Anti-Defamation League resigned from a hate-crimes panel to protest the inclusion of a Nation of Islam representative.

The ADL said Thursday it would not sit on the Illinois Governor's Commission on Discrimination and Hate Crimes if Claudette Johnson, also known as Sister Claudette Marie Muhammad, serves on it.

Johnson is minister of protocol in the Nation of Islam, whose leader, Rev. Louis Farrakhan, repeatedly has made anti-Jewish statements.

On Wednesday, Gov. Rod Blagojevich called Farrakhan's words "divisive," but said he did not believe in Johnson's guilt by association.

### Suicide bombing endorsed in kids book

The Ontario Library Association refused to drop from its recommended list a book that includes Palestinian children endorsing suicide bombing.

Palestinian and Israeli children speak about suicide bombings, anti-Semitism, guns and soldiers in "Three Wishes," by Deborah Ellis.

"In our eyes, the book is perfectly good and we stand by our selection committee and the rights of children to read this book," said Larry Moore, the association's executive director.

The Canadian Jewish Congress asked for the book to be removed from a list of recommended reading for 8-11 year-olds, saying it does not provide young readers with enough context.

## WORLD

### Russian Jewish leaders split on Hamas visit

Russian Jewish leaders expressed opposing views on Friday's visit of a Hamas delegation to Moscow.

President Vladimir Putin "should have taken the opinion of Russian Jews into consideration," Mikhail Chlenov, secretary general of the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress, wrote in a statement Thursday. "I find it difficult to judge what President Putin is striving for, but we, Russian Jews, do not want to host child murderers."

However, Adolf Shayevich, one of Russia's chief rabbis, said last

week that he had no problem with Hamas' visit to Moscow, and praised Putin for the invitation.

### S. Africa says will meet Hamas

South African officials said they would host Hamas leaders.

The comments Thursday represented a further weakening of U.S.-led efforts to isolate Hamas after its victory in Palestinian Authority legislative elections last month.

The meeting would be part of South Africa's ongoing effort to share its experiences on the transition from apartheid to democracy with both the Palestinians and the Israelis, Deputy Foreign Minister Aziz Pahad said in a statement.

### Survivors' lawsuit filed against France

A lawsuit in a U.S. court seeks damages from France for property lost by Jews and others during World War II.

The lawsuit was filed Thursday in a U.S. District Court in New York on behalf of Holocaust victims and their heirs.

The lawsuit was filed against France's national railroad as well as its national public depository, which the suit says accepted and held the plaintiffs' property.

## MIDDLE EAST

### Olmert rules out Haniyeh talks

Ehud Olmert ruled out talks with the Palestinian Authority's prime minister-designate.

"I have no intention of meeting with Ismail Haniyeh," the interim Israeli prime minister told reporters Thursday, referring to the top Hamas politician who is slated to take over the Palestinian Authority government.

Until Hamas renounces terrorism and recognizes the Jewish state's right to exist, "there is no chance we will hold any contacts with the Palestinian government," Olmert said.

### Israelis warned away from Jordan, Egypt

Israel upgraded a warning against its citizens traveling to Jordan or Egypt's Sinai Desert.

The government's Counter-Terrorism Unit reissued its long-standing travel advisory Thursday, citing new levels of terrorist activity in the two Arab countries.

Israel has full relations with both countries. A previous warning about travel to Sinai was borne out in 2004 when Islamist suicide bombers struck Red Sea resorts favored by Israelis.

### Funds for survivors

Israel's Finance Ministry increased funding for a foundation assisting needy Holocaust survivors.

The Finance Ministry decided Wednesday to increase funding to the Foundation for the Benefit of Holocaust Victims in Israel by \$1.3 million, Ha'aretz reported.

The foundation welcomed the decision but said more funding was imperative to continue helping needy survivors whose numbers and needs are increasing every year.

### Abbas plays down Iran's financial offer

Mahmoud Abbas played down Iran's offer to fund the Palestinian Authority.

"How will it enter the Palestinian territories?" the P.A. president asked Thursday on Al-Jazeera about moneys Tehran pledged after Israel halted tax payouts in response to Hamas' election victory.

But Abbas added, "As far as we're concerned, if aid comes to the Palestinian Authority from any source and it reaches us, we of course welcome it."