



## IN THE NEWS

## Peres writes off Iranian president

Shimon Peres said Iran's president will suffer the same fate as Saddam Hussein.

Israel's elder statesman spoke out Saturday after Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, at a Tehran conference, repeated calls for the Jewish state's elimination and questioned the Holocaust. "His remarks recall those voiced by Saddam Hussein. Ahmadinejad will end up like Saddam Hussein," Peres said in a statement read by Israel Radio.

## Jihad undeterred by IDF's Gaza offensive

Islamic Jihad vowed to continue rocket attacks and suicide bombings despite an Israeli counteroffensive. "The nonstop crackdown against our resistance might limit this effort, but it's not going to stop it," Islamic Jihad leader Ramadan Shalah said in a statement

## U.S. extends PLO waiver

The United States extended a waiver that allows the PLO office to operate in Washington for six months.

A spokesman for President Bush's National Security Council said the move was made because the office remains a useful channel for the United States to communicate with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. The United States has regularly granted the six-month waivers since 1994.

## Pollard-Barghouti swap in the works?

American and Israeli officials denied reports that Israel plans to offer to free a jailed Palestinian militiaman if the United States grants clemency to Jonathan Pollard. [Story, Pg. 2]

**Reminder:**  
The JTA World Report will not be published on Thursday, April 20 and Friday, April 21.

# WORLD REPORT

PUBLISHED WEEKDAYS BY JTA—THE GLOBAL NEWS SERVICE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE • WWW.JTA.ORG

## New study raises key question: How to promote active converts?

By RACHEL SILVERMAN

**N**EW YORK (JTA) — Low conversion rates among intermarried Jewish families continue to plague those working to reverse the demographic downturns in American Jewry.

Fewer than one-fifth of non-Jews who marry Jews convert to Judaism, according to a new study distributed by the American Jewish Committee.

The "Choosing Jewish" report, which interviewed 94 mixed-marriage couples and nine Jewish professionals in the Boston and Atlanta areas, also painted a bleak picture of Jewish involvement for those who do convert.

Many converted Jews — 40 percent — are described as "accommodating Jews by choice."

They come to Judaism because they are asked to do so, and allow others to determine their level of Jewish observance, the report said.

Jews in this category often have profiles of Jewish involvement similar to moderately affiliated born Jews.

Another 30 percent of converted Jews are identified as ambivalent Jews — they continue to express doubts about their conversion and feel guilty about beliefs or holidays left behind, according to the report. Their children mirror this ambivalence by thinking of themselves as half-Jews.

The report qualified only 30 percent of converted spouses as "activist Jews," or those who identify deeply with the Jewish people and Israel.

These Jews often are more committed to Jewish practice than are born Jews, and

their children are virtually undistinguishable from children whose parents were born Jewish.

The findings, compiled by Brandeis University professor Sylvia Barack Fishman, have widespread implications for a community grappling with the reality of mixed marriages.

According to both the 2000-2001 National Jewish Population Survey and surveys by Gary Tobin, president of the San Francisco-based Institute for Jewish & Community Research, the U.S. Jewish intermarriage rate is between 40 percent and 50 percent.

The AJCommittee hopes the new data will create a road map for greater Jewish involvement among converts and intermarried

families.

The breakdown of converted Jews by category shows that we should "not treat converts as an undifferentiated mass," said Steven Bayme, the AJCommittee's director of contemporary Jewish life.

Instead, he envisioned a sliding scale of Jewish involvement, ranging from those with a low level of affiliation to those who are highly involved.

"We should not see conversion as the end of the story," he said.

"What we're really aiming for is converts who enrich the Jewish community through Jewish activism.

"We need to enlarge the pool of activist converts," he added.

But that requires a proactive approach.

First and foremost, Jews need to "wave the banner of inmarriage," advocating Jew-

*Continued on page 2*

FOCUS  
ON  
ISSUES

## ■ A recent AJCommittee study raises flags on converts' Jewish involvement

*Continued from page 1*

ish partners whenever possible, he said.

In cases of intermarriage, Bayme described conversion as "the single best outcome."

"We need to be up front about our preference for conversion," he said.

To that end, he talked about the role of rabbi as the "nurturer of would-be converts," and the need for Jewish family members to "be clear about values and objectives."

In addition, Bayme advocates raising children in an exclusively Jewish household, since attempting to combine religions would be "a disaster Jewishly."

Edward Case, publisher of Interfaithfamily.com, which encourages Jewish connections in the interfaith community, took issue with several of these premises.

"I think there is a real danger in promoting conversion too aggressively," he said.

"If we stand at the door, a lot of people might not come in."

Case said that accepting intermarried non-Jews who don't convert — not just those who do — should be paramount.

"The way to have more Jewish children is for interfaith couples to get involved in Jewish life," he said.

"It's important to see intermarriage as an opportunity and not as a negative or a loss.

"I think it's important to communicate a message of welcome," he continued. "The message we need to send to

unconverted non-Jews is, We're grateful to you and happy to have you just as you are."

Case criticized the lack of money allocated to such interfaith outreach — less than \$3 million a year between Jewish fed-

erations and family foundations, he said.

Bayme said "it's a bit premature" for the AJCommittee to recommend any policy changes based on the report, but that the group will discuss the findings at several upcoming meetings. ■

## Pollard-Barghouti swap plan denied

By DAN BARON

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli and American officials have dismissed reports that convicted spy Jonathan Pollard might be released in a swap.

Landmark elections in Israel and the Palestinian Authority have raised fresh speculation that Pollard, the former U.S. Navy analyst serving a life prison sentence for spying for Israel, could win clemency as part of wider diplomatic Mideast maneuvering.

Israel Army Radio reported Sunday that Israel planned to offer to release jailed Palestinian terrorist Marwan Barghouti in exchange for Pollard after Prime Minister-elect Ehud Olmert forms his new government.

The rationale for such a swap is rooted in Hamas' political takeover in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

As a leader of the rival, more pragmatic faction Fatah, Barghouti, if freed, could be expected to undermine the radical Islamic group — something both Jerusalem and Washington want.

Barghouti is serving five life sentences plus 40 years for murder and attempted murder in the form of terrorist attacks.

Israeli government officials denied the reported plan, and a spokesman for the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv dismissed it as "speculation."

That left open the possibility that someone in Olmert's office was floating a trial balloon, testing reaction in Israel and the United States to the idea of a Pollard-Barghouti swap.

Pollard's wife, Esther, suggested that the report might serve a narrower Israeli interest.

Olmert, who narrowly won last month's general elections as head of the centrist Kadima Party, is keen to shore up right-wing support ahead of planned withdrawals from the West Bank.

Being perceived as campaigning for Pollard to be pardoned could help Olmert with Israel's more conservative voters.

Still busy trying to build a governing coalition, Olmert is widely expected to turn to the Pensioners Party led by

Rafi Eitan — Pollard's recruiter and handler.

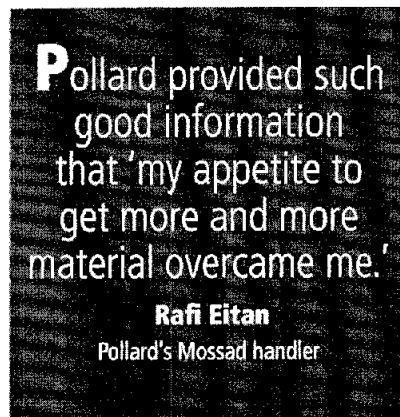
Eitan, who was then head of the industrial espionage unit Lakam, took responsibility for the Pollard affair.

He told Yediot Achronot last week that the young Navy analyst provided "information of such high quality and accuracy, so good and so important to the country's security" that "my desire, my appetite to get more and more material overcame me."

Eitan, now 79, has vowed to lobby for Pollard from the Knesset. But that has done little to mollify the ex-spy, who accuses Eitan of forsaking him.

Through his lawyer, Nitzana Darshan-Leitner, Pollard has threatened to petition Israel's High Court of Justice against any Cabinet portfolio appointment offered to Eitan.

Such an open legal hearing, Darshan-Leitner said, would entail going public with a "very damaging" secret document that she alleged Eitan still holds. ■



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JTA WORLD REPORT is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For more information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.  
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# Will Ukraine get a Jewish museum?

By YULIANNIA VILKOS

KIEV, Ukraine (JTA) — A Jewish activist in Ukraine has collected thousands of artifacts for what he hopes will be his country's first Jewish museum. But, he admits, it's all about the money.

Leonid Finberg, director of the archives at Kiev's Institute of Jewish Studies, put together a small exhibit of Jewish artifacts last summer for the newly renovated Beit Jacob Synagogue in the Ukrainian capital.

The few dozen precious artifacts now carefully displayed under glass in the shul's main hall include a book illustrated by Marc Chagall, which Finberg picked up at a flea market in Lvov.

There's also a letter he found written in Yiddish by a World War II Jewish soldier, a "truly unique document," he says, that somehow escaped Soviet wartime censorship.

Finberg, an inveterate collector, says the exhibit he organized is just a tiny portion of the holdings, which boast thousands of items that could be the basis for a future Jewish museum.

"But a museum with its own building requires millions of dollars, while we operate with budgets of several thousands," Finberg says. "So for the moment, we are doing what we can."

■  
A Jewish museum is still a dream not only for Ukrainian Jews. There is not a real Jewish museum in the entire former Soviet Union.

Some local Jewish leaders say that although the region's Jewish communities have grown tremendously since the breakup of the Soviet Union 15 years ago, the timing and conditions for the creation of Jewish museums are not yet ripe.

Josef Zissels, the head of the Va'ad of Ukraine, says plans for such a museum in Ukraine have been in the works for a long time, but are likely to be postponed yet again.

"To have a collection for a museum is not enough," he says. "You've got to have investors willing to invest in the long-term project and museum specialists with expertise on Judaism studies."

According to Zissels, Ukraine's Jewish communities have more urgent needs, such as caring for the elderly and building Jewish schools.

But in Moscow, plans for Russia's first Jewish museum are moving forward, mainly because there is funding for the project.

The Chabad-affiliated Federation of Jewish Communities is planning a multi-million-dollar museum that will recount the history of Judaism, Russians Jews, the Holocaust and tolerance, says the federation's executive director, Rabbi Avraham Berkowitz. It will fill a 10,000-square-meter building adjacent to the Marina Roscha

Chabad Jewish Center, and should be completed within five years.

Grigori Kazovsky, an expert in Russian Jewish art who is helping to develop the museum, says it will be a modern facility with multimedia features that are commonly used in Western museums, but are still a novelty in the former Soviet Union.

Kazovsky is concerned, however, that most of the items for the museum's collection have to be acquired from abroad.

"Unfortunately, little Jewish heritage has been preserved in Russia, so we are finding Jewish art and archives through Judaism dealers, mostly in the United States and Israel," Kazovsky says.

Ukraine is in a more fortunate position than Russia, says Finberg, as more Jewish artifacts are available locally. The Institute of Jewish Studies has been laying the base for a future museum since it was founded in 1990.

■  
"A tradition of preserving family history was almost non-existent during Soviet times," Finberg says.

"People were even afraid to write diaries. But a part of the intelligentsia did preserve some documents despite everything, and it has been our task to collect and study them."

The institute's vast archives on 20th-century Jewish life in Ukraine are largely the result of its project to preserve local Jewish heritage via a program funded by the British-based Hanadiv Charitable Foundation, Finberg says.

The bulk of the institute's records are made up of the private archives of Jewish writers and artists who were killed during Soviet times. The materials were passed on to the institute by the victims' children or grandchildren.

Among the institute's treasures are collections of pre-revolutionary photographs from Jewish family albums, old prayer books and materials on Jewish theater and film-making activities in Ukraine before World War II.

"Seventy Jewish theaters existed in Ukraine before the Second World War, and dozens of Jewish films were made at that time," Finberg says.

Old posters advertising theatrical performances and several films are featured now in the institute's archives.

Finberg says the institute is often contacted by Ukrainian and foreign film

makers or theatrical directors, who use its photo archives when creating Jewish costumes and characters.

■  
To make its holdings available to a broader audience, the institute has been publishing books, holding joint exhibitions with the National Art Museum of Ukraine and running educational projects with a handful of Jewish schools in Kiev.

Iryna Klimova, head of educational projects at the institute, says she has been lecturing to Jewish youth on topics such as Jewish religious objects and the architecture of historic synagogues still found around Ukraine.

"These young people will most likely never have a chance to go to old Jewish towns or to visit Jewish cemeteries, where many tombstones are masterpieces of art," says Klimova, who has photographed many of the old synagogues and cemeteries during field trips organized by the institute.

But Kazovsky says that Jewish museums are needed in the former Soviet Union not so much for Jews as for the rest of the local population.

"Such museums would help to destroy prejudices against Jews that still exist in the region," he says. ■

ACROSS  
THE FORMER  
SOVIET  
UNION

'A part of the  
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Leonid Finberg

Archives director,  
Institute of Jewish Studies

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## MIDDLE EAST

### Arabs prod Hamas on coexistence

The Arab League urged Hamas to accept a plan for Israeli-Palestinian coexistence.

Palestinian Authority Foreign Minister Mahmoud Zahar, a senior Hamas official, met over the weekend in Cairo with Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa.

Moussa pressed Zahar to accept a 2002 Arab League plan in which Israel would withdraw from the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Golan Heights in exchange for recognition by its neighbors.

At the time, Israel rejected the proposal.

Zahar, whose faction seeks the Jewish state's destruction, seemed skeptical about the proposal.

"The whole problem is with the other side, the Israeli side," he told reporters.

### Israeli Arab eyes Jerusalem

An Israeli Arab leader said Jerusalem will become an international Islamist capital.

"Jerusalem will soon be the capital of a Muslim Arab Caliphate, and all efforts by the Israeli establishment to Judaize the city will amount to nothing," Sheik Raed Salah, head of the Islamic Movement in Israel, told a weekend rally in Kfar Kassem.

Salah, who was briefly accused by Israeli authorities of funding Palestinian terrorist groups, also said the Jewish state was planning to replace the Al-Aksa Mosque in Jerusalem with a Third Temple as part of a plot hatched in coordination with the United States.

### Ethiopian immigrant kills wife and self

An Ethiopian immigrant to Israel killed his wife and then himself in the presence of the couple's eight children.

Ilu Beja, 46, stabbed his wife, Adelu, 42, repeatedly before turning the knife on himself last Friday.

Both died shortly afterward in the hospital. The Jewish Agency for Israel has approved funding an Amharic-speaking social worker to help counsel the children.

The family immigrated several years ago to Israel and were reportedly in bad financial straits.

Domestic violence and poverty are two of the most difficult problems facing the Ethiopian community in Israel.

### Arrest prompts Jerusalem riots

The arrest of a fervently Orthodox Jew suspected of killing his baby sparked riots in Jerusalem.

Scores of residents of the fervently Orthodox Mea Shearim neighborhood went on the rampage late last week, setting garbage dumpsters on fire, blocking traffic and scuffling with police.

The protestors accused authorities of a "blood libel" after a member of a prominent rabbinical family was arrested on suspicion he fatally beat his crying infant son.

The damage from the riots was estimated at more than \$20,000. At least five fervently Orthodox men were detained for disorderly conduct.

### Arab man killed for selling home to Jews

Palestinian vigilantes killed a Jerusalem Arab they suspected of selling his home to Jews.

Fatah gunmen claimed responsibility for shooting the 48-year-old father of seven, whose body was discovered in the West Bank last week.

He was accused of being a traitor for selling his home in eastern

Jerusalem's A-Tur neighborhood to Jews.

Residents reportedly refused the dead man's family permission to bury him in A-Tur over the weekend.

The neighborhood has seen scuffles between Palestinians and Israeli police as Jews who bought local property try to move in.

## NORTH AMERICA

### Moussaoui assails U.S. support of Israel

Zacarias Moussaoui said U.S. support for Israel is one of the main reasons he hates the United States.

Speaking late last week at his sentencing trial for conspiring with Al-Qaida in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, Moussaoui said "the Jewish state of Palestine is a missing star in the American flag.

"You are the head of the snake for me. If I want to destroy the Jewish state of Palestine, I have to destroy you."

Speaking to prosecutor Gerald Zerkin, Moussaoui said he and other Muslims want to "exterminate" American Jews.

The current hearings will determine whether Moussaoui faces the death penalty.

## WORLD

### Pope endorses Israel, Palestinian statehood

Pope Benedict XVI endorsed Israel's right to exist as well as Palestinian statehood hopes.

"May the international community, which reaffirms Israel's just right to exist in peace, assist the Palestinian people to overcome the precarious conditions in which they live and build their future, moving toward the constitution of a state that is truly their own," the pontiff said in an Easter Sunday speech at the Vatican.

His remark on Israel was seen as an indirect rebuff to calls by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad for the Jewish state to be eliminated.

Benedict also urged an "honest," negotiated solution to the international crisis caused by Iran's nuclear program.

### Priest sorry for radio broadcasts

A Polish priest apologized for allowing anti-Semitic statements to be broadcast on a radio station he runs.

"We did not mean to hurt anyone's feelings," said Tadeusz Rydzik of the statements made on Radio Maryja in which a commentator called demands for land restitution for Polish Jews a "Holocaust business" and said Jewish groups sought bribes in the early 1990s in exchange for Jewish support for Poland's entry into NATO.

Rydzik made his apology after the radio station came under strong criticism for allowing anti-Semitic and xenophobic statements on its programs.

### Czech lawmakers won't vote on Nazi art law

An amendment to a Czech law that would have extended the date of the Nazi art law failed to make it to the country's Parliament for a vote.

The chairman of the Czech Federation of Jewish Communities, Tomas Kraus, said he is alarmed that what he had thought would be an easily approved extension was rejected in committee.

The Ministry of Culture lists more than 7,000 items in its gallery collections that the Nazis stole from their original owners.

Only a few hundred of these have been claimed and returned. Equally worrisome, Kraus said, is that the funding of the documentation center that researches the provenance of the country's art collection for the purpose of seeking out owners is now in jeopardy.