

IN THE NEWS
Bush condemns terrorist attack in Israel

President Bush condemned Monday's suicide bombing attack in Tel Aviv.

"It is a despicable act of terrorism, for which no excuse or justification is possible," Bush said in a statement after the attack in Tel Aviv that killed at least nine people.

Bush said the burden for preventing terrorist acts rests with the Palestinian Authority, and noted that Hamas leaders defended the attack.

The British foreign secretary, Jack Straw, called the attack "senseless and totally unjustified."

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan said the Palestinian government must "take a clear public stand against such unjustifiable acts of terrorism."

Al-Arian to be deported?

A Florida professor acquitted of terrorism charges is expected to be deported.

Sami al-Arian reportedly has agreed to be deported rather than face a new trial for allegedly helping to channel money to Islamic Jihad.

In December, a jury found him not guilty on eight charges and deadlocked on nine others. Any deportation agreement would have to be approved by a federal judge.

A Palestinian born in Kuwait, al-Arian was a professor at the University of South Florida until his arrest in 2003.

UJC exec to leave

Gail Hyman, the United Jewish Communities' senior vice president of communications, announced her departure.

Hyman, who has occupied the post for eight years, will leave in early May to take a consulting job at a national association for nonprofits. During her tenure at the UJC, Hyman did much to bring the federation world online, and guided the UJC's branding effort.

WORLD REPORT

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'I saw things no one should see': Israelis pick up pieces at bomb site

By DINA KRAFT

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Pieces of ceiling dangled at the end of electrical cords hanging over the carnage below — lifeless bodies, pools of blood, the injured shouting for help.

The young Palestinian who blew up himself Monday at Mayor's Falafel, near Tel Aviv's old Central Bus Station, killed nine innocents when he detonated his metal- and nail-packed bomb.

It was the second time the restaurant has been hit in four months, and both times Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility. This time, the Fatah movement's Al-Aksa Brigades also claimed responsibility.

More than 40 people were injured in Monday's attack, several of them critically, rescue officials said.

Guy Sadeh was among the first at the scene, passing by on his way to pick up new business cards. He helped treat and calm the injured.

"I saw things no one should see," Sadeh, 36, said as he lay on a hospital gurney while being treated for cuts on his right foot.

His khaki pants were splattered with blood.

The blue awning of the restaurant sagged under its shattered glass sign.

Red police tape was quickly strung up. The force of the blast sent debris flying 30 feet around. Passersby wrangled for a closer look, and some took photos with cellphone cameras.

Fervently Orthodox men from the Zaka rescue service, wearing plastic gloves, black suits and orange vests, picked through the debris searching for body parts and pieces of

flesh to be buried with the bodies. One Zaka member climbed a ladder to sponge off a nearby pole.

The whines of ambulance sirens were joined by the alarms of cars parked in front of the restaurant. Police forensic teams wearing white jumpsuits sifted through the twisted mangle of upturned tables and chairs in search of clues about the powerful bomb.

The bombing shattered the calm of the Passover holiday, a time when schoolchildren are on break and Israeli families visit relatives and friends, hosting barbecues in parks and by the sea.

The attack came just hours ahead of a swearing-in ceremony for the new Knesset. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert denounced the attack and assured his countrymen that Israel would know how to respond.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas also condemned the attack, but it was excused by the P.A.'s Hamas leadership, which deemed it a legitimate response to Israeli actions.

Neveh Sha'anani, the southern Tel Aviv neighborhood where the attack took place, is a working-class area, home to many foreign workers. It has suffered six attacks since the intifada began in 2000.

In January, a suicide bombing at the same falafel stand killed no one but the bomber. The stand's owners, three brothers, called the outcome a miracle and hired a security guard.

This time, the attack was much more devastating.

Rafi Ackler, 50, who owns a gift shop on the same block, said the bombing was bad for the country and bad for business.

"We were just beginning to recover from the

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other attack, when there was a drastic drop-off in business. We just started breathing again and this happens," he said.

Noting the helicopters flying overhead and the cars in front of his shop that police had marked with an "X" — indicating that they're not suspected of carrying explosives — he asked a friend, "What will be?"

Benny Schor, 42, who owns a printing press around the corner, said he's too scared to eat out anymore.

"You never know when it is going to happen to you," he said. ■

Berlusconi, friend of Israel and U.S., loses Italian election

By RUTH ELLEN GRUBER

BUDAPEST (JTA) — Over the past five years, the center-right Italian government headed by Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi emerged as one of Washington's staunchest allies — and one of Israel's strongest supporters in Europe.

Now, however, Berlusconi's loss in national elections to Romano Prodi — whose center-left coalition includes some far-left parties that are strongly pro-Palestinian — will mean continued but possibly less demonstrative support for Israel.

So close was the April 9-10 vote that even a week later Berlusconi still had refused to concede defeat, and Italy seemed poised on the edge of political limbo.

Berlusconi's pro-Israel stance had earned him "statesman of the year" honors from the Anti-Defamation League. His loyalty to President Bush won him the honor of addressing a joint session of Congress last month.

Prodi, a former president of the European Commission who has served as prime minister in the past, is expected to form a new government and take office sometime next month. He has stated that he wants to maintain a close relationship with the

United States, but intends to realign Italian policy closer to that of the European Union.

Ehud Gol, Israel's ambassador to Italy — who has called Berlusconi's Italy one of Israel's "best friends" — told Israel's Army Radio that he expected "the warm relations" to continue under Prodi, "though maybe not in the same form or on the same level."

Lisa Palmieri-Billig, Rome representative of the American Jewish Committee, agreed.

"We hope and rely on the fact that there are strong voices within the coalition who are friends of both the United States and Israel," she told JTA.

Likewise, Alessandro Ruben, head of the ADL office in Rome, said there were a number of figures in Prodi's coalition who were "kosher" — that is, who have demonstrated firm support for Israel.

These include Piero Fassino, head of the Democratic Party of the Left, the largest party in Prodi's center-left coalition, who was instrumental last year in founding a national pro-Israel group, the Left Wing for Israel.

Prodi's coalition also includes the Radical Party, whose leaders long have adopted a pro-Israel policy, and the Daisy, a moderate-left party whose leader, Francesco Rutelli, forged links with Israel's Kadima party on a trip to Israel in February.

Rome's leftist Mayor, Walter Veltroni, also has made a point of supporting Jew-

ish causes and attempting to use his office and position to bring Israelis and Palestinians together.

"There is a range of people in the center-left coalition," Ruben said, adding that it would be important to maintain a balance in the coalition and also to maintain a commitment to finding peace.

Jewish observers will closely monitor Prodi's policy. In fact, Prodi already has run into trouble on the issue.

Last week, a mis-translation of the Arabic voice-over of an interview he gave to the satellite news channel Al-Jazeera made it seem as if he was opening to Hamas.

"I shall commit myself at the European level to shape a new position with respect to the new Palestinian government," it quoted him as saying. "I am looking with great attention at the signs of an opening being made by Hamas."

The reported misquote sparked sharp reaction in Italy, and Prodi's office rushed out a correction, noting that what Prodi really said was, "Now I'll get to work in an active way in Europe and we shall see the position in the future. Besides, there have been openings by Hamas that are very interesting."

The Europe Union classifies Hamas as a terrorist organization. The Europeans this month froze direct aid to the Palestinian Authority, saying Hamas must renounce violence, recognize Israel's right to exist and acknowledge past Israeli-Palestinian peace agreements. ■

Italy's new leader leads a coalition that includes some pro-Palestinian parties.

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Czech Jews weigh Holocaust museum

PRAGUE (JTA) — The Czech Jewish community is considering the creation of a Holocaust museum for Czech Jews and Roma, or gypsies. The museum would be in an unused synagogue in the town of Pisek, near the site of the former Lety concentra-

tion camp, where Roma were held before being transferred to Auschwitz where they were nearly all killed. It would take at least five years to restore the Pisek synagogue, according to the local government, which favors the plan. ■

New JTS head weighs in on halachah, gay rabbis

By CHANAN TIGAY

NEW YORK (JTA) — The next chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, Arnold Eisen, told JTA he favors allowing gays and lesbians to become Conservative rabbis.

"My personal opinion is that I would like to see these processes end up with the ordination of gays and lesbians," he said. "But I might be outvoted."

The Conservative movement in recent years has been roiled by this hot-button issue. The movement's central halachic authority, the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, has debated the issue at length and has scheduled a vote for December.

Still, Eisen said, despite pressures to resolve the issue, a change cannot simply be imposed from above.

"There's got to be halachic process," he said. "You have to preserve the integrity, the authenticity of halachah."

"The halachic process is non-negotiable," he added.

Eisen, 54, advocated a robust discussion among seminary faculty on homosexuality's place in the Conservative movement. He pointed out that such a discussion preceded the seminary's decision to ordain women in 1983.

"The faculty is going to have to decide how it wants to think about this issue," he said. "I just want to have a discussion. I just want to know how my colleagues feel about this."

A sociologist who has focused largely on American Jewry, Eisen officially was tapped as chancellor Monday following a lengthy search. He will succeed Rabbi Ismar Schorsch, who will step down in June after two decades in the position.

Eisen will serve a year as chancellor-designate before taking the reins full time in July 2007. He comes to JTS at a time of some uncertainty for the movement: Conservative Judaism faces dwindling numbers, a debate on the homosexuality issue and a struggle to articulate a unified vision.

As a Jewish studies professor and chairman of Stanford University's Religious Studies Department, and as a frequent traveler to congregations around the United States, Eisen is well-acquainted with the American Jewish community. He is not a rabbi, however, and will be just the second seminary head without rabbinical

ordination in JTS' 120-year history.

Some Conservative rabbis have expressed concern about the fact that a position sometimes likened to the movement's de facto chief rabbi will be filled by a non-rabbi. Eisen says he understands the concerns.

Some within the movement have suggested that the chancellor's role as a halachic voice could be transferred elsewhere: perhaps to the head of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, the movement's synagogue arm; the head of the Rabbinical Assembly, the rabbinical arm; or a newly created position like a mara d'atra, a local halachic authority.

Eisen declined to speculate on whom this position might fall to. But he stressed that movement rabbis will find him to be a strong ally.

"I'm not one of these scholars who doesn't care about the rabbinate," he said. "You're going to find me a super-supportive chancellor for rabbinical students."

"I think this is going to be good for the rabbis," he said.

Eisen said he imagined a rabbinical school graduation ceremony in which he will ordain the movement's newest spiritual leaders "as a representative of the Jewish people and the Conservative movement in America," rather than as a rabbi ordaining another rabbi.

"I am a member of the communities they're going to be serving," he said. "And I like the symbolism of me representing these communities in ordaining these rabbis."

Eisen said the major challenge facing the movement is getting unconnected Conservative Jews involved.

"How do you get them to be part of Jewish communities? How do you connect them?" he asked. "There's a membership crisis" in the Conservative movement, which in recent years has been overtaken numerically by the Reform movement. "But to me, with Jews in general, everybody worries about the declining numbers — but half the Jews we have are not connected."

"With camps, with schools, with synagogues, the challenge is to make the meaning so real, so palpable that people want to come back for more."

Historically, Conservative Judaism arose as a middle-ground between traditional Orthodox Judaism and American modernity — a function that is no longer needed.

"No Jews anymore have trouble being fully a part of American life, and many

Jews don't know about tradition," he said. "So you have to attract them from Square One. You have to persuade them that this way of being is a good, substantial way of leading a Jewish life."

Eisen said his first responsibility as chancellor will be to the seminary rather than the movement as a whole: There will be a focus on scholarship, on applying that scholarship to Jewish life, on training students in each of JTS' schools and in raising funds necessary to accomplish these goals, he said.

Still, he said, he hopes to play a role in the Conservative movement at large.

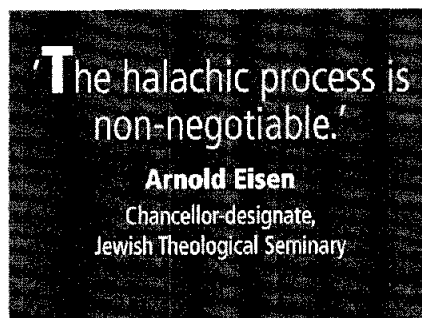
"One of my goals for the Conservative movement is that I want there to be a stronger leadership," he said, adding that leaders of movement branches need better resources. "I'm hoping to get many of my colleagues more involved in the Conservative movement than they have been."

Movement insiders also have complained that Conservative Jewry has not articulated a coherent message to take into the world. Eisen agreed that this has been a concern, and suggested that the movement ought to articulate "a message of substance and ethics and Torah."

The "major theological challenge that we have concerns the idea of mitzvah: What does it mean to have mitzvah?" he asked.

The problem, he said, is that many Jews believe that by observing mitzvot, or Jewish laws, they give up their autonomy.

"This is, frankly, nonsense," he said. "The message that mitzvah is far more wonderful than that, this message has not reached most Conservative Jews, unfortunately."



NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Iran, Syria fund P.A.

Iran donated at least \$50 million to the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority. Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki on Sunday announced the \$50 million donation, which aims to make up for short-term losses the Palestinian Authority has suffered since Israel halted tax payouts to protest Hamas' rise to power.

According to unconfirmed media reports, the Iranian donation may amount to twice as much, \$100 million. Separately, Syria said it was launching a campaign to promote private donations to the new Palestinian Authority government.

Report: Israel hotels overcharging

Several leading Israeli hotels overcharge foreign guests, according to a newspaper expose.

Yediot Achronot reported Monday that foreign guests at major resort hotels in Eilat and Tel Aviv are routinely charged as much as 80 percent more than Israelis.

One hotel owner quoted by the investigative report attributed the price difference to surcharges demanded by tourist agencies abroad that handle reservations.

Responding to the report, the Tourism Ministry said it would consider excluding from its promotional campaigns hotels proven to have overcharged guests.

The Israel Hoteliers Association declined comment pending its own probe.

Pink Floyd star heads for peace village

Pink Floyd veteran Roger Waters relocated an upcoming concert in Israel to a mixed Jewish-Arab village.

Waters, famed for the band's 1970s hit "Another Brick in the Wall," had been scheduled to perform June 22 in Tel Aviv, but Ha'aretz reported Monday that the venue was changed to Neveh Shalom, a small community of Israeli Jews and Arabs between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, because Waters wants to "promote coexistence."

Palestinian artists, who had adopted "Another Brick in the Wall" as a song protesting Israel's West Bank security fence, criticized Waters last month for agreeing to perform in Israel.

Waters, who also opposes the fence, said in response that he refused to boycott Israel.

NORTH AMERICA

Fired editor sues for discrimination

The former editor of a U.S. newspaper sued her employer, alleging she was fired because she is a woman and Jewish.

Allison Walzer was editor of the Times Leader in northeast Pennsylvania from 1986 to 2005.

She filed against the paper on April 7, demanding some \$450,000 for gender discrimination, religious discrimination and violation of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act.

In January 2005, the Times Leader reported in a business brief that she had left the paper, without elaborating.

In the lawsuit, Walzer, 52, says she was fired on a pretext — a staff photographer took personal pictures of her children.

Walzer said she had received performance-based pay hikes and bonuses that put her income at more than \$230,000 in 2003 and nearly \$200,000 in 2004.

President and publisher Patrick McHugh replaced Walzer with Philadelphia Inquirer veteran Matt Golas, whom the lawsuit describes as "a Catholic male, like McHugh." McHugh would not comment on the case.

Jewish philanthropist dies

Maurice "Chico" Sabbah, founder of the nation's only non-Orthodox Jewish boarding school, died Monday at age 77.

A wealthy businessman, Sabbah poured more than \$100 million into the school's 100-acre campus in Greensboro, N.C.

His contribution, which paid full tuition for the school's initial 77 students, is believed to be the single largest donation by any individual to Jewish education in the United States.

Born in Brooklyn and raised in Great Neck, N.Y., Sabbah made aliyah and served in the Israeli army after college.

After returning to the United States, he served in the U.S. Army in Korea before entering the reinsurance business.

He started the American Hebrew Academy, which now boasts 126 students, in 2001.

Team adds non-Sabbath days to promotion

The Washington Nationals baseball team added days not on the Jewish Sabbath to a promotion aimed at religious groups.

The team added six Sunday games, days after a reporter called the team's marketing office on the issue, the Washington Jewish Week reported.

The promotion offers religious institutions discounted tickets to selected games.

Holocaust museum to open registry

A New York Holocaust museum is to unveil a registry of survivors on Yom Hashoah.

The Museum of Jewish Heritage — A Living Memorial to the Holocaust is to house the Benjamin and Vladka Meed Registry of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, beginning April 26.

Created in 1981 to document survivors' experiences and help them find relatives and friends, the registry contains more than 195,000 records.

The registry is also available at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington.

Lindsay Lohan a Kabbalist?

Teen queen Lindsay Lohan said she is "looking into" Kabbalah.

The actress and singer, who has been plagued by both familial problems and relentless paparazzi, told reporters she needed a coping mechanism.

"All of us need something.

You have to grab on to whatever gets you through," she said. Lohan, 19, joins a growing list of stars, including Madonna, Britney Spears and Demi Moore, interested in Jewish mysticism.

WORLD

Ukrainian synagogue attacked

Several windows were shattered in a Ukrainian synagogue in what is believed to be an anti-Semitic attack.

Vandals threw stones early Monday at the Choral Synagogue in downtown Kirovograd.

No one was hurt.

Local police are investigating the case but no arrests have been reported.

According to local Jewish leaders, the incident was only the most recent act of vandalism against Jewish institutions in the central Ukrainian city during the past few years.

Vitaly Kakhnov, director of the Kirovograd charitable center Hesed Shlomo, told JTA that community members believe this week's attack was motivated by an anti-Semitic act since it took place on Passover.