

IN THE NEWS
Fatah creates its own militia

Gunmen from Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas' movement announced the formation of a militia to counter Hamas police, media reported.

The 2,000-strong militia will "protect Fatah's sons and Fatah's institutions against attacks, whether from Israel or from parties" at home, said militia spokesman Al-Muatasem Billah.

Reuters quoted him as saying that the group does not want to clash with Hamas police, "but if it happens, we will not stand handcuffed."

The creation of the militia raises concerns in an area rife with factional violence.

Jewish community leader Yoskowitz dies

Longtime Jewish community leader Jay Yoskowitz died suddenly Tuesday.

(Full story, pg. 3)

UNRWA bill introduced in House

Congress will consider legislation to tie U.S. contributions to UNRWA to outside auditing of the agency.

The bill introduced Wednesday by Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), ranking Democrat on the International Relations Committee, and Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Ill.), a member of the House appropriations subcommittee that deals with UNRWA, would require the president to certify that the U.N. agency that administers relief to Palestinian refugees is subject to comprehensive, independent audits and "does not knowingly provide employment, refuge, assistance or support of any kind to members of foreign terrorist organizations."

The bill will be attached as an amendment to two other bills due for consideration as early as next week, and is likely to pass.

WORLD REPORT

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

Feds pursue writer's files as they try to build case against lobbyists

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The FBI is casting its net at least as far back as the 1980s in its attempt to prove a pattern in the government's classified information case against two former Jewish lobbyists.

The recent revelation that the FBI wants to plough through decades-old files belonging to the late investigative reporter Jack Anderson is the latest sign that the government has not yet prepared its case against Steve Rosen, former foreign policy director for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, and Keith Weissman, AIPAC's former Iran analyst.

Government delays in assessing what evidence should be classified and what should be used have pushed the trial back from April to August, and prosecutors still are scrambling to find precedents for a case that the defense and judge say is unprecedented.

The questions also have contributed to concerns among free-speech advocates that the case is an assault on the First Amendment.

"There has long been an unwritten agreement the government may do what it must to deter unauthorized disclosures of classified information and to punish leakers but that, once disclosed, the government does not pursue those who receive or publish the information," the Federation of American Scientists said in a statement on its Web site.

Mark Feldstein, director of the journalism school at George Washington University, told JTA he was "shocked" when FBI agents came asking for access to Anderson's files. The family has handed Feldstein the files for archiving

and because he is writing a book about the journalist, who died last December.

"As they explained it to me, they were looking for additional evidence for their case against the lobbyists," Feldstein said. "They grilled me about which pro-Israel reporters worked for Anderson, and which ones had connections to Anderson."

Feldstein would not release the documents. The FBI still may pursue them through the courts. FBI spokesman Bill Carter, who would not comment on the AIPAC aspect of the case, said the government's interest

in the files was natural.

"An individual came to us that had seen the documents and indicated that there were a number of classified U.S. government documents in the collection," Carter told JTA. "Our concern was that since the plan was to make the documents available to the public, to make sure that no classified documents would be made available to foreign agents."

Feldstein said the agents acknowledged that the statute of limitations would have lapsed on whatever they might find in the files, but would not otherwise say how it related to the AIPAC case.

However, a central weakness in the government case always has been that the core of the indictment against Rosen and Weissman was a government sting in 2004, when Larry Franklin, a mid-level Pentagon analyst, leaked information he allegedly said was classified.

Franklin's leak had to do with reports of an imminent Iranian attack on Israeli agents supposedly in northern Iraq.

Other exchanges described in the indict-

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ment, also dealing with Iran and terrorism, do not explicitly involve classified information, and in pre-trial hearings, defense lawyers have aggressively pursued the argument that such exchanges were routine between lobbyists and government officials.

If the government were to uncover evidence of Rosen's role in trading in classified information in the 1980s, it could try to establish a pattern in court. Anderson

became ill around 1990, and did not report extensively after then.

Weissman was not employed by AIPAC in the 1980s, but Rosen already was a well-known lobbyist with ties to the executive branch.

AIPAC, which fired Rosen and Weissman last year, would not comment on the case. The government has cleared AIPAC of all wrongdoing in the case. In a hearing last month, Judge T.S. Ellis III described as substantial the defense's argument that the

government was patching together disparate cases to establish a precedent.

Additionally, Tom Reilly, the Justice Department attorney who represents the intelligence agencies on the prosecution team, acknowledged that the government had not substantially begun to review the evidence to sort out what should be available and what should not.

The time needed for that review postponed the trial from the May 23 trial date Ellis had wanted until Aug. 7. ■

Film on Orthodoxy and gays hits Ukraine

By VLADIMIR MATVEYEV

KIEV, Ukraine (JTA) — Audiences of different faiths and ages in Ukraine packed premiers of a documentary that explores Orthodox Judaism and homosexuality.

But some of the better known Jewish institutions in the country refused to host the showings of "Trembling Before G-d," saying the topic was too controversial.

Those who agreed to host the film say they believe a discussion of the thorny topic is needed in Ukraine.

"This is just a beginning. Ukraine really needs these types of movies," said Rabbi Alexander Dukhovny, leader of the Reform movement in Ukraine.

The filmmaker, Sandi Simcha DuBowski, and Rabbi Steven Greenberg, believed to be the first Orthodox rabbi ever to openly declare his homosexuality, spent two weeks in March in the Ukrainian capital of Kiev and the southern port city of Odessa showing the movie and talking

to people in theaters, community centers and on television.

During their trip, the 2001 documentary portraying gay Orthodox Jews who struggle to reconcile their faith and their sexual orientation, was shown in the former Soviet Union for the first time.

Hostility and bias toward gays and lesbians in Ukraine is still commonplace, as it is in many other parts of the former Soviet Union.

"The attitude toward gays and lesbians has changed but not enough, some gay people believe," said Anatoliy Yarema, a TV host and reporter.

Ukraine decriminalized homosexuality — treated during Communism as a punishable offense — in 1991, the year of Ukrainian independence. ■

Yarema, who had Dubowski and Greenberg on the air of his TV show "One Plus One," said that "it is still very difficult" to be openly gay in Ukraine.

As if to prove the thesis that gay people do not often feel comfortable here, many of those who attended the screening of "Trembling Before G-d" in Kiev's House of Cinema preferred to leave the theater shortly before the lights went on and the discussion started.

And yet, compared to other FSU states, Ukraine is considered to be one of the most advanced in its attitude toward gays and lesbians.

There are a few gay and lesbian publications, One of Us and gay.ua, a few gay bars and a night club in Kiev and, of course, Internet sites. In September 2003, the first, albeit small, public gay pride demonstration was held in Kiev.

More than 100 people attended the pre-

miers in Kiev and Odessa.

Attempts were made to screen the film in a number of Jewish community institutions, but many of them refused to get involved.

Most Jewish leaders approached thought the subject was too controversial. Others were cautious for religious reasons or displayed some bias.

"At first we didn't know what this film was really about. Now we refuse to screen it in our institute because we are not going to propagate such things," said Leonid Finberg, director of the Institute of Jewish Studies in Kiev. ■

Kiev's Solomon University also refused to host a screening.

"Most people in Ukraine still don't understand the problem because of their upbringing, elements of Soviet mentality and fear, because homosexuals were persecuted in the Soviet Union," said Vladimir Schukin, a Jewish psychiatrist.

At a screening at the Odessa Jewish community center, a Chasidic man cautioned Greenberg and Dubowski: "You will be beaten here."

But no violence took place, and this attitude was the exception among those, both Jewish and non-Jewish, who came to see the film.

"A remarkable film for thoughtful people of different beliefs, one of the best and bravest," said Yulia Voronova, a student.

A young Jewish leader said the movie helped him come to terms with his own prejudices.

"I had a negative attitude" toward gay people, said Aleksey Gaidar, an activist with the Netzer Jewish youth club in Kiev. "But the movie touched me." ■

Many local Jewish institutions refused to screen the movie.



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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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Jewish groups stick with Darfur

By RACHEL SILVERMAN

NEW YORK (JTA) — Two days after the Save Darfur rally in Washington, one participant, 29-year-old Margie Klein, said it would be a “colossal mistake” to walk away from the fight right now.

“Imagine telling people in Auschwitz facing the gas chambers, ‘Don’t feel bad because 25,000 people got together and are rooting for you,’” the rabbinical student said.

“We need to get these people out of their hell, not rest on our laurels. We need to keep working until this tragedy has ended,” said Klein, who is studying at Hebrew College, a non-denominational rabbinical school in Boston.

All across the country, Jewish community organizers are heeding her advice: Instead of seeing the rally as an end point, they are working to harness its momentum and keep the Darfur cause alive.

Jewish leaders are responding to the ongoing genocide of black Africans in Darfur, Sudan. Since 2003, Arab militias, known as Janjaweed, have been raping, torturing, killing and displacing Darfuri citizens. The situation in Darfur, which some estimate has claimed more than 400,000 lives and displaced millions, constitutes the first time the U.S. government has recognized genocide while it is still occurring.

Jewish groups have been particularly appalled by the atrocities in Darfur. Determined to make ‘never again’ not just a meaningless cliché, they have taken a leading role in anti-genocide advocacy and education.

It was two Jewish groups — the American Jewish World Service and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum — that founded the Save Darfur coalition, which organized Sunday’s rally.

Now Jewish activists are turning their attention to other forms of mobilization.

Klein, who heads a group of socially minded seminary students across the religious spectrum, called Jewish Seminars for Justice, leads by example.

After the rally, 60 of the 250 seminar-ians her group bused to Washington participated in a training session with Rabbi David Saperstein, president of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, and Ruth Messinger, president of the

American Jewish World Service.

On Monday afternoon, they met with Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick, who was named this week as a special envoy to the region. The group focused on grass-roots mobilization, with more projects in the works.

Klein says the group will keep on Darfur “as long as the situation there continues.”

The Religious Action Center is of a similar mind-set.

Addressing an energetic crowd Sunday, Saperstein announced a new campaign — “30 Days for Darfur” — meant to urge a beefed-up international response.

Saperstein said the initiative will send representatives to U.N. offices, embassies and consulates of NATO and African Union countries, as well as to those of Russia and China. Saperstein said that President Bush, with whom he met last Friday, was highly receptive to this effort.

“History, looking back on Darfur, will not grade either him or us on our efforts but on our success or failures in stopping the genocidal activities,” Saperstein said. “We need to engage the international community... America can’t do it alone.”

Saperstein called the rally “the beginning of an ongoing effort.”

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‘We need to get these people out of their hell, not rest on our laurels.’

Margie Klein
Rabbinical student

The Reconstructionist Rabbinical College has chosen a different approach. The institution, which serves as the rabbinical training arm of the Reconstructionist movement, will divest from companies that do business in Sudan.

Though Rabbi Dan Ehrenkrantz, president of the college, predicted that while the economic impact on Sudan would be “very small,” it would send a powerful message about the government-sponsored genocide occurring there.

Endowment Chairwoman Joanne Hogan said in practical terms, the divestment will cause the school’s \$20 million endowment to drop one holding — in a French telephone company called Alcatel. She said she did not expect significant economic ramifications to occur on either side of the transaction.

But if other Jewish institutions jump on board, as Ehrenkrantz hopes, damage could result.

“If no Jewish communal funds were invested in Sudan, it would be such a wonderful and important statement from the Jewish community,” he said.

He said the inspiration for the divestment campaign came, in part, from activism among the school’s student body in advance of the rally, which 50 students attended.

Jewish community leader Yoskowitz dies

NEW YORK (JTA) — Longtime Jewish community leader Jay Yoskowitz died suddenly Tuesday.

Yoskowitz, who was 59, passed away hours after burying both of his parents in New York.

“He was a very committed communal professional, very dedicated to the Jewish community and to the advancement of Israel and Jewish causes,” said Norman Lipoff, past president of JTA’s board and national chairman of the United Israel Appeal when Yoskowitz became its top professional.

Yoskowitz, who was senior vice president at the American Technion Society when he died, served in top positions at the Council of Jewish Federations, United

Israel Appeal, Jewish National Fund and B’nai B’rith, and at federations in Iowa, Connecticut and Texas.

“Jay had the real values of character, of honesty and of integrity,” said Mel Bloom, the Technion Society’s executive vice president.

“He was a mensch.”

Following the funeral of his elderly parents, who died hours apart, Yoskowitz returned home to begin the mourning period when he choked on food and could not be revived.

Yoskowitz is survived by his wife, three children and a brother. A funeral is scheduled for Friday at Beth El Synagogue in New Rochelle, N.Y.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Independence Day in Israel

Israel celebrated its 58th birthday. Independence Day was launched Tuesday night with an annual rally at Mount Herzl in Jerusalem, where select citizens lit 12 candles symbolizing the ancient tribes of Israel.

Officiating was lawmaker Shimon Peres, who urged Israelis: "Don't cease to dream about peace." But Peres also emphasized the strength of the Jewish state, which is under threat from arch-foe Iran's nuclear program.

"Our might is unmatched," he said. Israelis marked the public holiday, which ends Wednesday night, by wearing blue and white clothes in honor of the national colors, attending fireworks displays and feasting at traditional outdoor barbecues.

Israel's population now stands at 7,026,000 — an almost nine-fold increase since the country's founding in 1948.

Iranian army repudiates 'Israel first'

The Iranian army repudiated a statement from a top Revolutionary Guard officer who said Israel would be the first target in a U.S.-Iran conflict.

Mohammed Ibrahim Dehkhani's statement was "his personal view and has no validity as far as Iranian military officials are concerned," The Associated Press quoted an army spokesman as saying Wednesday.

Dehkhani had been quoted as saying that if America makes "any mischief" against Iran, "the first place we target will be Israel." The Revolutionary Guard is the more ideologically driven component of the Iranian military.

NORTH AMERICA

Brandeis removes pro-Palestinian art

Brandeis University pulled a pro-Palestinian art exhibit from its campus.

Among the images at the "Voices from Palestine" exhibit were Palestinian children dripping with blood, a bulldozer threatening a girl, and a boy with an amputated leg walking on crutches.

The pieces were painted by Palestinian teenagers in a Bethlehem refugee camp, at the request of an Israeli Jewish student at Brandeis. The Zionist Organization of America condemned the exhibit, and several students lodged complaints with the school.

A university spokesman said the panel was yanked four days into its two-week run because "it was completely from one side in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict."

AJCommittee raises \$105 million

The American Jewish Committee announced the completion of a \$105 million fund-raising campaign.

The news was announced Tuesday by Harold Tanner, chairman of the campaign and honorary president of the group, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary at a weeklong gathering in Washington.

Bipartisan support for AJCommittee energy bid

Democrats and Republicans committed to greater energy independence for the United States at an American Jewish Committee conference.

Sens. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) and Gordon Smith (R-Ore.), as well as Democratic Party Chairman Howard Dean, addressed a session on energy independence at the AJCommittee's 100th anniversary celebrations in Washington this week.

The AJCommittee leads the "Set America Free" coalition, which seeks to reduce dependence on foreign oil. "We are committed to ending our reliance on oil from the Middle East," Dean said to applause.

Roth receives literary award

Philip Roth won the prestigious PEN/Nabokov literary award. Roth, whose most recent novel is "Everyman," won the \$20,000 biennial prize given to "a living author whose body of work, either written in or translated into English, represents achievement in a variety of literary genres and is of enduring originality and consummate craftsmanship."

The PEN American Center works to advance literature, defend free expression and foster international literary fellowship.

DC businessman buys baseball team

A group of investors led by real-estate magnate Ted Lerner and his family purchased the Washington Nationals baseball team. Lerner and Major League Baseball wrapped up details of the \$450 million purchase Tuesday night following a yearlong competition over ownership.

Lerner, 80, was raised in an observant Orthodox Jewish family. One of the largest beneficiaries of his philanthropic work is his Conservative congregation, Ohr Kodesh in Chevy Chase, Md., to which he contributed \$505,000 in 2003.

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Sweden bars Hamas lawmaker

The Swedish prime minister denied entry to a Hamas lawmaker. Goran Persson said Wednesday that Salah al-Bardaweel, as a member of a European Union-labeled terrorist group, could not visit his country. Bardaweel previously tried to obtain a visa from France and was denied for the same reason.

The Hamas lawmaker is trying to join a group of Palestinian politicians from other groups on a European tour. Palestinians living in Malmo, Sweden, had invited them to the country for a visit this month.

Persson's statement is a shift from the stance of foreign minister, Jan Elisson, who said that the Hamas member could visit the country, with the restriction that he not meet with government officials.

Ukrainian shul attacked

A Ukrainian synagogue was attacked, but no one was hurt. Vandals threw stones and stole a security camera Monday at the Ner Tamid shul in Simferopol, but no one was hurt.

A video recording obtained with the shul's other surveillance camera showed two young men who appeared to be in their late teens who committed the attack.

Anatoly Gendin, president of the Association of Jewish Communities and Organizations of Crimea, informed local police about the incident. He later told JTA that police failed to show up at the scene promptly.

Yad Vashem seeks Ukraine Shoah data

Yad Vashem launched a project to collect data on Holocaust victims in Ukraine. Ukrainians are invited to fill out a form about Holocaust victims they know of and send it to Yad Vashem directly or via their local Jewish community, Boris Maftzir, head of the project, told JTA.

Naomi Ben-Ami, Israel's ambassador to Ukraine, said she hoped official Ukrainian sources would also help in the undertaking. "We have always cooperated with archives in Ukraine," she said. "There should be no difficulties with obtaining new information."