

IN THE NEWS
Ehud Olmert praises House of Representatives

Ehud Olmert commended the U.S. House of Representatives for passing a bill that cuts off assistance to the Palestinian Authority.

Speaking Wednesday to both houses of Congress, the Israeli prime minister said the Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act "sends a firm, clear message that the United States of America will not tolerate terrorism in any form."

Olmert, who received several standing ovations, reiterated that he is ready to negotiate with P.A. President Mahmoud Abbas, a relative moderate from the Fatah Party, but would not entertain contacts with the Hamas-led P.A. Cabinet until the group renounces terrorism and recognizes the State of Israel.

Olmert said if negotiations fail, he is ready to conduct a unilateral withdrawal from parts of the West Bank.

He also praised Congress for legislation known as the Iran Freedom and Support Act that would further isolate the Islamic republic.

Arrest raid turns deadly

Israeli troops killed four Palestinians in clashes that erupted during a West Bank arrest raid.

Soldiers entered Ramallah on Wednesday to arrest a senior Islamic Jihad terrorist, only to find themselves under attack from local gunmen and rock-throwers.

U.S. deports acquitted Palestinian

The United States deported a Palestinian who was acquitted of charges that he aided Islamic Jihad.

Sameeh Hammoudeh agreed to be deported this week to the West Bank after pleading guilty to a tax fraud charge separate from the terrorist charges.

Hammoudeh was acquitted of 10 charges in December.

WORLD REPORT

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Arrest of Ethiopian aid official raises concern for Falash Mura fate

By URIEL HEILMAN

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The arrest of the local director of the Jewish aid compound in the Ethiopian city of Gondar is prompting growing concern about the future of thousands of Falash Mura waiting to immigrate to Israel.

The arrest last week of the official, Getu Zemene, led to the temporary closure of the Gondar aid compound, a multisite facility that provides schooling, some food and some employment to an estimated 9,000 Falash Mura in the city. An additional 4,000 or so Falash Mura awaiting aliyah live in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa, where the local Jewish aid compound has been closed since an interne-cine dispute there a year and a half ago forced Ethiopian authorities to intervene.

That conflict prompted the Ethiopian government to bar the North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry, which ran the aid compounds, from operating in Ethiopia.

Zemene said the turmoil in Addis — and elements in Gondar who he said want to wrest control of the compound from the community — led to his arrest.

"There are people who are making problems in Gondar, but these are people who are not eligible" for aliyah, "and they want us to close the compound," Zemene told JTA in a telephone interview from Ethiopia. "The accusation was related to NACOEJ and the problems in Addis Ababa."

Zemene was released from jail the day after his arrest, and he returned to a celebratory welcome last Friday outside the Gondar compound, where thousands of supporters turned out to greet him. The aid compound has since

reopened, and Zemene said he does not face criminal charges.

The problems in Gondar underscore the climate of uncertainty faced by the Falash Mura left in Ethiopia, some of whom have been waiting up to eight years for permission from Israel to immigrate. In the meantime, they have become an aid-dependent population, having left their rural homes and livelihoods to live in squalid neighborhoods of Gondar and Addis Ababa near where Israeli government officials determine their eligibility for aliyah.

It's not clear exactly how many Falash Mura remain in Ethiopia. The Falash Mura, who call themselves Beta Israel, are Ethiopians of Jewish ancestry whose progenitors converted to Christianity several generations ago to escape social and economic pressures.

Turned away when Israel airlifted Ethiopian Jews out of Africa in Operation Moses in 1984 and Operation Solomon in 1991, these Beta Israel have since begun returning to Jewish practices in a bid to move to the Jewish state.

Israel began accepting Falash Mura immigrants in the mid-1990s. Since an Israeli Cabinet decision in February 2003 to bring up to 26,000 Falash Mura remaining in Ethiopia to Israel, some 300 Falash Mura are being brought to Israel each month.

An Israeli government decision more than a year ago to double the pace of aliyah for up to 20,000 remaining Falash Mura has not been implemented.

While the Israeli government tarries — an Israeli High Court order three weeks ago gave the government 60 days to provide a detailed plan for the expedited aliyah — the number of Ethiopians claiming Jewish ancestry or eligi-

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■ *There is a growing number of Falash Mura waiting in Ethiopia to make aliyah*

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bility for aliyah continues to grow.

The Interior Ministry has yet to finalize the list of those eligible to immigrate.

"A year later we're in the same place we were a year ago," Ori Konforti, the senior official in Ethiopia for the Jewish Agency for Israel, which is responsible for immigration to Israel, told JTA in Ethiopia three months ago. "I think if we don't close the list, we may well still be here in another 10 years."

This week, the United Jewish Communities, which pledged a year ago to raise \$100 million for Ethiopian aliyah and absorption as part of its Operation Promise campaign, led a delegation of some 65 UJC officials and federation leaders to Ethiopia. UJC officials say they hope the money they're raising will prompt the Israeli government to begin its expedited aliyah program.

By speeding up immigration, some aid officials say, Israel will be able to close the chapter on mass Ethiopian aliyah, which has been an expensive process for the state. With a benefits package that includes long stays in Israeli absorption centers, generous housing grants and a broad array of social services, the average Ethiopian immigrant costs the Israeli government about \$100,000 over the course of his lifetime, according to Israeli government estimates.

As part of the process of launching the expedited aliyah, the Jewish Agency is slated to take over control of the aid compounds from the North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry — which, though it doesn't maintain an official presence in

Ethiopia, funds the Gondar compound. Because of the ongoing dispute in Addis Ababa, the conference has not been able to reopen the aid compound there.

"The community does not want what happened to the Addis Ababa compound to happen in Gondar," said the conference's director of operations, Orlee Guttman.

Guttman said the conference is eager for the Jewish Agency to take control of the compounds.

Within the Israeli government, every ministry seems to have a different excuse for why the expedited aliyah hasn't begun.

One government official said the operation is being held up because the funding hasn't been approved yet in this year's budget, the Jewish Agency is ill-prepared

to absorb the immigrants and there is no detailed agreement with the Ethiopian government over the particulars of the operation.

But the Foreign Ministry says it signed a deal with the Ethiopian government last fall. The Jewish Agency maintains that it is ready but has not been given a green light from the Israeli government. The Finance Ministry says it allocated an additional \$45 million for the accelerated aliyah in this year's budget, although the budget has yet to be

approved by the Knesset.

"The problem is being prepared for them on the ground," said Sabine Hadad, a spokeswoman for Israel's Interior Ministry.

'The problem is being prepared for them on the ground.'

Sabine Hadad

Spokeswoman, Israeli Interior Ministry

Jewish Berliners return for visit

By TOBY AXELROD

BERLIN (JTA) — They were the lucky ones. Babies or toddlers, they were bundled up by their parents and taken from the city of their birth, by train, by boat. Some landed in Chile, others in China. Some ended up in Soviet camps. Their lives were sometimes hard. But they were among the Jews from Germany who survived the Nazi genocide.

Some 80 former Berliners, invited here by the city, gathered for lunch Monday at the Jewish community center in the former West Berlin. They already had enjoyed a week of getting to know the new Berlin, the new Germany, and meeting political and religious leaders. But for many, the highlight was a visit to the street or house where their families had lived.

For Eva Eichen Izchak, that meant going to Brunnenstrasse 41, where her mother ran a tobacco shop in the 1930s. "It was right across from the U-bahn," or subway station," and next to their apartment, she said. The current shop owners, immigrants to Germany, shook their heads in amazement when they heard the story, said Eva, who was 6 when the family fled East. They lived out the last war years in Soviet camps, and immigrated to Israel in 1957.

For Danny Moses, home was Holmstrasse 10. He did not go back inside, but took many photos of the elegant apartment building. "The building is very nice, beautiful," said Moses, who came to the event from Santiago, Chile, with his wife, Sonia Menashe. Moses was less than a year old when his family left Germany in May, 1939.

During his visit to the Jewish Museum here, Moses photographed several pages from the memorial book listing some 60,000 Berlin Jews who were deported and murdered. There were several pages of people with his family name, he said.

Marion Wollstein, who came here from Santiago with her husband, Rolando Torrijos, said she was fascinated "to see that Berlin today is a capital of Europe again, and that people live together in peace again here."

Berlin is one of many cities that annually host Jewish guests whose families fled Nazi Germany. There were about 500,000 Jews in Germany in 1933. More than half fled, but many ended up in countries later occupied by the Nazis, where they were arrested and deported. Berlin was home to 175,000 Jews before the war. Today's community numbers about 12,000, including about 9,000 who have come from the former Soviet Union since the fall of the Berlin Wall.



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Rich Jewish campus life backed

By PAULA AMANN
Washington Jewish Week

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Amid worries about fraying religious ties among Jewish college students and campus rifts over Israel, a conference held here this week probed the interplay between American academia and Jews.

"Inspiring Values, Creating Leaders: The Summit on the University and the Jewish Community," hosted by Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, drew more than 600 university leaders, professors, students and Jewish professionals to dissect such issues.

If Jewish life on American campuses is facing troubles, they stem from causes deeper than academia, many participants suggested.

Rabbi Jeff Brown of Temple Solel in the San Diego suburb of Cardiff-by-the-Sea, Calif., does outreach to college-age children of congregants.

"It's a question of them consciously or subconsciously exploring whether Judaism is relevant to them," said Brown, 27, when asked to name the central problem for Jews of college age. "Does having a connection to our 5,000-year-old heritage matter to them at all?"

The director of the Steinhardt Social Research Institute at Brandeis University, Leonard Saxe, who studies Jewish college students, suggested a strategy to re-engage these youth: "kishkes, kortex and kinesthetics," deliberately tweaking the spelling of cortex.

That means offering experiences rich in emotional and sensory elements, intellectual heft and leadership opportunities, Saxe said in an interview.

"Jewish education hasn't touched all the senses," said Saxe, a panelist at "A New Generation's Culture and Its Impact upon the Jewish Future," the final session of the conference. "There are things which have Jewish intellectual content, but they're not emotionally engaging."

"You can be taught about Shabbat, but unless you live a day separate from the rest of the week, you don't understand and appreciate it."

Yet many speakers at this week's gathering described the Jewish scene at American universities in upbeat terms.

Summing up the conference theme at the opening plenary, the outgoing president of Hillel, Avraham Infeld, said it is possible to be "universally human" and "distinctively Jewish" in academia.

Pointing to an honorary doctorate he received that morning from Lutheran Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pa., he said, "At Muhlenberg and around the world, we have not only been able to strike a detente between these two worlds, but we have been able to achieve" friendship.

Jewish students can find kosher food, take Jewish studies classes and attend religious services at most of the nation's best universities, Infeld said.

He and fellow panelist Steven M. Cohen, a sociologist at Hebrew Union College, said that academia encourages both diversity and freedom of speech.

While Jewish students should enjoy the same freedom of expression that everyone else has, "Hillel and the academic world should not promise our students a comfortable and quiet intellectual environment," Infeld said, arguing that such calm would not serve their education.

Cohen contended that college campuses do not pull young people away from Judaism. In fact, he said, those with more advanced degrees are more engaged in Jewish life and more likely to marry other Jews.

Also at the conference, Hillel pledged to double its numbers over the next five years. In its five-year strategic plan released this week, the largest campus Jewish organization in the United States pledged to double the number of students involved in Jewish life; double its annual campaign; double its funding to local Hillels; and launch an aggressive recruitment and retention program for campus professionals.

To help fund the effort, the Charles

and Lynn Schusterman International Center will increase its endowment from \$10 million to \$100 million. Hillel also pledged to strengthen its relationship with university administrations, Jewish Studies departments and Jewish communities near campuses where it works.

On Monday, the literary editor of *The New Republic*, Leon Wieseltier, zoomed in on Israel as he addressed the thorny question of "How to Defend (And Not to Defend) the Jews."

Calling for "intellectual honesty" by campus backers of the Jewish state, he urged a return to "first principles" about Israel's reason for being.

"Zionism is simply what used to be called, in the good old days, the national liberation movement of the Jewish people. Full stop," said Wieseltier, who also affirmed the right of Jews to differ with Israeli government policies.

Harvard University law professor Alan Dershowitz weighed in on "Balancing Individual Rights and Communal Responsibilities" via video remarks for a plenary panel Monday.

While defending free speech, Dershowitz called for "ism equity" and the "circle of civility" in campus debates.

"You can't have one rule for men, one rule for women, one rule for blacks, one rule for whites, one rule for Jews, one rule for Muslims," he said.

"The rules have to be identical, symmetrical. I'm afraid that's not going on, on many campuses today. I think we're seeing a double standard."

Hillel's president-elect, Wayne Firestone, praised such proactive moves by university leaders and suggested that they need to "create safe space for difficult discussions" on campus.

(Eric Fingerhut and Debra Rubin of the *Washington Jewish Week* contributed to this report.)

FOCUS ON ISSUES

'You can't have one rule for men, one rule for women, one rule for blacks, one rule for whites, one rule for Jews, one rule for Muslims.'

Alan Dershowitz
Professor, Harvard University Law

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Study: Saudi texts promote hatred

Saudi textbooks still promote hatred of Christians and Jews, a new study says. The textbooks, used in schools in Saudi Arabia and in Muslim schools around the world, promote hatred of "unbelievers," including Christians, Jews, Hindus and atheists, as well as Muslims who don't share the Wahhabi brand of Islam that the Saudi government backs, according to the study conducted by the Washington-based Center for Religious Freedom.

In one textbook, teachers are instructed to tell students to "give examples of false religions like Judaism, Christianity, paganism, etc." A JTA special investigation revealed last year that Saudi Arabia is also funding teaching materials for American public schools that contain anti-Israel and anti-Western views.

Iran tests missile

Iran tested a long-range missile this week, according to Israeli intelligence. Israeli security sources disclosed the launch this week, assessing that it was aimed to coincide with Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's visit to Washington.

Iran had no comment. Israeli media reports said the missile was a Shihab-3, which is believed to have a range of 810 miles, enough to hit Israel.

Hamas leader's arrest lauded

The American Friends of Hebrew University praised the capture of a Hamas leader believed to be behind a 2002 bombing at the school. With the capture of Ibrahim Hamed, "justice can finally be served," Peter Wilner, the American Friends' executive director, said in a statement.

Nine people, including five Americans, died in the July 31, 2002, attack at the Jerusalem university.

Israel honors Africa

Israel celebrated its ties with Africa. Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni met with the ambassadors of 11 African nations in Israel to mark the anniversary of the African Union's formation in 1963. Livni used the Wednesday meeting to express confidence in diplomatic and trade ties with Africa, as well as concern over the humanitarian crisis in Darfur.

"As a people who endured great suffering in the past, Israel cannot be indifferent to the distress of others," she said. In the last two years, there has been a rise in the volume of trade between Israel and its African partners.

Israel's first lady: I'm no adviser

Ehud Olmert's left-leaning wife played down her influence on the Israeli prime minister's policymaking. "Our political differences have narrowed," Aliza Olmert told journalists accompanying her husband to Washington this week. "But I am not an adviser. He takes his advice from his advisers."

Israel's first lady is a noted artist whose left-wing views are largely shared by the couple's four children.

Their influence is credited with bringing about a change of political thinking in Olmert.

WORLD

Red Cross to vote on Magen David Adom

The Red Cross is expected to vote to admit Israel's emergency services agency next month.

Magen David Adom has been excluded from full member status in the international humanitarian organization. In December, a conflict regarding Magen David's Jewish star emblem was put to rest. The Israeli agency still faces opposition from Arab and Islamic states, and must complete certain regulatory steps prior to entry. The June resolution also will grant full member status to the Palestinian emergency services outfit.

Together with the American Red Cross, American Friends of Magen David Adom has pushed hard for Israel's admission.

Scottish church: Label settlement goods

The Church of Scotland called on European authorities to identify products made in Israel's West Bank settlements.

The call came from the church's General Assembly, which met in Edinburgh this week. At the meeting, a committee reported that the church does not hold any investments directly relating to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Rome's Jews mourn dead Muslim leader

Rome's Jewish leaders joined Christian and Muslim dignitaries in mourning the death of the imam of Rome's main mosque.

Rome's chief rabbi, Riccardo Di Segni, accompanied by the Jewish community's president, attended a memorial service Tuesday at the mosque for Mahmoud Hammad Shweita, who died of cancer Sunday.

NORTH AMERICA

Restaurateur has ties to Hezbollah?

The owner of a chain of Middle Eastern restaurants in the Detroit area has ties to Hezbollah, according to U.S. prosecutors.

The U.S. Attorney's Office said in documents filed last week in U.S. district court that Talal Chahine, who owns the La Shish restaurant, has connections to top officials with the Lebanon-based terrorist group.

Chahine's attorney said his client has never supported violence. Chahine and his wife, Elfat El Aouar, were charged last week with four counts of tax evasion related to their business.

ADL blasts church group on Israel

The Anti-Defamation League criticized the World Council of Churches for what the ADL called a one-sided statement against Israel. The ADL said the council "needs a reality check" after criticizing Israel for the ongoing conflict in the Middle East.

In its statement, the Geneva-based council, which includes more than 350 churches from around the world, called for a relaxation of sanctions on the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority.

The council condemned the killing of innocent civilians by both sides in the conflict and called for the Palestinians to "maintain the existing one-party cease-fire toward Israel."

Recently, the council also called on Iran to halt its uranium enrichment program and recognize the State of Israel.

Republican chairman to Israel

The chairman of the Republican Party is slated to meet with top Israeli leaders. Ken Mehlman is due to leave Wednesday evening for Israel, and will return June 1.

He will meet with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to discuss Olmert's plan, presented this week to President Bush, to pull out from more of the West Bank. He also will meet with top military and intelligence officials, members of Olmert's Cabinet and leaders of the opposition. Mehlman, who is Jewish, also will visit his grandmother, who lives in Israel.