

## IN THE NEWS

**Olmert lauds France on curbing anti-Semitism**

Ehud Olmert praised France for its efforts to combat anti-Semitism.

The Israeli prime minister, in Paris to promote his West Bank withdrawal plan, also reassured French Jews who have been jarred by hate crimes. Before meeting Wednesday with French President Jacques Chirac, Olmert praised the French leader as "one of the greatest fighters against anti-Semitism in the world."

The remarks were a reference to steps taken by French officials against predominantly Muslim immigrant groups that have targeted Jews.

**Israel raids West Bank city**

Israeli soldiers killed a Palestinian gunman during a raid of the West Bank city of Jenin.

Mohammed al-Wash, 26, a member of the Tanzim, the terrorist arm of Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah movement, was killed Wednesday and 13 other wanted Palestinians injured.

**Annan questions Israel on mine story**

Kofi Annan questioned reports that a Palestinian mine was behind the killing of at least seven picnickers last week on a Gaza Strip beach. "To find a mine on the beach is rather odd," the U.N. secretary-general said Tuesday.

An Israeli military investigation into last Friday's incident suggested that a Palestinian mine was responsible, and rejected claims that an Israeli shell fired in exchanges with terrorists that day had caused the deaths.

An on-site investigation by Human Rights Watch concluded that an Israeli shell fired that day caused the deaths. Palestinian officials have called for a U.N. investigation. Israeli officials say they would cooperate with such an investigation.



# WORLD REPORT

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## French Jewish officials unhappy with court decision for Jewish family

By BRETT KLINE

**P**ARIS (JTA) — A court decision to force the French national railroad to compensate descendants of French Jews rounded up during World War II has drawn criticism from the French Jewish community.

A court in Toulouse ordered the SNCF and the state last week to pay about \$77,000 to Alain Lipietz, a European Parliament deputy from the Green Party.

But French Jewish officials criticized the decision, apparently because of their belief that since the railroad has owned up to its wartime activities, the decision could open up a slew of lawsuits and could result in a backlash against the French Jewish community.

Nazi-hunter Serge Klarsfeld said the SNCF simply had been requisitioned by the Germans during the war and had had no room to maneuver.

"Many people had their houses and businesses and cars requisitioned," said Klarsfeld, president of the Association of the Sons and Daughters of Jewish Deportees from France. "Should they be charged today? The answer is no. Only the really top decision makers should ever have been sought out."

Lipietz' father and uncle were denounced by neighbors in the town of Pau and transported by train on May 8, 1944, to Drancy, the infamous internment camp north of Paris.

They stayed there until Aug. 17, 1944, when the camp was liberated, and thus were never deported to Auschwitz, the fate

of thousands of other internees in Drancy.

The judge wrote that the state had done nothing to help liberate the internees, and that the SNCF had never protested against the deportations to Auschwitz. The decision marks the first time a state-run company in France has been convicted of a Holocaust-related crime.

The judge threw out other charges brought by the plaintiffs accusing the SNCF of complicity in crimes against humanity.

Roger Cukierman, president of CRIF, the umbrella organization for secular French Jews, said that attacking the SNCF was "very severe," adding, "the SNCF today has nothing to do with the SNCF during World War II. The group has shown a great deal of transparency about its wartime activities and has participated in educational programs for young people."

Exhibits on the Holocaust, coordinated with CRIF, have been set up at various times in major train stations across the country.

Cukierman added that Lipietz "has never done much to fight anti-Semitism in France."

The loudest criticism of the court's decision came from lawyer Arno Klarsfeld, Serge Klarsfeld's son, who is representing the SNCF in a similar case in New York.

"If the railway workers are guilty, then so are the bakers who sold Germans bread in Paris and elsewhere in France," Arno Klarsfeld said. "That means that everyone is guilty, and if everyone is guilty, then no one is guilty. Limits have to be set on this."

Klarsfeld explained that the judge may have thought railway workers stripped the

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AROUND  
THE JEWISH  
WORLD

## ■ A decision to compensate descendants of French Jews has upset the community

*Continued from page 1*

Jews of their valuables and pushed them into the cattle cars, when in fact it was policemen and other security forces who did that.

"This decision was not based on equity," he said, "and when the public finds out that lies were told, they might say, 'Well, if there were lies told about this, maybe some of the other details on the Holocaust are lies also.'"

"This could damage the credibility of the Jewish community in France," he added.

Meir Waintrater, editor in chief and publisher of *L'Arche*, a French Jewish monthly magazine, said it makes sense that the Jewish community opposes the ruling.

Alain Lipietz "does not identify with the Jewish community and the community does not identify with him," Waintrater said. "Community members see very quickly that the French public could develop a type of caricature image of Jews here based on this ruling, an image that is totally false since nobody supports the ruling. That is the danger involved here."

Waintrater said the list of institutions that collaborated with Nazi Germany is very long, including, for example, the Paris bus and train network, which were forced to provide buses for the wartime roundups of Jews.

"Newspapers published restrictions against Jews, lawyers and doctors associations forced Jews to stop working,

and even the legal aid groups for artists kept Jewish musicians from collecting copyright fees during the war years," Waintrater said. "The list of groups in the public and private sectors that voluntarily collaborated or were forced to do so is endless."

Arno Klarsfeld is representing the

SNCF in a class-action suit filed by 20 or 30 people in a New York district court, concerning Holocaust and deportation-linked activity in wartime France.

He said that a first case already had been dismissed, and that a decision on the pending case should be reached in October. ■

## Tunisian victims to be compensated

By TOBY AXELROD

BERLIN (JTA) — Former inmates of Nazi prison camps in Tunisia may now apply for compensation from Germany.

Tuesday's announcement followed negotiations between the Claims Conference and Germany's Finance Ministry. Germany committed some \$280 million to this and several related causes.

"It is the first time that the suffering of women and children in Tunisia has been recognized," Gideon Taylor, the Claims Conference's executive vice president, told JTA in a phone interview after meeting with Karl Diller, Germany's deputy finance minister. "This is one reason why we pursued the issue of North African camps so intensively."

Those eligible may number only a few hundred, Taylor said, "but it's still significant."

He added that the talks were generally positive, but "there were some issues we didn't reach agreement on." He didn't elaborate.

Former internees in Gabes, Marcia-Plage and Tniet-Agarev in Tunisia will be eligible for payments of about \$320 per month under the Article 2 Fund if they meet other German-mandated eligibility requirements. Information on eligibility criteria is available at [www.claimscon.org](http://www.claimscon.org).

Additional compensation and social service funds will cover certain Western Europeans who have not received compensation, as well as increased funding for survivors' home care, Taylor said.

The Claims Conference delegation was chaired by President Israel Singer and included Taylor and Noach Flug, chairman of

the Center of Organizations of Holocaust Survivors in Israel.

The conference meets annually with the German Finance Ministry. Diller represented the past government under Gerhard Schroeder as well as the current government of Angela Merkel.

Beginning in July 1942, the French Vichy government and its dependent protectorate authorities in Tunisia interned Jews in camps there, prompted by the Nazis. Following German occupation of Tunisia in

November 1942, the Nazis ran the camps.

Jews at the camps were fenced in and tightly guarded. Conditions and medical care were poor and food was scarce.

The sum includes \$26 million for social services for Jewish victims of the Nazis, which the German

government has agreed to provide through the end of 2007. This is up from about \$7 million in 2004 and \$11 million in 2005.

In addition, Article 2 payments also will be applied to 4,000 new claimants from certain Western European countries whose eligibility was established after negotiations in 2003. This will result in an 8 percent increase in the number of people receiving Article 2 payments, which currently stands at 49,000.

However, "there are still groups of survivors from Western Europe on whose behalf we will continue to negotiate," Taylor said.

Article 2 has paid more than \$1.8 billion to more than 68,000 Holocaust survivors since it began in 1992, following Claims Conference negotiations with the newly unified Germany. The Claims Conference allocates the funds to 43 agencies assisting needy Jewish survivors in 17 countries. ■



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# Back to the future for Zionist Congress

By DINA KRAFT

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Theodor Herzl launched his vision of a Jewish state at the First Zionist Congress in 1897 in Basel, Switzerland. More than a century later, Israel exists — and so does the congress Herzl launched.

Under the banner "The Dream Still Matters," more than 2,000 representatives from across the globe will gather in Jerusalem from June 19-22 for the 35th Zionist Congress to keep the ideological torch alive.

"It's almost like a conscience to the country, the Zionism that will provide the fervor and commitment to allow Israel to grow and allow it to relate to a dream and not just day-to-day existence," said Marty Davis, director general of the department for Zionist activities of the World Zionist Organization, which holds the congress.

Dubbed "the Parliament of the Jewish people," the congress brings together Zionist activists from around the world to vote on topics ranging from civil marriage in Israel to the reduction of social and economic gaps between Israel's Jewish and Arab citizens.

The congress debates the policies of the World Zionist Organization, which helps determine half of the \$350 million budget of the Jewish Agency for Israel. The Jewish Agency is involved in immigration and absorption and runs religious, political and educational programs throughout the world.

The WZO has a \$13.5 million budget, drawn from money raised by Keren Hayesod — its fund-raising arm — and the Jewish Agency.

Zionist federations held elections in their home countries to select delegates to the congress. About 120,000 Jews outside Israel voted in the elections, which chose 750 people who can vote at the congress. Others will act as delegates and observers.

Delegates will be choosing people for key positions, among them the head of the Jewish National Fund and the treasurer of the Jewish Agency. Zeev Bielski, chairman of the WZO and Jewish Agency, is expected to be re-elected to his post.

## BACKGROUNDER

"The problem with elections abroad is that if 120,000 people voted, that means about 11 million did not vote — that is, the vast majority of world Jewry did not participate," said David Breakstone, head of the WZO's department for Zionist activities. Breakstone also is the official representative of Conservative Judaism's Zionist arm on the WZO executive.

In the past, organizations aligned with the traditional Zionist political parties such as Labor and Likud were the main forces at the Congress. In recent years, Diaspora Jews have aligned themselves instead with the various religious streams.

The main theme of this year's conference is revitalizing the Zionist movement.

If in the past the focus was "strengthening and fortifying a Jewish state, then the emphasis now is on creating of Israel an exemplary society. The feeling is not that we are creating a new definition of Zionism, but going back to the original," Breakstone said.

A master showman, Herzl conceived the initial Zionist congress as a grand, almost regal affair. He even sent his friend Max Nordau back to his hotel to put on a tie when Nordau arrived without one.

Delegates at the initial congress voted for the Basel Program, which called for the establishment of a "home for the Jewish people in Palestine, secured by public law." They also established the institutions that made up the organization, including the Zionist Executive and the Zionist General Council, which meet between the quadrennial congresses.

The initial congress established institutions to carry out its policies that still exist today, including Keren Hayesod and the Jewish National Fund, which focuses on land issues.

When Britain took control of Palestine in 1917 an organization was needed to represent the Jewish people. The Zionist Organization, as Herzl had dubbed it,

first assumed that responsibility, but in 1929 a larger body, the Jewish Agency, was established to handle the task.

The Jewish Agency was built as a partnership between the Zionist Organization and other Jewish groups. In the years before the founding of the state, the agency was a quasi-government that helped build the country's infrastructure, create settlements and facilitate immigration.

When the State of Israel was founded, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion considered doing away with the apparatus of the Zionist movement.

"At first Ben-Gurion said the Zionist movement was scaffolding that could now be taken apart. Whoever was a Zionist should just move to Israel, he said," recounted Amos Yovel, chief editor of the WZO's publishing house, which publish-

**A** master showman, Herzl conceived the initial Zionist congress as a grand, almost regal affair.

es books on Zionism.

But Ben-Gurion soon realized he would need Diaspora Jewry's support to make Israel a viable state. Furthermore, with the state consumed with issues of security and economy, it was thought that organizations like the WZO and Jewish Agency could focus on immigration, settlement and Jewish education in the Diaspora.

The role of the WZO shifted with the country's development. In the 1950s and 1960s the focus was on agricultural settlement; in the late 1970s it was on development towns.

By this time, a division of responsibility had been made between the WZO and the Jewish Agency, with the WZO focusing more on Diaspora issues and the Jewish Agency on immigrant absorption and educational programming for Israeli youth.

By the mid-1990s, Davis said, a growing rift was noted between Diaspora and Israeli Jews. Partnership programs were launched to bring a new generation of Jews to Israel, where they could see programs on the ground that they help support.

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## NORTH AMERICA

### Treasury blocks assets for Iran dealing

The U.S. Treasury blocked the assets of four Chinese companies and a U.S. company for supporting Iranian missile proliferation.

"The companies targeted today have supplied Iran's military and Iranian proliferators with missile-related and dual-use components," Stuart Levey, undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence, said in a statement.

The Chinese companies include Beijing Alite Technologies Company, LIMMT Economic and Trade Company, China Great Wall Industry Corporation and China National Precision Machinery Import/Export Corporation.

The U.S. company is G.W. Aerospace, located in Torrance, Calif., the U.S. office of China Great Wall Industry.

### Caterpillar resolution fails

Opponents of sales of Caterpillar bulldozers to the Israeli military failed in a resolution they hoped would move the company toward "greater accountability."

Howard Lenow of Jewish Voice for Peace said a resolution Wednesday to separate the positions of CEO and chairman of the board — which opponents of sales to Israel hoped would make company management more amenable to their position — received 27 percent support at a Caterpillar shareholder meeting Wednesday in Chicago.

Caterpillar last year rejected a resolution to stop selling bulldozers to the Israeli military. The machines have been used to demolish Palestinian structures that the Israeli army says house terrorists or conceal the entrances to weapon-smuggling tunnels, and to clear land for Israel's West Bank security fence. They also are believed to have been used in the destruction of Israel's Gaza Strip settlements last summer.

### Committee OKs anti-terrorism cooperation

A U.S. House of Representatives committee approved legislation strengthening anti-terrorism cooperation between the United States, Israel and other nations.

The Homeland Security Committee passed the Promoting Anti-Terrorism Capabilities Through International Cooperation Act on Wednesday in a voice vote, reflecting its bipartisan support. Designated allies include Israel, Britain, Canada, Australia and Singapore.

Companion legislation in the Senate was scheduled to be marked up Wednesday by the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee, but was delayed due to an extended markup session on an unrelated bill. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee lobbied for the bill.

### Group for FSU Jews honors leaders

A group that works with Jews in the former Soviet Union honored two of its leaders at a Capitol Hill reception.

Shoshana Cardin, the group's one-time national chairwoman, received NCSJ's Torch of Liberty Award, which was presented Tuesday evening by Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.).

The group — which advocates on behalf of Jews in Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic states and Eurasia — also honored its executive director, Mark Levin, for his 25 years of service.

Cardin, whom Mikulski called a "national treasure," has chaired many top national organizations, including the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, United Israel Appeal and the Council of Jewish Federations.

She also is past president of JTA's board of directors.

## WORLD

### Belarus Jewish school under political pressure

A Jewish kindergarten in Belarus was forced to remove Jewish symbols from classrooms after a prosecutor accused the teacher of violating the country's religious law.

The prosecutor says Lyudmila Izakson-Bolotovskaya violated the law by holding Jewish religious celebrations inside the school, which is located in a government building in the city of Mogilev.

The prosecutor's action came after recent Purim celebrations in the kindergarten, which featured a children's Jewish musical group, were shown on local television news. Prosecutors argued that Izakson-Bolotovskaya, who also leads the music group, violated the children's rights, and that television coverage of the event illegally propagated Judaism.

The teacher was warned that she might be prosecuted if the actions are repeated. According to local Jewish leaders, menorahs and Stars of David were removed from the kindergarten.

### Sentences in France for terror plot

A French court sentenced 25 Islamists for plotting terrorist attacks in Paris that may have included Israeli targets.

The leaders of the group received sentences Wednesday of eight to 10 years, while others received lighter sentences.

### U.S. couple lauded for wartime efforts

An American couple were honored for their efforts to rescue Jews during World War II. Tuesday's ceremony at Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial honored Martha and the Rev. Waitstill Sharp.

They're the only U.S. wartime citizens beside journalist Varian Fry to receive the honor. The couple, who were living in Wellesley Hills, Mass., left their own children behind as Czechoslovakia was invaded by the Nazis in 1939.

The Sharps helped save Jews, including 29 children, and non-Jewish anti-fascists by smuggling them out of the country.

## MIDDLE EAST

### Adviser: Hamas prepared to offer long truce

Hamas might offer a 50- to 60-year truce if Israel withdraws to its pre-1967 borders, a top Palestinian adviser said.

But Hamas still would not recognize Israel, Ahmed Yusef, a political adviser to Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, told Ha'aretz.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has made clear that Israel has no intentions to withdraw to the pre-1967 borders, which he says are indefensible.

Yusef also said suicide bombings do not serve the Hamas government's interests, despite a call by the terrorist group's military wing to end a cease-fire because of increasing violence in Gaza.

### Hamas minister stopped with \$20 million

The Palestinian Authority's foreign minister was stopped at the Gaza border with \$20 million in cash in his luggage. Mahmoud Zahar had been to Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, China, Pakistan, Iran and Egypt on a fund-raising tour in recent weeks.

He was intercepted Wednesday on his return by guards loyal to P.A. President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah group.

Abbas will decide whether Zahar will be permitted to keep the funds.

Tens of thousands of public workers have not been paid since international aid was cut off and bank accounts frozen when Hamas took power in March.