

IN THE NEWS
Israel seeks conditions on Palestinian aid efforts

Israel wants Palestinians who benefit from a proposed foreign aid mechanism to sign a document renouncing terrorism.

Israeli sources said the request was made this week in talks with the European Union, whose idea for a funding mechanism circumventing the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority was endorsed over the weekend by its partners in the diplomatic "Quartet" managing the Mideast peace process — the United States, United Nations and Russia.

European diplomats said no decision has been made on whether to attach conditions to donations destined for the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Israeli airstrike kills three children

An Israeli airstrike in the Gaza Strip killed three Palestinian children. Israeli aircraft fired a missile at a car carrying an Al-Aksa Brigades squad in Gaza City on Tuesday.

The suspected terrorists managed to leap free of the vehicle, but a dozen bystanders were wounded. The dead were identified as a boy and girl, aged 5 and 7, and a 16-year-old.

Conviction overturned for synagogue attacker

Russia's Supreme Court overturned the conviction of a man who attacked synagogue worshippers.

A spokesman for the court said the reasoning behind Tuesday's ruling regarding Alexander Koptsev would be publicized later. Earlier this year, Koptsev was sentenced to 13 years in jail for stabbing nine people at a Moscow synagogue in January. A new trial is expected to take place.

One of Russia's chief rabbis said he hopes the retrial would allow the court to include hate crimes charges.

WORLD REPORT

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Outcome could be up in the air as Magen David Adom vote nears

By RACHEL SILVERMAN

NEW YORK (JTA) — The excitement over a December agreement to admit Israel's Magen David Adom to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent movement after a 60-year exclusion may have been premature.

This week 192 states, as well as 183 national emergency relief societies, are convening in Geneva to decide whether to allow Israel full membership, but the route appears less smooth than advocates believed just a few months ago.

The December agreement to allow a neutral red crystal symbol appeared to have overcome Arab and Muslim states' longstanding refusal to accept a red Star of David, the symbol of Israel's emergency services agency.

That vote suggested to many that Israel's entry into the International Red Cross and Red Crescent movement was not far off. But now Israeli and American supporters of Magen David Adom worry their optimism may have been a bit hasty.

Officials from Switzerland — which, as the depository state of the Geneva Conventions, is charged with ensuring MDA's compliance with certain protocols — reported problems during a visit to Israel last week.

The protocols are part of a memorandum of understanding signed by MDA and the Palestinian Red Crescent Society last November that requires Israel to, among other things, allow Palestinian ambulances quick and easy passage through military checkpoints.

Sources with Jewish organizations say Swiss officials did not think Israel was complying satisfactorily. One source close to the

issue said the Palestinians' new, Hamas-led government has been using ambulance drivers other than those approved by Israeli security services, causing delays at the checkpoints.

In accord with another protocol, Israel is allowing two Palestinian ambulances to operate in eastern Jerusalem but has expressed reservations about doing so, claiming that the vehicles have been used to transport weapons and terrorists.

One source, speaking on condition of anonymity, suggested that Israel's reticence may have other roots as well: The Israeli govern-

ment "is feeling uncomfortable" with the fact that formally recognizing the Palestinian group "could imply recognition of a Palestinian state," the source said.

Further challenges could come from Arab and Islamic nations or their emergency service societies.

Shai Franklin, who is attending the conference as director of international organizations at the World Jewish Congress, said Syria's representative has made his alliances clear.

The Syrian envoy brought up the question of Arab interests at a Monday morning session, a day before the conference got underway, Franklin said.

"He threw down a marker," Franklin said. "He wanted to remind people" Arab and Islamic states "are fully prepared to make trouble."

In the final days before a vote on Israeli membership — expected Wednesday or Thursday — those in Geneva and on Capitol Hill were scrambling to push Israel's case.

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**FOCUS
ON
ISSUES**

■ Excitement over MDA's admission to the Red Cross may have been premature

Continued from page 1

Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.), who long has advocated for Israel's inclusion in the international movement, was to hold a news conference in support of MDA on Tuesday in Washington. That follows a letter that Clinton and Sen. Elizabeth Dole (R-N.C.) sent in April to the U.S. secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, asking her to urge Congress to approve the Red Cross' adoption of the red crystal symbol.

Peter Eisenhauer, a spokesperson for the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, said the bureau continues to be "actively engaged" on the issue and has a delegation in Geneva.

Major Jewish organizations, such as the American Jewish Committee, also are lobbying on the issue.

Ambassador Aaron Jacob, the AJCommittee's associate director of international affairs, said the group has approached many countries for their vote, especially countries that supported Israel in the December vote.

"We're asking them to do the same in Geneva again," he said.

Jacob admitted that "there are still some pending issues regarding the memorandum of understanding," but he expressed confidence that "the outstanding issues would eventually be sorted out."

Franklin, speaking from Geneva, said the World Jewish Congress also is involved in last-minute campaigning. He said his organization is targeting "countries on the fence" and trying to educate

national relief societies which were not present during the December vote.

Franklin said he sensed the International Red Cross and Red Crescent movement is proceeding "like a plane rolling down a runway."

"The opening session this morning made it clear the federation is agreed on moving forward to admit" the Israeli

and the Palestinian agency, he said. "The movement now is fully committed."

Still, he acknowledged that Arab and Islamic states could present "potential snags."

"Will questions just sort of be on the record... or will they really obstruct, really impede the proceedings?" he asked. "And that we can't tell." ■

Belgian restitution snags on lack of proof

By JOEL CLARK

BRUSSELS (JTA) — Nine years after the Belgian government began to address Holocaust restitution, many survivors feel cheated.

There is a restitution fund of \$138 million, paid by the Belgian government, banks and insurance companies in 2002. The distribution of that money is running into snags, however, such as the pace of the government-appointed commission and its demands for documentation that many survivors cannot provide.

The Buysse Commission has spent four years going through more than 6,000 claims brought by Holocaust survivors and descendants of victims. The commission expects to complete its work by the end of 2007.

Nearly \$25 million has been paid out, but survivors who are unable to prove

what they owned during the war — either because records do not exist or because they were too young to know the full extent of their families' holdings — do not receive full compensation.

Before the Nazis invaded Belgium in 1940, 65,000 Jews lived there; by the end of the war, 28,000 had been deported and killed.

Joseph Novak was born in Brussels in 1935. During the war, he was hidden in a nearby convent for more than two years. His mother was deported in 1942 and his father had died before the war.

Having rebuilt his life in Belgium, Novak, 71, now seeks compensation for his parents' apartment and possessions. Since

he was just five years old when he went into hiding, however, Novak lacks the evidence and the memory to satisfy the Buysse Commission.

The result is that he received \$3,100 in restitution. The amount is based on his mother's business and a deposit account his parents had created in his name, the only two elements of his family's pre-war belongings for which records survive.

"I have behaved very well toward Belgium all my life, but have been denied everything I have ever asked for," Novak told JTA.

Novak's case and others like it have received sympathy from the Fondation du Judaïsme de Belgique.

"At the foundation, our first and most important duty is to the survivors," said Philippe Markiewicz, a foundation board member.

Markiewicz last year helped to set up

Solidarity 3000, a framework by which survivors who lived in Belgium during the Nazi occupation can receive a minimal amount, regardless of documented evidence.

Solidarity 3000 is funded by interest earned from the restitution fund and enables any survivor who has received compensation of less than 3,000 euros, or some \$3,800, to claim the difference from the foundation. But that's small comfort to a survivor like Novak.

"In the end, I just gave the 2,506 euros (\$3,100) to my son as the inheritance from his grandmother," he said. "It's not that I'm short of money to support my family, but it's what that small amount of money symbolizes — all that my parents lost." ■

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Chabad stakes claim in China

By LARRY LUXNER

GUANGZHOU, China (JTA) — It's Friday evening in Guangzhou, a chaotic metropolis of 10 million people. As the sun starts to set over traffic-clogged Huan Shi Road, a handful of young men gather for Shabbat services at a makeshift synagogue located atop a Kodak photo-processing lab.

By the time darkness falls, no less than 40 men are praying fervently. When services are over, they join their wives and children in the synagogue's dining hall for a kosher chicken dinner complete with freshly baked challah, local vegetables and Manischewitz wine.

Welcome to Chabad of Guangzhou, one of the newest outposts of Yiddishkeit in China.

"Before I came here, Starbucks was the 'in' place for Jews," Rabbi Eliyahu Rozenberg said. "Now if you want to see a Jewish face, you come to Chabad."

The Israeli-born Rozenberg, 25, was sent to Guangzhou less than a year ago with his wife, Pnina, and baby daughter, Michal, to run the Chabad synagogue.

"Here in Guangzhou, we have about 200 local Jews that I know of," he told JTA.

China's fourth-largest city is the capital of the wealthy Guangdong province, which accounts for 12 percent of the country's economic output.

Like elsewhere in this vast nation of 1.3 billion people, the booming economy has attracted a rush of foreign investors to Guangzhou, many of them Jews seeking spiritual as well as material fulfillment — and Chabad is moving in to meet their needs.

"One or two years ago, religious Jews spent Shabbat alone in their hotels. Now even the non-Orthodox come, because they want to see other Jews," Rozenberg said. "We do a minyan," or a prayer quorum of at least 10 men, "every morning at 8 a.m."

Among them is Patrick Dauvillaire, 35, a French businessman of Moroccan origin. He lives in an upscale Guangzhou apartment complex with his wife Gu Qin, 34, and their daughters Sarah, 5, and Ilana, 1.

Thanks to donations from local Jews and visitors, Rozenberg says, Chabad soon will leave its second-floor temporary headquarters near the Garden Hotel and move into a property with a Sunday school and mikvah, or ritual bath.

"I want to make a strong community

here," he said, "to open a school and a kindergarten. We recently brought a chef in from Israel and, God willing, we'll soon open a full-service kosher restaurant."

That's nothing short of a miracle for Chaim Daniel Buxbaum, a New York attorney who has lived in Asia since 1963.

"I'm here longer than any Jew in Guangzhou," said Buxbaum, 72. "Even though there was no organized religious life in Guangzhou, the Canton Fair attracts many Jewish businessmen, and so we organized minyanim so they could pray together."

Chabad of Guangzhou is only three years old, yet Chabad-Lubavitch is hardly new to China.

The first Lubavitch rabbi in China was Meir Ashkenazi, spiritual leader of Shanghai's Congregation

Ohel Moshe from 1926 to 1949. Before and during World War II, Ashkenazi spearheaded relief efforts for thousands of European Jews who had taken refuge in Shanghai.

Virtually all of Shanghai's Jews left the country after the Communist takeover in 1949, and Jewish life on the mainland disappeared until the 1980s, when China's growing economy began attracting outsiders.

Today, anywhere from 5,000 to 10,000 Jews live in China, not including another 5,000 in Hong Kong, a former British colony that reverted to Chinese control in 1997. Virtually all of them are foreigners: American, Israeli, British and French citizens working as factory managers, financial advisers, English teachers and tour guides.

Thanks to a gross domestic product forecast to grow by 10 percent in 2006 — and 8 percent annually over the next five years — more Jews are flocking to China every day.

"This is one of the most positive developments in the Jewish world," said Rabbi Mordechai Avtzon, the Hong Kong-based director of Chabad's Asian operations. "China is a big story, and its growing economy will demand more and more Jewish people, whether they're selling simple trinkets or setting up highly sophisticated operations."

Seven Chabad houses currently serve the community: two in Hong Kong and one each in Beijing, Shanghai, Pudong, Shenzhen and Guangzhou.

The new, 10,000-square-foot Rohr Family Chabad Community Center of Beijing is due to open in late August. This month, Chabad officially dedicated its new Shanghai Jewish Center in the presence of Avtzon and 200 guests.

The Shanghai Jewish Center, in operation since 2003, is actually a large villa located within a gated community off busy

Hong Qiao Road. It boasts a synagogue, mikvah, preschool and six classrooms.

The center's new name, Ohel Yisroel, was chosen by two major benefactors: Georges Bohbot and Max Azria. A third philanthropist, George Rohr,

was instrumental in funding the Shanghai center, as well as the new synagogue in Beijing.

Center director Rabbi Shalom Greenberg notes that at least 50,000 Jews visit Shanghai every year.

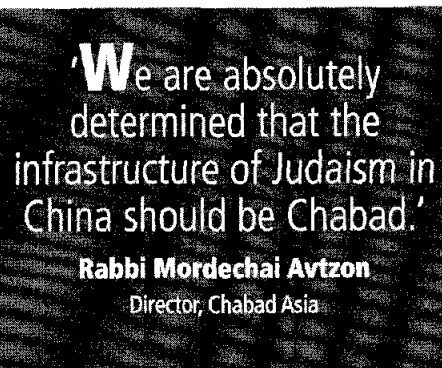
Thanks to funding from Rohr and other sources, Chabad plans to inaugurate at least three more centers in China within the next 18 months.

Avtzon said his yearly operational budget is \$2 million, not including capital projects. Chabad has just purchased a new property in Guangzhou for \$1.2 million, one in Beijing for \$1.3 million and one in Shanghai for \$1.8 million.

"We are absolutely determined that the infrastructure of Judaism in China should be Chabad. That's why we set up a JCC in each place, because Chabad cares for Jews in a way few other organizations do," he said. "We have the right balance of not compromising Jewish values and tolerating those who do. But tolerance does not mean we have to endorse intermarriage."

That's led to problems for Dauvillaire, who attends Chabad services in Guangzhou regularly.

"Chabad will not allow our daughters to attend their Talmud Torah because their mother is not Jewish," he complained. ■



NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Southern Israeli town on strike

A southern Israeli town briefly went on strike to protest the government's failure to stop Palestinian rocket salvos from the Gaza Strip. Sderot residents blocked road access to their town and the municipality suspended services Tuesday.

There also were threats to prevent Defense Minister Amir Peretz, a Sderot resident, from leaving town. But the action was called off within hours because of intense heat and because it already had generated media interest.

Ethiopian immigration to Israel to remain flat?

An Israeli ministerial committee recommended that the government postpone a decision to double the number of Falash Mura allowed into Israel from Ethiopia.

The Falash Mura are descendants of Ethiopian Jews who converted to Christianity and who are now returning to Judaism. The government decided several years ago to increase the number allowed into Israel each month, from 300 to 600.

However, the decision was never implemented, and the committee said the move should be postponed further because of financial considerations. The recommendation comes as Israel's High Court of Justice is set to hear a petition next week on the government's failure to expedite the aliyah.

Liberal Jews protest Katsav

A small protest was held in Jerusalem to protest Israeli President Moshe Katsav's refusal to address a Reform Jewish leader as "rabbi." The protest was held Monday outside Katsav's official residence. Because of the refusal, Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Union for Reform Judaism, will not meet with Katsav while the former is in Israel this week for the 35th Zionist Congress.

Katsav has said he will recognize the Reform movement when the Knesset does so.

Reform movement center in Israel inaugurated

The Reform movement in Israel inaugurated a \$12 million cultural center in Jaffa on Sunday. The facility, to be opened officially in October, will be called Mishkenot Daniel. The decision to put it in Jaffa was part of the movement's efforts to reach out to middle- and working-class families in Jaffa and Tel Aviv.

The inauguration coincided with the first annual convention of the Association of Reform Zionists in Israel to be held in the Jewish state. The center is to include a youth hostel, auditorium, classrooms and a synagogue. Some prominent American Jews have donated to its building, and Israeli Reform movement officials hope local Reform congregants will help raise additional funds for the complex.

Israeli Arabs upset over pool rules

A kibbutz in Israel is restricting membership in its swimming pool to residents of local Jewish settlements. An Israeli Arab was rejected from joining the Kibbutz Kabri Beach Club because his village was not on a list of approved settlements, Ha'aretz reported. Many Arab families have been swimming at the club for years. Kibbutz officials said the decision was economically based, and that Arabs and Druse who work at the kibbutz are welcome to join.

NORTH AMERICA

Atlanta Jewry soars

Atlanta's Jewish population grew by 60 percent during the past decade, according to a recent study. Atlanta's Jewish population

is nearly 120,000, making it the 11th-largest Jewish community in America. The study, designed by Ukeles Associates in coordination with the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta, measured demographics and Jewish identity.

Details were released Tuesday. Among the highlights: Atlanta has twice as many children as seniors and intermarriage rates are among the highest of any U.S. community. Nearly 20 percent of Atlanta's Jews are Georgia-born; of those born elsewhere, 30 percent hail from New York.

Illinois officials visit Israel

Officials from Illinois are touring Israel to discuss defense, education and trade issues.

This week's visit comes as Illinois tries to position itself as a center for counterterrorist business following Boeing's relocation to the state, Globes reported.

WORLD

London channel hosts anti-Israel panel

A London television station reportedly broadcast an anti-Israel panel. The Jerusalem Post reported that Islam Channel, the largest Islamic television group in Europe, aired "Why anti-Zionism is not anti-Semitism" on Thursday, against a backdrop reading, "Zionism: The cancer at the heart of international affairs."

Moderator Alan Hart, a former BBC correspondent, said that "the anti-Semitism card is something the Zionists have exploited to suppress debate," and dismissed reporting about Israel's existential concerns as "propaganda," the Post reported. The panel included several anti-Zionist Jews.

Dispute makes JNF leader unclear

There is no front-runner to head the Jewish National Fund following a dispute among Labor Party candidates. An internal party vote gave Efi Stenzler, mayor of the Israeli city of Givatayim, a one-vote victory over Arik Hadad, chair of the World Zionist Labor Movement. Hadad is contesting the vote.

The party's delegates to the 35th World Zionist Congress will select a candidate who, in turn, will be elected Thursday by the entire congress. The position of treasurer, another Labor-designated slot, also is unclear following a dispute between the two front-runners, Hagai Merom, a former Knesset member, and Moshe Cohen, treasurer of the Labor Party.

Holocaust memorial in Ukraine vandalized

A Holocaust monument was vandalized in Ukraine for the second time in less than three months.

The memorial in Sevastopol was smeared last week with pink paint and swastikas. An act of vandalism on the same site took place in late March.

At that time, police arrested a 21-year-old man who is to stand trial on charges of hooliganism.

Acts of vandalism against Jewish sites and institutions in southern Ukraine have been occurring almost monthly during the past two years, said local Jews.

Ukrainian Jews get cemetery land

The Jewish community of Kremenchug, Ukraine received a plot of land in the city's municipal cemetery.

According to Rabbi Shlomo Salamon, chief rabbi of Kremenchug, the community welcomed the city authorities' decision because there was no space left in the old Jewish cemetery.