

**IN THE NEWS**
**Olmert rules out swap for hostage**

Ehud Olmert ruled out the release of jailed Palestinian terrorists in return for the freeing of an Israeli soldier abducted to the Gaza Strip.

"The question of a prisoner release is not even on the Israeli government's agenda," the prime minister said Monday in a speech to the Jewish Agency for Israel in Jerusalem.

Olmert spoke after a coalition of Palestinian terrorist groups that abducted Cpl. Gilad Shalit in a cross-border raid Sunday said they would not disclose his condition unless Israel frees all Palestinian security prisoners who are female or younger than 18.

**Olmert threatens Gaza Strip assault**

Ehud Olmert said Israel is on standby to attack the Gaza Strip if an Israeli soldier held by Palestinian gunmen there is not released.

"Yesterday I gave the military commanders instructions to deploy forces so that they are ready for a comprehensive and protracted operation in order to strike the terrorist organizations and their chiefs," the Israeli prime minister said in a speech Monday, 24 hours ahead of a deadline for the return of Cpl. Gilad Shalit.

**Trump plans Tel Aviv tower**

Donald Trump announced plans to build a Tel Aviv tower that would be Israel's tallest.

The American real-estate tycoon said Sunday that the 70-story Trump Tower Israel, slated to go up across from the Diamond Exchange in Ramat Gan, would be mainly residential.

No timetable or budget was immediately cited for the new project, but media reports said Trump had paid \$44 million for a building currently on the site where the tower will be erected.

# WORLD REPORT

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

## Iraqi ambassador to Washington speaks out on terror, but not Israel

By LARRY LUXNER

**W**ASHINGTON (JTA) — For those looking to Samir Shakir Mahmoud Sumaida'ie for a sign that Iraq's new government will warm up to Israel, the message might well be: Don't hold your breath.

Baghdad's first ambassador to the United States in 15 years dismisses any such talk as preliminary. In an interview with JTA last week, Sumaida'ie said he has no contact with Israeli diplomats in Washington, and that such things are not an immediate priority for his government.

"The Palestinians have their struggles, and we have consistently supported their legitimate rights. However, right now we have our own struggle," the newly arrived diplomat said, not uttering the word "Israel" once.

"I believe that the settlement and stabilization of the Palestinian issue will have a beneficial impact on the whole region," he said. "So will the stabilization and prosperity of Iraq."

That can only happen, Sumaida'ie said, if U.S. troops remain in his country for the time being.

"We realize that we are not yet ready to take on these security challenges by ourselves, especially because we're under attack by Saddamists and international terrorists who are well-trained and well-motivated," Sumaida'ie said in an interview at the four-story Iraqi Embassy near Dupont Circle.

"We appreciate that the United States has made huge sacrifices, but we must keep in mind that if we defeat the terrorists in Iraq,

we will be protecting the world, including the U.S.," he continued. "If, on the other hand, we allow a failed state in Iraq, Al-Qaida and the Saddamists would fight over control and, most probably, Iran and Turkey would find it necessary to intervene. There would be a strong possibility of regional conflict and

Iraq would become a breeding ground for terrorists. And just as terrorists visited America on 9/11, they will be sure to visit again."

Sumaida'ie, 62, doesn't take his job lightly. As an activist opposed to Saddam's Ba'athist regime for many years, Sumaida'ie founded several political organizations and participated in conferences of the Iraqi opposition in Beirut, Vienna and New York.

After Saddam's removal in 2003, Sumaida'ie returned to Iraq and became a member of the Iraqi Governing Council. In April 2004 he was named interior minister, and in August 2004 was appointed Iraq's ambassador to the United Nations.

Sumaida'ie, who assumed his current post May 17, concedes that U.S. support for the war in Iraq has eroded substantially as casualties mount.

"We've had a whole number of obstacles and setbacks, but I would argue that most of the problems we had were not a result of the intervention," he said. "Rather, they were caused by not handling the situation in the right way immediately after the start of military operations. We cannot now afford to give up, throw in the towel and walk away, because the consequences would be terrible."

On the bright side, Sumaida'ie said he cannot stress enough the sweeping changes

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**BEHIND  
THE  
HEADLINES**

## ■ Iraq has seen sweeping, positive changes since the U.S. invasion, ambassador says

*Continued from page 1*

that have overtaken Iraq since U.S. forces overthrew Saddam Hussein.

"This is the biggest transformation for Iraq in modern history, and probably the biggest transformation for the region in history," he said. "We have started to build democratic institutions, and despite all the challenges, Iraqis are willing to go out and vote and exercise free choice."

Take the example of Iraqi women, he said.

"Under Saddam's rule, women were oppressed, raped and murdered. Not many people know that in Iraqi detention centers, people were employed as full-time rapists," he said. "Now women represent one-third of the National Assembly. Women are for us a huge source of social cohesion and potential for keeping democratic Iraq on track."

At the same time, he said, "we are engaged in a huge battle with formidable forces arranged against us, both internally and externally. It's very much a battle of survival for Iraq as we know it."

That battle has been made a little easier recently with the killing of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a fundamentalist from Jordan responsible for inciting bloodshed between Iraq's Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims and for planning a series of terrorist attacks in Iraq, Jordan and elsewhere.

"Al-Zarqawi symbolized a brand of extremism and brutality which is quite rare. He also symbolized hate against Shi'ites," Sumaida'ie said. "Now he has been removed, and the message is that no-

body is beyond reach. If anybody chooses the road of violence and brutality — and knowingly and intentionally goes out to murder Iraqi civilians — he'll be hunted down."

A year ago, the son of Sumaida'ie's first cousin was killed in political violence. More recently, Sumaida'ie lost two members of his extended family to terrorists and criminal elements in Baghdad, he said.

Even so, he says he's confident the new government can get the security situation under control.

"Nothing else will move unless we do," he insisted. "We've already started on a policy of reconciliation by releasing detainees and by opening dialogue with some segments of the so-called resistance. Hopefully

we can bring the less extreme elements of these groups into the political process so they can participate."

Another challenge is the economy. At the moment, Sumaida'ie said, Iraq is producing around 1.5 million barrels of petroleum a day. That number would be much higher if not for insurgent attacks on pipelines and sabotage of refineries and other infrastructure.

"It will take a while and a lot more blood will be spilled, but that's the surgery that's required to turn around Iraq and the Middle East," he said. "We have considerable internal threats, and we know there is a certain amount of interference from outside. We always stress to our neighbors that it is not in their interests to destabilize Iraq. If they do, they will pay the price." ■

**'Under Saddam's rule, women were oppressed, raped and murdered. Now women represent one-third of the National Assembly.'**

**Samir Shakir Mahmoud Sumaida'ie**  
Iraqi ambassador to the United States

## Birthright opens eyes of Indian Jews

By DINA KRAFT

JAFFA, Israel (JTA) — Zohar Reuben, 24, of Mumbai explores the narrow alleyways and stalls of Jaffa's outdoor flea market with fellow young Jews from India after a long journey that has taken them from the Galilee to Jerusalem.

It's on this birthright tour of Israel, thousands of miles from home, that Reuben has found, for the first time, close Jewish friends his own age from India.

In Mumbai, he explains, Jews live spread out across the vast city. Although he comes from a kosher home and goes to synagogue regularly, he does not have a group of young Jewish friends. Most of his friends are Hindu or Muslim.

"When I tell them I'm a Jew they say, 'Huh? What's a Jew?'" said Reuben, who works in marketing.

He said he has been excited to see life in the Jewish state. "It's good to be one of the crowd. I want to rediscover my Jewish roots," said Reuben.

For many Indian Jews on the trip, birthright offered a first glimpse of life in a place where Jews make up the majority.

This was the second time a group of Jews from India has come on birthright.

Birthright provides free 10-day trips for Jews between the ages of 18 to 26 who have never come to Israel on an organized tour. The group of 40 is mostly from the Bene Israel community centered in Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi and Ahmadabad.

The community, which is ethnically Indian, claims descent from Jews from the Galilee who fled persecution in the 2nd century BCE and landed in India after a shipwreck.

Today the community of Indian Jews numbers about 5,500. Aside from the Bene Yisrael, there are Cochin Jews from southern India and Baghdadi Jews who are descended from former Iraqi Jews, as well as Jews from Syria, Yemen and Iran.

Sharon Galsurkar, 30, a Jewish educator from Mumbai, said bringing the young adults on a trip like birthright gives a huge boost to the community, which struggles as a tiny minority to keep younger members involved.

"They relate more intensely here," he said. "As a Jewish educator, I feel this is what is making our community strong." ■

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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](http://www.jta.org).  
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# The trauma of kidnapping

By DINA KRAFT

TEL AVIV, Israel (JTA) — Cpl. Gilad Shalit, a baby-faced soldier with large, round glasses, smiles from the front pages of Israeli newspapers under banner headlines calling for his return home.

The 19-year-old was captured and taken hostage Sunday in Gaza after being lightly wounded during a Palestinian cross-border raid. Two other soldiers in his tank unit were killed in the battle.

Hamas and two smaller groups claimed responsibility for the attack and now reportedly are calling for the release of Palestinian women and youths from Israeli prisons in exchange for information on the soldier.

The specter of soldiers being kidnapped is one of the greatest fears in Israeli society, reminding the country of its own vulnerability. For years, terrorist groups have sought to abduct soldiers, believing they can be used as bargaining chips.

Shalit, described as a kind and shy teenager by his family, has joined the ranks of Israeli soldiers captured in battle in recent years. Other cases include:

- October 2000 — Benny Avraham, Adi Avitan and Omar Souad, three soldiers patrolling the Lebanese border by jeep, are ambushed, killed and dragged across the border by Hezbollah guerillas. Three years of negotiations mediated by Germany lead to an agreement to return their remains to Israel, along with kidnapped Israeli businessman Elhanan Tannenbaum in exchange for the release of hundreds of Arab prisoners.

- October 1994 — Cpl. Nachshon Wachsmann, 19, is captured by a Hamas cell in the West Bank which asks for the release of Palestinian prisoners. A botched commando raid leaves Wachsmann, a commanding officer, and several hostage-takers dead.

- October 1986 — Capt. Ron Arad, an Israeli air force navigator, parachutes out of his damaged warplane over Lebanon and is taken hostage. Israel says Arad is captured by Lebanese militiamen connected to Iran, but no concrete information is available on his whereabouts or his condition and years later he remains unaccounted for, amid speculation that he is dead.

Raphael Israeli, a Hebrew University history professor who specializes in Islamic history and its fundamentalist movements, said kidnappings strike deeply at the Israeli psyche.

A soldier killed in battle is not an unexpected event, he said, "but when one is captured and helpless it immediately brings up the image of the Holocaust, where Jews did not have the opportunity to fight or resist," he said.

Furthermore, the drama of a kidnapping creates a wide audience, especially, he said, in a small country where "we are

very few and therefore everyone counts. When something like this happens, everyone is worried."

The Shalit family has been sequestered in its village in the western Galilee since the news of their son's capture. Gilad's father made his first comments to the media on Monday to Israel's Army Radio, choking back tears as he pleaded for his son's life.

"It is important for me that he is treated well medically and that they treat him fairly, that they remember he is a human being," Noam Shalit said in the interview. "We believe that whoever holds him has a family and knows what we are feeling." ■

## BACKGROUNDER

## Green suffuses Zionist congress

By DINA KRAFT

JERUSALEM (JTA) — For the first time, the World Zionist Congress passed resolutions on recycling and clean rivers thanks to one of the newest players in the arena — the Green Zionist Alliance.

An umbrella group of Jewish environmental organizations in the United States, the alliance hopes to influence Israel's environmental policy through its affiliation with the World Zionist Organization.

"Four years ago no one had green on their agenda, and this year, Mercaz Olami ran a good part of its platform as a green platform," said Noam Dolgin, 29, chair of the alliance. He

was referring to the voting bloc of the Conservative movement's wing of the Zionist party, of which the green alliance is part.

This was the alliance's second time at the congress. Held every four years, the congress draws some 2,000 delegates and activists from around the world. This year's congress ended June 22.

Alliance members say the growing Jewish environmental movement in the United States can have a role in Israel, translating the experience of activism to Israel and focusing on sustainable devel-

opment in the Jewish state.

"For us North American Zionists, the classical definition of Zionism has changed," Dolgin said. The focus now is on building a better Israel, one that cares about protecting the land the Jews waited so long to return to.

Israel today is a country where urban sprawl and development quickly eat up open space, pollution levels double every decade, coral reefs face extinction and the Dead Sea is shrinking every year.

The alliance hopes to reduce Israel's use of oil, air pollution and asthma levels. It would like to see full environmental impact statements for all projects that the

WZO funds, the integration of ecological education into the school curriculum, restoration of rivers and increased collaboration on environmental projects with Israel's neighbors.

"More than the Jews have kept the Land of Israel, the Land of Israel has kept the Jews," alliance co-founder Rabbi Michael Cohen said, riffing on a famous maxim about how Shabbat helped sustain the Jewish nation.

The alliance passed three resolutions at the congress and secured a senior position for one of its members with the Jewish National Fund. ■

Environmental activists long have complained that the JNF is run by politicians who aren't necessarily environmentalists.

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## WORLD

### Planned JCC in Moscow gets boost

A new Jewish community center slated for Moscow received a boost. On Monday, Arkady Gaydamak signed an agreement with the Jewish community of Moscow, which has long sought partners to help build a multimillion-dollar community center across the street from the city's Choral Synagogue.

Gaydamak told JTA that construction of the 120,000 square-foot center, to be completed by the end of 2008, may top \$30 million.

This week's signing, attended by philanthropist Ronald Lauder, may jump-start the ambitious project, which for years remained a subject of negotiations among international Jewish groups, leading Russian Jewish philanthropists and the Moscow Jewish community.

### Anti-Semitism up in Manchester

Anti-Semitic incidents in Manchester, England, increased by 40 percent from 2004 to 2005, the city's police superintendent said. In an address to a synagogue in Manchester last week, Leor Giladi said the increase came even as there was a 30 percent drop over the same period in the Greater London area.

Giladi reported that two or three incidents were reported weekly — mostly anti-social behaviors such as throwing water balloons or eggs as people walked to synagogue — though some incidents involved physical attacks.

Giladi, also founder of the 30-member Manchester Jewish Police Association, said many incidents go unreported, and urged community members to report all incidents so more resources would be devoted to fighting hate crimes.

### Israeli elected to U.N. post

An Israeli expert was elected to a United Nations committee on women's rights. Ruth Halperin-Kaddari, director of Bar-Ilan University's Rackman Center for the Advancement of the Status of Women and author of "Women in Israel: A State of Their Own," was named to the 23-member committee.

### Holocaust memorial in Uruguay defaced

The Uruguayan Jewish community denounced desecrations to a Holocaust memorial in its capital. The Montevideo memorial was vandalized several times during the past week.

Ernesto Kreimerman, president of the Central Israelite Committee of Uruguay, told El Pais newspaper that these types of actions "tend to happen when there are anti-Semitic expressions on the world stage," mentioning comments by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The government swiftly repudiated the recent desecrations.

### Interfaith soccer tourney held in Berlin

An interfaith youth soccer tournament was held in Berlin. Sunday's event, which included Jewish, Muslim and Christian children, was staged as the World Cup is being held in Germany. "When I see Muslim kids running around in Berlin shouting, 'Go, Germany!' and waving the flag, I think it's great that they really feel a part of this society," said Berlin cantor Avitall Gerstetter, who organized the event with local Turkish, Christian and non-religious groups for the second year in a row.

"And that's the way we Jews feel, too — we are at home in Germany."

### Lithuanian cemetery vandalized

A Jewish cemetery in Lithuania was vandalized. Nineteen tombstones in the cemetery near the capital of Vilnius were toppled Saturday night, according to Simonas Alperavicius, leader of Lithuania's

Jewish community. Alperavicius speculated that the attack could be linked to the 65th anniversary of the June 23, 1941, uprising of Lithuanian nationalists against the Soviet Union.

## MIDDLE EAST

### Palestinians have WMDs?

A Palestinian terrorist group said it had developed unconventional warheads for its rockets. The Al-Aksa Brigade in Gaza said this week it could load its rockets with chemical and biological agents and would use them against Israel if there is a flare-up in fighting.

"We will not hesitate to use some of these materials to respond to the liquidation of our leaders and fighters," the group, which belongs to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah faction, said in a statement. "We will declare it an open-ended war, where nothing is forbidden." Israeli security sources cast doubt on the claim, noting the lack of professional weapons labs in Gaza.

### Israel hunts for Gaza tunnels

Israeli forces are scouring the Gaza Strip frontier for tunnels dug by Palestinian militants. The army ordered a full-scale hunt for tunnels after Palestinian gunmen used a passage to attack an Israeli military position outside southern Gaza on Sunday.

Security sources said the Palestinians were believed to have dug as many as 10 tunnels to Israel.

Palestinian tunneling expertise is believed to have been honed for years in Rafah, a town on Gaza's border with Egypt that has seen heavy smuggling of arms and drugs.

### Kidnapped soldier has French citizenship

The Israeli soldier abducted by Palestinian gunmen in the Gaza Strip has French citizenship. The Foreign Ministry in Paris said Monday it was helping Israel in efforts to recover Cpl. Gilad Shalit, whose father was born in France.

Israeli Tourism Minister Isaac Herzog said, "there is a very significant effort by many elements, including international elements," to return the 19-year-old soldier unharmed.

### Court orders Palestinian farmers protected

Israel's top court ordered the army to boost protection for Palestinian farmers harassed by settlers.

The High Court of Justice on Monday found in favor of a petition filed by civil rights groups against the recent military practice of preventing Palestinians in the West Bank from accessing their farmland for fear they could be attacked by settler vigilantes.

### Jewish Agency meets in Jerusalem

Delegates with the Jewish Agency for Israel's Assembly gathered in Jerusalem. The three-day assembly, which began Sunday, will focus on Jewish identity, immigration to Israel and anti-Semitism.

On Tuesday, Zeev Bielski is expected to be re-elected as the agency's chairman and Hagai Merom is expected to be elected as treasurer. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert was to address the assembly Monday night. After the assembly is over, the agency's board of governors will meet.

## NORTH AMERICA

### Arts group names new leader

The National Foundation for Jewish Culture named a new executive director. Elise Bernhardt, a curator, producer and adviser on arts programming and development, will take over the New York-based foundation from Richard Siegel, who resigned after 27 years.