

IN THE NEWS
Israel puts offensive on hold

Israel said it was putting its expanded Lebanon offensive on hold to give diplomacy a chance.

The government decided early Thursday to hold off on deepening the Israeli sweep against Hezbollah in order to give a chance to U.S.-led efforts to form a peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon.

"We can allow a little more time to see if there's a possibility for a diplomatic process," Tourism Minister Isaac Herzog, a member of the Security Cabinet, told Army Radio.

Rockets kill two Israelis

A woman and her son were killed by a Hezbollah rocket salvo on northern Israel.

The victims of Thursday's attack on Deir al-Assad, an Israeli Arab village in the Galilee, suffered a direct hit to their home. Early reports misidentified the toddler as a girl.

Dozens of rockets fired elsewhere on northern Israel caused structural damage but no serious casualties.

Russian Jewish group slams Muslim comments

Anti-Israel comments by some leaders of the Russian Muslim community are harming interfaith coexistence in Russia, the leading Russian Jewish group said.

The Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia leveled the criticism after Muhammad Karachai, deputy head of the Union of Muftis of Russia, earlier this week said Israel's war on Hezbollah has revealed "the aggressive nature of the Zionist state that organized a real holocaust in Lebanon."

A federation spokesman said his group was going to call on the Interfaith Council of Russia to call on the Muslim group to disown its leader's statement, Interfax reported.

WORLD REPORT

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BRIAN HENDLER

An Israeli settler cries out as he takes part in a farewell ceremony at the synagogue in the Katif settlement, in the southern Gaza Strip, Sunday, Aug. 21, 2005, as they wait for Israeli soldiers to remove them.

A year after Gaza withdrawal, ex-settlers still feel pain and anger

By DINA KRAFT

YAD BINYAMIN, Israel (JTA) — Eti Tsur shows off her spacious home with pride — its high, sloping, red-shingled roof, its verdant lawn.

But it exists only as a memory captured in a photograph, displayed in a photography exhibit of her former Gaza Strip settlement.

"This is like memorial candles for our homes, which are no longer," said Tsur, who was among the founders of Ganei Tal when it was established in 1977.

Ganei Tal's memorial exhibition was held at a hall in the small southern Israeli settlement of Yad Binyamin, where most of the community has resettled.

The exhibit displays the remaining physical memories of the lush settlement that once housed sprawling geranium greenhouses, graceful homes and quiet streets, and which in recent years had become the target of

Kassam rocket attacks from neighboring Palestinians.

Among the items on display were keys to the settlement's former offices, sports trophies won by its basketball team, fliers advertising local events and a wooden sign that pointed to the settlement's synagogue.

A year has passed since Israel's historic withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, which saw some 8,000 Jewish settlers removed from their homes, some of them with force by Israeli soldiers and police. It was hailed as a watershed moment, the first time Israel had withdrawn unilaterally from territory seized during the 1967 Six-Day War.

The religious right tried but failed to mobilize Israeli public opinion against the withdrawal. Embittered, they felt betrayed by the government and the army.

But the first anniversary of the Gaza withdrawal comes as a full war rages in northern Israel and across the border in

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**FOCUS
ON
ISSUES**

■ *The first anniversary of the Gaza withdrawal comes as a full war rages in northern Israel*

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Lebanon, making it difficult to speak of “the expulsion army” and a nation divided.

“It’s painful. What can we say — we told you so? That sounds childish to say, but here is Lebanon with all these weapons and in Gaza it will now be the same,” said Ita Frieman, 56, standing next to a model of her former garden bursting with green and dotted with ficus and jacaranda trees.

David Hazony, editor in chief of *Azure*, the journal of the Shalem Center, a conservative research institute in Jerusalem, said the religious right is more frustrated than angry a year after the withdrawal.

“They’ve been stunned into silence because, from their perspective, their worst prophecies have come true,” he said. “Many of the people who opposed disengagement now believe that, just as the withdrawal from Lebanon laid the groundwork for a renewed war with the Palestinians in 2000, so too did the withdrawal from Gaza lay the groundwork for the war we face now.”

Hazony suggested that the Palestinians’ election of Hamas, the increase of Kassam rocket fire into southern Israel and the war in Lebanon are prompting Israelis on both the left and the right to question the wisdom of unilateral withdrawal.

Many former settlers have reacted angrily to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert’s recent comments that he still plans a unilateral withdrawal from the West Bank.

“It’s hard for us to see a prime minister who sends soldiers into battle and then says, ‘Soon we will give back more terri-

tory.’ It makes us feel rage when we know many of the soldiers are potentially those who will be expelled,” said Moti Sender, who used to live in Ganei Tal and has continued to run a Web site called Katif-Net for residents of Gush Katif, formerly the main Jewish settlement bloc in Gaza.

Eli Farhan, who before disengagement lived in the northern Gaza settlement of Elei Sinai, wrote to Olmert after he learned that the Israeli army was using his former settlement and others during recent raids into Gaza to disable the Kassam rockets being launched into southern Israel.

It’s time to “fix the mistake and regain control of the buffer zone that was abandoned,” Farhan wrote.

“The Palestinians need to understand that they have things that they could lose,” he added. “The only way to re-establish our deterrence is to show that there are concessions that can be reversed. In the northern Gaza settlements, all the infrastructure still exists — all we would have to do is rebuild our homes.”

Other former settlers from Gush Katif also yearn for a return.

“We will return to every community” is a slogan popular especially among youth who grew up there.

But most are focusing on building new lives in their new homes.

The largest concentration of evicted settlers lives in Nitzan, north of Ashkelon. Some families live in matching mustard-yellow prefabricated houses with small lawns and freshly paved sidewalks.

Most of the former settlers from Gaza and four West Bank settlements that also were evacuated have been moved into temporary housing. Some spent months in hotels before getting temporary housing.

The government also is in the process of paying compensation to evacuated families. Families are supposed to receive between \$200,000 and \$250,000, an amount that can increase depending on the size of their previous homes and property and how long they lived in Gaza, but most families say they have received only partial payouts so far.

Government officials have estimated the total price tag of the Gaza withdrawal, including settler compensation and military costs, at about \$2 billion.

A major problem has been finding jobs. About 51 percent of former settlers are unemployed, according to former Gush Katif officials. In Nitzan, some 70 percent of former settlers are out of work.

Frieman, who once was director of social activities for Ganei Tal, is among the unemployed. She has been searching for a new job but without luck.

“I am looking for a yesterday that no longer exists,” she said wistfully.

Starting over has not been easy. Only 150 out of 700 people who owned businesses in Gaza have opened new ones, and only 17 percent of the farmers have remained in agriculture, according to figures listed on Katif-Net.

About 500 families have seen their economic situations deteriorate drastically, and are receiving welfare payments.

Moty Karpel, an important ideologue of the right and editor of the settler newspaper *Nekuda*, thinks the war in Lebanon will show Israelis that they need a fundamental shift in thinking.

Zionism, he said, has to undergo a “total world view change,” moving from Theodor Herzl’s vision of a safe haven to understand that conflict is part of life in the Middle East.

“The ideology of Zionism said we would come to the Land of Israel and have peace. Now we have a war of survival, and we don’t have energy for another 100 years of fighting,” he said.

The answer is to look toward the country’s religious community, which Karpel said “has a different approach to return to Israel and ideology.”

This ideology understands that there will be more conflict but has the spiritual stomach to fight and, despite everything, still create a thriving society, Karpel said.

Back at the Yad Binyamin exhibit, the focus was less on the future than the past.

“Everyone comes and we just cry,” Tsur said.

The former settlers have ‘been stunned into silence because, from their perspective, their worst prophecies have come true.’

David Hazony

Editor in chief, *Azure*

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McKinney unseated in Georgia

By RACHEL POMERANCE

ATLANTA (JTA) — Blame Rep. Cynthia McKinney's defeat this time around on the G-E-O-R-G-I-A-N-S.

So says Atlanta Jewish activist Stephen Oppenheimer, referring to the infamous charge by McKinney's father, Billy, who blamed her 2002 defeat on the "J-E-W-S."

Four years ago, a national network of Jews funneled nearly \$1 million into the campaign coffers of Denise Majette, who upset McKinney. McKinney then won the seat back in 2004 when Majette opted to run unsuccessfully for the U.S. Senate.

One of Congress' most controversial members and a vehement critic of the U.S. alliance with Israel, McKinney lost Tuesday night's Democratic runoff for her congressional seat to longtime Dekalb County Commissioner Hank Johnson, 59 percent to 41 percent.

In Georgia's heavily Democratic 4th District, Johnson is virtually guaranteed a win in November against Republican Catherine Davis.

In 2002, McKinney was an easy target for Jewish activists, who contributed nearly half of Majette's funds. This year, McKinney's own politics appear to have done her in.

Seen as a lightning rod because of her broadsides against the Bush administration, anti-war posturing and race-related incidents, McKinney took a public relations beating this spring. When a Capitol Hill security guard physically detained her, the black congresswoman allegedly punched him, accusing him of racism.

A grand jury indictment against McKinney eventually was dropped, but the scuffle did not play well at home, aggravating the feeling among constituents that McKinney was increasingly out of step with their interests, experts say.

"The Jews did not make it happen this time. It was the Georgians," said Oppenheimer, a pro-Israel activist who helped fund Johnson's campaign, and had helped fund past McKinney opponents as well. "She was a poor representative, she was totally marginalized in Washington, she did not add anything of significance to the discussion and did not bring home the bacon."

For example, McKinney voted against every defense appropriation despite representing a district located close to the military contractor Lockheed Martin, said Bill Shipp, author of the political newsletter Bill Shipp's Georgia and a panelist on the political talk show "The Georgia Gang."

"The growing middle class down there came to the conclusion that she wasn't delivering anything," Shipp said.

In large part, McKinney's loss was due to an erosion in support from her predominantly black constituency.

She and Johnson, who also is black, split the African-American vote, which makes up some 60 percent of the district. Georgia's 4th District is one of

the wealthiest black districts in the country.

"Atlanta is the mecca of the nation for African Americans, and you can't be the mecca and be the heart of that mecca" and believe those constituents will feel represented by outrageous behavior — like the fact that McKinney travels in a Humvee

with security guards as if she were a rap star, Republican pollster Matt Towery said.

Opposition also came from white Democrats and from Republicans who did not vote in the Republican primary and therefore were eligible to vote in the Democratic runoff.

McKinney also suffered from low voter turnout in the primary and increased turnout in the runoff, Towery said.

"That was just the perfect storm for a major landslide defeat," Towery said.

Jewish activism did play a role, but Jews initially were reluctant to participate in the campaign because they felt

badly burned by Majette, who had abandoned her seat just two years after Jews had worked hard to help her win it.

For his part, Johnson earned Jewish support by reiterating Israel's right to defend itself against Hezbollah, and simply by not being McKinney, who has called for Israel's nuclear disarmament.

At a recent rally for Israel at Atlanta's Ahavath Achim synagogue, Johnson drew sustained applause and a standing ovation.

Before the June 18 primary, Jewish money accounted for some \$20,000 of the \$160,000 Johnson raised. The Jewish contribution for the runoff was about \$100,000, about one-third of the new money Johnson raised.

In contrast to 2002, most of the Jewish money raised this year was local; nation-

ally, Jews felt too miffed by their past experience in the district and focused on other candidates, namely Democratic Sen. Joseph Lieberman in Connecticut, Oppenheimer said.

Furthermore, relations between pro-Israel activists and black members of Congress had been strained by the 2002 pro-Israel campaign to unseat McKinney and

Rep. Alabama's Earl Hilliard (D-Ala.) — another black candidate considered anti-Israel — even though the alternative candidates Jews supported were also black.

Jewish activists are working to rebuild those relationships, in large measure by thanking the legislators for their pro-Israel platforms, Oppenheimer said.

McKinney's conduct in the wake of her defeat only highlighted the deficiencies that cost her the race: On Tuesday night, her camp played an anti-Bush protest song, one of her guards scuffled with a TV photographer and McKinney claimed voting irregularities.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

'Atlanta is the mecca of the nation for African-Americans, and you can't be the heart of that mecca' and believe those constituents will feel represented by outrageous behavior — like the fact that McKinney travels in a hummer with security guards as if she is a rap star.

Matt Towery
Republican pollster

Defining a 'robust' force in Lebanon

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The search for the perfect buffer force in southern Lebanon increasingly sounds like one of the loaded but vague words one sees in personal ads: "Robust" sounds nice, but what does it really mean?

A buffer force is the next step in securing an end to Israel's war against Hezbollah in Lebanon, but diplomats now shaping the first step — a cease-fire — already are preoccupied with creating a force that both sides will find acceptable.

Leading the effort in the U.N. Security Council are the United States and France. The word that keeps cropping up among diplomats is "robust," but no one has officially outlined what that means.

For Israel, it means being able to engage Hezbollah militarily, said Gal Luft, a former Israeli battalion commander who now is director of the Washington-area Institute for the Analysis of Global Security.

"This kind of force will be targeted one way or the other by Hezbollah," Luft said. "It has to be a fighting force; we're not talking about police work here."

Sean McCormack, a spokesman for the U.S. State Department, said defining an international force was something of an evolutionary process.

"These are all, you know, kind of version 2.0, 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, to sort of borrow a software comparison," he said Tuesday.

One version that everyone agrees is obsolete is UNIFIL, the hapless unit of truce observers that has manned the border area since 1978.

The eight-nation, 2,000-troop force has a strict monitoring mandate; its troops are armed with nothing more powerful than semi-automatic rifles and may shoot only in self-defense.

Luft said UNIFIL is weak because its contributing nations — including Ghana, Ireland and Ukraine — are not battle-hardened. He said one good sign is that Turkey, with an army that for decades fought a guerrilla war on its eastern frontiers, is likely to take a pre-eminent role in any future force in southern Lebanon.

"They're not likely to flinch when a suicide bomber attacks," he said.

A French diplomat said UNIFIL also is crippled by terms of its creation that

require it to launch any action only with the consent of the sovereign government. That has meant little in Lebanon, where a weak government for decades has ceded the South to a succession of occupiers, militias and terrorist groups.

The diplomat, speaking under anonymity, said the new force would have a different mandate.

"If forces attacked, we would have the right to respond," the diplomat said, anticipating that France, a country with deep roots in Lebanon, would lead such a force. "The idea is not to put any soldiers in harm's way, to respond in a robust way without consent of Beirut."

But no one wants to specify yet what that means in practice.

McCormack rattled off a list of questions now being worked over by diplomats — "What's the specific mandate? What does this international force look like exactly? What are the rules of engagement?" — but quickly added that it was too early to make any possible answers public.

However, he was ready to say what such a force would not do: "I don't expect that it's international forces that do the disarming of Hezbollah," he said.

That's Israel's role, said Shoshana Bryen, director of the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs.

"You can't expect any foreign group to undertake the disarmament of a terrorist group," she said. "I'm not sure Israel would find any force acceptable until after Hezbollah has been defanged."

The question, she said, is whether such a force would be able to keep Hezbollah disarmed after Israel finished the job. That could be daunting, especially securing Lebanon's border with Syria to prevent weapons-running.

"You would be expecting a force to do on Syria's western border what the United States has been unable to do on Syria's eastern border," she said, referring to the infiltration of insurgents into Iraq. "Who's going to work as hard as you are on something you want to have done?"

BEHIND THE HEADLINES



Maher Attar

A French peacekeeper with the UNIFIL points his gun at members of the Shite Amal militia in Marrakeh, Lebanon in 1996.

Another factor is Lebanon's resistance to the very quality the French diplomat said was key to the force's success — its ability to act freely. Lebanon instead wants a "beefed-up" UNIFIL that, for an interim period, would guide the Lebanese army in controlling the South.

Israel said it was interested in such a formula, and it seemed to be finding favor with the United States as well.

"The Lebanese government understands that the Lebanese armed forces need to be built up," McCormack said, adding that the United States would provide funds to train and equip them.

The problem with that formula is that, since Hezbollah is part of the Lebanese government, it's likely that its militants will simply be incorporated into the Lebanese army, said Raphael Israeli, a Hebrew University expert on Iran and its proxies, including Hezbollah.

"This is absurd," Israeli said. "The Lebanese government is telling us Hezbollah is a partner in the government. If they are partners, how can they control them?"

UNIFIL is weak because its contributing nations — including Ghana, Ireland and Ukraine — are not battle-hardened.

The war's environmental toll on Israel

By URIEL HEILMAN

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Whenever this war with Hezbollah ends and the people of northern Israel finally return to their homes, they'll be going back to more than empty streets, freshly dug gravesites and a beefed-up military presence.

They also will be coming home to a radically altered physical landscape.

Devastated by fires sparked by Katyusha rockets, northern Israel has seen its forests obliterated, its grazing lands laid waste and its wildlife annihilated over the past four weeks.

The country may never look the same, experts say.

"We have very serious damage," said Moshon Gabay, spokesman for the Israel Nature and National Parks Protection Authority. "In previous wars we did not suffer damage like this. Every Katyusha that falls starts a fire."

The green hills of the Galilee have turned orange and black, smoldering with the remains of forest fires. The sky, usually bright blue this time of year, is shrouded in thick gray smoke. The large animals and many birds that live in the area have taken flight, and countless numbers of smaller and slower animals have been killed in raging fires that have turned verdant hills to ash.

So far, officials say, more than 7,000 acres of undeveloped land have been destroyed, including about 2,500 acres of woodlands encompassing roughly 700,000 trees. Some of those trees were as old as the State of Israel.

"It's an ecological catastrophe. Animals are dying. Trees are getting burned," said Orit Hadad, an official with the Jewish National Fund in Israel, where it is known as Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael. "Even if every tree is replanted, to bring these forests back to the state they were in will take 50 to 60 years."

That means that most of the survivors of this war will not live to see the landscape return to its prewar state.

Among the hardest-hit areas have been the Naftali forest range near Kiryat Shmona, where more than three-quarters of the forest was obliterated, and the Birya Forest in the Western Galilee, near Safed, where more than 600 acres have burned.

Less is known about how the animals

that live in this largely rural area have fared. Firefighters have found the remains of many slow-moving animals, such as snakes and turtles, in burned areas. Larger animals that managed to escape likely will suffer from loss of food sources and a sharp reduction in available grazing lands, experts said.

"We're very aware of this problem of disruption of the food chain, even if there is not much we can do," said Michael Weinberger, a JNF forest supervisor in the Central Galilee and Golan Heights.

Tourists who return to this area after the war may be startled to find Israel's most popular hiking spots, where waterfalls pour over lush ridges, virtually unrecognizable.

On Tuesday, the fires from Katyushas reached Mt. Meron, already scorched, and nearby Nahal Amud, a strikingly beautiful canyon that runs from the Upper Galilee to the Kinneret Lake and is replete with waterfalls, blooming plant life and animals ranging from gazelles to wild boars.

There is little that Israel's Nature Protection Authority, which maintains the area, can do for these lands at risk. Even after the war ends the authority will not replant, since the areas are protected reserves or natural areas where the rule of thumb is to let nature take its course.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

'It's an ecological catastrophe. Animals are dying. Trees are getting burned.'

Orit Hadad

Jewish National Fund in Israel

Even if officials tried, there would be no way to restore the variety of plant life, wildlife and woodlands native to the area.

"It all depends on the rain that will fall," Gabay said. "We let these areas repopulate naturally."

The JNF says it will try to replant as many trees as possible after the fighting is over. Each acre will cost an estimated \$5,500 for the first two years to resoil, replant and treat, officials said.

For now, the focus is on putting out the fires.

Because most firefighters in northern Israel are busy trying to extinguish blazes sparked by the Katyusha rockets in urban areas where human lives are at stake, the fight against forest fires has been conducted mostly from the air.

Israel's Interior Ministry has run out of money to pay for the planes, so the JNF is picking up the tab with an emergency fund for which it has yet to raise money.

"We are all working 12- to 16-hour days — crews on fire trucks and on the ground," said Paul Ginsburg, JNF's head forester for Israel's northern region. "Forests that have taken 50 years to grow, that saw two generations of foresters, are burning. Everything we do is under the threat of Katyusha attacks. The work is stressful and heartbreaking."



Firefighters work to save a forest in northern Israel.

JNF-Israel

Polish politician rejects anti-Semite label

By DINAH A. SPRITZER

WARSAW (JTA) — Handsome, articulate and full of sympathetic words for the “Jewish nation,” Polish Education Minister Roman Giertych is asked to account for years of anti-Semitic statements made by members of his party, the League of Polish Families.

His indirect reply might be interpreted as a desire to obscure his party's past, or an honest attempt to explain Polish irritation with Jewish finger-pointing.

“You have to understand the problem: For 45 years all we learned in school was the suffering of Polish people, so if someone talks about their suffering, then we talk about how 6 million Poles died during the war, how we were exiled to Siberia, how we fought against Hitler,” says Giertych, 35.

Giertych refuses to acknowledge that “competition in suffering” has little relevance to the type of Jew-baiting that has emerged from the league. Some league members have decried the so-called economic exploitation of Poles by Jews; others blame the Jews for communism.

When it's pointed out that Giertych's deputy, Wojciech Wierzejski, wrote that international Jewry was the enemy of the Polish national movement, Giertych balks, claiming that Wierzejski was quoting another writer from the 1930s.

But since Giertych recently has declared to the Polish press his antipathy for anti-Semitism, how does he plan to change the minds of those in his party who hate Jews?

“They don't hate Jews,” he tells JTA. “That's your imagination.”

Giertych is the grandson of an infamous anti-Semitic politician who warned of an alleged Judeo-Masonic conspiracy and supported kicking Jews out of universities in the 1930s, a move recently defended by Giertych's father, a far-right member of the European Parliament. Giertych himself, a lawyer with two master's degrees who speaks several languages, is not known ever to have publicly uttered or written an anti-Semitic statement.

Yet Giertych, who also is deputy prime minister, stands accused of leading the most xenophobic, intolerant and anti-Semitic party in any European government coalition.

Over the years, some hate-filled barbs

have slipped from the mouths of his supporters. Members of All Polish Youth, a quasi-skinhead group of which Giertych is honorary chairman, reportedly have been photographed making the Nazi salute. And Ryszard Bender, one of the founders of the League of Polish Families, said in 2000 that “Auschwitz was a labor camp, not a death camp.”

PROFILE

Now Giertych has embarked on a campaign to show that he and his Catholic right-wing brethren are setting a new direction.

“Nobody makes anti-Semitic statements, because if they do they will be kicked out from our party the next day,” he insists.

Since it joined Poland's right-wing government coalition in April, the league has been attacked for bigotry by rights groups, the Anti-Defamation League and even the European Parliament.

The league won just 7.8 percent of the vote in 2005 national elections, but was needed to cement a government majority.

Critics since have focused on the party's open hatred of gays. Wierzejski has called

gays pedophiles and said that if they demonstrate, “they should be hit with batons.”

On the Jewish front, Giertych inadvertently made headlines earlier this month when Israel's ambassador to Poland, David Peleg, said Israel would not work with Giertych or his ministry on Holocaust education.

The Polish government has been scrambling to transfer the Israeli-Polish programs, which involve more than 30,000 Israeli students coming to Poland each year to the Prime Minister's Office. Giertych wants the prestigious Holocaust program back.

I wrote the embassy and the education minister in Israel and said, ‘Look, a Holocaust program taught from your point of view directed by me will have tremendous credibility in Poland,’” Giertych said. “After all, nobody would ever accuse me of being a philo-Semite.”

His efforts were to no avail.

In July, Giertych traveled to Jedwabne to commemorate a notorious 1941 pogrom.

Poles had thought Germans committed this atrocity until 2000, when Jan Gross' book “Neighbors” showed it was Polish townspeople who killed the Jews.

However, some Poles — particularly Giertych supporters — continue to reject this conclusion and see the Jedwabne commemoration as part of an anti-Polish conspiracy. Thus Giertych's visit had a double symbolism, though he says he doesn't know who really killed the Jews at Jedwabne.

Giertych says his visit to Jedwabne, planned after his visit to the Birkenau death camp to hear Pope Benedict XVI, was a turning point.

“I have always understood the Shoah, but it is something else to feel, to empathize, and this grew deeper at Birkenau when I had time to reflect on the people who lived and died there,” he said.

Asked if anyone in his party holds anti-Semitic views, he answers no. But it's hard to elude certain incidents.

First there was the case of Piotr Farfal, the 28-year-old deputy director of Polish Television and a league

member, who wrote several anti-Jewish diatribes for a neo-Nazi magazine 10 years ago, including the statement, “We do not accept cowards, collaborators or Jews.”

Recently, it surfaced that a 24-year-old party member wrote when he was 18 that Jewish authors should be excluded from lessons on Polish literature.

Giertych, for his part, says he already has changed the league's image of Jews.

“For 15 years of my life, I tried to change the understanding of people,” he says, “so why this boycott of the ambassador? It's sad, stupid.”

But he's irked when it's suggested that he should go to synagogue to prove his bona fides.

“What for? Why should I?” he asks, his mouth tightening.

Told that this would be the ultimate conciliatory gesture, he frowns and looks dismayed.

“I am not the pope,” he retorts.

Giertych is not known ever to have publicly uttered or written an anti-Semitic statement. Yet he stands accused of leading an extremely xenophobic party.

ARTS & CULTURE

Jewish groups court Mel Gibson

By TOM TUGEND

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — The race is on to become the first Jewish group to land an appearance by Mel Gibson, with three already entered and more waiting in the wings.

That comes after the actor-director, while being arrested on suspicion of drunk driving, launched into an anti-Semitic tirade in which he blamed the Jews for all the wars in the world.

First out of the starting block was Rabbi David Baron of the Temple of the Arts in Beverly Hills.

Baron alluded to the actor's profuse apologies for his anti-Semitic slurs, then invited the director of "The Passion of the Christ" to speak at Yom Kippur services, "in order that you might directly express to the Jewish community your remorse."

Some have suggested that the publicity accruing to the first Jewish institution sponsoring Gibson's mea culpa might have played a role in the temple's invitation.

The Museum of Jewish Heritage — A Living Memorial to the Holocaust in New York City also extended an invitation to Gibson.

Asserting that he took Gibson's previous apology "very seriously," director David Marwell added in his letter that "In making a genuine commitment to learn about the Jewish people, you could find no more appropriate place to start your journey than our museum."

A third invitation has come from the "1939 Club," a Los Angeles-based association of Holocaust survivors and their children.

Of all Jewish organizations, none has better entree to Hollywood's A-list than the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

However, center founder Rabbi Marvin Hier, said that "under no circumstances" would he invite Gibson.

"As a member of the academy, I voted for Gibson's 'Braveheart' as best picture, and when 'The Passion of the Christ' came under attack, I said there was no proof that Gibson was an anti-Semite," Hier said. "Now we have proof that he is an anti-Semite. He can't be cured by a press release or be koshered by a 24-hour 'conversion.'" ■

Young and restless — and Jewish

By RACHEL SILVERMAN

NEW YORK (JTA) — If you didn't catch last Friday's episode of "The Young and the Restless," here's what you missed: Neil blew off Dru for dinner. Nick and Sharon continued struggling with their divorce. And Brad Carlton came out as Jewish.

That's right, Carlton — a mainstay of the long-running soap series — told viewers that his real name is George Kaplan and that his mother, Rebecca Kaplan, is a concentration camp survivor.

Carlton's declaration of his lineage illustrates the degree to which the Holocaust, and Judaism, have infiltrated pop culture. Though a soap opera may seem an unlikely genre for a lesson in Jewish history, "Young and Rest-

less" head writer Lynn Latham says it's just the opposite.

A veteran soap writer, Latham pointed out in an e-mail exchange with JTA that "storytellers are storytellers no matter what form we work in ... and we are always looking for compelling stories to tell.

"I believe the most riveting ones reflect real life," she added.

Don Diamont, who has played Carlton on the show for two decades, couldn't agree more.

"You can't tell the Holocaust story too many times, however the Holocaust story is told," he said.

The plotline has particular significance for Diamont: He too is Jewish, and like his character, Diamont — whose real last name is Feinberg — came to his Judaism later in life.

Raised the "ultimate secular Jew," Diamont knew little of religion growing up. His family had a Christmas tree but no Chanukah celebrations.

Diamont has vivid childhood memories of being taunted for being Jewish.

"I remember going home and saying to my dad, 'What's a kike?' He said, 'It's the worst thing you can call a Jew.'"

The bullying led Diamont into fights at school, and gave rise to conflicting emotions.

"When you have no sense of who you are, any sense of where you come from,

who your people are, and then you're attacked in that sort of way, there's a natural sense of pride," he said. "But the other half is ashamed because you're being made fun of, you're being abused."

Diamont took his mother's maiden name when he began acting and modeling. He remembers an agent recommending that he choose a more "rhythmical" name.

"Donald Feinberg is kind of like a neon sign," he said. "It's flashing 'Jew, Jew, Jew.'"

But Diamont's attitude toward Judaism began to change as an adult when his older brother, who had been diagnosed with a brain tumor, began to study for his Bar Mitzvah. Diamont decided to study too.

His brother passed away before becoming a bar mitzvah, but Diamont underwent the rite of passage at age 29.

Diamont's sense of Judaism also was heightened by his father's death. As he grew sick, his father expressed regret at not having given his children a Jewish education, Diamont said.

"Particularly with my dad's passing, I really felt a longing just to get more in touch and ask who I am and where I come from," Diamont said. "I'm not suddenly going to become the most religious, observant Jew in the world, but as I started getting older, the pride started to overcome the shame."

Now Diamont goes to synagogue on High Holidays, celebrates Chanukah and has seen two sons bar mitzvahed.

After playing the same character for 20 years, Diamont said it was a pleasant surprise to find out that the character's true identity was not unlike his own.

"I open a script one day and I knew that they were delving into" the character's history, "but I had no idea my real name was George Kaplan," he said. "I called upstairs to the head writer and I said, 'So, I'm Jewish?' And she said, 'Are you okay with that?' I said, 'Well, yeah, I am Jewish.'"

Diamont also is glad that his character, a chiseled Navy SEAL, doesn't conform to Jewish stereotypes. ■

ARTS
&
CULTURE

I remember going home and saying to my dad, "What's a kike?"

Don Diamont
Soap actor

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

AIPAC judge denies dismissal

The judge in the classified information case against two former AIPAC analysts denied a motion to dismiss the case but narrowed the government's ability to invoke the U.S. Espionage Act.

In a decision released Thursday, Judge T.S. Ellis III ruled that a never-used 1917 statute that criminalizes the receipt — not just the leaking — of classified information was not unconstitutional.

However, Ellis does not entirely reject the constitutional arguments of Steve Rosen, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee's former foreign policy boss, and its Iran analyst, Keith Weissman.

Arrests for laundering Hezbollah funds

Two men were arrested in Ohio on charges of laundering money for Hezbollah. Police on Tuesday apprehended Ali Houssaiky and Osama Abulhassan, 20, of Dearborn, Mich., for a traffic violation in Marietta, Ohio, and found \$11,000 in cash, 12 cell phones, airline passenger lists and other information on airport security, according to a spokesman for the Washington County Prosecutor's Office.

The men, who also were found with a map marking Wal-Mart stores from Ohio to South Carolina, admitted to buying hundreds of telephones and reselling them in Dearborn.

Official: U.S. Jews not especially at risk

The U.S. Jewish community was urged to be vigilant but not to panic after a major terrorist attack was thwarted in Britain. "We have been advised" by federal, state and local law enforcement "that there is nothing directly concerning the Jewish community," Paul Goldenberg, director of the Secure Community Network, told JTA on Thursday. SCN is a collection of member agencies of the U.S. Jewish community, security experts and law enforcement officials that share information and policy protocols concerning Jewish communal security.

Goldenberg encouraged all Americans traveling abroad to monitor State Department travel advisories. Comprehensive advisories and tips for safe travel may be found at www.scnus.org under the "travel safety" icon on the left side of the page.

Poll: Jews backed Lieberman

Jews in Connecticut gave U.S. Sen. Joseph Lieberman more than 60 percent of their vote in his unsuccessful bid to gain the Democratic nomination.

A CBS/New York Times poll published Thursday showed Lieberman won 61 percent of the Jewish vote in Tuesday's primary while his successful challenger, Ned Lamont, won 39 percent. Overall, Lamont bested Lieberman 52 percent to 48 percent. Lamont challenged Lieberman for supporting the Iraq war and for his closeness to President Bush.

Lieberman, a three-term senator and the Democrats' vice-presidential candidate in 2000, is now running as an independent in November's general election.

Federation attack suspect attempts guilty plea

The suspected shooter in the attack at Seattle's Jewish federation attempted to enter a guilty plea. Surprising even his own attorney, Naveed Haq, 30, in shackles and jail clothing with the words "Ultra Security Inmate" emblazoned across the back, attempted the plea Thursday on the nine counts against him in the July 28 shooting, which left one woman dead and five injured.

Despite Haq's attempted plea, King County Superior Court Judge Michael Trickey agreed to a request by C. Wesley Richards, Haq's

public defender, for a continuance on the arraignment so he could assess Haq's competence for trial.

MIDDLE EAST

Soldier killed in Lebanon

One Israeli soldier was killed by Hezbollah in southern Lebanon. Several other soldiers were wounded in Thursday's anti-tank attack.

Tourist stabbed in Jerusalem

A tourist from Europe was stabbed to death Thursday in Jerusalem's Old City.

A young Arab attacker approached a group of tourists from behind and then stabbed the man, a police spokesman said.

Alleged Lebanese spy indicted

An Israeli Arab was charged with passing classified military information to Lebanon. The Nazareth District Court indicted the 30-year-old Bedouin on wartime espionage allegations Thursday, saying he had informed a Lebanese liaison with information on the location of Hezbollah rocket strikes and Israel's military deployment.

According to the indictment, the Lebanese, assumed to be a Hezbollah go-between, supplied the suspect with drugs and received the classified information through cell phone conversations.

Suicide bombing foiled

Israeli security forces thwarted a planned Palestinian suicide bombing in the West Bank. Acting on intelligence, the Shin Bet arrested two Palestinian women at a checkpoint outside Nablus on Wednesday night.

One of the detainees is believed to be a would-be suicide bomber from Fatah who was en route to an attack in Israel, the other her accomplice.

Anti-war protesters rally in Israel

Some 600 protesters rallied in Tel Aviv against Israel's offensive in Lebanon. Thursday's rally was the largest in Israel since the war with Hezbollah began July 12.

Meanwhile, three of Israel's best-known authors spoke out against the Israeli Cabinet's decision to widen the war. Amos Oz, A.B. Yehoshua and David Grossman voiced their opposition to the Cabinet decision at a news conference Thursday.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has not yet implemented the decision, preferring to give international diplomacy more time.

Northern Israelis have group wedding in Tel Aviv

Fifteen couples from northern Israel got married in Tel Aviv.

The couples who participated in Tuesday evening's group ceremony had had their own weddings canceled because of Hezbollah rockets attacks, The New York Times reported.

WORLD

British Jews reassured on terror threat

British Jews were reassured that they face no specific threat after a plot was thwarted to bomb trans-Atlantic flights from London. The terrorism alert in Britain was raised Thursday to critical, the highest level, after police uncovered a plan they said aimed to create "mass murder on an unimaginable scale" by detonating explosives on up to 10 aircraft.

Police informed community leaders that they had no intelligence suggesting that U.K. Jews were targeted, though the situation was still being monitored.