

IN THE NEWS
**U.N.: IDF killed
202 Palestinians**

A U.N. report said the Israeli army has killed 202 Palestinians since the June abduction of an Israeli soldier.

The Aug. 24 report from the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip said 44 children were among the dead. Operation Summer Rains was launched after the June 25 abduction of Cpl. Gilad Shalit in a Hamas-led raid.

**Report: U.S. probing
Israeli bomb use**

The State Department reportedly is investigating whether Israel's use of American-made cluster bombs in southern Lebanon violated agreements with the United States.

The investigation began this week after reports that three types of American cluster munitions, anti-personnel weapons that spray bomblets over a wide area, were found in many areas of southern Lebanon and were responsible for civilian casualties, the New York Times reported Friday.

The inquiry is not expected to lead to sanctions.

**Israeli commander to
oversee Iran threat**

The head of Israel's air force was chosen to oversee Israel's military preparedness in case of a confrontation with Iran.

Maj. Gen. Eliezer Shkedy will coordinate Iran-related operations among the Mossad, military intelligence and other branches of the Israeli army. In the case of war, he would oversee battle plans and fighting. Shkedy's appointment was made before the war in Lebanon began, Ha'aretz reported Friday.

Some in Israel's military and political establishment fear the international community will not seriously confront Iran over its nuclear program and that any military action may fall to Israel.

WORLD REPORT

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Mud-wrestling with your own: Jewish Greeks return to roots

By SUE FISHKOFF

OAKLAND, Calif. (JTA) — Two years ago, Rabbi Mark Bloom of Oakland's Temple Beth Abraham gave a talk on Jewish ethics at a national convention of Zeta Beta Tau. Founded in 1902, ZBT is the nation's oldest Jewish fraternity.

After the speech, two members from Oklahoma State University asked whether he'd pose for a picture.

"I said, 'Sure, but what's the big deal?'" recalls Bloom, who recently had come on board as the fraternity's first chaplain. Admitting that there were no Jews in their chapter, the two young men told Bloom, "We've never met a real rabbi."

These students may have known next to nothing about the Judaism that allegedly informs their fraternity, but that's about to change.

After decades of fervent non-sectarianism, the nation's five Jewish fraternities and sororities are re-emphasizing their Jewish roots.

While remaining open to non-Jewish members, these organizations are actively recruiting Jewish students, reintroducing rituals such as Shabbat meals and promoting Israel's cause on campus with a vigor not seen in years.

"We're a Jewish sorority, and staying true to who we are keeps us strong," says Bonnie Wunsch, executive director of Alpha Epsilon Phi, founded in 1909 as the nation's first Jewish sorority.

After years of "Jewish was in, Jewish was out," AEPi has been focusing strongly on its Jewish identity for about a decade, Wunsch says. And it's growing fast as a result — three new chapters and two colonies,

the precursor to a chapter, since April.

"No doubt, hands down our biggest strength is our Jewish identity," Wunsch says. "It's clear that we need to be even prouder, more out there with it."

Things were very different 20 years ago when Bloom was a ZBT brother at Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill. His chapter was, he says, "80 percent Jewish," but the brothers shied away from promoting their affiliation.

"You would often hear things in hash sessions like 'he's too Jewish, and we're trying to get away from that,' or 'he's only rushing ZBT because he thinks it's a Jewish house,'" Bloom recalls.

In the 1960s and 1970s, every Jewish Greek organization, struggling for membership, opened its doors to non-Jews and began de-emphasizing its ethnic affiliation.

In the past few years, a new generation of "millennials" has hit the college campus. Ethnic identity is in, religious exploration is hip and fraternities are once again popular.

"For Jewish college students, the need to identify is stronger than ever," says Dana Tarley, 20, an AEPi sister at American University in Washington.

But not all of them identify religiously, or even politically.

"For some, Hillel isn't the answer and Chabad isn't the answer. Jewish Greek life is," she says.

There's also a marketing aspect, says Marianne Sanua, associate professor of history and Jewish studies at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton.

"If you say, 'we're just a fraternity like any

Continued on page 2

**FOCUS
ON
ISSUES**

■ U.S. Jewish fraternities and sororities are re-emphasizing their Jewish roots

Continued from page 1

other,' who would join when there are others that are more prestigious? If you say, 'we're a Jewish sorority,' you have your pick of the Jewish students."

While many members and the national leadership hail the move as long overdue, others feel left out and confused.

Some are voting with their feet. This past February, a dozen AEPi sisters at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge quit after chapter officials announced the group's "return to its national identity." The bolters included seven of the eight-member pledge class.

According to junior Elizabeth Katcoff, chapter vice president of recruitment, these young women did not realize they were joining a Jewish sorority. They were not told about AEPi's historic Jewish roots during recruitment, which Katcoff acknowledges was a mistake.

By May, the MIT chapter had five new pledges, of whom four are Jewish. But bad feelings persist, AEPi officials admit.

"This is fairly typical of what the historically Jewish fraternities and sororities are going through," says Sanua.

"Returning to their Jewish roots is a highly delicate process and can be very controversial."

Tarley says AEPi "wasn't presenting itself as Jewish" when she joined two years ago. She spearheaded her chapter's return to its roots, organizing Jewish holiday meals, making sure sisters showed up for pro-Israel fund-raising events and bringing in speakers to promote birthright Israel

trips. Within two years, the chapter had a Jewish majority.

Some of the sisters were "uncomfortable" with the changes, she admits, but adds, "dissension is healthy."

Wunsch points out that AEPi and the other historically Jewish Greek houses "are culturally Jewish, not religious," even when they put up mezuzahs or say Jewish blessings before Shabbat dinners.

"That's all we do that's religious," Wunsch maintains. "We allow young women to be Jewish in a non-threatening manner."

Sometimes fledgling chapters run into opposition from Jewish members of non-

Jewish fraternities and sororities, who fear that a new Jewish Greek house will recruit desirable Jewish students.

That happened at the University of Arizona this past year, when AEPi formed its newest colony.

"We had a problem with the Jewish girls in Delta Gamma," says Suzanne Solomon, 20. "They said, 'you can't come on campus.'"

Solomon and the 21 other young women who hoped to become AEPi fought and won the case in the university's Panhellenic, which controls campus sorority life.

"We're 100 percent Jewish," Solomon enthuses, adding that she expects a big social payoff: "When Jewish girls come, Jewish boys follow." ■



El Salvador to move embassy

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica (JTA) — El Salvador will move its embassy in Israel to Tel Aviv, a diplomatic setback that leaves Israel's capital without any embassies.

In a written statement late last Friday, El Salvador's government said the move was aimed at helping the Middle East peace process. The statement went on to offer El Salvadoran "recognition of the right of a Palestinian state to exist."

The move comes 10 days after Costa Rica, the only other country that kept an embassy in Jerusalem, announced it was moving it to Tel Aviv. Costa Rican President Oscar Arias said the move was an attempt to "rectify a historic error."

Both countries had maintained embassies in the western sector of Jerusalem since the early 1980s.

El Salvador's president, Antonio "Tony" Saca, is of Palestinian descent. His right-wing ARENA party moved the embassy to Jerusalem in 1984, after Israel supported the country's armed forces despite international scorn for El Salvador's poor human rights record during a bloody civil war with the leftist FMLN guerrillas, but Saca had always been evasive on the embassy issue.

In 2004, shortly before his election, Saca was a major contributor to construction of a "Palestine Plaza" in San Salvador. The plaza, which honors the "victims" of Israeli independence in 1948 and features a map of

pre-partition Palestine, lists Saca's name on a plaque identifying major donors.

The FMLN, now the country's largest opposition party, long has had ties to the PLO and opposed the embassy's Jerusalem location. Last year, the FMLN-controlled municipality of San Salvador built a Yasser Arafat Park along the city's Jerusalem Avenue.

Palestinian representatives have visited El Salvador in recent years. Nicaragua is the only Central American country to officially recognize Palestine, though El Salvadoran officials have hinted since Saca took office that diplomatic recognition could be forthcoming.

Saca's move came as no surprise to Israeli officials in the region. It long had been expected that if Arias moved Costa Rica's embassy Saca would follow suit.

El Salvador's 300-member mainly Conservative Jewish community generally has supported ARENA, which traditionally has relied on coffee and industrial oligarchies for leadership.

There are an estimated 60,000 people of Palestinian descent, mainly Christian, in El Salvador. Saca has drawn on that community for his inner political circle.

Saca made no public comments on the decision, which was announced by the Foreign Ministry while Saca was en route to Florida to visit with El Salvadoran immigrants there. ■



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Katrina bolsters Baton Rouge's Jewish life

By LARRY LUXNER

BATON ROUGE, La. (JTA) — Twelve months ago, Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans and turned the state capital, Baton Rouge, into Louisiana's largest metropolis virtually overnight.

Yet in an unexpected way, Katrina also has challenged and energized Jewish life in this city of 500,000 people and two synagogues.

"More Jews evacuated to Houston, but the impact on Baton Rouge was much greater because we didn't have the infrastructure," said Rabbi Martha Bergadine, executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Baton Rouge. "The Jewish community here is approximately 30 percent larger than before."

That's because 350 to 400 New Orleans Jews who fled to Baton Rouge have decided to remain for now. That's in addition to the 1,200 Jews already living in the state capital, which had a pre-Katrina population of around 250,000.

Bergadine said many of the newcomers have benefitted from a \$1 million grant from the United Jewish Communities, the federation umbrella organization. The grant provides infrastructure for those displaced people from New Orleans under the Jewish Community Partnership.

"People felt they were living through something historic and life-changing. They knew their lives would somehow be different" after Katrina, she said. "Our concern is that people are still traumatized psychologically. For example, the social networks of many seniors have been totally uprooted. The people they talked to every day for 20

years are now scattered."

Bergadine, who directs three part-time staffers at the federation, said caseworkers are still helping "people who don't need therapy, but who need guidance dealing with different organizations and referrals."

Real estate is still at a premium in Baton Rouge and vacant apartments are hard to find, said Erich Sternberg, president of the Jewish Federation of Greater Baton Rouge.

"We must continue to support the people who are here and continue to make them feel welcome, whether they decide to stay permanently or whether they go back home," he said. "Secondly, we must encourage and nurture some of the good things that have come out of this experience."

For instance, the community is planning its first Jewish film festival for January 2007.

"There have been a lot of initiatives that, in the past, people would not have necessarily taken the time to do," Sternberg said. "Since Katrina, the Jewish community has really stepped up its act."

The community is almost exclusively Reform, with two temples, B'nai Israel and Beth Shalom. The latter suffered extensive damage from Hurricane Rita, three weeks after Katrina.

"Rain collected on the roof, came through and destroyed the interior, wrecking both our sanctuary and our social hall," said Rabbi Stanton Zamek, who is married to Bergadine. "At the very minimum, we had over \$535,000 in damage."

Zamek added: "We weren't hit by Katrina the way folks in New Orleans were, but we have many family and social ties to that community, and people are still fairly haunted by it."

"We're very worried about what's going to happen in the new hurricane season. Lots of people are still in trailers, and they'll be inclined to evacuate very quickly. Now we have some inkling what it'll be like when waves of people start coming from New Orleans into this city."

Robert Krupkin, vice president of the board of Beth Shalom, said the synagogue, with 140 member families, has raised

\$410,000 so far to fund repairs.

In addition to money from UJC, the Union for Reform Judaism also has contributed funds for area relief, including \$60,000 to the Working Interfaith Network of Baton Rouge, \$10,000 to the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, \$10,000 to the Katrina Relief Fund of the Jewish Federation of Greater Baton Rouge and \$10,000 in "mini-grants" to each of the city's temples.

Meanwhile, at least one Jewish institution has seen its popularity grow dramatically since Katrina: the Hillel at Louisiana State University.

Jeffrey Lahasky, who's from the Louisiana town of New Iberia, says LSU's Hillel now has 160 students, "which is amazing, considering we didn't have even five only two and a half years ago."

Moshe Cohen, Hillel's local interim program director and a 24-year-old graduate

student in mathematics, said that when he arrived at LSU, there was no visible Jewish culture.

"The organization sort of got momentum a year ago, and it was just perfect timing because when the hurricane happened, luckily enough, we were here," said Cohen, who's from Westchester, N.Y. "It was wonderful to serve as a beacon for Jewish life."

English professor Daniel Novak, who doubles as the Hillel faculty advisor, says Hillel doesn't have its own building on the LSU campus, but meets regularly outdoors or at people's homes.

"Jewish students from Louisiana end up going to schools in places like Texas and Georgia, because we never had many Jews on campus or an established Hillel house," said Novak, who recently co-founded Sigma Alpha Mu, LSU's first Jewish fraternity in 20 years. He adds that LSU has just begun offering a minor in Jewish studies for the first time in the university's history.

"We're not trying to replace New Orleans as a hub for Jewish life in Louisiana, but rather use this as an opportunity to welcome any Jews from New Orleans, to make LSU a place where Jews can come and feel comfortable," he said. "Our ambition is to make this a school that Jews from the entire state will flock to."

The community is planning its first Jewish film festival for January 2007.

THIS WEEK

FRIDAY

- The Israeli school year begins.

SATURDAY

- The Beta Israel of North America Cultural Foundation presents the Third Annual Sheba Film Festival in Harlem, N.Y., through Sunday. The festival features films from the Ethiopian and Jewish diasporas together with arts, crafts and other cultural exhibits.

SUNDAY

- Europe celebrates the sixth European Day of Jewish Culture. About 30 countries will participate in the event to promote Jewish history and heritage with tours, open houses, exhibitions, lectures and concerts.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDEAST

Fox crew freed

Palestinian kidnappers released two Fox News journalists they were holding hostage in the Gaza Strip.

Correspondent Steve Centanni of the United States and cameraman Olaf Wiig of New Zealand were freed Sunday after being held for almost two weeks by an obscure Palestinian group calling itself the Holy Jihad Brigades. They were said to be in good health.

Airstrike wounds reporters

Two Palestinian reporters were wounded in an Israeli airstrike in the Gaza Strip. The journalists, one from Reuters and another local, were struck by a missile near their vehicle Saturday night as they covered an Israeli military incursion in northern Gaza during which three Palestinian gunmen were killed.

Army officials said the vehicle had been moving in a suspicious manner near the combat zone and that its press markings were not clearly visible.

Katsav denies wrongdoing

Israel's president denied wrongdoing in a sexual misconduct scandal. Moshe Katsav argued his innocence to Israel Radio over the weekend.

Attorney General Menachem Mazuz and Police Chief Moshe Karadi reportedly will decide this week whether to recommend criminal charges over allegations that Moshe Katsav had inappropriate relations with a former female staff member. According to media reports, the complainant may press for Katsav to be charged with sexual harassment or even rape.

Poll: Israelis want Olmert resignation

Sixty-three percent of Israelis want Ehud Olmert to resign, according to a new poll. Results of the Yediot Achronot poll, released Friday, showed for the first time that a majority of Israelis favor the resignation of the prime minister, elected in March, because of his handling of Israel's war with Hezbollah.

Hezbollah surprised by Israeli response

Hezbollah's leader voiced surprise at the intensity of Israel's Lebanon offensive. In a Lebanese television interview broadcast Sunday, Sheik Hassan Nasrallah said it might have been a mistake for Hezbollah to kill eight Israeli soldiers and abduct two in a July 12 raid that triggered a 34-day war.

"If I had known that the operation to capture the soldiers would lead to this result, we would not have carried it out," he said.

But Nasrallah played down speculation that the almost two-week-old cease-fire would collapse into another round of fighting.

Excavation reveals Judean site

Archaeologists made a major discovery at a kibbutz near Jerusalem. The Jerusalem Post reported that the archaeologists, from Israel, the United States and Europe, uncovered a sophisticated water system from the seventh century BCE and a Muslim structure from the ninth century CE at Kibbutz Ramat Rachel.

Experts said the findings indicate that the kibbutz, just south of Jerusalem, was a major royal site.

WORLD

Argentine Jews complain over blocked protest

Argentine Jewish leaders met with the country's interior minister after left-wing activists prevented Jews from holding a demonstra-

tion against Iran. Luis Grynwald, president of the community's central AMIA institution, and Jorge Kirszenbaum, president of the DAIA political umbrella group, talked with Anibal Fernandez for more than an hour Friday morning about an incident Thursday in which the Quebracho group blocked a street where Jews were to demonstrate.

Many saw the move as anti-Semitic.

Polish attacker gets suspended sentenced

A man who attacked Poland's chief rabbi in May received a suspended sentence.

Karol G., 33, was convicted Friday by a Warsaw court of an act of violence and racially motivated hate speech for assaulting Rabbi Michael Schudrich.

B'nai B'rith reviews tsunami projects

A B'nai B'rith team spent a week reviewing the organization's post-tsunami development projects in Sri Lanka.

The projects focus primarily on rebuilding the cooperative sector, which suffered about \$47.4 million in damages in the country's southern province alone.

Laos gets Chabad emissary

Chabad-Lubavitch now has a representative in Laos. Rabbi Shalom Ber Marzel and his wife are expected to serve Israeli backpackers and other tourists who visit the Southeast Asian country.

Laos is the 73rd country to have a Chabad emissary. Seed funding for the new office comes from the Rohr Family Foundation.

Jewish women meet in Budapest

A fourth annual conference on European Jewish women was held in Budapest. Bet Debora in Budapest — Diversities held the Conference of European Jewish Women, Activists, Academics and Rabbis from Aug. 23 through Sunday at Central European University. It explored how to empower women in the context of European Jewish life.

NORTH AMERICA

Mason sues Jews for Jesus

Jackie Mason is suing Jews for Jesus for using his name and likeness in a pamphlet. The pamphlets, which the missionary group has been distributing around New York City, feature the comedian's image juxtaposed with the words "Jackie Mason... A Jew for Jesus!?"

"While I have the utmost respect for people who practice the Christian faith, the fact is, as everyone knows, I am as Jewish as a matzo ball or kosher salami," the 75-year-old said in documents filed in state Supreme Court in Manhattan, according to The Associated Press.

A Jews for Jesus official chided Mason for getting so upset.

Man provided Hezbollah TV

A New York man was arrested for providing Hezbollah's satellite channel in the United States. Javed Iqbal, who runs HDTV Corp., a Brooklyn-based satellite provider, was charged with conspiring to support a terrorist group.

In March, the U.S. Treasury Department designated Hezbollah's al-Manar a "global terrorist network," effectively freezing the station's assets in the United States while prohibiting Americans from having any transactions with the station.

Mark Dubowitz of the Coalition Against Terrorist Media told the Washington Post Thursday he was "pleased that the U.S. is taking the necessary steps to ensure al-Manar's incitement to violence is stopped."