

IN THE NEWS
**Israeli police:
Charge Katsav with rape**

Israeli police recommended indicting President Moshe Katsav on charges of rape and sexual harassment.

Katsav rejected calls to resign, and his attorney said Monday morning that he will quit only if an indictment is submitted. Investigators presented their findings and recommendations to Attorney General Menachem Mazuz and senior officials in the State Prosecutor's Office.

The most serious charge is for the alleged rape of two women, but police also accused Katsav of purchasing dozens of gifts with money taken from the President's Residence budget, Ha'aretz reported. Katsav's attorney noted that that only the state prosecutor can decide on an indictment.

**U.S. funding
 Hamas opponents**

The United States has launched a funding campaign aimed at bolstering groups in the Palestinian Authority opposed to the Hamas government.

Reuters reported over the weekend that the Bush administration has earmarked up to \$42 million for overhauling Hamas rival Fatah, providing schools in the West Bank and Gaza Strip that offer an alternative to Hamas' Islamist teachings, and bankrolling Palestinian journalists and watchdog groups that would monitor the Hamas government. The report cited official documentation and was tacitly confirmed by a U.S. envoy in the region.

Bush signs Darfur act

President Bush signed the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act. Jewish groups led lobbying for the act, signed by Bush last Friday.

The act bans dealing with Sudan until it abides by a peace treaty with tribes in the Darfur region and allows an international peacekeeping force.

WORLD REPORT

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

With Hamas stockpiling weapons, Israel fears 'new Lebanon' in South

By LESLIE SUSSER

JERUSALEM (JTA) — With Hamas' militia smuggling millions of dollars' worth of weapons into Gaza and Israel determined to prevent a significant Palestinian arms build-up, the two sides could be on the brink of a major military showdown.

According to IDF sources, Hamas wants to emulate Hezbollah's model in Lebanon: to develop its rocket threat against Israeli civilians, use sophisticated anti-tank weapons to inflict losses on Israeli armor and troops and build strong defense systems to impede Israel Defense Forces' movement.

Israel is determined to nip these developments in the bud.

"We have learned the lessons of Lebanon," Defense Minister Amir Peretz was reported as saying in closed meetings. "We won't allow Hamas to become part of the Iranian axis of evil."

The fact that there's no political process on the immediate horizon makes the situation even more volatile.

"Israel is marching rationally and with its eyes open toward a head-on confrontation with the Hamas authority in Gaza. Both sides are preparing for it, on the assumption that it is unavoidable," military analyst Alex Fishman wrote in Yediot Achronot.

Most of the weapons are being smuggled into Gaza across the border with Egypt. Last week alone, an estimated \$6 million worth of arms and ammunition got through, IDF sources say.

Significantly, the consignments included dozens of Russian-made Konkurs anti-tank missiles, one of the weapons used by Hez-

lah to great effect against Israeli tanks and soldiers in the recent Lebanon war. According to Israeli estimates, Hamas has smuggled more than 20 tons of explosives, anti-aircraft missiles, anti-tank weapons, sniper rifles and ammunition into Gaza since the beginning of the year.

According to IDF officers, Hamas hopes to create a Hezbollah-like "balance of terror" by building solid defensive positions and acquiring and stockpiling longer-range rockets. The group then would be in a position to threaten heavy and persistent rocket attacks on Israeli civilians and a costly ground operation if the IDF moved in to stop the rocket fire.

"The Palestinians are arming themselves to the teeth, building a military force, defensive systems and preparing Hezbollah-style surprises," Fishman wrote.

Last week, the IDF escalated its activities in Gaza against Palestinian militiamen and the arms build-up. In operation "Rain Man" in the southern Gaza Strip, and operation "Four Kinds" in the North, soldiers have been searching for tunnels and arms caches and engaging Palestinian militiamen as Israeli helicopters and unmanned drones target Palestinian rocket-launching teams.

Over the weekend, about 20 Palestinians were killed. However, given the latest arms-smuggling figures, the generals are considering widening these operations.

Some analysts maintain that that's just what Hamas wants: It believes a wider Israeli operation would leave the IDF more vulnerable to attack with the new weapons at the Palestinians' disposal.

"If Israel widens its military activities our

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NEWS
ANALYSIS

■ Israel and Hamas could be on the verge of a significant military confrontation

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response will be so strong the earth will shake," warned Abu Obeida, a spokesman for Izz a-Din al-Kassam, the Hamas military wing.

The IDF has been conducting a low-key but highly effective operation in Gaza since the kidnapping of Cpl. Gilad Shalit in late June. In the four months since then, more than 300 Palestinians, most of them fighters, have been killed.

Persistent Palestinian rocket attacks on nearby towns and villages have not caused any Israeli fatalities during that period, and IDF losses in Gaza have been just one soldier dead, killed by "friendly fire."

Hamas militiamen in Gaza are said to be under tremendous pressure from the organization's radical, Damascus-based leadership to inflict heavier losses.

The looming confrontation could be averted if the fundamentalist Hamas and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas' secular Fatah party are able to overcome their differences and set up a national unity government. That could pave the way for a ceasefire and peace talks with Israel.

But Hamas' refusal to recognize Israel or be part of a government that does has led to deadlock. Without such recognition, the international community will not lift its boycott of the Palestinian Authority, nor will Israel be ready to begin peace talks.

Fatah has been unwilling to form a unity government on Hamas' terms. To break the impasse, Abbas is threatening to call new elections, but Hamas warns that if he does, there could be civil war. Growing instabil-

ity on the Palestinian side could intensify hostilities against Israel.

Moreover, Israeli officials are convinced that if there is a ceasefire, Hamas will merely use it to stockpile more weapons. This fundamental mistrust of Hamas' motives also helps make another serious round of fighting more likely.

The United States long ago reached the conclusion that as long as Hamas is in power there's no way the Israeli-Palestinian deadlock can be broken. According to unconfirmed reports, Washington already is taking action to topple Hamas and bring Fatah to power: The Bush administration reportedly has budgeted \$42 million to create "democratic alternatives" — in other words, to create an alternative secular education system, encourage critical journalists, help Fatah campaign strategies and enlarge Abbas' Force 17 presidential guard.

Whether this American initiative can prevent civil war among the Palestinians

or hostilities between Palestinian militias and Israel remains to be seen. Some observers think it could exacerbate an already difficult situation — and could even lead to Hamas militants attacking American targets.

Clearly, the situation is highly inflammable. Israeli officials believe that as long as Hamas militants are convinced they

can adapt the Lebanese model to embarrass and perhaps even ultimately defeat Israel, the chances for peacemaking on the Palestinian track are slim.

The Israeli view is that it's now up to the Palestinians to make a historic choice for war or peace. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert succinctly summed it up in his address opening the Knesset's winter session Monday.

"The Palestinians must decide what kind of future they want," he declared. That is, to decide between coexistence or continued conflict with Israel — or, in other words, between Fatah and Hamas.

'The Palestinians are arming themselves to the teeth, building a military force, defensive systems and preparing Hezbollah-style surprises.'

Alex Fishman

Military analyst, Yediot Achronot

African Jews adjust to democracy

CAPE TOWN (JTA) — The South African Jewish community has settled down and accepted the changes brought about by the country's transformation to democracy in 1994, according to a recent survey.

Conducted by the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Cape Town, the study found that the community now sees its long-term future in South Africa, citing as key factors its emotional attachment to the country and attachments to family, economic growth and religious freedom.

South African President Thabo Mbeki reportedly was "very excited and enthusiastic" about the results. In 2003, as keynote speaker at the South African Jewish Board of Deputies' centenary conference, Mbeki expressed shock that the Jewish community appeared destined to disappear.

Mbeki was referring to a 1998 survey, also carried out by the Kaplan Centre, in which only 44 percent of respondents said

they were "very likely" to continue living in South Africa. That figure has now jumped to 79 percent. Combined with those who were "fairly likely to stay," the total in 1998 was 71 percent. The recent survey, conducted in 2005 among 1,000 adults in the country's major Jewish population centers, put the comparable figure at 92 percent. The survey's margin of error is 3 percent.

In addition, respondents said they were satisfied with Jewish communal institutions, and they noted a climate of religious tolerance and diversity, Shain said. Anti-Semitism was seen as a minor problem in South Africa, though 73 percent of respondents said it was a major problem elsewhere.

However, 85 percent perceived anti-Zionism as more of an issue in South Africa. Sixty percent of respondents agreed with the statement that Israel should "give up some territory in exchange for credible guarantees of peace."



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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.
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Jewish groups oppose railway lawsuits

By BRETT KLINE

PARIS (JTA) — Mayer Grosman thinks back to Feb. 2, 1944, all the time.

French policemen and militia members came to his parents' apartment in Paris with orders to take two Grosman males — Grosman, age 6, and his father.

But Grosman's grandfather, whose name was not on the paper, insisted on going in place of 6-year-old Mayer. After jewelry and money exchanged hands, the police and militia agreed.

Grosman's father and grandfather, both Polish-born Jews, were taken on a train of the SNCF, the French national railway, to the Drancy internment camp north of Paris. From there, another SNCF train took them to Auschwitz, where they were gassed.

Grosman's mother took him and his sister and hit the road, hiding in French homes and churches. They survived the war.

Grosman, along with other deportees' families, received a settlement worth about \$24,000 from the French government in 2000. But when Alain Lipietz, a French deputy in the European Parliament whose father and uncle were rounded up and sent

to a holding area during the war won a cash indemnity worth about \$77,000 from the SNCF — the railway is appealing the case — Grosman decided he'd sue as well.

"I've never forgotten and never forgiven," said Grosman, 68. "I want recognition, and if my children and grandchildren can receive financial compensation, all the better."

More than 1,000 people, both Jews and non-Jews, have filed similar claim letters since the Lipietz case in Toulouse last summer. Under French law, the SNCF must respond to each letter individually within two months, or legal proceedings begin automatically.

Jewish community leaders in France have come out against claims on the SNCF. They argue that of all the state-run institutions active during World War II — including banks, insurance companies, the education system and many others run by high-level civil servants in prestigious posts — SNCF officials have made the greatest effort to be transparent and truthful in explaining their wartime activities to the French public.

"I understand the families," said Roger Cukierman, head of the CRIF, the umbrella organization of French Jewish groups. "I can feel their pain, but the SNCF has really made an effort to put together exhibits in train stations and other educational tools. If people take the SNCF to court, they could begin doing the same with other state-run groups such as the police, and then why not private companies? I understand the claims, but is this the right path to take?"

CRIF officials and community leaders — such as Serge Klarsfeld, the well-known Nazi-hunter, lawyer and head of the Sons and Daughters of Jewish Deportees from France — have criticized the lawsuits, but the CRIF has taken no official position.

The story gets more complicated. Klarsfeld's son, Arno, was highly praised in 1998 for representing plaintiffs in the trial

against Maurice Papon, a Vichy police boss who directed deportations from Bordeaux and went on to a decorated civil service career.

Arno Klarsfeld now represents the SNCF in New York, where deportees' families filed a class action suit against the French railway. He also works closely with Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy on providing legal papers to certain illegal immigrants in France, leading some to charge that his SNCF work is politically motivated.

Neither Serge nor Arno Klarsfeld returned phone calls for this article.

Historians consider the Holocaust the industrialization of mass murder on an unprecedented scale. In France, that industrialization is represented by the SNCF's efficiency in deporting mostly Jews, but also Resistance fighters and even railway workers who joined the Resistance.

"Right after the war, De Gaulle did a brilliant thing," said Corinne Hershkovitch, a lawyer representing some 500 families who have

launched claims against the SNCF. "All the major institutions, the banks, insurance companies, construction companies and so on, were issued a presidential pardon for collaborating with the Nazi regime, in the interest of French national unity. He managed to convince the French people that France had won the war."

The SNCF officially opened its wartime archives in 1992. The Bachelier Report, commissioned by the SNCF and written by a private French institute, was issued in 1996 and made available to the public in 1998, revealing some ugly details.

For example, the report noted that the Nazis asked for big barrels of water to be placed in each train car so people could quench their thirst on the trip to Auschwitz.

"French SNCF officials at the time refused to do so," Hershkovitch said. "They said putting barrels of water in each car could easily delay the trains and upset the schedule. They said that their job was to keep the trains rolling on time."

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

THIS WEEK

TUESDAY

- Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert leaves for a three day state visit to Russia.
- Dennis Ross, the former top U.S. Middle East peace negotiator, and Prince Zeid, the Jordanian ambassador to the United Nations, discuss "winners and losers" in the recent Israel-Hezbollah war, at the Princeton Club in New York.

WEDNESDAY

- Former President Clinton headlines a fund-raiser for the National Jewish Democratic Council at the Washington home of Sen. John Rockefeller (D-W.Va.)

FRIDAY

- The Holy Land Ecumenical Foundation has its eighth annual conference in Washington, through Saturday.

SUNDAY

- The Jewish Agency for Israel's board of governors begins a three-day meeting in Jerusalem. The 2007 budget and the agency's programs to assist rehabilitation efforts in northern Israel are on the docket.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Israel seeks Lebanon talks

Israel called for peace talks with Lebanon. Addressing the opening of the Knesset's fall session Monday, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said Israel made gains against Hezbollah during this summer's war in Lebanon.

He also voiced hope that the Aug. 14 cease-fire could be parlayed into peace talks with Beirut. "I want to take this opportunity to call on Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora to meet me face-to-face," Olmert said, adding that he hoped for "direct talks that would bring peace to our peoples."

Siniora, who has been at pains to offset Hezbollah's postwar appeal to many Lebanese, rebuffed the call.

Israel remembers missing airman

Israel marked 20 years since air force navigator Ron Arad went missing in action. Israeli schools Monday held commemorative classes and television and radio stations aired discussions on Arad, who became a cause celebre after bailing out of his crippled warplane over Lebanon on Oct. 16, 1986.

Defense Minister Amir Peretz said in a statement that Israel would continue its efforts to recover the airman, based on the assumption that he is alive. Arad was held by Shi'ite militiamen in Lebanon before disappearing.

Report: Egypt warns Hamas over hostage

Egypt reportedly urged Hamas to release a captured Israeli soldier. The London-based newspaper Asharq al-Awsat reported Monday that Egyptian intelligence chief Omar Suleiman, in talks this week with Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal, said that Palestinians holding Cpl. Gilad Shalit in the Gaza Strip have until the middle of next week to free him or risk provoking a massive Israeli invasion of the coastal territory.

According to the report, Meshaal said his group would stand firm in its demand that Israel release hundreds of jailed Palestinians in exchange for Shalit. Israel has ruled out such a swap.

WORLD

Olmert seeks Russian help on Iran

Ehud Olmert said he would lobby against the Iranian nuclear program this week during a trip to Russia.

The Israeli prime minister flies to Moscow on Tuesday for a two-day visit including talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin. "The Iranian threat and developments in North Korea will no doubt be central to the talks I will hold with the Russian president," Olmert told the Knesset on Monday.

Russia often has disagreed with U.S.-led efforts to curb Iran's nuclear program through sanctions, saying it's not convinced Tehran is seeking to develop nuclear weapons.

Russian arms sales to Syria also have come under scrutiny after evidence surfaced that the arms are reaching Hezbollah in Lebanon, as Israeli officials had predicted.

Israel welcomes N. Korea sanctions

Israel welcomed the U.N. Security Council resolution punishing North Korea for its nuclear testing. Israeli officials said Sunday that the unanimous Security Council decision to impose sanctions on Pyongyang in response to its controlled nuclear blast last week could send a message to Iran about its own atomic ambitions. "Iran, like North Korea, is a poor country.

Such sanctions have a deterrent power," one official said. Under

the sanctions resolution passed over the weekend, arms shipments going in and out of North Korea are subject to monitoring, a step that could help stem the flow of missile and nuclear technology if applied to Iran, Israeli officials said.

Ukrainian leader not coming to Israel

Ukraine's president will not visit Israel next month, contrary to reports. A press officer for Viktor Yushchenko told JTA last Friday that earlier reports of a state visit to Israel in early November were "a newspaper hoax."

Earlier this month, some media reported from Berlin that Yushchenko announced his upcoming visit to Israel when he and Israel's vice premier, Shimon Peres, received a prestigious international award in the German capital. A member of Yushchenko's administration told JTA that the visit is likely to take place at a later date.

This is at least the third time in two years that a potential visit by Yushchenko to Israel has been postponed.

France honors Jewish official

The Anti-Defamation League's Abraham Foxman received the French Legion of Honor. French President Jacques Chirac conferred France's highest civilian and military honor on the ADL's national director at a ceremony Monday in Paris.

Chirac emphasized Foxman's commitment to remembering the Holocaust, fighting anti-Semitism and promoting dialogue among all people.

Holocaust conference in Moldova

A Holocaust conference on Jews in formerly Romanian territories was held in Moldova.

Monday's conference, "Destiny of Jews in Bessarabia, Northern Bucovina and Transnistria in 1940-1944," was organized by the State Teacher Training University, Elie Wiesel's National Institute for Studying the Holocaust in Romania and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Scholars documented the deportations and executions of Jews in Transnistria, the non-Jewish population's attitude toward Jews and the history of the Jewish ghetto in Chisinau, formerly known as Kishinev.

NORTH AMERICA

Foer wins People's Choice award

Jonathan Safran Foer's "Everything Is Illuminated" was named the decade's best work of Jewish fiction.

More than 1,500 people voted online in the first People's Choice Award, sponsored by JBooks.com. Foer's 2004 novel was chosen by 34.7 percent, and Philip Roth's "The Plot Against America" was chosen by 29.3 percent.

The remaining finalists were Cynthia Ozick's "The Puttermesser Papers," Saul Bellow's "Ravelstein," Dara Horn's "In the Image" and Steve Stern's "The Wedding Jester."

Winners of the Koret International Jewish Book Awards were also announced today. Rochel Berman's "Dignity Beyond Death" won in the new category of Jewish life and living.

Rebecca Goldstein's "Betraying Spinoza" won for Jewish Thought, David Grossman's "Her Body Knows" won for Jewish fiction and Howard Schwartz took top honors in children's literature for "Before You Were Born."

The awards will be presented Nov. 15 in San Francisco during the Koret International Jewish Book Awards ceremony.

The awards are administered by Jewish Family & Life, in cooperation with the National Foundation for Jewish Culture.