

## IN THE NEWS

**High court backs 'targeted killings'**

Israel's top court upheld "targeted killings" of Palestinian terrorists.

After nearly five years of deliberations, the High Court of Justice on Thursday rejected petitions filed by civil-rights groups against the Israeli military's practice of tracking and killing Palestinians believed to be behind imminent terrorist attacks.

The three-justice panel said it was persuaded by the state's arguments in favor of the tactic as a last resort, but didn't give carte blanche. The High Court urged military commanders to review each operation to ensure that the risk of injuring Palestinian civilians is minimal.

**Ahmadinejad accused of inciting genocide**

A group of prominent lawyers, politicians and Jewish leaders are attempting to have Iran's president indicted on charges of incitement to genocide.

The initiative, announced Thursday in New York, claims that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's consistent Holocaust denial, his threats to "wipe Israel off the map" and his pursuit of nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities violate key provisions of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

The initiative was unveiled at an event sponsored by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

**New U.N. chief blasts Iran's Holocaust denial**

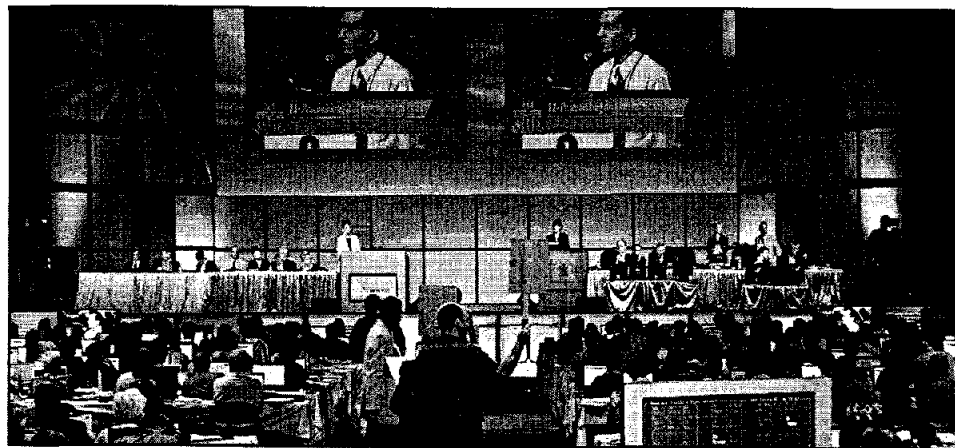
The incoming United Nations secretary-general said it was unacceptable for Iran to deny the Holocaust and threaten Israel.

"Denying historical facts, especially on such an important subject as the Holocaust, is just not acceptable," Ban Ki-moon said Thursday, according to Reuters. "Nor is it acceptable to call for the elimination of states or people."

# WORLD REPORT

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## After divestment fight, relations with Presbyterians remain strained



Rachel Pomerance

Presbyterian USA delegates debate a resolution replacing the church's 2004 Israel divestment vote at the group's General Assembly in Birmingham, Ala., in June.

By JACOB BERKMAN

**N**EW YORK (JTA) — Leaders of the Presbyterian Church (USA) apparently still have a long way to go before regaining the trust of the Jewish community — and even of some Presbyterians.

In 2004, the Presbyterians' General Assembly passed a resolution calling on the church to start the process of divesting its \$7 billion pension fund from companies that do more than \$1 million of business with Israel.

Israel's occupation of territories the Palestinians claim, the resolution said, "has proven to be at the root of evil acts committed against innocent people on both sides of the conflict."

The resolution, which also called on Congress to end all military aid to Israel until the occupation ends, passed by a vote of 432-62, with seven abstentions.

Seen as one of the more difficult divestment threats to date, American Jews and many within the Presbyterian Church rallied against it, holding scores of focus groups and conference calls with parties on both sides.

Two years later, meeting in Birmingham, Ala., this June, the General Assembly took a more balanced approach, asking its Mission Responsibility Through Investment group to seek what it called "affirmative investment opportunities" in Israel, Gaza, eastern Jerusalem and the West Bank.

The group targeted five companies for divestment: Motorola, United Technologies, ITT Industries and Caterpillar for working closely with the Israeli military, and Citigroup for handling accounts allegedly used to transfer funds to Palestinian terrorists.

Under the new resolution, even if the word

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FOCUS  
ON  
ISSUES

## ■ Meeting of Jewish and Presbyterian leaders couldn't complete the reconciliation

*Continued from page 1*

"divestment" will no longer be used, the Presbyterians still could try to pressure companies to cut business ties to Israel's military.

The resolution passed 483-28, with one abstention. It included an apology to Jews and Presbyterians who were offended by the 2004 resolution, saying, "We are grieved by the pain that this has caused, accept responsibility for the flaws in our process, and ask for mutual understanding and dialogue."

Even after a recent meeting of Presbyterian and Jewish leaders in Louisville, the reconciliation seems far from complete.

On Nov. 29, the Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick, clerk of the church's General Assembly; Rabbi Jerome Epstein, executive director of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism; Carl Sheingold, executive vice president of the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation; and Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Union for Reform Judaism, met and drafted a statement that said their communities would continue to consult with each other, support each other and work on social service issues together.

But some of those involved suspect the meeting may have been primarily intended to explain what has happened since the June General Assembly in Birmingham.

Critics say that when the church has communicated the outcome of the Birmingham resolution through its internal newsletter, "Assembly in Brief," and elsewhere, it describes the resolution as merely a clarification of the 2004 resolution rather than a repudiation.

Immediately after the Birmingham resolution, Ethan Felson, associate executive director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, wrote an Op-Ed for JTA saying that the handling of the 2004 conflict should be a model for future anti-divestment fights.

But the Presbyterian leadership's reluctance to acknowledge a significant change in divestment policy has raised serious questions inside and outside the church, especially among Presbyterians on the Peacekeeping Committee that put together the new resolution and Jewish leaders who engaged the Presbyterians in dialogue after 2004.

"I have seen and experienced great disappointment in what has happened since Birmingham," Felson told JTA. "The church took extreme pains to say that nothing had changed — and pain is the right word because we felt pain."

Felson was not invited to the reconciliation meeting in Louisville last month — nor were Orthodox groups — but he was skeptical of it.

"It's not too late, but the hope for a new beginning in Birmingham has yet to be realized," Felson said.

Within the church there appears to be a disconnect between ministers in the pulpit and those in the seminaries and the church's central offices.

Those on the ground have a more evenhanded approach to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict because they need to reflect their congregations. But among the church hierarchy, there is a distinctively pro-Palestinian bent, according to Gary Green, an ordained Presbyterian elder and executive director of End Divestment Now, a Presbyterian group started after the 2004 divestment overture.

After the intifada began in September 2000, a concerted effort was launched to sway the church toward the Palestinian side and delegitimize Israel, Green said. This was evidenced by the election of the Rev. Fahed Abu-Akel, a Palestinian-born minister, as moderator of the 2002 General Assembly.

Many delegates at the 2004 General Assembly were blindsided by the divestment resolution, unaware that it would even be

on the docket, Green said. They voted for it based on longstanding church policy not to profit from companies that make money from war.

However, polls after the 2004 General Assembly showed Presbyterian ministers that those in the pews overwhelmingly did not support the resolution. More than 20 overtures were written and presented at the 2006 General Assembly as alternatives to the 2004 resolution.

That rift displayed itself after the Birmingham General Assembly, as those on the pro-Palestinian side tried to claim that the new resolution represented only a change of language, not policy.

"I think they were minimizing the changes in their Mideast policy that took place in Birmingham," Mark Pelavin, director of the Reform movement's Committee on Interreligious affairs, told JTA after sitting in on the reconciliation meeting in Louisville.

Even last week the Rev. Jay Rock, coordinator of interfaith relations for the Presbyterian Church (USA), told JTA, "What happened in 2006 corrected what they thought rightly maybe was some lack of clarity."

In 2004, Rock said, the press misreported and misunderstood the General Assembly's resolution. In 2006 as well, initial reportage of the new resolution was based on misunderstanding, he said.

Those involved in the five-and-a-half-hour reconciliation meeting last month, however, say it wasn't just a photo opportunity. Kirkpatrick spent a long time trying to explain the reaction within the church to the new resolution.

"It was about speaking candidly, I hope, about how the actions since Birmingham have affected both communities and identifying how we can work together," Pelavin said.

Asked to characterize how far apart the Jewish and Presbyterian establishments were, the Conservative movement's Epstein said, "If when they voted on divestment was a one, and the ideal is a 10, my guess is we are at a six or a seven. We have certainly crossed the 50-yard line. Whether we are in field-goal range, I don't know."

Even without using the word 'divestment,' the Presbyterian Church (USA) still could try to pressure companies to cut business ties to Israel's military.



### WORLD REPORT

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# College students applaud gay ruling

By CAMPUSJ.COM

NEW YORK (JTA) — Conservative Jewish college students across the country were applauding the movement's increased inclusion of gays and lesbians last week, even as they acknowledged it would do little to change their already accepting campus communities.

"I don't think it'll affect Jewish life on campus," Nathan Weiner, executive director of the National Union of Jewish LGBTQ Students — a group for gay, bisexual and transgender Jewish college students — told CampusJ.

"I think Jewish campus life and most of the Conservative movement progressed a long time ago. It was just a matter of whether the leadership would catch up."

Weiner said Conservative groups on campus already include gays and lesbians. He said the greater inclusion will have more of an impact in USY, the movement's youth group, which had restricted employment in its regional and national groups — largely staffed by college students — to heterosexuals.

The decision by the Conservative movement's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards allowing rabbis to officiate at same-sex commitment ceremonies and accepting gay rabbis was a hot topic on many campuses.

At the University of Pennsylvania, campus Conservative Rabbi Michael Uram devoted a Friday night speech to explaining the decision. At Indiana University, a course in Jewish folklore discussed news articles about it and viewed the documentary about gay and lesbian Orthodox Jews, "Trembling Before G-d." At Washington University, Conservative students held a "Coming Out Party" at Friday night dinner, where they distributed copies of newspaper articles and the most permissive responsum.

Rabbi Mychal Copeland of the Stanford University Hillel, who is one of the few openly lesbian rabbis at a Hillel and has started LGBTQ groups for Jewish students at two schools, said Jewish students at Stanford used the decision as an opportunity to engage in textual study, and to learn about the different denominations and their approaches to Jewish law.

It's "raising interest in what all the different sects of Judaism are about," she said, noting "that's significant in a world

where people want to be just Jewish, and as students don't want to be pigeon-holed into different movements."

Copeland, a Reconstructionist, said Conservative students in her Jewish Queers group are excited that "there's gonna be so many out gay and lesbian rabbis in the Conservative movement," and that they also "hope this makes

a difference in their congregations, especially undergrads who are dealing with coming-out at home, to their families and the rabbis of their congregations."

For many Conservative students planning on attending rabbinical school, it was cause for celebration.

"The committee's work embodies a first step on a sacred journey toward full inclusion," Aaron Weininger, a gay Conservative undergraduate deciding among rabbinical schools, told CampusJ.

Hillary Blank, a straight Conservative undergraduate who plans to attend the Jewish Theological Seminary's rabbinical school, said that "I am very moderate politically but on issues in Judaism, I consider myself very liberal — as on the issue of homosexuality from the religious perspective — so I was very happy to see that this was accepted."

Conservative student leaders also expressed support. At Washington University, the Conservative minyan issued a statement expressing solidarity with Keshet, the Jewish LGBT group there.

"I think it's great," Eliot Gordon, the co-chairman of the University of Pennsylvania's Conservative Jewish Community — one of the more active campus Conservative groups — told CampusJ. "As a progressive community we want to follow the tide of the times and respect



Brian Hendler

Students celebrate the Conservative endorsement of a halachic position allowing gay rabbis and same-sex commitment ceremonies Dec. 6 in New York.

gay rights while balancing this with traditional Jewish beliefs. This is a hard thing to do, but I'm excited about the decision."

While some students hoping for a more progressive decision were unhappy with the continued ban on male intercourse, and the two responsa that expressed a negative viewpoint toward homosexuality, others considered the regressive aspects irrelevant.

Copeland said Conservative students at her campus are looking to the progressive elements as "a foot in the door" and the regressive elements as "laughable" because they consider it impossible that "anybody would refrain from any kind of sexual activity that they

**We want to follow the tide of the times and respect gay rights while balancing this with traditional Jewish beliefs.**

**Eliot Gordon**

Co-chairman, University of Pennsylvania's Conservative Jewish Community

would want to engage in."

However, Weiner was less pleased. "I'm torn because I feel like any progress is good progress, but in my initial reading, I felt that it was a slap in the face," he said. "Keeping the ban on male sodomy is problematic: it's almost like they're saying you can be a rabbi, but like a Catholic priest, they're asking you to be celibate."

Weiner, who grew up as a Conservative Jew, called the move "too little, too late" to get him to return to the movement, which he left in college.

(Reporting by Sam Guzik, Laura Birnbaum, Jordan Magaziner, Ben Greenberg and Steven I. Weiss.)

# Jewish kids can like Christmas, too

By WENDY MOGEL

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — In a second-grade classroom I visited recently, the children were comparing how many presents they were going to receive for Christmas. When they finished, Sarah announced, "I don't celebrate Christmas, I celebrate Chanukah. We get eight presents every night for eight nights."

Even for those who were not yet up on their multiplication tables, her total clearly trumped the previous top scorer. It was a valiant attempt to compete with Christmas, and I think it worked on the other children. But she couldn't fool me. I've been there myself, plus I'm a therapist.

Therapists aim to place themselves in their client's shoes. What is life like for them? What is their subjective experience?

So let's be a young Jewish child living in North America in the weeks leading up to Dec. 25.

Your best friend, who is not Jewish, lives down the street. Her parents, who normally won't allow her to bring anything bigger than a twig or a rock into the house, drag a dark, fragrant, 7-foot fir tree through the front door. For hours they work to decorate the tree with twinkling and glittering objects.

■  
This unusual activity is in preparation for a visit from a man traveling from the North Pole in a sleigh drawn by reindeer. He wears a red suit decorated with white fur, lands on their roof and enters their house through their chimney. In exchange for a simple offering of cookies and a glass of milk, he delivers to them exactly the presents their hearts desire (as long as his magical list shows that they have been "nice").

Where do all these gifts come from? They were made and wrapped by happy, highly industrious elves.

When you go to the store with your mom to buy a present for your teacher, the saleswoman leans over and asks "The Question." Even if your family buys all their holiday presents online or at the Chanukah boutique at the temple, if you don't live in Tel Aviv or Monsey, N.Y., someone will ask, "What do you want Santa to bring you?"

You aren't sure what to say to be polite and still protect your pride. Santa doesn't come to your house — not because of the

naughty-nice business, but because you don't celebrate Christmas. You, as a 3-year-old non-Jewish acquaintance of mine says, celebrate "Harmonica."

For a whole month your life is like the saying, "Don't think about an elephant." You can't help it because the elephants are everywhere.

Now let's go to your house. The home of no graven images, maybe a few blue-and-white decorations. On the first few nights of Chanukah your family puts pale wax candles in a cold, metal, fork-like object as a tribute to a military victory and something called the miracle of

the oil — a story considerably less romantic than the one about three wandering kings following a star to a baby in a manger.

As for Chanukah rituals, there is always some confusion about the proper prayers, the right combination of words and melody, because you don't hear them all day, every day playing at the mall.

You host or attend a party or two where you eat latkes, a treat so delicious that you say, like you do about charoset at Passover and cranberry sauce and pumpkin pie at Thanksgiving, "Why don't we have this every week?"

You play a gambling game by spinning a little chunk of wood, but no one is quite sure of the rules. Instead of money you use chocolate coins wrapped in foil, each alike, except the ones that are squashed, all a bit waxy when you take a bite.

All of this is sweet and delightful and you do get a lot of presents, but they are spread out over eight nights, so the getting doesn't have the majesty of one huge blow-out of unwrapping, swooning and delirium. There are only two songs to sing for your holiday, one very straightforward, detailing action by action exactly what you're doing anyway — "Lalalalalalalala, come light the menorah, let's have a party, we'll all dance the hora" — and one about an old rock.

As an adult, it is tempting to spin this situation for your child: Honey, you are so lucky, you get presents for eight nights!... We celebrate Chanukah and so many other wonderful holidays all the year through!...

But these concepts ask your child to

stretch her mind to encompass the whole cinematic epic of how wonderful Jewish traditions are and, at the moment, your child isn't looking at a movie. She is looking at a bright, colorful snapshot, and the snapshot is filled with such potent allure that your words float off into the category of grown-up speak, a category that contains nonsense such as, "You don't really want that ice-cream cone so close to dinner, you just think you do."

It's hard to empathize with people who seem to have everything. Yes, our children have amazingly good lives; yes, they have a stunningly profound religious heritage; yes, their parents are hopelessly devoted. But they don't have Christmas, and we can do

them a kindness by taking a moment in the next few weeks to look at the temporarily dazzling world of Christmas from their perspective.

We don't have to put up a tree or sing carols or give

them eight presents for eight nights, but we can let them know that we know how it looks from down there.

The received wisdom for Jewish parents is not to dilute, pollute or mix traditions. Christmas is such a joy bully, if you let any of it in the door, Chanukah will be blown out the window. But just as Republicans don't own family values, Christians haven't appropriated winter gladness and glitter.

An alternative to Christmaphobia is to be relaxed and expansive. We don't want the children to be ashamed of their longing or to have to hide their pleasure. Instead, let's call a magnificent holiday a magnificent holiday, and let our minor holiday be minor. Have a festive Chanukah party, but think about making a gingerbread house, driving around to look at the decorations, choosing your favorite house. Serve eggnog and decorate cookies at home.

As Jews, we have the freedom to selectively appreciate this holiday. We are spared some of the frenzied shopping countdown and can enjoy the visions, the aromas and the lights that are so welcome at this dark and chilly time of year. We can share with our children all the pleasure the season has to offer and protect them from feeling ashamed about it. That is a gift they can keep and pass down to our grandchildren.

## CHANUKAH FEATURE

Let's call a magnificent holiday a magnificent holiday, and let our minor holiday be minor.

# Mah jongg making a comeback

By SUE FISHKOFF

SAN FRANCISCO (JTA) — Three dozen people, all women except for two young boys, are sitting around card tables in the Bureau of Jewish Education's library getting ready to learn how to play mah jongg. Each table has a full set of 152 plastic tiles spread out, face down, and the players are listening to teacher Marc Wernick explain the rules.

"East throws out first," he instructs each foursome. "Pick your lousiest tile, make a complaint about your kids, and throw it down."

The women laugh knowingly. Talking about the family is a time-honored tradition in mah jongg, an ancient Chinese game that came over from Shanghai in the early 1920s.

In 1937 the National Mah Jongg League formed to standardize the rules for American play. There are more than 275,000 members today, most of them Jewish women.

Mah jongg caught on quickly in this country among Jewish women, but suffered a slump by the 1970s, when women entered the work force en masse and few young Jewish women took up the game. Mah jongg skipped a generation, although it lingered on in Miami high-rise buildings, Hadassah groups and senior centers.

Now there's been a major resurgence of interest among women in their 20s, 30s and 40s. And what is being called the first online tournament will be held during Chanukah on Mahjongtime.com. The

tournament starts at sundown Dec. 16 and runs through sundown Dec. 23, with the four players at the final table winning cash prizes up to \$2,000.

In the game's heyday, women would meet, usually weekly, at one another's homes to play the fast-moving game, clicking and clacking their tiles, snacking on refreshments, and talking about their lives.

## CHANUKAH FEATURE

Judy Watman remembers her mother playing the game with her friends in their Cleveland home in the 1950s.

Watman, who still has her mother's card table and monogrammed mah jongg tablecloth, organized a beginners' group two years ago at her synagogue, Beth Am Israel, along Philadelphia's Main Line. Eight or nine women come each time, all members of the congregation.

"We talk about the holidays or things that happen in synagogue," Watman says. "When someone's sick, we support each other. It's a female connection thing."

Many of the younger women who are part of the resurgence say they are moved by nostalgia, looking to forge a connection with mothers and grandmothers who played the game before them.

The group at San Francisco's Bureau

of Jewish Education includes several mother-daughter pairs, one mother-son duo, and a multigenerational grouping.

Rochelle Green, 38, has come with her 66-year-old mother, Myra, and her 12-year-old daughter, Ariana Miller.

Green says her mom dragged them there.

"She said she wanted to expose us to Jewish games," Green recalled. "I said, what, besides guilt?"

"It was fun," Ariana says shyly.

The mah jongg revival started about five years ago, but has gained momentum in the past year or two. Today many JCCs, synagogues, federations and other Jewish institutions are running beginners' classes and holding drop-in sessions.

Linda Feinstein has been teaching mah jongg for six years in and around Manhattan. She estimates that she's taught more

than 1,200 people, all women, virtually all Jewish. And the interest isn't letting up.

Feinstein saw a big upsurge after 9-11, as if people felt the need for comfort and camaraderie.

"People said, 'I want to get together with other women,'" she says.

Most of her students are in their 50s or 60s. Many have brought their daughters.

But it's not just women anymore.

Roni Antebi organizes the Friday afternoon drop-in game at Seattle's Jewish Community Center. The 12 to 15 regulars are women, mostly in their 60s or older. Except for 26-year-old David Smith.

Smith, a student at Bastyr University, decided to take up mah jongg as part of an assignment for a class on multicultural psychology.

In November he walked into the JCC and saw he was the only person in his 20s, and the only man.

"It was kind of awkward," Smith admits.

But the women quickly warmed to him and taught him the ropes. They didn't even make him pay up when he lost, which he did every game.

On his second visit he showed up with cookies, and even won a game. The women haven't tried to fix him up yet, he reports, "but they have started to poke around." ■

Many women who are part of the resurgence want to forge a connection with mothers and grandmothers.



Sue Fishkoff

Myra Green, second from left, brought daughter Rochelle Green, center, and granddaughter Ariana Miller to the first mah jongg class held at San Francisco's Bureau of Jewish Education.



# Ukrainians want Jews out — poll

By VLADIMIR MATVEYEV

KIEV, Ukraine (JTA) — One-third of Ukrainians do not want Jews in their country, a new survey found.

Conducted by the Kiev International Institute of Sociology, the study found that 36 percent of respondents do not want to see Jews as citizens of Ukraine, compared to 26 percent in a similar survey conducted in 1994.

Researchers also found that anti-Semitic attitudes were especially widespread among younger respondents. According to the survey, 45 percent of respondents aged 18 to 20 do not want to see Jews as citizens of Ukraine.

"The attitude toward Jews is not the worst; it's in the middle of our diagram," Vladimir Panioto, director of the Kiev International Institute of Sociology, told JTA. "Ukrainians harbor even more negative feelings to Gypsies and black people."

Regarding Gypsies, or Roma, 71.8 percent of respondents said they did not want to see them as citizens of Ukraine, and 61.4 percent expressed a similar attitude toward ethnic Romanians.

The survey of 2,000 respondents in 24 regions of Ukraine was conducted Oct. 13-24.

Jewish leaders and activists differed in their assessments of the survey.

One activist said it was an accurate reflection of widespread anti-Jewish and xenophobic moods in Ukrainian society.

Moreover, said Alexander Naiman, Ukrainian authorities are exacerbating the situation by not doing enough to improve it.

Authorities thus far have failed to take "a proper stand on the problems of ethnic minorities in Ukraine," said Naiman, who heads the country's Anti-Defamation League in Kiev, a group that is not affiliated with ADL in the United States.

Those who agree with Naiman believe that anti-Jewish sentiments have become even more common in this country of 47 million as a result of the situation in the Middle East, particularly in the wake of Israel's war with Hezbollah this summer.

"Xenophobia is on the rise in Ukraine partly because Ukrainian authorities do nothing to curb it and partly because of biased information concerning the situation in the Middle East" in the Ukrainian media, said Mikhail Frenkel, a Jewish journalist and the head of the Association of Jewish Media in Ukraine.

According to an annual audit of anti-Sem-

itism in Ukraine published earlier this year by the Jewish Agency for Israel, the number of violent anti-Semitic attacks against individuals in Ukraine increased 50 percent in 2005 over the previous year.

Frenkel and other activists also blamed the Interregional Academy for Personnel Management, or MAUP, a Kiev-based private university that has become a major purveyor of anti-Semitic propaganda in Ukraine.

Jewish leaders tend to agree that despite some recent developments, particularly the closure of several MAUP regional branches, Ukraine is

not doing enough to stop anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli propaganda by the school leadership.

But some leading figures in the community said that findings of the survey required a more balanced approach and that the Jewish situation in Ukraine is not as bleak as the survey suggests.

"There is xenophobia and there is MAUP, but we should take into account that all ethnic minorities continue to develop freely in Ukraine," said Josef Zissels, leader of the Ukrainian Va'ad and one of the most influential figures in the Jewish community.

## Racism still plagues Polish politics

PRAGUE (JTA) — Poland's education minister has been fighting for a year to prove that he and his party, the ultra-conservative League of Polish Families, have rejected anti-Semitism.

But two recent incidents connecting the league with neo-Nazis reveal the uphill battle Roman Giertych faces and suggest that more needs to be done to eradicate xenophobia from Polish political life.

In a video that circulated on the Internet in late November, league supporters were seen shouting "Sieg Heil!" at a neo-Nazi rally in southern Poland.

Members of the league's All Polish Youth association, a so-called club of patriots, are accused of organizing and participating in the 2004 rally first revealed by the Polish daily newspaper Dziennik. The video, which shows attendees celebrating in front of a massive burning swastika, has drawn international media attention.

Giertych, honorary chairman of All Polish Youth, has called for the state prosecutor to investigate the rally, since propagating Nazi ideology is illegal in Poland.

A few days after the video surfaced, another leading Polish daily, Gazeta Wyborcza, ran photos showing the league's deputy head, Wojciech Wierzejski, at a 2002 concert of Polish neo-Nazi and white supremacist rock bands.

Wierzejski refused to speak to the media about the incident. He said on his Web site that he was merely listening to "patriotic music."

In the 1990s, according to Polish journalists, Wierzejski wrote that "international Jewry was the enemy of the Polish national movement."

All of which makes the job tougher for Giertych, who repeatedly has denounced anti-Semitism since the Catholic-based league joined the government coalition last year after

garnering 8 percent of the vote in national elections.

The league is the post-communist incarnation of Endecja, a political movement between the two world wars whose members attacked university students as part of an openly anti-Semitic party platform.

Giertych, who also is deputy prime minister, emphasized in a July interview with JTA that he had cleansed his party of racism, and called himself a friend of Israel. He also attended a May commemoration of the 1941 Jedwabne pogrom.

"Nobody makes anti-Semitic statements, because if they do they will be kicked out from our party the next day," Giertych told JTA in the interview.

Krzysztof Bosak, a member of Parliament and current head of All Polish Youth, dismissed the notion that the group was a haven for fascists.

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

**Roman Giertych**

Chairman, League of Polish Families

## ENVIRONMENT

## Turning on to energy efficiency

By BEN HARRIS

**N**EW YORK (JTA) — For centuries, Chanukah has brought warmth and light to Jewish homes at the darkest time of the year. Now two Jewish organizations are using the eight-day festival to warn about too much warmth and light.

The Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life and the Jewish Council for Public Affairs are teaming up this Chanukah for a nationwide education and advocacy campaign about global warming and energy conservation.

Both groups want to shed light on the global warming problem — but a more energy-efficient light.

The bright idea at the center of their effort this Chanukah, which begins Dec. 15, is to encourage Jewish institutions to switch to compact fluorescent light bulbs, or CFLs, which consume 75 percent less energy.

Apparently unable to choose among clever Jewish light references, the campaign is known both as “A Light Among the Nations” and “How Many Jews Does it Take to Change a Lightbulb?”

COEJL Executive Director Barbara Lerman-Golomb is hoping that installing the bulbs will turn the public on to the need for greater energy conservation.

“The idea behind it is that we can start with a simple action that will lead to larger actions that we can take,” Lerman-Golomb told JTA.

More than 350 Jewish institutions have already signed on.

COEJL estimates it will sell 20,000 of the compact fluorescent light bulbs, which Lerman-Golomb says will prevent more than 8,000 tons of carbon dioxide from entering the atmosphere.

The bulbs not only save money by consuming less energy, but last longer than regular bulbs while providing the same illumination.

Rabbi Fred Scherlinder Dobb, a Reconstructionist rabbi in Maryland and a member of the COEJL board, designed a ceremony for congregations to use in sanctifying the bulb installation. ■

## A Spanish story of Holocaust survival

By LARRY LUXNER

**BUENOS AIRES (JTA)** — On his 68th birthday, Jorge Klainman decided he could remain silent no more about his Holocaust horrors.

The Polish-born, retired businessman sat at his electric typewriter, he said, “and suddenly the curtains of my memory began to part, revealing events that happened 50 or 60 years ago. After that my life changed completely. I felt liberated.”

The result was “El Septimo Milagro,” a harrowing Spanish-language tale of life and death in a series of Nazi concentration camps that has captivated readers from Buenos Aires to Barcelona.

Translated into English as “The Seventh Miracle” and into Hebrew as “Nes Ha-Shev’i,” Klainman’s first-person account differs from most other Holocaust memoirs in its extraordinary attention to detail. It ranges from the 1939 roundup of Jews from his Polish hometown of Kielce to Klainman’s frightful March 1944 encounter with psychopathic concentration camp commandant Amon Goeth, the SS officer portrayed by Ralph Fiennes in Steven Spielberg’s movie “Schindler’s List.”

Goeth marked Klainman, then 15, for execution by firing squad.

“My mind refused to comprehend the reality of what was happening,” Klainman wrote. “The end had come. They were going to shoot me and burn me. I thought of my loved ones, and that soon I would be joining them. I reached a state of mind where I just wanted, with all my being, to get it over with.”

But Klainman’s Ukrainian executioners somehow missed their target, and later that night fellow Jewish prisoners risked their lives to bring his bleeding body to the camp infirmary. A kindly doctor there gradually nursed the teenager back to health.

Fate intervened five more times before he was liberated by American soldiers in 1945, and Klainman was saved from certain death.

In 1947 — with the help of international Jewish organizations — Klainman set sail from Italy to Rio de Janeiro, caught a plane

to Asuncion, Paraguay, and smuggled himself across the heavily guarded border into Argentina, where he eventually married and raised a family.

“Six actual miracles occurred and saved my life,” according to Klainman, 78. “The seventh was my being able to write the story.”

And now, with anti-Semitism again rising throughout his adopted country, Klainman told JTA he feels compelled to share that story with Argentines who may not have yet gotten the message.

“Ten years from now there won’t be any Holocaust survivors left to transmit the truth to young people,” he said in an interview at his Buenos Aires apartment.

Klainman, a jewelry retailer by profession, lived in Tel Aviv from 1971 to 1990 and again from 1999 to 2004.

He said the reaction of Argentina’s Christians to his book is much stronger than the Jews because “the Jews already know this story.”

Klainman said he was inspired to write “El Septimo Milagro” after his son Miguel began asking him troubling questions about his past.

“For 50 years I guarded my silence like a hermit, but then I got tired of

these delinquents denying the Holocaust,” he said.

It took Klainman four months to write the book.

“When I read what I had written, I realized nobody would believe it was true,” he said. “So we [Klainman and his wife, Teresa] decided to travel to Poland to look for details. It was very traumatic, that first time back in Poland, more so for Teresa than for me.”

“Jorge didn’t talk about it. I knew very little,” said Teresa Klainman, an Argentina native who had no idea what a concentration camp was until she met her husband. “I knew he was a survivor, that he had no family and that he was in camps, but it was a taboo subject.

The Klainmans would return to Poland twice more, most recently as part of a program to bring Jewish children to Poland to teach them firsthand about the horrors of the Holocaust. ■

I got tired of these delinquents denying the Holocaust.

Jorge Klainman,

Author, “El Septimo Milagro”  
(The Seventh Miracle)

## NEWS IN BRIEF

## MIDEAST

**Rockets hit southern Israel**

A Kassam rocket hit the southern Israeli town of Sderot. Ha'aretz reported that the rocket, fired Thursday evening from northern Gaza, damaged buildings and vehicles; four people were treated for shock. It followed a similar attack earlier in the day, in which a rocket struck a kibbutz in the western Negev, damaging property but causing no injuries.

**Yad Vashem hosts Holocaust counter-conference**

Yad Vashem hosted an event to counter Iran's Holocaust denial conference.

Forty foreign diplomats gathered Thursday in Jerusalem for a symposium titled "Holocaust Denial: Paving the Way to Genocide." Participants called for the international community to take action against Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who has called the Nazi genocide a myth and hosted international Holocaust deniers in Tehran this week.

**Troops foil bombing**

Israeli troops foiled a Palestinian bombing.

Soldiers manning a checkpoint outside the West Bank city of Nablus discovered a 20-pound explosives belt Thursday during a search of a Palestinian car. The vehicle's occupants, believed to be terrorists from Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah faction, were arrested.

**Two killed in West Bank**

Israeli security forces killed two Palestinians in West Bank raids.

Undercover troops shot dead an Al-Aksa Brigades fugitive in Nablus on Thursday, witnesses said. At least three Palestinian bystanders were injured in the incident.

**Olmert-Prodi talk taped**

Israeli television broadcast footage that appeared to show Ehud Olmert coaching his Italian counterpart on what to tell reporters about the Palestinians.

Channel 10 on Wednesday aired footage of the Israeli prime minister, who visited Rome earlier in the day, quietly conferring with Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi ahead of their joint press conference.

"It is important that you emphasize the three principles of 'the Quartet' — that they are not negotiated.

They are the basis for everything. Please say this?" Olmert tells his counterpart, referring to Western demands that the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority renounce terrorism, recognize Israel's right to exist and honor past Israeli-Palestinian agreements. Addressing reporters later, Prodi did make such a statement, and also endorsed Israel's character as a Jewish state.

## NORTH AMERICA

**Hezbollah still operating in Canada**

Hezbollah is still engaged in fundraising and other activities in Canada.

Secret reports from Canada's intelligence establishment make the assertions several years after the government outlawed the Lebanese group as a terrorist entity.

The Toronto-based National Post newspaper, which used the Access to Information Act to attain copies of several secret intelligence assessments. One of the heavily edited reports indicated that Hezbollah still has a presence in Canada and its "activities in Canada

include fundraising, [censored] collection and the procurement of equipment."

**O.U. opposes rabbi talk ban**

The Orthodox Union slammed Israeli legislation that would bar religious outreach to youth.

"Israel is the Jewish state and Israelis should be free to engage each other — even on the street — in discussions about Jewish tradition, observance and heritage," the umbrella body for U.S. Orthodoxy said in a statement Wednesday.

The bill, presented Monday, would bar adults from pressuring anyone aged 18 or younger to intensify their religious involvement through action such as donning tefillin on street corners.

**Neturei Karta defends Holocaust denial conference**

A fervently Orthodox fringe sect defended its decision to attend a Holocaust denial conference in Iran.

Ilan Deutch, a spokesman for the anti-Zionist Neturei Karta group, said in an interview Thursday that members of the group went to the controversial Tehran parley this week as part of its efforts to "prove" that the Holocaust has been misused to build political support for Israel. "For the sake of saving Jews from Zionism, you have to do these things sometimes," Deutch told Israel Radio.

**Koch to Holocaust board: Boot Prager**

Ed Koch wants Dennis Prager kicked off the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council.

The former New York City mayor plans to ask the council's advisory board to remove Prager, a columnist and radio host, because he condemned Keith Ellison, a Muslim who recently was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from Minnesota, for saying he will take the oath of office with his hand on a Koran, in a private ceremony after the mass swearing-in.

The Bible is often used at such events, and Prager says Ellison is disregarding an American tradition.

**Rabbi stars in video game**

A new video game claims to be the first with a rabbi as its hero. "The Shivah," launched this week by Manifesto Games in New York, features a rabbi who sets off on a murder-mystery quest after his cash-strapped congregation receives an unexpected donation.

Manifesto, which deals in downloadable games, is selling "The Shivah" for \$5.

## WORLD

**Study: Circumcision reduces HIV risk**

Circumcision halves a man's risk of contracting AIDS from heterosexual sex, a study found.

Officials from the U.S. National Institutes of Health announced the findings Wednesday, based on clinical trials in Kenya and Uganda that confirmed a study done last year in South Africa. The New York Times reported.

**Study on extremism 'unserious'**

A German political scientist challenged a recent study that showed a rise in right-wing extremism in Germany.

Klaus Schroeder called the Friedrich Ebert Foundation study "unserious," according to a report in the Nuremberg Zeitung newspaper.

The study suggested that extremism was especially problematic in the southern German state of Bavaria. Speaking to journalists in Munich, Schroeder said the study — conducted in Leipzig, in eastern Germany — came to "completely absurd conclusions."