



W O R L D  
U N I O N F O R  
P R O G R E S S I V E  
J U D A I S M



ה א י ג ו ד  
ה ע ו ל מ י  
ל י ה ד ו ת  
מ ת ק ד מ ת

## International, Regional and Committee Reports to the International Assembly

March 16, 2006  
16 Adar 5766

Hannover, Germany





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## Greetings

Steven M. Bauman, Chairman  
Rabbi Uri Regev, President

Dear Friends,

On these pages you will read about a most extraordinary year in the life of the World Union for Progressive Judaism:

- New Progressive communities and congregations are forming all around the world.
- Regional movements are getting stronger and more proactive.
- The seeds of social and political advocacy are bearing fruit.
- Interaction and sharing among communities and regions are on the rise.
- Young people are developing their sense of Jewish identity and becoming more involved, both locally and internationally.
- The management and programs of the World Union are entering a new era of strategic, long-term planning and implementation.

There are still many challenges that lie ahead, both financial and logistical, but we are more excited than ever before about the direction in which we are headed.

Please do take the time to read these reports. We hope they will inspire you to deepen your involvement with the World Union. Call us, write to us. Take part in the exciting journey that is the global movement of Progressive Judaism.

B'shalom,

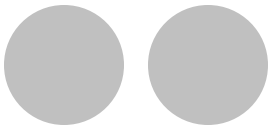
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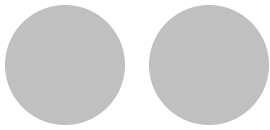
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# Reports from the Regions



## Australia, Asia and New Zealand

Phyllis Dorey, President, UPJ

Janice P. Alper, Executive Director, UPJ

The constituency of the Union for Progressive Judaism (UPJ) includes 18 congregations, two affiliated day schools, *Netzer* Australia and ARZA. An executive committee comprising a cross section of individuals from the region governs the UPJ.

The UPJ executive director, Janice Alper, visited and worked with almost all of the many and diverse communities throughout the region in 2005. She learned first hand about their needs and expectations while sharing her expertise with them and establishing a network of special interest groups.

In 2005, the executive committee of the UPJ “met” every six weeks via telephone conference to discuss matters of governance and programming, focusing on the development of a three-year strategic plan. At the same time, they implemented a number of new and exciting initiatives:

### ***Zera'im* – UPJ Leadership Institute**

This highly successful pilot program began with a three-day retreat for 15 participants from Australia and New Zealand. They continued meeting once a month for six months by phone for a series of facilitated workshops, study and discussions sessions and project-based learning between sessions. Each participant was matched with an experienced “learning partner/mentor” in his or her community for support and to share the experience. This program will be offered twice in 2006 in two different locations within the region.

### **Education**

The UPJ sent a small group of its religion school teachers to the July 2005 Limmud Oz program in Sydney, and provided them with additional, highly successful follow-up seminars to help them review materials, write and test curriculum, and share ideas and experiences. This program was developed and facilitated by the UPJ executive director and one of its rabbis. The participants have since joined our Progressive Jewish Educators Network

### **Marketing**

In an effort to establish itself as a recognisable entity a new logo was developed with a tag line that reflects the work and commitment of the UPJ to its constituency — *“Uniting Communities Through Shared Beliefs and Vision.”*

The tag line served as the springboard for a strategic plan that involved all of the members and affiliates of the UPJ to set realistic goals and priorities for the organization in the next three to five years. A new Web site, reflecting the new image and strategic direction, is now under construction.

The UPJ sends its constituents a monthly online newsletter providing regular updates about programs, activities and visits and sharing experiences, resources and successes.

We also circulate an email newsletter – ProjeNews – to thousands of individual subscribers with news of events within the Progressive and wider Jewish communities in the region as well as national and international articles of interest and importance.

Finding the most appropriate and cost-effective technology (e.g. Interwise) to communicate over vast distances and time zones is an ongoing challenge and a high priority for 2006.

### **Programs and conference**

The UPJ's 2005 annual conference, held from 17-20 November 2005 in Brisbane, actively engaged its participants in challenging and creative workshop sessions, focused around the conference theme: *"Who is wise? One who learns from everyone."* (*Pirke Avot*) The constituents endorsed the executive committee's decision to move to holding biennial conferences, with an extensive calendar of a range of interesting programs in the alternate years.

### **Progressive Jewish Professionals Network**

Following the conference in Brisbane, the UPJ held a professional development retreat for all the regional rabbis, cantors, Jewish education professionals in leadership positions, youth workers, *shlichim*, executive directors and general managers. Everyone felt that the retreat was a great success and agreed to meet at least once a year.

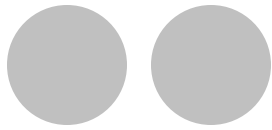
### **Other 2005 activities**

In January, the UPJ sponsored two regional representatives to participate in the annual Beutel Leadership Seminar in Israel. In June, a small but enthusiastic contingent of Australians represented the UPJ at the *Va'ad HaPoel* and JAFI Assembly meetings in Jerusalem, as well as ARZENU seminars and community visits. In July, 10 UPJ delegates, including two youth representatives, attended the 32<sup>nd</sup> World Union for Progressive Judaism convention in Moscow. They actively participated in the program, leading several workshops, and were presented with an award acknowledging the UPJ's ongoing support for refugee relief in communities in Israel and the FSU. Two of the UPJ's past presidents were elected to the new World Union executive board: Philip Bliss as a vice chairman and Penny Jakobovits as a member.

In August, the King David School in Melbourne and the Emanuel School in Sydney ran a very enjoyable joint Zionist program in Victoria that created stronger ties between the schools and among the students. The schools' Y'esh Israel Tour, a three-week educational program for year 10 students from 7-30 December, was a great success.

The Union for Progressive Judaism continues to be represented on a number of federal (Australian) Jewish organisations – such as the Executive Council of Australian Jewry and the Zionist Federation of Australia – as well as all the state Jewish roof body organisations and those bodies in New Zealand, where the movement's voices and points of view are heard and contributions widely respected.

For further information, please visit the UPJ Web site: <http://www.upj.org.au/>



## Europe

Gordon Smith, Chairman, ER

Linda Kann, Project Development Manager, ER

During 2005, the European Region (ER) continued its work of encouraging and assisting the development of Progressive Jewish communities in Europe, which now exist in Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Switzerland and the U.K.

A total of 80 ER representatives were present in Moscow for the World Union's 32nd International Convention in July. The European Region was central in the planning of the Moscow convention: both Linda Kann and Judy Smith served leading positions with Steve Bauman in organizing the convention. The ER was particularly pleased to sponsor 11 delegates from emerging communities in continental Europe to enable them to attend the Moscow conference. Upon their return to their communities, these delegates were urged to devise programs based on their Moscow experience. This sponsorship was provided from funds raised at a special European Region dinner held in April in honor of a past ER chairman, Jeffrey Rose.

At an open ER board meeting in September, Rabbi Rodney Mariner, convener of the European Beit Din, explained the work of the EBD and how it relates to the work of the European Region. The EBD was established some 10 years ago with the aim of agreeing on a standard of recognition, working in liaison with Israel and setting aside the difficult issues of patrilineality. The critical feature is the EBD's ability to solve problems rather than impose solutions.

A number of major events took place in Germany in 2005. In particular, Rabbi Walter Homolka organized a dinner to celebrate and recognize the work of Rabbi Walter Jacob. Many leaders of the World Union and the European Region attended, which provided an opportunity to meet with a number of ministers from the German government. Further meetings took place later in the year among then World Union president, Ruth Cohen, executive director, Rabbi Uri Regev, and German chancellor, Schroeder.

Sustained efforts by both the European Region and the World Union have yielded significant progress in achieving formal recognition for Progressive communities in Germany. In November the *Zentralrat* voted to admit the liberal community in Schleswig-Holstein and the liberal Landesverband in Lower Saxony (members of the ER). This is an important step in obtaining a share of state funding.

The German Foundation for Remembrance Responsibility and Future (*Stiftung Erinnerung Verantwortung und Zukunft*) has awarded the ER funds to run a major research project in Europe. Entitled "Networking of Progressive Jewish Communities in Europe," the project involves six participating communities from Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, Poland and the UK.

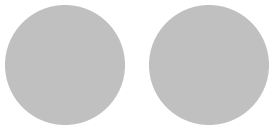
An important area of the ER's work is the Rabbinic Training Fund (RTF), which provides assistance for trainee rabbis attending recognized rabbinic colleges in Europe. The maintenance of a stream of new rabbis is essential for the future of Progressive Judaism in Europe, and the ER tries to ensure that the students whom it supports will later work within continental Europe.

Leslie Bergman, vice chairman of the ER, represents the region on the board of the European Council of Jewish Communities (ECJC); the ER is active in promoting a closer working relationship with that important organization.

During the year, the European liaison committee of the North American Council of the World Union was incorporated under the chairmanship of Oskar Brecher. Fraser Marcus, a board member of the European Region and a member of the International Assembly, represents the ER on this important committee. The main mission statement of the NAC's European Committee is to provide support to the ER of the World Union and to deliver resources from North America to amplify the current efforts in community rebuilding.

At the general assembly meeting of the European Region, held in April 2005, Eliel Masson (Geneva) came to the end of his term as vice president. Rabbi Tony Bayfield (UK) was elected to succeed him. Robin Michaelson (UK) completed two terms as vice chairman and Leslie Bergman (UK) was elected to succeed him.

For further information, please visit the Web site of ER: [www.europeanregion.org](http://www.europeanregion.org)



## Former Soviet Union

Geoffrey Chinn, FSU Committee Chairman  
Alex Kagan, FSU Director

### **World Union Conference In Moscow**

The 32<sup>nd</sup> International Conference of the World Union for Progressive Judaism was held in Moscow in June 2005, an unprecedented event in both Russian and World Union history. Over 300 delegates from all over the world learned about and witnessed Progressive Jewish life in the FSU, which has grown dramatically since its inception 15 years ago. One of the convention highlights was the Shabbat service spent with *Netzer* youth at the Mendelevo retreat outside of Moscow, during which the Nefesh congregation of Brest (Belarus) received a Torah Scroll donated by Temple Sha'arey Shalom in Springfield, New Jersey. Many participants attended two very moving Jewish wedding ceremonies in Tula, the first to be conducted there since 1917.

### **Congregation News**

Belarus now has 16 Reform congregations in 14 towns and cities. A *Bnei Mitzvah* program for adults was initiated in 2005, enabling 30 adult members of the Reform congregations in Belarus to have their *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvahs*.

There are 27 congregations that are members of the Religious Union for Progressive Judaism in Ukraine. Five congregations (Simferopol, Kirovograd, Kerch, Evpatoria, Zvenigorodka) own their respective buildings. A congregation in Chelyabinsk has moved into new premises provided by that city's JCC.

### **Twinning Program**

Throughout the year, several congregational missions visited their counterparts, or "twins," in various parts of the former Soviet Union. This gave visitors from the UK and the United States and their hosts here a chance to know each other better and deepen the relationships across the miles.

### **Education**

In the FSU today there are two Reform day schools, five nursery schools, five congregations with Sunday school programs and 14 that offer adult Jewish education.

In 2005, the World Union appointed full-time educational directors for Russia, Ukraine and Belarus – Olga Markus, Alena Pisnaya and Irina Belskaya, respectively – to develop programs and materials for new and existing education initiatives.

In the spring of 2005, fifty educators attended the first pedagogical conference for Reform educators and facilitators from Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, held by the Religious Union for Progressive Judaism (RUPJ) in Belarus. A second conference on Hanukkah and Tu b'Shevat was held in December.

### **Netzer**

In May of 2005, 50 *Netzer* FSU participants joined the annual Holocaust education trip to Poland on the March of the Living, and were hosted by Beit Warszawa, the Reform community of Poland.

The *Netzer* summer camps had their most successful year ever in 2005, with a record 850 youths attending eight camps in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. The campers dealt with a variety of subjects, such as traditions, Judaism, history, Israel, Hebrew, different concerns of Reform Judaism and the ideology of Reform Zionism. Surveys conducted among the campers indicated a strong rise in their sense of Jewish identity and belonging, their love of Israel and a desire to practice their Judaism.

### **Machon Institute**

In 2005, several Machon graduates continued their work in Moscow and in Smolensk. Second-year Machon students had a wonderful opportunity to spend five months in Israel, studying with Russian-speaking rabbinical students of HUC and learning Hebrew in the MASA program, sponsored by the government of Israel. Several Machon graduates continue to serve as community workers in various cities throughout the FSU.

### **Holidays**

- Young adults from Reform communities in Riga and Minsk joined the festivities at the international "Purimshpiel Festival" in Vitebsk, both winning prizes.
- Approximately 600 members of three Minsk Reform communities participated in High Holidays services led by Rabbi Abramovich together with two HUC students.
- Rabbi Elena Rubinstein, through the FSU Rabbinical Infusion Program of Hebrew Union College, led Rosh Hashanah services at the Ani-ve-Ata congregation in Chelyabinsk.
- Rabbi Joshua Taub, of Temple Emanuel in St. Louis, spent a week during Sukkot with Russian congregations in Lebn and Tver.
- In 2005, 40 rabbinical, cantorial and education students at HUC in Jerusalem visited more than 30 communities in the "land of their ancestors" – Russia, Ukraine and Belarus – to help lead Pesach services and activities.

### **Seminar for Scribes**

Thirty men and women from Russia, Belarus and Ukraine came to Minsk to learn how to write *klafim*, the parchment text for mezzuzot, in the first such seminar in the history of the FSU Reform movement. It was led by the IMPJ's Rabbi Yehoram Mazor.

### **Media**

The Web site of the Reform movement in the FSU, [www.reform.org.ru](http://www.reform.org.ru), is proving to be extremely popular among the members of the Reform congregations and other internet surfers interested in the Reform Judaism. The Russian-language Reform quarterly magazine, *Rodnick* (The Source) continues to be published, as does the World Union page in the *International Jewish Newspaper*, printed in Moscow.

### **Plaut Commentary**

Prior to Simchat Torah 5766, Russian translations of the famous commentary to the Torah written by Rabbi Günter Plaut, which is already available in English, German and Hebrew (Genesis only), were posted onto the FSU Reform movement Web site: [www.reform.org.ru](http://www.reform.org.ru) New translations are being added to the Web site on a weekly basis, making it an invaluable tool in Torah study for Russian-speaking Jews.

### **Rabbinical Council**

In September, 2005, FSU rabbis, during a conference in St. Petersburg, formed an FSU Rabbinical Council and elected Rabbi Michael Farbman as chairperson. This will help the rabbis coordinate and develop their activities in all three countries.



## Israel

Paula Edelstein, Chairperson  
Iri Kassel, Executive Director

The Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism (IMPJ) continues its dynamic and widespread activities in many areas. In recent years there has been a strong and growing interest: new members joining the congregations, expansion of educational programs and a steady rise in the number of youths in movement summer camps. The surveys recently conducted highlight the great potential that exists within Jewish society in Israel.

Following are a number of developments that occurred in 2005:

- Two new congregations joined the movement, in Carmiel and Rosh Ha'ayin, bringing the total number of Progressive congregations in Israel to 25.
- A new building has been dedicated for the congregation in Mevasseret Zion.
- A new program center is being established in Jaffa, called Mishkenot Daniel.
- A new Bat Mitzvah class program is bringing young girls into the Jewish religion, and includes their being *aliyah*, called to the Torah, during ceremonies in one of the movement's synagogues. For most girls in Israel this is new, as Bat Mitzvah is typically only a party, not related to a religious ceremony.
- The education wing of the movement continues to prepare course study and continuing education programs for teachers. A new photo exhibit, "Pictures Speak Judaism," uses photographs to wordlessly transmit the prominent values of Progressive Judaism to the very young.
- In 2005, *Mechina*, the movement's one-year leadership training course for high school graduates prior to army service, received state recognition. In addition to their studies, the 15 young people currently enrolled are volunteering and helping educate local children and youths, thereby assisting the underprivileged populations in Jaffa.
- The movement's congregations held courses this year for the development of volunteer leadership and social justice activities, which have already had an impact on members and their work.
- In the spirit of *tikkun olam* and in coordination with the Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC), a number of food-donation campaigns were organized for Jews, Muslims and Christians in need, as well as distribution of heating equipment during the winter. A joint program with the Masorti movement, *Kehilat Tzedek*, was established to promote social justice work in the congregations.

- The following accomplishments of IRAC, the public advocacy and legal arm of the Reform movement in Israel, have contributed greatly towards creating a more just and pluralistic Jewish society:

- State recognition of the movement's conversion process abroad
- Legal assistance to approximately 5,000 new immigrants
- Ongoing fight for government funds for congregation buildings, education activities, Jewish education and conversions
- Petition for state recognition and salaries for Reform rabbis

- Four new rabbis were ordained and are involved in the movement's congregations or educational institutions. Approximately 30 students are currently enrolled in the Israeli rabbinical ordination program of Hebrew Union College.

- Rabbis from the movement conducted approximately 400 weddings and 2,000 Bat Mitzvah ceremonies.

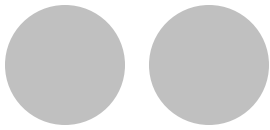
- The second annual "Riding 4 Reform" bicycle tour took place in March to raise money and cultivate friends for the movement.

- The number of students in the Reform conversion program has doubled, and the number of converts who have passed the advanced rabbinical council's *Bet Din* for conversion has also grown.

While the movement in Israel is in an upswing, broader financial and human resources are needed to meet the great challenges that still lie ahead: to expand all activities, reach new congregations and locations, deepen the educational programs, respond to the needs of the ever-increasing Israeli population that is seeking to enrich their Jewish lives, and to influence Israeli society to become more diverse and just.

For further information, please visit the IMPJ Web site:

<http://www.reform.org.il/English/>



## Latin America and the Caribbean

Miriam Vasserman, WU representative, Latin America  
Berta Zylberstein, Head of Communications, Latin America  
L. Jack Davidson, President, UJCL  
Martha Lichtenstein, Head of Communications, UJCL

The constituents of the Progressive movement have made significant progress in 2005 in meeting a number of challenges that face the Jewish community in this part of the world. These include increasing rates of assimilation, the need to strengthen Jewish education, vast distances between communities and the strong influence of the Masorti (Conservative) and Chabad (Orthodox) movements.

In February 2005, the World Union installed a **regional office in São Paulo, Brazil** to integrate Progressive congregations and Jewish institutions in Brazil and other countries on the South American continent, to inform, motivate and recruit volunteers and to work with other Jewish organizations to promote partnership and joint actions. A new Web site and a newsletter were created that promote activities and events held by the Progressive congregations in Brazil and Latin America.

In January 2005, Brazil sent seven participants to the **Beutel Leadership Seminar** in Jerusalem. They found the seminar very productive and instructive, and have already implemented many new practices in the Progressive congregations of this region. In June, Argentina, Brazil and Chile sent several representatives to the World Union's 32nd International Convention in Moscow, including a journalist to cover the event.

The World Union's **Yad B'Yad Task Force** has had a very positive effect in South America. Created in 2002 to provide food, clothing and medication for families experiencing difficulties, it has since invested in additional projects, like the Arlene Fern Community School, through the Fundación Judaica headquartered in Buenos Aires. The most recent *Yad B'Yad* initiative, supervised by Lenore Mass, is helping the *Aviv* project in the Jewish community of Belo Horizonte, in Minas Gerais, Brazil.

Liberal Jewish streams in the region are not differentiated as they are in Europe and the United States, which permits more fluid dialogue and various joint initiatives. One result is that in September, representatives from the Jewish movements – the Worldwide Council of Conservative Synagogues/Masorti Olami and the World Union for Progressive Judaism in Latin America – met in Buenos Aires to begin planning a jointly sponsored convention. The first **Conference of the Jewish Communities in Latin America** will take place in **Punta del Este, Uruguay, November 16-19, 2006**. This event will emphasize the ideas the movements have in common while respecting their differences, strengthen dynamic and pluralist Judaism throughout Latin America and affirm the Jewish community's relationship and solidarity with the state of Israel.

In October 2005, professor and sociologist **Paul Liptz** of the World Union's Saltz International Education Center came to Brazil at the invitation of the World Union Latin America and spoke to the community during the High Holidays on various important themes concerning Liberal Judaism and Jewish identity.

In December, World Union representatives Jerry Tanenbaum and Miriam Vasserman visited the Yakar Congregation in **Santiago, Chile**, led by the dynamic Rabbi Roberto Feldmann, to reinforce the institution's links with the Progressive movement. Also in Santiago, Congregation Or Shalom, which had received a Torah from the World Union 16 years ago and now has several of its own, donated one *back* to the World Union in a ceremony before *Kabalat Shabbat*. It was brought to a congregation in Odessa, Ukraine, which had its sacred scroll stolen late last year.

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The **Union of Jewish Congregations of Latin America and the Caribbean (UJCL)** groups together the small liberal Jewish communities in the area. Its purpose is to preserve their rich heritage and help them enjoy a Jewish life. Since geographic distances are so great, a virtual network keeps members in constant electronic communication.

With the support of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, the region has established a Department of Communications and begun a bilingual (Spanish-English) newsletter, *Mifgash (Encounter)*. Published monthly to constantly growing list of subscribers, it keeps everyone updated on activities in the different communities and provides a framework to express constituents' thoughts, projects, and aspirations.

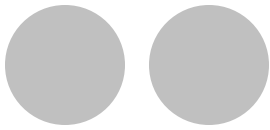
The UJCL has also created a Web site at [www.ujcl.org](http://www.ujcl.org) that contains information about the communities, copies of our newsletters, information on conferences and more.

In 2005 the UJCL welcomed *Kehilah Masorti* of Guadalajara, Mexico; a congregation in Trinidad is planning to join us as well.

Regional delegates made a successful trip to Israel during the summer, and plan to organize another one. There are also plans to organize regional summer camps.

The end of the year was busy in preparation for the ninth UJCL conference that took place January 26-29 in Guadalajara, Mexico, with a parallel fifth Youth Encounter. The theme of the conference was "*Tikkun Olam: the Role of Small Jewish Communities in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.*" The guest speaker was Dr. Daniel Fainstein, President of the Hebraic University of Mexico, an outstanding thinker and educator.

The UJCL has earned a place among Jewish organizations in the area, an achievement that is a great source of pride and an inspiration.



## North America

Ron Cohen, Chairman, North American Council  
Susan Milamed, VP for Development and Planning

During 2005, the World Union for Progressive Judaism built upon the previous year's progress, strengthening its organizational infrastructure and fund-raising activities in North America. The new North American Council approved by-laws, identified a committee structure and installed a new chairman; development efforts raised over \$4.5 million for emerging Progressive communities worldwide; new professional staff members specializing in development and communications were hired; and the recent alignment among Reform movement leadership in North America continued to flourish.

The Council furthers the work of the World Union by promoting its mission, programs and projects through educational, financial and advocacy support in the U.S. and Canada. Interim officers and executive committee members, led by interim North American Chairman, Steve Bauman, conducted Council meetings in New York City on May 22 and in Houston, Texas on November 20. At the November meeting following the Biennial Convention of the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), by-laws were approved and a slate of new officers and executive committee members submitted by the Council nominating committee were installed, with Ron Cohen as the new Council chairman.

Approximately 500 people attended a festive World Union luncheon during the URJ convention, which featured Tel Aviv-Yafo Mayor Ron Huldai, a good friend to the World Union, as keynote speaker. The event honored Reform/Progressive movement builders Stephen K. and Sandra J. Breslauer, Gerard and Ruth Daniel, Betty Golomb, James and Susan Klau, Robert and Audrey Morris, Henry Poser III and Anne Molloy, Bernard and Audre Rapoport and the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation.

Fund-raising and communication of the World Union's message in North America was achieved through

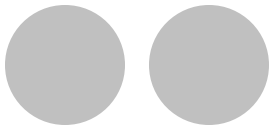
- congregational presentations and individual meetings held by Rabbi Uri Regev;
- special events for donors in targeted cities sponsored by local rabbis and World Union supporters;
- partnership (twinning) relationships between congregations in the U.S. and former Soviet Union;
- visits by Progressive movement rabbis from Israel and the former Soviet Union;
- grant seeking from foundations and Jewish federations;
- broad-based mailings and follow up phone outreach; and
- targeted requests for a number of special programmatic initiatives.

New brochures were produced, the logo refined and a strategic communications plan for the future prepared. New professional staff members were appointed: Susan Milamed as Vice-President for Development and Planning, and Vera Hollander as Director of Marketing and Communications.

The Reform youth movement in the United States took a major step in 2005 by joining with its international peers as an official branch of *Netzer Olami*. The addition of the National Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) brings to 17,000 the number of youths around the world actively involved in Reform Judaism.

In another expression of the deepening cooperation among Reform movement partners, the World Union was welcomed as a third beneficiary of funds raised through the Reform Jewish Appeal, alongside the Union for Reform Judaism and Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. This fund-raising initiative will provide welcome support for the World Union's overall mission.

The North American volunteer leadership and staff of the World Union for Progressive Judaism look forward to an exciting future and to fruitful collaboration with its regional partners worldwide in realizing the vision for the World Union's continued growth.



## Europe Committee of the North American Council

Oskar Brecher, Chairman

The Europe Committee of the North American Council was organized to provide support for European community renewal in conjunction with the World Union's European Region. The territory of interest is all of Europe west of the former Soviet Union, home to approximately 1,350,000 Jews, with special focus on those Jewish communities where North American support may act as a catalyst: France, Germany and Hungary. Of additional significant interest are Poland, the Czech Republic, Italy and Spain.

Reflecting sensitivity to local concerns and priorities, as well as the objectives of the European Region and the policies and interests of the World Union as a whole, the Europe Committee membership is very diverse, with four of its 14 members residing in Europe. The rest have either roots in Europe or longstanding interest in the region.

A survey of the issues facing emerging Reform Jewish communities in Europe indicates the existence of some common themes: a shortage of Reform rabbis and the financial support necessary for their education and placement in nascent congregations; problems of recognition as a legitimate branch of Judaism by entrenched interests in the Orthodox movement, governmental entities and major institutions of host countries; and the isolation of many new Reform communities in their own parochial settings who have no effective connection with the broader Jewish community.

The Europe Committee has developed a four point program to further its mission:

1. Development of a survey and database of existing and emerging Reform Jewish communities and the identification of leaders and leadership candidates.
2. Funding and assisting in the search for a World Union executive director for Europe to establish the presence of Reform Judaism there. The executive director will represent the movement and the World Union to government authorities and major institutions in Europe and fundraise in support of the mission.
3. Political lobbying and the funding of legal action to gain recognition or parity with the other branches of Judaism.
4. The systematic organization of twinning, missions and exchanges between European congregations and the U.S. under the umbrella of the URJ.

Since its founding meeting in May 2005, the committee has been developing the case statement for the European executive director and the quiet period of fundraising. It has met with the JDC, the New York UJA and the AJC, and is working with the Commission on the Jewish People of the NY UJA to launch the census and database initiative. It has raised funds and soft commitments for the census and data base, and the Beit Warszawa and Szim Shalom synagogues.



## South Africa

Steven Lurie, Chairman, SAUPJ

A highlight for the Progressive Jewish community in South Africa in 2005 was that, for the very first time, four congregations were able to enjoy High Holy Day services with Progressive rabbis, thanks to the World Union. They were Rabbi Paul Feinberg in Cape Town, Rabbi Zach Shapiro at Temple Israel in Johannesburg, and student rabbis Stacy Nolish in Pretoria and Nava Hefetz in Johannesburg.

This is a milestone for the country, as there is a shortage of rabbis, particularly in Gauteng province, which includes Johannesburg and Pretoria. The senior Rabbi in Cape town has resigned and been succeeded by Rabbi Greg Alexander. A student rabbi, Malcolm Matitiani, received his *smicha* (ordination) in September this year, giving that city two rabbis.

The conference of the South African Union for Progressive Judaism (SAUPJ) in Cape Town was a great success, and featured the World Union's Rabbi Joel Oseran as guest speaker.

The *Netzer* leadership is flourishing in South Africa. The summer camp and youth tour to Israel were both very successful, the youth committee in Gauteng is making a big difference there and a TaMaR group has recently been established by Melissa Smith.

South Africa was also fortunate with respect to *shlichot* (delegates) for the youth movement. Despite the Jewish Agency cuts worldwide, thanks to Maoz Haviv and *Netzer Olami*, Cape Town and Johannesburg will each have one this year.

The relationship with the Orthodox community leadership continues to be difficult and this has taken up a lot of space in the Jewish press. Nevertheless, there has been a tremendous amount of support for the Progressive movement in this matter.

The M.C. Weiler school in Alexander Township held a celebration for its 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, which was attended by the Israeli ambassador. This school ran against great odds during the apartheid years and continues to do great work.





Reports  
from the  
International  
Office in Jerusalem



## *Netzer Olami*

Maoz Haviv, *Mazkir* (Director)

Many meaningful events took place during 2005, making it a very productive year for the World Union's international Progressive Zionist youth movement.

### **NFTY Joined *Netzer Olami***

On February 19, 2005, during their biennial convention in Los Angeles, California, the members of the National Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) unanimously accepted our invitation and became the North American *snif* (branch) of *Netzer Olami*. This major step made our movement truly *olami* (worldwide) with 17,000 members, and the impact will undoubtedly continue well into the future and spread throughout the global Reform movement.

### **A *Shnat* Program for the FSU**

The new *Shnat* (one- or two-semester youth movement) program for Russian-speaking graduates of our movement had its first six female participants in 2005. Alex Kagan, the director of World Union youth programs in the former Soviet Union (FSU), developed *Shnat* FSU to help high school and university graduates widen their Jewish knowledge. Created in cooperation with Hebrew Union College, the program places an emphasis on Hebrew learning to help participants continue their involvement into the adult Reform community in the FSU.

### **Netzerfest on the Galilee**

Several groups in Israel last summer gathered on the shores of the Sea of Galilee for a successful two-day program, designed by *Netzer Olami's chinuch* (education) coordinator, Haim Ben Shalom and *Shnat* participants from Australia and Argentina. Some 200 members of our movement from Britain, Israel and North America participated in this successful and inspiring event.

### **Record Summer Camps Season in the FSU**

A total of eight *Netzer* youth camps were held across Russia, Ukraine and Belarus last year with a record 850 participants. Among the findings of a recently conducted survey among the youths who attended is the fact that those who identified "very strongly" as Jews went from 41 percent before to 67 percent after the session. Sixty-six percent said they found Reform Judaism, as experienced at the camp, to be the most suited for themselves personally.

### **European Youth Conference in London**

A very successful conference of European delegates from ARZENU, *Netzer Olami* and TaMaR (young adults group) took place in London in November 2005. A summary and results will be reported at the next *veida* (conference) of *Netzer Olami*.

### **South America Conference on anti-Semitism**

Another successful conference took place towards the end of the year in La-Plata, Argentina. Run by the Council for International Zionist Youth Movements operating out of Jerusalem, it included 250 *chanichim* (participants) from 12 movements throughout

South America. The government of Israel was represented by our Reform activist, Arik Kaplan; Ze'ev Beilsky, representing the Jewish Agency, noted *Netzer Olami* of South America, which had twelve delegates – eight from Argentina, two from Porto Alegre, Brazil, one from San-Diego, Chile, and the *Netzer shlichah* (delegate) to Argentina, Shani Glazer. Our presence at the conference helped widen our operations and involvement in this part of the world.

### **Meetings in Argentina, Brazil and South Africa**

A very successful meeting was held in Argentina with the *hanhalah* (leadership) of the local movement and with a group of top *madrichim* (counselors), some 20 young adults, 20 to 23, each of whom leads a *Netzer* age group in a *peulah* (activity) every *Shabbat*. In Porto Alegre, Brazil there was a meeting with 35 young adults, 20 to 26, of the Centro-Israelita Reform Community that wishes to establish a TaMaR group. In the large Reform community of Rio De Janeiro, the management of the synagogue and the *Chazit-Hano'ar Shlichah* (youth service leaders) also hope to start a TaMaR group. A visit to participants in a summer camp near Cape Town, South Africa, included a group of some 20 dedicated and enthusiastic *madrichim* who were working with a fantastic staff of six Israeli *shlichim*. While the camp is still small – with only 70 *chanichim* – we hope to launch a major effort this year to enlarge and stabilize the movement in the Johannesburg area.

### **URJ Biennial, Houston, Texas**

The primary goal was to address the NFTY participants at the convention and to encourage them to join our *Shnat* program, which was done in a keynote address at *Shabbat* lunch to the 250 young participants. They were given information regarding *Netzer* and *Shnat* in brochures that were printed just for the event. Isaac Nuel, a graduate of Keshet and a *Netzer* volunteer in the Jerusalem office, also spoke to the young group about a new cooperation program.

### **New *Netzer Olami* and *Shnat* Brochures**

As part of the central office's attempt to update and upgrade the information regarding the movement and the *Shnat* program, we produced two new brochures for worldwide use. Due to budget restrictions, we could only come out with an English edition.

### **Jewish Agency**

A true reflection of the growth and recognition of our youth movement worldwide was the Jewish Agency's latest allocation of Israeli *shlichim*. While their 'distribution map' for other movements was cut, the *Netzer* map remained almost the same – an acknowledgement on their part of the benefits of investing in our movement.

### ***Netzer Olami* Staff**

All of these developments could not have been accomplished without the hard work and dedication of the *Netzer Olami* movement staff in Jerusalem and around the world. They all deserve recognition and our thanks for their efficiency and commitment.



# Saltz International Education Center

Rabbi Rich Kirschen, Director

During the first year of operation, the Anita Saltz International Education Center (IEC) created its defining vision and built an early track record of successful seminars. The position of center director became full time, and will be responsible for continuing to shape the center in ways that will best serve the World Union for Progressive Judaism and its constituents worldwide.

The Saltz IEC has also learned from many of the movement's leaders around the world that it is just as important to bring seminars, symposia and workshops to communities outside of Israel as it is to bring communities to seminars in Israel, and that this will strengthen the bonds between Israel and the communities of the World Union.

## **Beutel Leadership Seminar 2005**

The second 10-day Beutel leadership seminar was a very powerful program and helped the participants – who came from Brazil, Australia, Germany, Italy, Israel, France, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic – to understand the centrality of Jerusalem both for the Jewish people and for our movement. The seminar incorporated the themes of Spiritual/Religious Growth, Contemporary Israeli Society, Progressive Judaism, Community Building and Leadership Training.

The level of interaction and enthusiasm among the participants was extremely high as they discussed mutual challenges and considered ways of increasing institutional relations with each other. The success of the seminar should send an important message to the lay leaders of our movement that subsidizing the program is also a worthwhile investment in the World Union itself.

## **Liberal Judaism UK Mission to Israel**

In February 2005, Rabbi Daniel Rich of the liberal Jewish Movement in Great Britain led a group of rabbis and lay leaders to visit Israel through the eyes of progressive Judaism via the Saltz IEC. The mission focused on raising the consciousness of the participants about the political and religious complexity of the situation here in Israel and on engaging them to actively partner with Israel and their constituencies. They visited progressive Jewish communities in Jerusalem, Modi'in, Tel Aviv and Haifa. We hope to use this trip as a model for future groups visiting from England and to promote more of a connection with Israel.

## **German Youth Delegation**

For two weeks, a group of German young adults, many from Russian backgrounds, came to Israel and the IEC for an intensive seminar to grow, explore their Jewish identities and set the pattern for their adult Jewish lives. They engaged in meaningful learning experiences including prayer, text study, field visits, Israeli culture and *hadracha* (leadership) skills.

### **French Young Adult Mission**

Le Mouvement Juif Libéral de France (MJLF) is a dynamic Progressive congregation of over 1,900 families in Paris, France, led by Rabbi Daniel Farhi. After participating in the IEC's Beutel Leadership Seminar, MJLF's director for Jewish education, Ori Reshef, decided to take his summer teen group to Jerusalem through Saltz.

The group's week here, guided by Nava Hefetz, a respected educator and rabbinical student at Hebrew Union College, taught them the importance of leadership, social action and volunteerism. The program wove together many themes, from the dream of Jerusalem to the price that was paid by its young people, from the sun rising in Jerusalem to Tel-Aviv, where the sun set. Young women from the group read from the Torah and led the *t'fillah* during Progressive Jewish services. The group conducted an extraordinary photo journalist program of Jerusalem as the city prepared for Shabbat. After photographing and interviewing Jerusalem's residents in Machaneh Yehuda, Mercaz Ha Ir, Emek Rafeaim and Mea Shearim, they assembled a remarkable exhibition of Jerusalem before Shabbat that will be displayed in the lobby of their congregation in France. The MJLF is now planning additional programs with the Saltz IEC.

### **Levisson Institute**

A group of older adults came to experience ten days in Israel learning intensively about the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism, led by Rabbi David Lilienthal, Dean of the Levisson Institute in Amsterdam. The program combined numerous meetings all over Israel as well as workshops, text study and prayer services, and was seen as part of the Levisson Institute's rabbinical curriculum.

For more information, contact Rabbi Kirschen at [rich@wupj.org.il](mailto:rich@wupj.org.il)



## Mercaz Shimshon/Beit Shmuel

13 King David Street  
(6 Eliahu Shama Street)

Jerusalem, Israel

<http://www.beitshmuel.com/index.htm>

Over the past two years, our unique children's programs, course offerings and special events have made Mercaz Shimshon/Beit Shmuel (MS/BS) a center of pluralistic Jewish cultural life and education in Jerusalem.

### **Courses on Judaism and Israeli Culture**

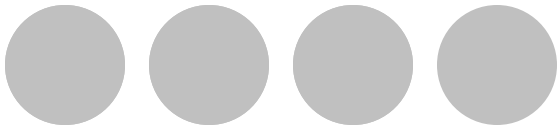
Since October 2003, when our course focus became the relationship between Judaism and Israeli culture, participation has grown dramatically: from 360 students that year to 515 in 2004 and 700 in 2005. Among our most popular courses are Authors Reading from the Bible, Ladino for Beginners, and Arabic (for beginners and advanced students).

### **Tour and Talk: A new and unique project.**

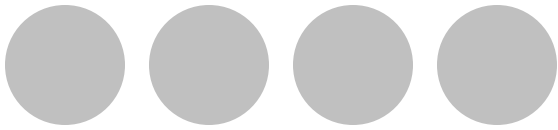
We began "Tour and Talk" for youth and young adults with the educational department of the IMPJ, offering day-long programs of tours and group discussions at MS/BS. Topics included: "Currents in Judaism," "Tolerance and Accepting Diversity," "Jerusalem of Three Religions" and "Culture: A Discussion and Freedom of the Phrase."

### **Special Events**

- Our annual study session on the night of *Shavuot* is going into its sixth year, becoming a Jerusalem tradition for about 800 people who come to MS/BS to participate in the learning.
- Our theater, halls and facilities have kept a number of groups coming back for their productions which included 200 performances in 2005.
- Our theater subscription series, "Saturday Morning, a Beautiful Day," offers families living in Jerusalem an educational and cultural alternative for Saturday mornings. Currently, 250 children participate in this program.
- A new Shabbat program provides creative activities on the current Torah portion for children from ages two to nine on the first Saturday of every month.
- In 2005 we began offering scholarships to students in their 20s and 30s to attend our *Beit Midrash* (House of Learning), where hundreds of students over the past six years have come from all religious streams to study together.
- Our week-long *Sukkat Tzedek* (Sukka of Justice) film festival attracted over 600 people to see dozens of student films on the topic of social justice. A cooperative venture among the Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC), the Students and Young Persons' Forum of IMPJ and Mercaz Shimshon/Beit Shmuel, the festival included experts and religious leaders leading discussions on the dilemmas and conflicts dividing Israeli society today.
- This year for the first time, MS/BS, Hebrew Union College and progressive Jewish communities in Jerusalem are putting together an Independence Day program for 500 people.



Reports  
from Committees,  
Task Forces,  
Special Projects



## International Interfaith Task Force

Rabbi Mark Winer, Chairperson

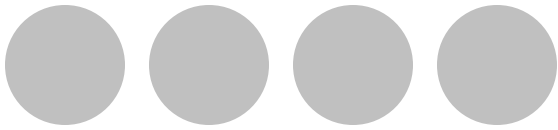
The highlight of the task force's first full year was the convocation in March 2005 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Nostra Aetate, the Second Vatican Council Document which has become the "watershed" in all Jewish interfaith relations.

In addition to meetings with Cardinal Walter Kasper and Father Norbert Hofmann of the Holy See Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, the program included a convocation of Progressive Jews from throughout Italy, meetings with Chief Rabbi Segni and other Orthodox leaders in Italy, a briefing by the Israeli Ambassador to the Vatican in his residence, a discussion with journalists covering the Vatican, and programs at San Egidio and the Gregorian University.

Over 30 Progressive Jewish leaders from throughout the world participated, representing Israel, the United States, Great Britain, Russia, South Africa, Austria and Italy. Excessive eating and drinking was the complaint of many participants, although few suffered lasting effects from the numerous Roman banquets. The meetings with Cardinal Kasper and Father Hofmann helped advanced a key task force programmatic proposal: the development of a joint curriculum for Jews teaching Jews about Catholicism and Catholics teaching Catholics about Judaism in mutually acceptable terms throughout the world. Discussions continue, although no final agreement has been reached.

The scheduled peak event of the Rome convocation was to have been an audience with Pope John Paul II. Due to his hospitalization, the audience was cancelled. However, a delegation from the World Union conducted a prayer service at the Pope's hospital. The service and Rabbi Regev's moving tribute to Pope John Paul II was broadcast throughout Italy on Italian television, and Italian newspapers gave the service and Rabbi Regev's words broad coverage.

The task force is still in its formative period and many other initiatives are in exploratory stages. Governance in the form of an official task force is in the process of being established. Funds have been raised, outside of the World Union's budgetary resources, to support all task force activities. We look forward to a productive 2006.



# Marketing and Communications Task Force

Judy Smith, Chairperson

This task force was established in August 2005 with a mandate to address the following critical communications issues:

## **Internal Communications**

To define and integrate the World Union's constituent components and define its structure, processes and procedures in order to:

- Greatly enhance the communications amongst and between the various World Union regions, constituents and staff;
- Provide effective means to share best practices in all areas of operations;
- Develop concise and consistent branding and marketing;
- Coordinate and synchronize the mechanisms to realize the above.

## **External communications**

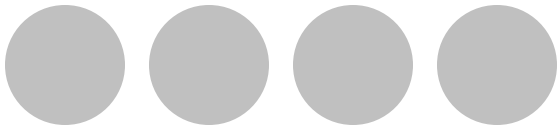
To leverage the internal communications infrastructure and processes developed above and implement them in a cohesive, strategic plan to:

- Brand and market primary World Union messages;
- Provide key message points, drafts of brochures and other communications tools that can be localized by regions;
- Provide news, press quotes and other resources online for use by regions;
- Institutionalize internal vetting processes to coordinate international branding messages and news-worthy events

At the same time as this task force was being established, the World Union appointed Vera Hollander as director of marketing and communications, based in New York. At the end of September a survey was sent to 1,800 recipients (World Union leadership, volunteers and congregants) to elicit feedback on issues such as

- Visual identity (logo and graphic design)
- Editorial content (consistent messages and communication styles)
- Production of printed materials (brochures, newsletters, annual reports)
- Development of a new, interactive Web site and e-newsletter
- Increasing media publicity
- Exploring new avenues of outreach and fund-raising

Based on the responses, a strategic plan has been developed to deal with each of the above points. The initial task force steering group – consisting of Judy Smith (London), Vera Hollander (New York), Lesley Sachs (Jerusalem) and Jonathan Hirshon (California) – has now been expanded to include representatives from each World Union region. They, in turn, will appoint regional delegates to work in small groups on marketing materials and outreach, media PR, image strategy, Web site development and international advocacy. The task force uses Interwise phone conferencing very effectively on a regular basis to support Vera in her work.



## Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Representatives to the U.N.

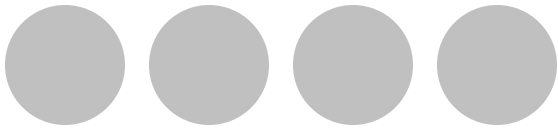
Norma Levitt  
Judith Hertz  
Betty Golomb

The NGO representatives of World Union for Progressive Judaism to the United Nations have been active during the past year.

- Monitoring and supporting the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The World Union fully endorsed their implementation in a resolution passed in Moscow in July at their 32<sup>nd</sup> International Conference;
- Following the progress of the U.N. reforms suggested by the Secretary General in his report, "In Larger Freedom," particularly the Human Rights Council and the Peace Building Commission;
- Participating in the NGO – Civil Society (CS) Consultation in June, 2005 and endorsing a statement that was presented to the General Assembly during the "Millennium + 5" summit in September;
- Actively participating in the Committee of Jewish NGOs (JNGOs) which meets monthly. Some speakers heard on issues concerning Israel were:
  - Ambassador Arye Mekel
  - Ambassador Daniel Carmon
  - Ambassador Richard Shifter
  - Mark Malloch Brown
  - Ambassador John Bolton
  - Terye Roed Larson
  - Edward Mortimer

Action taken by the JNGOs since the Seminar on Anti-Semitism in June 2004 has been credited with speeding up the designation (by General Assembly resolution) of January 27 as the annual U.N. Commemoration of the Victims of the Holocaust, and with setting up the permanent video loop on the Holocaust in the waiting area where U.N. tours begin.

- Representing the World Union at the 49<sup>th</sup> session of the U.N.'s Commission on the Status of Women, February 28-March 11, 2005, including in particular the Caucus on the Girl Child and a panel on women and girls with disabilities.
- Screening of the Israeli documentary film, "39 Pounds of Love," at the U.N. as part of the proceedings of the ad hoc committee to draft the international charter on the rights of the disabled. The World Union co-sponsored the accompanying discussion with the International Organization for People with Disabilities.



## U.N. Commission on Human Rights

Rabbi Francois Garaï (Main Representative)  
David G. Littman (Spokesman at UNCHR)  
Elie Masson

Following is a list of the oral statements, with themes highlighted, that were presented by the World Union for Progressive Judaism at the 61<sup>st</sup> Session (2005) of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva (prepared, spoken, submitted by David G. Littman in close collaboration with Rabbi François Garaï and Elie Masson). The relevant written World Union statements were attached to the oral statements.

### **21 March 2005 – *Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia* (item 6):**

- Judeophobia – Under the guise of ‘anti-Zionism,’ now recognised as endemic in the Arab/Muslim world, being nourished by general ‘culture of hate’ creeping into Europe
- Farewell address by Malaysian president of the 10<sup>th</sup> OIC Summit (16 October 2003)
- Many examples: Ramadan 2002 TV story / *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (Egypt)

Written Statement: E/CN.4/2004/NGO/15: “The alarming growth of Judeophobia....”

### **23 March 2005 – *Violation of human rights/fundamental freedoms* (item 9):**

(Delivered as joint statement with the Simon Wiesenthal Center)

- League of Nations Mandate, Palestine of 1922 split into two by UK Mandatory Power
- 78 percent of designated Palestine became Jordan; 22 percent remained Palestine Mandate
- UNGA Resolution 181 split the 22 percent into two separate states: Arab and Jewish
- ‘International legality’ refused by Arab League and Palestinian leadership for 40 years
- This steadfast ‘refusal’ by many should end for there to be peace and reconciliation

Written Statement: E/CN.4/2003/NGO221: “14 Fundamental Historical Facts on the Middle East: Israel/Palestine”

### **5 April 2005 – *Civil/Political: Human rights and terrorism*” (item 11):**

- In 2003, Rabbi François Garaï spoke of Geneva Spiritual Appeal (24 October 1999), agreed by all religious representatives and signed: UNSG, WHO, ICRC, UNCR, UNHCHR
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Appeal: St. Peter’s Cathedral (Geneva) 22 March 2003 (Christians/ Jews/ Muslims): “*Condemnation of all who blaspheme/defame religion by claiming to kill in God’s Name*”
- An omission in resolution on ‘defamation of religions’ would send a clear message to all
- The ‘culture of hate and death’ must be outlawed by OIC and international community

Written Statement: E/CN.4/2004/NGO/88: “Human Rights and terrorism: Most essential human right is the right to life”

Written Statement: E/CN.4/2004/NGO/25\*: “*Hamas: Sheikh Yassin; al-Rantisi – The UN and the grave worldwide cultural clash*”: Urgent Appeal (19 April 2004) - Kofi Annan, HCHR, Chairman CHR, *signed: Rabbi Uri Regev, Rabbi François Garaï, David G. Littman*

Written Statement: E/CN.4/2004/NGO/26: “*Muslim Brotherhood /Hamas/Hizbullah/ Al-Qaeda: Terror Legacy ‘Jihad-Martyrdom-Bombings’; and Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi*”

**8 April 2005 – Special Meeting: *Situation of human rights in Sudan (item 3):***

(Association for World Education text delivered as joint statement with the International Humanist and Ethical Union and the World Union for Progressive Judaism.)

- Overview of situation of slavery in Sudan and the current Peace Conference (CEAWAC)
- Urge the GOS and UN agencies to resume CEAWAC's return of slaves, despite UNICEF
- End of impunity; prosecution for genocide should be main focus; Darfur a blatant case

Documentation: "The U.N. finds Slavery in Sudan" by David G. Littman (MEQ, 9/1999)

**15 April 2005 – *Specific groups/individual ... mass exoduses (item 14):***

- The 'Forgotten Jewish Refugees' from Middle East & North Africa (900,000, now 5,000)
- 'Dhimmitude' and remnant Dhimmi Jewish/Christian communities (Arab/ Muslim world)
- Arab League's rejection of Israel created Arab refugees and 'religious cleansing' of Jews
- Appeal to Iraqi ambassador to recognise former ambassador's lie in 2003 (Jews of Iraq and in Arab world), thus paving way to peace & reconciliation [he made an official reply]
- Appeal to HCHR/ CHR/Muslim religious and political leaders for persecuted indigenous Christian Dhimmi minorities in Arab/Muslim majority countries to have equal human rights
- 'Combating defamation religions' resolution: omitted to condemn killings in God's name.

Written Statement: E/CN.4/Sub.2/2003/NGO/35: "Historical Facts and Figures: the Forgotten Jewish Refugees from Arab Countries"

**18 April 2005 – *Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (item 3):***

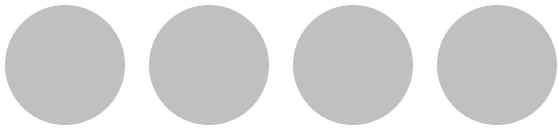
- Prolonged 'disappearances'/The Missing (missing Iranian Jews)
- International ICRC Conference, Geneva (19-21 Feb. 2003): "The Missing: end silence." Stressed at 28<sup>th</sup> Int. Conference Red Cross & Red Crescent in Geneva (2-6 Dec. 2003)
- Appeal to President Mohammad Khatami (11 Dec. 2003) at World Council Churches
- Names of 12 Jews who went missing 10 years ago trying to leave Iran via Pakistan
- Recalling history of Persian Jewry from before Cyrus the Great (Isaiah 44:28- 45:1)

Written Statement: E/CN.4/2004/NGO/87: The ancient Jewish Community of Iran: End silence on disappearances, discrimination, dhimmitude

**18 April 2005 – *Effective functioning of human rights mechanism (item 18a):***

- For 20 years we have raised many essential subjects considered taboo here
- The grave responsibility for omitting to insert 2003: '*Condemns* all who blaspheme and defame religion by claiming to kill in the name of God" – fault of OIC sponsors. Possible reasons: general fear, 'blasphemy', clear message
- Treaty Bodies & UN human rights machinery should examine this 'no action' which is a clear sign of what is wrong and why Commission needs reforming
- Parallel NGO Conference on "Victims of Jihad" taking place adjacent room

Written Statement: E/CN.4/2004/NGO/88: "Human Rights and terrorism – The most essential and basic human right is the right to life" (1999 Promulgation of the Geneva Spiritual Appeal / 2003: Confirmation in St. Peter's Cathedral, Geneva)



## *Yad B'Yad* Task Force

Jerry Tanenbaum, Chairman

While the economic situation in Argentina has been improving recently, many people remain under the poverty line. The *Yad B'Yad* Task Force has therefore been continuing to support the work of Fundación Judaica in Argentina to provide emergency assistance to those in need, including hot meals, clothing, medicines and assistance in finding jobs.

One of the year's highlights was the celebration of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Arlene Fern Community School. At a time when the other Jewish schools of Argentina lost many students – and many schools closed entirely – enrollment at the Arlene Fern School grew thanks, in large part, to the student subsidies provided through *Yad B'Yad*.

At the same time, *Yad B'Yad* expanded its focus to encompass all of Latin America and the Caribbean, thereby involving the World Union with the growing religious, education and humanitarian needs of Jewish communities throughout the region.

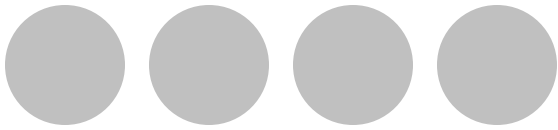
In 2005, the World Union opened a representative office in São Paulo, Brazil, headed by Miriam Vasserman and staffed by Berta Zylberstajn. The World Union also strengthened its ties with the Union of Jewish Congregations in Latin America and the Caribbean (UJCL), the umbrella organization of Reform and Conservative congregations in the region, and provided funds for the establishment of the UJCL's first staff position, which is held by Martha Lichtenstein from Aruba.

Latin America was well represented at the World Union's 32nd International Convention in Moscow. Seven promising lay leaders from Brazil participated in the 2005 Beutel Leadership Seminar in Jerusalem, bringing tremendous enthusiasm and taking home important leadership skills.

The World Union is currently making a major impact in Latin America, but this can only be sustained in the long run by placing Jewish professionals (rabbis, cantors and educators) who speak Spanish and/or Portuguese, and who are graduates of one of our Reform theological institutions.

It is also imperative to involve youth throughout Latin America with *Netzer Olami*. At present, only Argentina has an active *Netzer* group. However, we are making some progress in the Central America/Caribbean area and in Chile. Just as our solidarity is nurturing the Jewish present in Latin America, these youth will mold the Jewish future.

Looking ahead, the World Union is working with the Masorti movement in Latin America on what is believed to be the first conference ever sponsored and programmed jointly by the Conservative and Reform movements. Scheduled for November 16-19, 2006 in Punta del Este, Uruguay, it is hoped that World Union leaders from around the world will attend and participate.



## Youth and Young Adult Task Force

Mark S. Anshan, Chairman

This task force was established following the 2003 Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) Biennial, when professionals and lay leaders met to discuss how best to collaborate on the promotion of Israel-based programs among the young constituents of the URJ, World Union, *Netzer Olami*, NFTY, TaMaR and *Kesher*. The task force has provided a forum for these leaders to jointly achieve this goal on behalf of high school and college students around the world.

Since its formation, the task force has met in Jerusalem about twice year at the time of the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI) Board of Governors meetings. At these meetings, *Netzer Olami*, TaMaR, *Kesher* and NFTY delegates deliver reports on the programs being offered and developed, decide how to promote these programs and consider new ones. The task force works closely with new and existing programs, including those of Carmel, Shnat Netzer and NFTY's EIE.

Although it is still in its early stages of development, the task force has become a clearing house for ideas. Moreover, it has provided the opportunity for stronger professional relationships to be created, which in time will lead to greater collaboration and coordination.

The task force operates on an informal basis pursuant to a protocol which was agreed upon when it was first established. Notes of each meeting are recorded and distributed to all participants, and are available to others interested in the work of the task force.



## Global Social Action Initiative

Edward J. Bergman and  
Sharon Roling, Consultants

The updated World Union mission statement includes the mandate to advance social justice in the spirit of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world).

To help turn this commitment into a plan of action, the World Union invited Edward Bergman and Sharon Roling of Innovative Development Services (IDS) to help explore the options for bringing the World Union into the global arena of advocacy and social action, which would be done in close cooperation with its constituents, such as the Religious Action Center in Washington, D.C. and the Israel Religious Action Center.

Three areas have been defined as coming under the scope of this initiative:

1. Active participation in the global discourse on selected topics important to the World Union through representation on international bodies such as the U.N., and mobilizing our international constituents;
2. Advocacy on behalf of our own constituents regarding issues such as their status and rights and religious pluralism in Europe, Israel and wherever they are of concern;
3. Engaging in "hand on" social justice projects that involve international cooperation.

In November 2005, IDS began a four-month strategic planning project to explore areas of priority, programs, venues and funding sources with World Union leadership and other relevant resources. The Religious Action Center (RAC) in Washington, D.C., led by Rabbi David Saperstein and Mark Pelavin, are valued partners in this endeavor.

The planning process has included several components:

- As of February 24, 2006, more than 60 interviews have taken place with World Union leaders, representing lay leadership, Board members, rabbis and staff.
- Sharon Roling participated in the third Beutel seminar for Progressive Jewish leadership, at the Saltz International Education Center in Jerusalem, alongside lay leaders from 14 countries. Sharon interviewed the participants as well as World Union and IRAC staff.
- Discussions were held with the development staff in New York, focusing on possible cultivation strategies that could involve new constituents and potentially expand our lay leadership base.

- IDS is examining how the World Union's presence and voice at the U.N. – so ably represented for decades by our dedicated lay leaders Norma Levitt, Betty Golomb and Judith Hertz – can be fully integrated into the daily life of the World Union and further advanced.
- Meetings are being held with other Jewish organizations working in the global arena in order to avoid duplication, identify possible areas of cooperation and ensure a unique niche for the World Union.
- The outcome will be a clear vision and plan of action, as well as a number of pilot project designs, to be presented to our leadership for approval later in the spring of 2006.



## SAVE THE DATE!

**March 15-20, 2007  
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\* \* \*

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\* \* \*

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