

Peace move by father of stab victim

BY BEN LYNFIELD JERUSALEM

► THE FATHER of a young man killed in one of the most egregious incidents of anti-Arab racial violence in recent years is reaching out to Israeli Jews and calling for a joint Jewish-Arab campaign against racism.

"People ask me, why don't you feel vengeful towards Jews? I say I feel the opposite. I've made my relations with Jews stronger since this happened in order to battle racism," said Hussein Rawidi, whose son Hossam was stabbed to death in West Jerusalem two weeks ago.

According to the indictment filed on Sunday, Hossam Rawidi, 24, was speaking in Arabic with a friend when one of a group of four Jewish minors approached him calling out racist epithets including "Death to Arabs".

The minors at first attacked the Arabs with their fists, but then one of them pulled out a barber-shop razor and slashed Hossam in the face and neck, according to the indictment. He then attacked Hossam's friend, injuring him in neck, the indictment says.

The minors, aged 16 and 17, continued to punch and kick Hossam while shouting racist epithets, the indictment added. Hossam died in hospital.

The youth who wielded the razor was indicted for manslaughter, while the other three were charged with "assault causing harm in severe circumstances".

The death of his son prompted Hossam's father to reach out to left-wing Israelis. He spoke at a Zion Square rally against racism that drew about a 1,000 people last Saturday night. "I am starting to keep in touch with every Jew who isn't racist. Whoever supports me, I will support him. Whenever they invite me, I will speak," Mr Rawidi said.

HERE, ANY BODY CAN MAKE THEIR POINT



This eerie photograph by Claudia Rogge, *Camouflage 1*, is part of an exhibition entitled 'The right to Protest' now on at Jerusalem's Museum on the Seam. The show aims to portray "solutions" for Israel's "fractured" society

COURTESY OF MUSEUM ON THE SEAM ©CLAUDIA ROGGE

Siemens opens Nazi camp file

BY TOBY AXELROD BERLIN

► EACH FEBRUARY, Gilbert Michlin invites fellow survivors and their spouses to his birthday party at his home in Paris. Before making al'chaim, Mr Michlin remembers how, two days before his 18th birthday in 1944, he was deported from Paris and sent to a slave-labour sub-camp of Auschwitz.

This year, Mr Michlin turned 85. For decades, he has been asking: why did Siemens keep him and 87 other slave labourers alive? What happened to the other men who worked for Siemens, in the heart of the Nazi killing machine?

Answers might be in the company archive. Its director, Frank Wittendorfer, says Siemens central archive in Munich has 2.5 linear miles of files, 400,000 photos and 3,000 films.

Secrecy surrounds the archives, most of which were moved from Berlin to Munich before the end of the war, to escape Allied bombings. It has been about as hard to get into these archives as into those in the Vatican.

For years, historian Wilfried Feldenkirchen oversaw the central archive – but in June 2010 he died in a crash of an electric model of a Siemens car.

But now there are signs that Mr Michlin may get some answers. This month, the Siemens archive is to provide its files on Nazi-era operations at the Ravensbrück women's concentration camp to a major exhibition.

This could mean there is hope for Mr Michlin, who five years ago attended a historic, private meeting between Bobrek survivors and Siemens management and labour.

Now Dr Wittendorfer has said he plans improve access to the archives. Legitimate written requests will be honoured, but only those files that have been catalogued may be viewed. And slowly, Dr Wittendorfer and his staff are cataloguing miles of files so they will be searchable electronically.

Secrecy surrounds the files, which were moved to Munich

Fears in diaspora as Israel rejects convert

BY ANSHEL PFEFFER JERUSALEM

► THE ISRAELI Chief Rabbinate is trying to impose its stringent conversion rules on Orthodox organisations outside Israel.

Interior Minister Eli Yishai recently denied citizenship to a Canadian convert on the grounds that the Chief Rabbi, Sholmo Amar, does not recognise the authority of the rabbi who converted him in Canada.

The case of Thomas Dohlan, a former Canadian Air Force soldier who retired from service to pursue his dream of an observant Jewish life in Israel, has brought to the fore the issue of independence of Orthodox

religious courts around the world.

While in Israel, the Chief Rabbinate and most of the conversion courts are controlled by rabbis aligned with the Shas party or the "Lithuanian" strictly-Orthodox stream, in other parts of the world, especially North America, more liberal-minded "modern Orthodox" rabbis and organisations are also active in conversion.

Mr Dohlan, who is married to an Israeli, was converted by rabbis of the International Rabbinical Fellowship, a forum of rabbis in North America dedicated to "inclusive" modern Orthodoxy.

The organisation is opposed to the mainstream Rabbinical Council of America (RCA) that three years ago agreed to abide by the guidelines set out by Rabbi Amar when conducting conversions. Rabbi Amar also has the power to veto the authority of individ-

ual rabbis within the RCA to perform conversions.

Mr Dohlan's request to immigrate to Israel under the Law of Return was refused on unclear grounds but sources within the Interior Ministry have confirmed that the decision was made after consultations with Rabbi Amar.

By law, the Interior Ministry is required to grant citizenship to any candidate who has been converted by a recognised Jewish organisation or community, including those of the Reform or Liberal movements, but this issue is about power struggles within the Orthodox establishment.

A group of American and Canadian rabbis sent a letter to Mr Yishai calling upon him to "amend the wrong being done to our converts, to ourselves and to the entire Jewish people". A ministry spokesman said that "we are currently re-examining the decision".

German Iran-link bank under fire

BY TOBY AXELROD BERLIN

► PROTESTERS IN Germany demanded this week the closure of an Iran-owned bank which they claim helps finance the regime's nuclear programme.

The demonstration, which was made up of Jewish, Christian, exile-Iranian and other groups, was organised by Stop the Bomb, a German NGO.

It follows heightened pressure by the US government on Germany to crack down on the European-Iranian Trade Bank.

"Iran is a great danger for Israel and the rest of the world," said Wolfgang Seibert, head of the Jewish community of Pinneberg, who was at the protest. "And if the German government supports this bank, it is a stain on Germany's reputation."

According to Fox News, the US treasury already has put the bank on its no-go list. Eleven US Senators wrote to German Foreign Minister Guido West-

erwelle earlier this month urging him to take action to close down the bank because of its "financial support of Iran's nuclear proliferation activities".

Meanwhile, Mr Westerwelle's meeting with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in Tehran last week coincided with the release of two German journalists from an Iranian prison.

The pair had been held in custody for 133 days for trying to interview the son of a woman convicted to death by stoning for alleged adultery.

The woman's attorney now faces a death sen-

tence, said Michael Spaney, spokesperson for Stop the Bomb.

He said it seemed the German government only cared about German citizens in Iran but not about the Iranian people themselves.



A protester dresses as Ahmadinejad outside EIH bank