



Israeli court convicts American of murder

BY JACK KATZENELL
ASSOCIATED PRESS

TEL AVIV, Israel — Samuel Sheinbein was silent on the subject for two years. On Thursday, he spoke only a single word. "Yes," the stone-faced Maryland teenager said when an Israeli judge asked him whether he strangled an acquaintance with a rope in a middle-class suburb of Washington, D.C., then cut up the body with an electric saw and burned the parts.

Under a plea bargain that infuriated U.S. prosecutors, Sheinbein, 19, is to be sentenced to 24 years in an Israeli prison for the 1997 killing. He will probably be paroled after 14 years, counting the two years he has already spent in Israeli custody. He could have received a much tougher sentence if he were convicted as an adult in the United States.

Sheinbein fled to Israel shortly after the killing of Alfredo Tello Jr. in September 1997 and successfully fought extradition.

The case sharply strained relations between Israel and the United States.

On Thursday, standing handcuffed between two policemen, Sheinbein stared straight ahead as the verdict was read, ignoring the camera crews that packed the Tel Aviv District Court just as he had ignored questions shouted at him as he came in.

Although he has picked up some basic Hebrew, Sheinbein listened to an interpreter translate the proceedings into English. When asked by Judge Uri Goren whether he had strangled Tello and cut up and burned his body, Sheinbein answered "ken," the Hebrew word for "yes."

The sentence will not be handed down

until Oct. 11, after a social worker has submitted a report on Sheinbein. The report is required because Sheinbein was 17 — a minor — at the time of the killing.

The judge still has considerable discretion and could impose a longer or shorter sentence than proposed in the plea bargain. However, a life term is unlikely. No one who committed a crime as a minor has ever been jailed for life in Israel.

After Tello's slaying, Sheinbein escaped to Israel, claiming Israeli citizenship on the grounds that his father was born in Israel. His friend Aaron Needle, also charged in the crime, committed suicide in a Maryland jail.

The Israeli prosecution rejected Sheinbein's citizenship claim and moved to comply with a request from the United States for Sheinbein's extradition. But Sheinbein's lawyer, David Libai, took the

issue to Israel's Supreme Court, which ruled that under existing Israeli law Sheinbein could not be extradited.

The judges criticized the law, and it has since been amended, but it was too late to affect the Sheinbein case.

The Hispanic community in Maryland was outraged by the killing and by Israel's refusal to extradite Sheinbein. Some members of Congress threatened to cut aid to Israel unless he was sent back.

In court Thursday, Libai said he would not claim that Sheinbein acted in self-defense, as the defendant's father had done in his testimony to a grand jury in Maryland. Sol Sheinbein had said Tello tried to rob Needle and pulled a gun on him.

Prosecutor Hadassah Maor apologized to the three judges because the plea bargain was disclosed to the media by Dou-

glas Gansler, state's attorney in Montgomery County, Md., before it had been submitted to the Israeli court. She said the Israeli prosecution had felt bound to inform its colleagues in Maryland of the deal, but asked them not to make it public before the court received it.

Gansler, who would have had jurisdiction over the case, said Thursday it was "a miscarriage of justice" that Sheinbein was tried in Israel. He said the Tello family, with whom he spoke last week, was "resigned, frustrated."

Earlier, Gansler said it was outrageous that Sheinbein would be free at the age of 33 after committing a "thrill kill."

Prison riot sparks criticism of privately owned prisons

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — A fiery uprising by 290 inmates that led to the killing of a corrections guard at a private prison has sparked renewed criticism of the facilities in New Mexico.

Ralph Garcia, 42, was the first prison guard killed in a dozen years in New Mexico. But in the past nine months, four inmates have been killed in prisons operated by Wackenhut Corrections Corp.

Garcia was stabbed numerous times with a homemade knife in an attack by as many as nine inmates at the Guadalupe County Correctional Facility, one of two prisons in New Mexico operated by Florida-based Wackenhut.

The Tuesday riot near Santa Rosa was sparked by the prison's attempt to lock down the facility after an inmate was stabbed in a gymnasium.

"I don't think in any way you can point the finger at Wackenhut for something that was done by inmates," said Republican Gov. Gary Johnson.

Johnson and Corrections Secretary Rob Perry said they haven't decided whether to follow through on Perry's threat to remove inmates from private prisons if more deaths or disturbances occurred.

China vows not to use nuclear weapons in conflict with Taiwan

BEIJING (AP) — While declaring its resolve to retake rival Taiwan by force if necessary, China removed one threat Thursday by promising not to use nuclear weapons in the event of a conflict.

The pledge, issued by the Foreign Ministry, was the most explicit, public renunciation of the nuclear option China has ever given Taiwan and suggested a slight easing of their latest tensions.

Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui provoked the latest round of Chinese anger, saying in July that the two sides should deal with each other as separate states. Such a suggestion of parity seemed to Beijing as another move toward outright independence.

Court allows Million Youth March, urges police restraint

BY LARRY NEUMEISTER
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — A federal appeals court has upheld a decision allowing the Million Youth March to go forward in Harlem this weekend, even going so far as to warn the city not to police the rally with "undue rigidity."

Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, who insists the event is a thinly disguised hate march, was furious with the ruling, saying the judges "have the luxury of keeping their heads in the sand."

"Thank goodness they don't have to govern a city because things would be really dangerous," he said Wednesday after the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals rejected the city's challenge of a lower court order.

Rally organizers said the event, which they estimate will draw 20,000, would focus on opportunities for black and Latino youths to make a better world by educating themselves and challenging their

government to act fairly and responsibly to everyone.

Michael Hess, a lawyer for the city, said recent statements by rally organizers made it clear the group intends to seek violence, even bringing in gangs to help it succeed.

"This is a unique event, the only I've seen preaching hate, violence and death," he said.

But the court sided with organizers, finding they had a First Amendment right to proceed.

The three-judge panel warned the police department not to patrol the event with "undue rigidity," and said forceful action should be taken only if the crowd does not disperse after the deadline of 4 p.m. Saturday.

Last year, 28 people were injured, including 16 police officers, when chairs and bricks were hurled as an army of officers moved in to shut down the rally one minute after the 4 p.m. deadline.

S.C. takes to Internet in hopes of returning lost Jewish assets

ASSOCIATED PRESS

COLUMBIA — The S.C. Insurance Department hopes to link families of Holocaust-era Jews to lost assets through the Internet.

The agency put a link on its Internet page to the names of 29,000 Holocaust-era Jews earlier this week and is mailing the list to synagogues and to 60 known Holocaust survivors in the state.

The list includes unclaimed Swiss bank accounts, plus names from the Austrian State Archives in Vienna. People who recognize the name of a relative might then be in line to inherit unclaimed Holocaust-era assets.

Richard Bach, a Bennettsville

resident whose parents were deported to a concentration camp in Poland and never seen again, recently inspected the list.

"I didn't see any names on there that concerned me," Bach, 79, told *The State*.

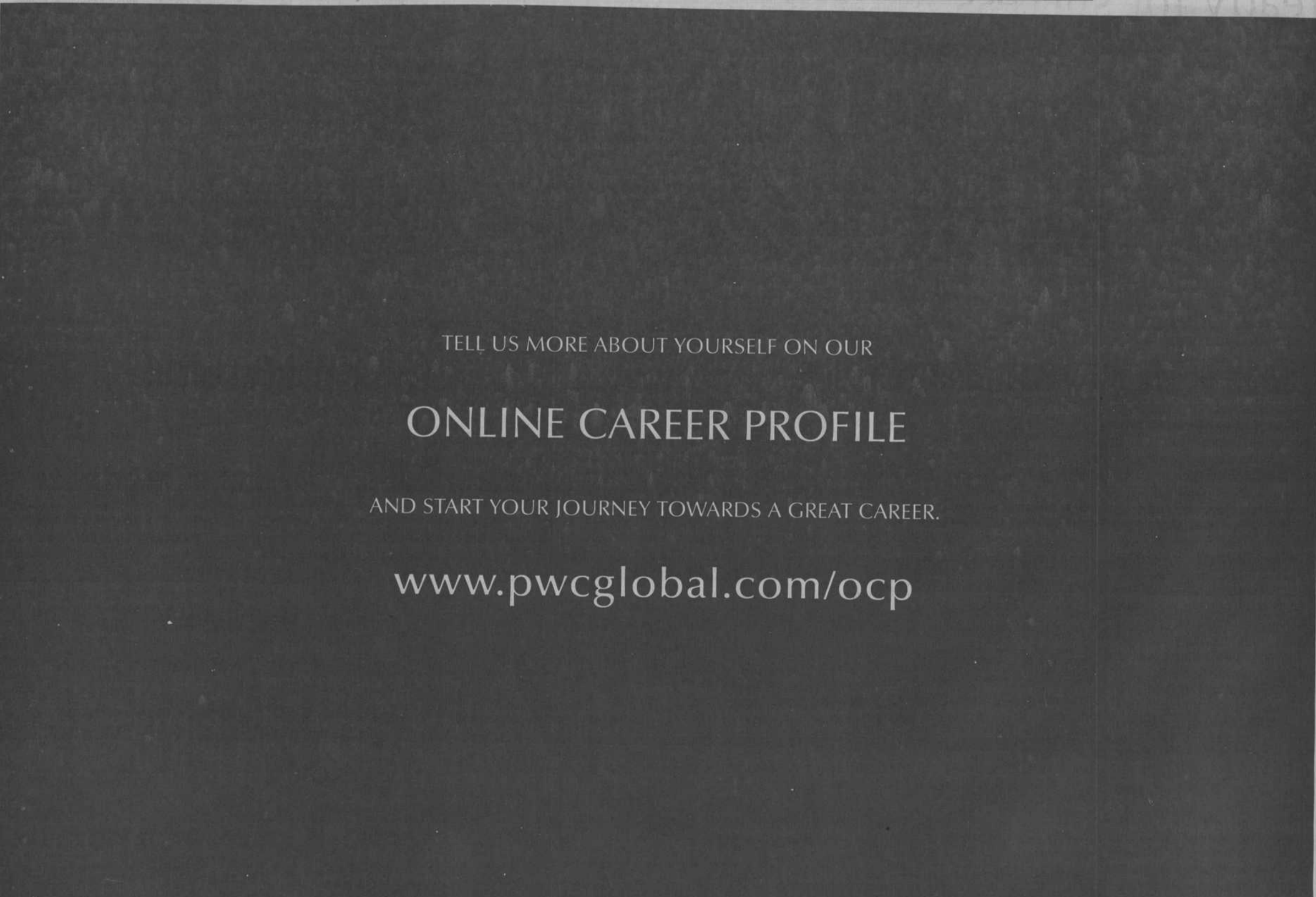
"I was kind of doubtful that I would recognize any names," Bach said. "Unfortunately, I didn't know a whole lot about my father's finances back then, so it's tough."

The restitution process could take years. No one knows what the potential payout for each person could be. Swiss banks have created a \$1.25 billion compensation fund to cover claims. Some estimates claim that there might be 200,000 people with claims in the United States alone.

State, federal and international governments and groups have sought help in recovering assets an insurance benefits owed Holocaust victims and their heirs.

For decades, European insurers refused to honor policies of Jews and others who were killed by Nazis killed during World War II because death certificates were rarely issued for concentration camp victims and policies were lost in the havoc of war.

The Insurance Department expects more lists will be released, spokesman Clayton Ingram said. "We're still just scratching the surface. There's probably a lot more to come," he said.



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