

Fading star 'set up attacks on TV bosses'

BY ANSHEL PFEFFER

▶ ONE OF Israel's top television stars, Dudu Topaz, has confessed to organising a series of physical attacks on media executives who rejected his ideas for television programmes.

Mr Topaz apparently hired two former bouncers to assault Shira Margalit, vice president of Channel 2; Avi Nir, a Channel 2 director; and talent agent Boaz Ben-Zion in Tel Aviv over the past seven months. Ms Margalit was hospitalised with fractures in her face but the attacks were unexplained until Mr Topaz was arrested on Sunday.

Police believe Mr Topaz was also planning to attack Amos Regev, editor of the freesheet *Yisrael Hayom*, who refused to run his column.

For 25 years, Mr Topaz was the king of Israeli entertainment. In the early 1980s, when the country had only one TV channel, he hosted gameshows and filled concert halls with crowds who came to see his stand-up acts.

When commercial television finally launched in 1993, he dominated the screen with lavish quiz shows, which gave away cars and other prizes on a

scale that had never been seen before on Israeli television, and hosted risqué chat-shows. It seemed as if he could get away with anything. He smashed the glasses of a critic who had dared criticise him, bit an Argentine soap-opera star and was acquitted of a sexual harassment case. Nothing touched him.

But over the past few years, Mr Topaz's attraction waned as more sophisticated comics came on the scene. His ratings plummeted and channels were no longer willing to give him airtime.

When the rumours began circulating last week that the 62-year-old was implicated in the mysterious attacks, the first reaction was disbelief. He seemed too prominent to be involved in a plot to ambush and beat up the victims.

But after his arrest on Sunday and confession two days later, it suddenly made sense. Mr Topaz had no existence outside his TV fame, after fathering three children with three different women, and never maintaining a relationship for more than a few months; his life was empty. And if the captains of the entertainment industry were not going to give him the limelight he craved, he would grasp it himself.

▶ STONE ME, THE TEMPLE'S BACK



Last month, guilty tourists returned a piece of the Colosseum in Rome they stole 25 years ago. Now Jerusalem has put on show a 21 kg stone a tourist had "adopted" from a Temple Mount dig in 1997, but returned in a special crate. The Antiquities Authority's Shay Bar Tura displays the stone

Air France crash man mourned

BY JAMES MARTIN

▶ A LONDON Chabad rabbi said his community was "in grief and shock" over news that an active member of the French Chabad community was a victim of this week's Air France crash.

A US strictly Orthodox website, *Voz is Neias*, reported that Serge (Shlomo) Anidjar, 40, a resident of Boulogne-Billancourt, in Paris, was on his way home after spending three days in Brazil on a business trip.

He was believed to be among 228 passengers feared dead after the plane crashed en route from Brazil to Paris on Sunday night.

Rabbi Levi Sudak, of Edgware Chabad, said: "We're deeply saddened by the loss of someone who appears to have died in tragic circumstances."

The report said Mr Anidjar was an active member of the Chabad Jewish community and had a wife and three children, the eldest just 12, who attend local Jewish schools.

Rabbi Michael Sojcher told the website: "The family is devastated. Shlomo was a good man and I know him very well. This is a very hard time for us."

The website said a second French Jew was said to have been on the flight and has been reported missing and that the Paris Jewish community was tracking his relatives.

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Aliyah rises from UK

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made aliyah on Monday with wife Alexandra and 18-month-old son Aidan.

The family have moved from Brondebury Park, north London, to Tel Aviv, where Mr Hart, 31, will work as a management consultant.

"It was a group of things that drew us to Israel in the end," he said. "We had decided over the last couple of years that we did not want to be in the UK. Israel offers a huge amount. The biggest thing that struck us was a lifestyle choice."

Figures released in Israel in January showed 2008 to be the worst in two decades for immigration.

The falling number of olim was put down to the Israeli government capping the immigration of Ethiopian Falash Mura, and a slowing down of Jews leaving the former Soviet Union.

Madonna to end tour in Tel Aviv

BY MARCUS DYSCH

▶ MADONNA IS to end her "Sticky and Sweet" world tour with a concert at Tel Aviv's Hayarkon Park on September 1.

It will be the Kabbalah student's second performance in Israel. Her last appearance was in 1993.

On her website, she said: "I'm very excited about returning to Israel for my final show. I know it will be unforgettable."

In 2004 Madonna, who has adopted the Hebrew name Esther, made a private pilgrimage to visit the graves of Jewish sages.

The announcement of the concert made front page news in Israel before tickets went on sale on Tuesday.

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