

Briefly noted

News in the [February 21, 2006](#) issue

German officials have suspended a lawyer's passport to prevent him from traveling to Iran to attend a proposed conference questioning whether the Holocaust ever happened. Horst Mahler is a former attorney for the National Democratic Party of Germany, a fringe party that political analysts accuse of having neo-Nazi tendencies. He surrendered his passport January 28, according to Radio Berlin-Brandenburg. The decision was made by the German state of Brandenburg. Interior Minister Eike Lancelle said Mahler is "a fanatic anti-Semite." German passport laws allow passports to be revoked if an individual's travel could damage national security or hurt the nation's vital interests. In this case, Brandenburg authorities say they hope to prevent Mahler from damaging Germany's reputation abroad.

Israel may relocate a jail in the Galilee on the recommendation of archaeologists who have discovered on its grounds the remnants of what is said to be the oldest church ever found in the Holy Land. The third-century prayer chapel laden with inscriptions and mosaics was found last year on Megiddo prison land, west of Afula in northern Israel. It was uncovered by prisoners helping archaeologists excavate the site prior to construction of a new prison wing. In light of the discovery, the prison will no longer be expanded, and a committee of leading archaeologists from the governmental Antiquities Authority has advised that it be relocated so the find can be preserved and further archaeological excavations can take place. Israel's president, Moshe Katsav, who toured the area, said he supports moving the prison because of the site's historical importance to Christianity. Katsav said Pope Benedict XVI had, at a meeting in Rome last year, expressed interest in visiting the excavation on any future trips to the Holy Land.