

JTA daily news bulletin

Published by Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc. 660 First Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016

Contents copyright: Republication only by previous arrangement.

Vol. XXXVI - Fifty-Second Year

Tuesday, September 2, 1969

No. 166

Israel Demands Release Of Two Nationals Held By Syria Following Hijacking Of TWA Liner

JERUSALEM, Sept. 1 (JTA) -- Israel renewed its demand today for the release by Syria of all Israeli citizens who were passengers aboard the TWA airliner hijacked by Arab commandos last Friday and forced to land in Damascus. Four of the Israelis, all women, were released today, flown to Athens aboard an Alitalia airliner, and brought here in a TWA airliner. But two Israeli men are still being held by Syrian authorities.

Israeli Government officials said today there would be no "bargaining" with Syria for release of the Israelis in exchange for two Syrian jet pilots who landed in Israel a year ago or for captured Arab guerrillas. The men as well as the women must be unconditionally released, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said last night. The release of the women did not "detract from the seriousness of the crime," he said.

Israeli Demands Are Directed To TWA And United States

Foreign Ministry officials said today that Israel's demand for action to secure the release of the two Israelis still held in Syria was directed "first and foremost" to TWA and the U.S. Government. They said the air carrier has not denied responsibility for its passengers' safety and that the U.S., under whose flag the plane flew, has assured Israel that it would do all in its power to have the Israelis set free. But the Ministry officials said they had no reports that a "neutral body" (presumably the United Nations) was doing anything regarding the wellbeing and safety of the Israeli citizens in Damascus.

(In Washington, Israeli Embassy officials disclosed that contacts were continuing today, with the State Department, Trans-World Airlines and international bodies in efforts to secure the release of the two Israelis still held by the Syrian authorities.)

The two men, apparently being held as hostages, are Prof. Shmuel Samueloff, 48, a member of the physiology department of Hadassah Medical School in Jerusalem, and Saleh Moualem, 42, of Ramat Hasharon, a travel agency employee. Israeli officials said today that proposals for an exchange had not been received from Syrian sources. But the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine which carried out the hijacking, claimed that one of its purposes was to seize Israelis as hostages for captured Arabs. The Israeli official pointed out that the two men are in the custody of Syrian authorities, not of terrorists and that Syria will be held responsible for their safety and prompt return.

Israeli Ire Softened By TWA Moves To Secure Release Of Detained Passengers

The four Israeli women arrived at Lydda Airport from Athens this afternoon in a TWA airliner and were given an emotional welcome by relatives and friends. They were taken to a waiting room reserved for VIP's and talked to the press there. They had little information to add. They said the Syrians treated them well, they had enough food and generally had no complaints except for their detention.

The women passengers released are Mrs. Hava Fried, 42, of Kiryat Motzkin and her 15 year-old daughter, Dalia; Mrs. Victoria Shamash, 61, and Mrs. Ardit Hana Arditi, 63. Mrs. Shamash and Mrs. Arditi were both returning from visits to relatives in Los Angeles where the TWA flight originated.

The Alitalia plane that took them from Damascus carried four TWA executives to the Syrian capital. They are F.C. Wiser, President of the airline, and vice-presidents Thomas Hughton, Richard Wilson and Gordon Gilmore. The plane's pilot, Capt. Dean Carter, is also remaining in Damascus. Its crew and 99 non-Israeli passengers were evacuated on Saturday.

The arrival of the airline officials in Damascus did much to mollify Israeli public opinion which was angered by the fact that the crew and non-Israeli passengers were promptly evacuated, leaving the six Israelis to their fate. Originally, TWA announced that Capt. Carter would remain in the Syrian capital to supervise repairs to the aircraft which was damaged by time bombs planted by the commandos after it landed. The head of Israel's Civil Aviation Administration, Moshe Peled, cabled TWA in New York Sunday expressing "shock" that the crew of the Boeing jet had left Damascus without the Israeli passengers. Shortly afterwards, TWA announced that Capt. Carter had been ordered to remain in Damascus to "expedite the release of six Israelis" as soon as possible. The airline said it had assigned "top priority" to obtaining their release.

(John Corris, director of public relations for TWA in Washington, told JTA today that "TWA, at this time, has no plans whatsoever to change its pattern of scheduled service to Tel Aviv.")

Mrs. Meir Says Syria Was 'Accomplice' In Hijacking of Plane And Must Bear Responsibility

TEL AVIV, Sept. 1 (JTA) -- Premier Golda Meir declared Sunday night that "The Syrian Government was an accomplice in the hijacking of a TWA plane and the kidnapping of its passengers and must bear responsibility for these criminal acts." Addressing an election rally at the Mann Auditorium, Mrs. Meir said the "sole ray of light" in the entire episode was "the firm stand of the United States Government in condemning the crime and its strong demand for the release of all passengers." She said Israel was gratified to learn also that the captain of the hijacked plane and other representatives of the airline would remain in Damascus until the detained Israelis are released.

Mrs. Meir said the Syrian Government assumed the onus of the crime when it failed to release the passengers or to arrest the hijackers. Syria, she said, is not a terrorist organization but a sovereign member of the United Nations with an airline of its own and dependent upon international cooperation. "The Government of Syria should weigh its future steps well and should realize that it cannot do anything it likes," she advised.

The hijacking was the top item on the agenda at the Sunday Cabinet meeting where Foreign Minister Abba Eban and Transport Minister Moshe Carmel presented reports. The Cabinet later issued a formal statement demanding the unconditional and immediate release of all detained Israeli citizens. The statement characterized the hijacking as "an act of air piracy endangering the safety and lives of scores of passengers, men, women and children, perpetrated by a band of Arab terrorists" who "violated international law, international conventions and the basic rules of human conduct."

The statement said "The Government of Israel notes with satisfaction the statement of the United States Government and its continuing efforts to free the hijacked passengers. The Government of Israel expresses the hope that in the face of concerted international reaction, not only will the Israeli passengers be released forthwith but that irresponsible acts such as that perpetrated last Friday will cease."

The Israeli Foreign Ministry set up a special headquarters to deal with the hijack case. The Ministry's director-general, Gideon Rafael, is in charge.

Airline Pilots Threaten 24-Hour Protest Strike Unless Two Israelis Are Released

PARIS, Sept. 1 9(JTA)--The International Federation of Airline Pilots Associations threatened today to call a 24-hour general strike of airline pilots unless the United Nations took immediate action to secure the release of two Israelis still held in Syria after their TWA plane was hijacked by Arab commandos and forced to land in Damascus last Friday.

The strike warning was issued at an emergency meeting of IFALPA's executive bureau here. Its chairman, Olaf Forsberg, of Finland, told newsmen later that the organizations's 44,000 members could not stand idly by as long as the two Israelis were detained. The strike proposal would require the approval of the various national pilots' associations affiliated with IFALPA.

Three Israeli Soldiers Killed; Four Wounded In Golan Heights Ambush

TEL AVIV, Sept. 1 (JTA) --Three Israeli soldiers were killed and four were wounded this morning in the Golan Heights in a guerrilla ambush of an Israeli mobile patrol. The incident took place in the southern section of the heights where the patrol was attacked with bazooka and machinegun fire. One of the vehicles was hit and damaged. One of the guerrillas was killed by Israeli return-fire, a military spokesman said.

Israel Air Force jets went into action today against Jordanian military positions opposite the Beisan Valley. The sortie, lasting 15 minutes, followed a synchronized attack by Jordanian forces on Israeli patrols near six Beisan and Jordan valley settlements this morning. One border policeman was wounded in the attack near Tirat Zvi. Fire was reported simultaneously in the vicinity of Yardena, Maoz Chaim, Neve Urr, Kfar Ruppim and Ashdod Yaacov, a military spokesman said.

An Israeli couple, Moshe and Orah Wahba, suffered slight injuries when guerrillas approached within 300 yards of Maoz Chaim last night and bombarded the settlement with bazooka and mortar shells. Israeli forces returned the fire and the guerrillas retreated leaving behind Ei Fatah flags and explosives which they had apparently intended to plant under buildings in the settlement.

An Israeli and three local Arabs were injured this morning when a hand grenade exploded at the entrance to the Bank Leumi branch office in Nabliis. An explosive charge was detonated in the labor exchange office in Rafah in the Gaza Strip last night causing slight damage but no casualties.

Two saboteurs were killed in the Golan Heights over the weekend and a third was gunned down by an Israeli patrol south of the Damiya bridge in the Jordan Valley. One of the Golan Heights victims was apparently killed when he mishandled a grenade. The other was shot in a clash with an Israeli patrol.

Syrian long range artillery shelled Israeli positions east of Kuneitra in the Golan Heights Saturday night but caused no casualties. An Israeli soldier was slightly wounded in an exchange with Egyptian forces across the Suez Canal Saturday.

An explosive charge went off in a parking lot near a movie house in Haifa Sunday morning. Three persons in nearby houses were treated for injuries caused by flying glass. One car in the lot was burned and another was slightly damaged.

Settlers at Metullah on the Lebanese border reported an encounter between a Lebanese patrol and Arab guerrillas near the slopes of Mt. Hermon. They said the shooting lasted half an hour. Several shots were fired at Kfar Yuval from Lebanese territory last night but caused no casualties.

200,000 Israeli Youngsters Return To School

JERUSALEM, Sept. 1 (JTA)--Eighteen thousand Arab school children in East Jerusalem began the new school year today as 200,000 Israeli youngsters all over the country returned to classes. There are 7,000 more children attending school in East Jerusalem this year than last year.

Rohen Is Charged In District Court With Arson And Wilful Destruction Of Holy Place

JERUSALEM, Sept. 1(JTA) -- Israel's attorney general filed charges in a Jerusalem district court today against Michael Denis William Rohen, a 28 year-old Australian national accused of setting the fire which severely damaged the El Aksa mosque in East Jerusalem Aug. 21. The charges drawn up by Meir Shamgar accuse Rohen on two counts: arson and wilful destruction of a holy place. The first charge carries a maximum penalty of seven years in jail and the second, 15 years. The court was asked to appoint defense counsel.

A special committee appointed by the Israeli Supreme Court to investigate the causes of the fire heard testimony today from an Arab shoemaker who was one of the guards appointed by the Moslem Religious Council at the mosque at the time of the fire.

Meanwhile the El Aksa mosque and the nearby Dome of the Rock (Mosque of Omar) have been placed under special security precautions. The Moslem religious authorities have put in charge a Jerusalem Arab, Hazem el Halidi, who once served as a major in the Syrian Army and served with British forces during World War II. Halidi reportedly participated in two coups in Damascus before returning to his native Jerusalem some years ago.

Swiss Rights Group Condemns Arab Incitement Against Israel Over El Aksa Fire

BERNE, Sept. 1 (JTA) -- The Swiss National Committee for Human Rights has denounced the Arab campaign of incitement blaming Israel for the fire which damaged El Aksa Mosque and has praised the efforts by Israel to ensure freedom of access to the holy places by people of all religions. The committee said that two of its representatives recently visited the holy places in East Jerusalem, including the Mosque of Omar and El Aksa Mosque and personally witnessed the care taken by the Israeli authorities to assure free access.

A statement by the committee denounced Arab accusations that Israel was responsible for the El Aksa blaze and said such accusations served as evidence that the Arab leaders were systematically inciting their people in a campaign of hatred of Israel and did not hesitate to exploit religious emotions for political ends. The statement affirmed that this runs counter to the very spirit of religion and the principles of human rights.

Nearly One Million To Vote Today For 11 Lists In Histadrut Elections

TEL AVIV, Sept. 1 (JTA) -- Close to a million Histadrut members will go to the polls tomorrow to vote for delegates to the 11th convention of Israel's powerful labor federation. There are 1,000 delegate spots and 4,600 candidates. The convention will elect members to Histadrut's governing councils.

The voters will have a choice of 11 lists, four of them representing new political factions. The factions are more or less the same that will present candidates for election to the Knesset, Israel's parliament, in next month's national elections.

A half million women members of Histadrut will go to the polls twice tomorrow. After voting for Histadrut convention delegates they will cast ballots for delegates to the convention of Moetzet Hapaolet, the women's labor Zionist organization. Farm workers will also vote for members to the Agricultural Workers Council.

Eight East Jerusalem Arabs whose names appeared on the Labor Party-Mapam list of Histadrut convention delegates withdrew suddenly today. It is believed they were threatened by extremists.

Film Stars Lead London Demonstration Against Iraqi Executions, Persecution Of Jews

LONDON, Sept. 1 (JTA) -- Two Israeli film stars, Topol and Dahlia Lavi, joined demonstrators organized by the World Union of Jewish Students in a demonstration before the Iraqi Embassy protesting the executions in Baghdad and the treatment of the Jews in the Arab countries. Some of the demonstrators came dressed in prison clothes. One group carried a gallows.

The demonstrators moved from the Iraqi Embassy to the Egyptian Embassy and the offices of the Arab League. At each stopping point, the shofar, the ram's horn, was blown by a man wearing a prayer-shawl.

Jewish Agency Calls For Continued Protests Over Iraqi Treatment Of Jews

NEW YORK, Aug. 29 (JTA) -- A call for continuation of worldwide protests against the executions in Iraq, "loud enough for even the deaf to hear them," was issued today by Dr. Emanuel Neumann, chairman of the Jewish Agency-American Section. He said that "Iraq has been deaf to the expressions of horror that have been voiced" over the "blood bath" and that "the voice of the entire civilized world must continue to be expressed until heard by the Iraqi Government."

Dr. Neumann drew the attention of the United Nations and other governments to the pledge made by the Jewish Agency Executive in Jerusalem that it would accept "full responsibility for bringing all Jews from Iraq and from all other Arab countries to Israel." He said that "remembering the lesson of the Holocaust, Jews must not be allowed to be kept as hostages and killed at will by vengeful Arab governments."

In New York, the Synagogue Council of America organized an interfaith mass public memorial service to be held in front of United Nations headquarters on Wednesday at 1:30 P.M. Richard Tucker will sing an ancient Jewish memorial prayer. Catholic and Protestant clergymen will participate in services.

ZOA Re-elects Torczyner To Presidency, Calls On US To Aid Israel With Arms

LOS ANGELES, Sept. 1 (JTA) -- Resolutions calling on the United States to provide Israel with the weapons needed for its defense and calling on United Nations Secretary-General U Thant and the United States Government for action to secure the release of the Israeli passengers of the hijacked TWA plane still held captive by Syria were adopted today at the closing sessions of the 72nd national convention of the Zionist Organization of America.

If Mr. Thant fails to succeed in this, the resolution stated, the United Nations "must ratify any measures taken by Israel for the upholding of international law." The resolution called for immediate and forceful response by the United States "to the act of Arab piracy committed against an American airliner and its passengers."

Another resolution, dealing with the continued difficulties along the cease-fire lines, "condemned the voluntary blindness of the UN to the willful violations of the cease-fire by the Arab states and the partisanship of the resolutions passed by a biased Security Council."

The convention re-elected Jacques Torczyner of New York president by acclamation after first amending the constitution to permit him to serve another term and after Rabbi Max I. Kirschblum withdrew as a candidate.

The convention also decided on a largescale program to combat Arab propaganda on the college campus by a program of information for students and faculty on developments in the Middle East.

It recommended establishment of a Kiryat ZOA near a major Israeli city to provide homes and commercial premises for immigrants and temporary visitors from America. The convention expressed full support of aliyah for people of all ages but stressed that maximum encouragement must be given to the immigration of young American Jews. In this connection, it decided, development of accommodations at the Mollie Goodman Academic High School in Israel "be accelerated for maximum development of its capacity."

In his acceptance speech, Mr. Torczyner welcomed the fact that the organization was united despite the contest that had taken place over its leadership and stressed the need for the Zionist movement at this critical time.

Earlier, Sen. Harrison A. Williams Jr., of New Jersey, told the convention that "United States efforts in the Middle East must be centered on one basic premise - Israel's right to life as a state. The other issues," he said, "important as they are, can be solved. Perhaps they can even be negotiated. But life itself, the continued integrity of the State of Israel, must be non-negotiable."

In its resolution on arms for Israel, the convention expressed the hope that "American statesmanship, recognizing the importance of the sovereign state of Israel for the Western World, will not permit the Soviet Union and its client states to endanger the stability and the future of the Middle East."

Nixon Message Says High Priority Being Given To Peace In Mideast

President Nixon, in a message read to the convention, stressed that his Administration accorded a high priority to permanent peace in the Middle East and declared that the United States was firmly committed to maintaining "friendly relations with the people of Israel and, indeed, with all the peoples of the Middle East." The President praised the ZOA for strengthening Israel's social and economic foundations and the cultural ties between "its people and their friends in America," tasks which he described as "in the highest American tradition."

Before his election, Mr. Nixon in statements to B'nai B'rith and to the ZOA, had declared his conviction that Israel required a "technological military margin" to offset Arab numerical superiority.

Mrs. Rita Hauser, U.S. representative on the United Nations Human Rights Commission, warned Israel and its friends to counter Arab propaganda depicting the Jewish State as an oppressive occupying power. She warned that the Arab line "is becoming increasingly credible among churchmen and student radicals." She said that Israel should permit the UN commission "or other impartial observer" to enter the occupied territories to show the world how the Arabs are being treated.

Community Trend Away From Universal Concerns Threatens To Alienate Youth, Rabbi Warns

STARLIGHT, Pa. Sept. 1 (JTA)--A growing trend within the Jewish community to deal more with "particular Jewish interests" and less with its "universal concern for humanity" threatens to alienate a large segment of today's Jewish youth, according to Albert Vorspan, director of social action for the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Mr. Vorspan addressed 230 Jewish college students at Camp B'nai B'rith here yesterday, attending the 24th annual summer institute of the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation.

Mr. Vorspan declared that many Jewish youths, determined to involve themselves with the issues "that are tearing their consciences apart," will either restructure the Jewish community to meet their needs or fall away from it entirely "if the trend toward parochialism continues."

The speaker warned that the Jewish community's "drift to look inward" to the increasing exclusion of broader moral and ethical questions, poses the danger of turning it into "a tribal, fossilized, self-righteous group on the periphery of American life." Mr. Vorspan, however, took exception to the "other side of the coin." He referred to those Jewish youths who "have swallowed every mythology about a Third World force and conspiratorial theory by which Israel and every other Jewish interest are sold down the river."