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TERRORISTS SLAUGHTER 18, WOUND 15 IN KIRYAT SHEMONA DURING 4-HOUR RAMPAGE

By Yitzhak Shargil

KIRYAT SHEMONA, April 11 (JTA)--Three Arab terrorists massacred 18 people--eight of them children--and wounded 15 others--including two policemen, three border patrol guards and three soldiers--during a four-hour rampage with machineguns, bazooka and grenades today in this town of 15,000 in Upper Galilee near the Lebanese border. The terrorists were killed by Israeli security forces. They belonged to a group calling itself "The Popular Front--The General Command" headed by Ahmed Jabril with headquarters in Beirut, Lebanon, the same gang which claimed it had perpetrated the slaughter of children in a school bus near Avivim three years ago.

Funeral services for the victims will be held tomorrow. At least two of the dead were soldiers, the rest mostly women and children who were mowed down by automatic fire or grenades. Several soldiers were among the wounded. Considerable damage was done to buildings in the town. Defense Minister Moshe Dayan rushed to the scene by helicopter from a Cabinet meeting in Jerusalem. He was accompanied by Acting Chief of Staff Gen. Yitzhak Hofi. About 300 townspeople demonstrated in the streets after the massacre to protest alleged lack of security measures. Kiryat Shemona which has a large immigrant population, has been a frequent target of terrorist assaults from Lebanese territory in recent years.

Reports By Eyewitnesses

According to accounts of the tragedy pieced together from eyewitness reports and reports by security forces and municipal authorities, the terrorists infiltrated across the Lebanese border during the night and invaded the town in the early morning hours. They occupied a school building, empty over the Passover holiday and began shooting wildly at passers-by shortly after 9 a.m. local time.

When security forces rushed to the scene, the terrorists escaped down a hill and occupied a four-story apartment building facing the Lebanese border some seven kilometers to the north, murdering many of the occupants in their flats. According to eyewitnesses, they tossed the bodies of their victims--including children--out of windows. The terrorists barricaded themselves on the top floor of the building and fired machineguns, Kalachnikov automatic rifles and grenades into the street. They hit a police armored car and a military half-track while spraying passers-by with automatic fire.

Israeli security forces surrounded the building. Acting under the direct supervision of Hofi, Gen. Motta Gur, commander of the northern command and national police chief Shaul Rozolio, they fired bazooka shells and recoilless cannon into the fourth floor flat. Paratroopers prepared to storm the building when the terrorists ignored a loudspeaker demand to surrender.

At that point, an explosion tore through the flat, possibly the result of a direct hit. Israeli soldiers entering the wrecked apartment found the bodies of three Arab terrorists (one report said four) sprawled on the floor. Dayan entered

the building a few minutes later. He refused to reply to questions before receiving a report from the local commanders.

An army spokesman later denied an allegation by the terrorist group in Beirut that the terrorists had taken hostages and demanded the release of 100 of their comrades in Israeli prisons, including Kozo Okamoto, the surviving terrorist of the Lod Airport massacre two years ago. The terrorists made no demands and took no hostages, the spokesman said. He said they left leaflets in Hebrew extolling murder as a way to get back their "stolen lands." The terrorist group is commanded by former Syrian army officers. The authorities reported that only one of the 15 wounded is in a serious condition. Three others were reported out of danger and the remaining 11 were listed as slightly wounded. The injured were hospitalized in Safad.

Corpses At Every Entrance

One of the eyewitnesses, Itzhak Safra, told this correspondent he heard people screaming that the terrorists were killing children. Though shooting was still going on in the upper floor of the occupied building, he said, he did not hesitate and entered the apartment. "We saw corpses at every entrance. Children, one a three-year-old, lay bullet-riddled in their beds where they had been sprayed with gunfire."

This correspondent learned that the Arab killers, coming from Lebanese territory, were detected by border police, who began pursuit. The killers raced to the township elementary school building and found it empty because of the Passover holiday. They managed to reach an apartment building on the northern outskirts of Kiryat Shemona where they systematically forced open every door and killed everyone they found. At that hour, most of the men were at work and only women and children were at home. They were slaughtered in cold blood.

Bodies of victims were sprawled on doorsteps, on beds and under beds, in the children's rooms and in the kitchens, on the staircase and in the yard. There was blood on the staircase and in the apartments. A woman's blood-soaked apron lay at the door to a flat where a mother of three was slaughtered.

Amram Peretz, 21, who was among the first to start rescue activities even while firing was continuing, said that he saw a man sobbing and yelling that "they slaughtered my children." Peretz said he rushed with the man into the flat and found wounded and dead children. The man's wife was fatally injured. The man pulled his dying wife and one wounded child to the basement where he covered them with his body, refusing to be parted from them.

MRS. MEIR: MURDER FOR THE SAKE OF MURDER

JERUSALEM, April 11 (JTA)--"It was murder for the sake of murder." This was how Premier Golda Meir described the carnage in Kiryat Shemona. "The people who committed this latest crime have done it out of a mere desire to murder and not of any lofty ideas of liberation," she declared

as she reported the tragic events to the Knesset which was packed with legislators, guests and reporters. "This is not liberation but plain and calculated murder of innocent children, women, men and soldiers. It is our obligation to do everything in our power to protect the lives of our people in Kiryat Shemona and everywhere else, and this we shall do."

Mrs. Meir warned Lebanon that Israel held her and her citizens responsible for the aid given to the terrorists who committed today's atrocity. She added that the Jewish people have suffered a great deal "but we are here, in a Jewish independent State which knows how to defend herself and her citizens." After she concluded her statement the Knesset members and those in the audience rose for a moment of silence in memory of the Kiryat Shemona victims.

Foreign Minister Abba Eban, in a statement issued here tonight, declared: "It is already plain that an immense brutality has been perpetrated in violation of every law of civilization and humanity. Every civilized man and woman in the world must be asking to what length this peril will go. The lesson must be an implacable resistance to the terrorists and an end to the deplorable indulgence with which these organizations have been surrounded in many places."

VICTIMS OF MASSACRE IDENTIFIED

TEL AVIV, April 11 (JTA)--The depth of the horror of the indiscriminate murders by Arab killers at Kiryat Shemona was dramatized by the disclosure of the names of the victims which indicated that it was whole families which had been crippled or wiped out.

They included the Shitrit family, the mother, Fanny, 30; and three children, Yocheved, 11, Aharon, 8, and Motti, four. In the Bitton family, the victims were Shimon, 33, Avi, five, and his two-and-a-half year old sister. In the Guetta family, the victims were Miriam and Yaacob, each 30. In the Stern family, death came to Hadassah, 27, and her daughter, Rachel, 8. Mrs. Esther Cohen, 49, perished with her son David, 17 and her daughter, Shulamit, 14. Also dead were Esther Yazada, 60, and Shmuel Ben Abu, 58.

The slain soldiers were identified as acting officer Mordechai Garidi, 20, of Ramat Hasharon and Corp. Abahab el Souhli, 20 from Maona-Tarshiha. Officials said the victims would receive a state funeral tomorrow with Chief Chaplain Mordechai Firon officiating. Police Minister Shlomo Hillel will represent the government.

KISSINGER CONDEMNS SLAUGHTER

WASHINGTON, April 11 (JTA)--Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger said today he "condemns this brutal and senseless slaughter of innocent civilians, particularly the murder of women and children, as we deplore all terrorist activity. In this instance this was particularly regrettable coming at a time when the processes of peace are already in motion." State Department spokesman George Vest said "this attack underlines the urgent need for the Secretary's continued efforts to persist in bringing peace to this region."

TEKOAH LODGES COMPLAINT IN UN

UNITED NATIONS, April 11 (JTA)--Israel lodged a complaint today with the Security Council and Secretary General Kurt Waldheim on the cold-blooded murder of 18 people in Kiryat Shemona. Israeli Ambassador Yosef Tekoah drew the attention of Waldheim and the Council to the ghastly crime but did not call for Security Council

action. Tekoah pointed out that the Arab governments harbor and finance these murderers and expressed indignation that the world has shown leniency towards the Arab terrorists.

JEWISH LEADERS DENOUNCE MASSACRE Accuse Arab Governments Of Aiding Killers

NEW YORK, April 11 (JTA)--Leaders of major Jewish organizations denounced the massacre today of 18 people in Kiryat Shemona and accused the Arab governments of aiding and abetting that atrocity as they had others in the past.

Rabbi Israel Miller, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, called the attack a "butchery" which was "a horrifying reminder" of what the Palestine "Liberation" movement stands for. Rabbi Miller added that the people of Israel would not be frightened "by a desperate act in a losing cause," which will "serve only to strengthen their unity of purpose." He said also that "rather than inhibit the support which American Jews have given to the Jewish State, it will serve only to intensify our commitment that the people of Israel shall live in security and peace."

"The guilt of the Arab governments in this frightful deed is plain," he declared. Rabbi Miller said neither Syria nor the other Arab governments "can have their peace and eat it too," nor escape responsibility "for the brutal massacre to which they have given encouragement by actively supporting the murderers who operate from their territories."

Mrs. Charlotte Jacobson, chairman of the World Zionist Organization-American Section, declared: "Passive acceptance of Arab terrorism on the part of world opinion has led to yet another outrage against human decency." Excoriating the self-styled Arab "liberators" who chose women and children as their victims, she called for prompt condemnation of the brutal attack by the governments of the entire civilized world, "who must make it clear that such inhuman acts will no longer be tolerated." She also called upon the government of Lebanon, which has permitted the terrorists to operate within their borders, to take immediate action to put an end to such outrages or be prepared to accept the responsibility for them. She noted the tragic irony that the attack, perpetrated by a terrorist group commanded by former Syrian army officers, took place just as the Syrian delegation arrived in the United States for the beginning of "peace" talks.

International Action Urged To Halt Outrages

Bertram H. Gold, executive vice-president of the American Jewish Committee said this latest outrage "must be viewed in the context of the developing Middle East situation." He said that "apart from the human tragedy, such action clearly jeopardizes the chances for permanent peace in the area. If the Arab governments and the moderate Palestinians want peace, let us now hear them speak out against this attack and let us hear from the United Nations, which has remained eloquently silent over the years in the face of repeated Arab violations of all the rules of decency and civilized behavior."

Mrs. Rose Matzkin, president of Hadassah, declared that the "barbarous act" of the terrorists "is an indication of the blind hatred of the Palestinian terrorist group. Fighting a last ditch battle against peace initiatives, these desperate men were not solitary extremists but were trained and disciplined by the Popular Front-General Command bred in Beirut. Their activities are known by the Lebanese and Syrian authorities whom we

most charge as accomplices for allowing them to operate and encouraging them."

Mrs. Faye Schenk, chairman of the Executive of the American Zionist Federation, stated that the massacre "underscores the supine attitude of international bodies toward these venal assassins. As long as these terrorist bands are given safe harbor from which to launch their perfidy, and the world accepts their right to exist, there will be no end to this needless tragedy."

Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, president of the American Jewish Congress, stated that the cold-hearted murder "ought to put an end to the grotesque notion that the guilt of Arab terrorists can somehow be mitigated by their alleged idealism. There is no idealism, no political grievance sufficient to explain away the brutality incarnate in throwing helpless children from rooftops. These are unspeakable acts, acts of appalling cowardice. They degrade us all." He called for "worldwide expressions of revulsion over these atrocities and we demand an international program to prevent and punish terrorism in the future."

Mrs. Henry Rapaport, president of the Women's League for Conservative Judaism, sent a telegram to the Lebanese Ambassador to the U.S., Najati Kabbani, protesting "the cruel and senseless action of the Arab terrorists. Lebanese countenance of such action can only serve to make more difficult hopes for peace in the Middle East. We urge you to convey to your government our sense of shock and distress in this situation and urge the taking of strongest steps to prevent its recurrence."

Rabbi Irwin M. Blank, president of the Synagogue Council of America, stated: "Even sensibilities that have become hardened to the habitual murder of civilians by Arab terrorists must be outraged by the new level of brutality and carnage that occurred today. The incredible inhumanity of the Arab terrorists condemns their cause beyond redemption. The revulsion and condemnation it must evoke on the part of decent men transcends all differences of politics, faith and nationality."

MRS. MEIR SUBMITS FORMAL RESIGNATION

JERUSALEM, April 11 (JTA)--Premier Golda Meir issued her formal resignation today in a speech to the Knesset. Earlier she returned her mandate to President Ephraim Katzir during a half-hour audience at the Presidential residence. Addressing a hushed Knesset meeting which had just received a report on the terrorist carnage in Kiryat Shemona, Mrs. Meir stated: "Since the recent Knesset elections I have been watching closely developments in the country and I have reached the conclusion that there is a public unrest which cannot be avoided, whether it is justified or not."

Mrs. Meir said the public should have the right to study the possibility of a new government and observed that although the present government was resigning, the interim government was capable of handling the situation and the army was prepared to cope with all challenges. She concluded her statement with a call to the nation "to behave not like a stricken people but like a people with a future open before it."

The special Knesset session was originally called to discuss the Agranat Committee's report, and the Likud had intended to propose a vote of no confidence in the government. However, with the turn of events the session turned into a public debate on Israel's internal crisis and external dangers.

While the Knesset was packed with legislators, guests and reporters, demonstrators stood in front of the main Knesset gate and booed Knesset members as they entered the building. The crowd of 200 demonstrators were part of a crowd of 1000 which gathered earlier at the Valley of the Cross at the bottom of the Knesset hill to demand greater democracy in Israeli political parties and the government.

Seek New Candidate To Head Government

After Mrs. Meir returned her mandate to Katzir the President read her resignation statement to waiting newsmen, translating it into English for American media. He said he would begin consultations immediately with the various parties to select a candidate to head a new government. He said Mrs. Meir had informed him that she would not be a candidate. President Katzir told the reporters that he had conveyed to Mrs. Meir the deep feelings of honor and respect that the entire nation felt for her.

Katzir spoke of her immense contributions to the national renaissance which, he said, could not yet be fully appreciated and esteemed. He said that a deep sense of responsibility for the future of the State had guided Mrs. Meir's every action throughout her long career and had prompted her to shoulder the heaviest burdens of leadership. She has set an example of responsibility and mature leadership, Katzir said, adding the hope that Israel would emerge from the present crisis "strengthened seven-fold."

Mrs. Meir's formal act of resignation followed a special Cabinet meeting at which she informed her ministers of her intention to resign--a formality required by Israeli law. The Cabinet was in session for two hours. An official communique stated that it had concluded its discussion of the Agranat Committee's report on events leading up to the Yom Kippur War.

With the prospect of new elections looming large, the various grass roots protest movements that have been building up in reaction to the Yom Kippur War coalesced last night into a single movement and selected Yochai Bin-Noon, a former naval commander and national hero as its leader. The groups represented in the new movement include demobilized soldiers of the paratroops, armored corps and other military units, students, intellectuals and academicians.

Among the stated aims of the movement is the infusion of new blood into the national leadership and electoral reform. Bin-Noon, though a naval officer, holds the rank of reserves general in Israel's defense forces. He is one of the few holders of the nation's highest decoration--Hero of Israel--which he won for his action during Israel's war for independence in 1948.

While Katzir seeks someone of sufficient stature to form a new government, the present government is expected to remain in office as a care-taker regime. The status quo will continue for the time being, sources here said today. Israel will continue to pursue a disengagement accord with Syria through the offices of U.S. Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger. Moshe Dayan is expected to remain on as Defense Minister in the care-taker Cabinet and will continue the contacts with Kissinger on disengagement which he began in Washington last month.

Foreign Minister Abba Eban said today that the fate of Syrian Jews would be at the top of the agenda in any negotiations with Syria. He said that both he and Dayan had apprised the U.S. of Israel's insistence that the Syrian Jewish problem be given top priority in any talks.

Crisis Seen As Historic Irony

Mrs. Meir's resignation and the storm in the Labor Party and the Alignment over the Agranat Committee report were regarded by many as historic ironies. The Premier had indicated prior to the general election last Dec. that she did not want to run again for public office and again sought to resign during the stormy period after the election when she was trying to form a coalition government.

Dayan, too, said he did not want to serve in the new Cabinet and came into it on March 6 only after proddings by Alignment leaders and the increased tension along the Israeli-Syrian cease-fire line on the Golan Heights. A little more than a month later, on April 2, the Agranat Committee released its report absolving Mrs. Meir and Dayan from responsibility for Israel's lack of preparedness on the eve of the Yom Kippur War and finding Chief of Staff Gen. David Elazar as mainly responsible for the deficiency. The demand for Dayan's resignation and for ministerial responsibility led to Mrs. Meir's decision to resign.

Another irony noted by observers was that in an effort to resolve the question of whether ministerial responsibility must be borne solely by Dayan or by the entire Cabinet, Justice Minister Haim Zadok was asked Tuesday night to draft a legal opinion in this issue. Several hours before Mrs. Meir announced her decision to resign, Zadok presented to the Cabinet a document based on British jurisprudence stating that individual ministerial responsibility exists but that there are no legal provisions to enforce it--meaning that a minister cannot be forced to resign. The legal opinion was prepared by a team of Justice Ministry lawyers headed by Attorney General Meir Shamgar. Zadok stressed that it did not represent his personal view.

For many, Mrs. Meir's resignation symbolizes the end of the "founders generation." The feeling also expressed was that the "Old Lady" would have liked to have left the stage of history "more gloriously." Labor Party leaders are now trying to make every possible effort to prevent the Alignment from dissolving into its constituent elements--Mapai, Achdut Avoda, Mapam and Rafi. It is no secret that some of the Labor Party leaders are afraid of a possible development which will bring Likud into alignment with Rafi. It is felt, therefore, that Labor leaders will make every effort to find a candidate for the post of Prime Minister that will be acceptable to all the Alignment elements.

Meanwhile, there was widespread conviction that there is now no way to avoid new elections. However, elections would not be held until Katzir gives a mandate to a political leader and that leader is unable to form a new government. Once a mandate is given, the person receiving it has 21 days to form a new government and may ask the President for an additional 21 days. If a government is still not formed by then the President can select another leader for the mandate. If this person, too, fails, the President must inform the Knesset Speaker about the failures, and the Knesset then chooses a date for elections.

KISSINGER HINTS MRS. MEIR'S MOVE MAY SLOW DOWN DISENGAGEMENT TALKS

WASHINGTON, April 11 (JTA)--Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger hinted that the resignation of Israeli Premier Golda Meir might slow down the disengagement talks between Israel and Syria. Other knowledgeable sources here also

noted that Mrs. Meir's move clouded the prospects of U.S. efforts to secure a speedy disengagement accord. These feelings were expressed even as a Syrian joint military and civilian team headed by Brig. Gen. Hikmat al-Shihabi arrived here yesterday to present Syria's view on disengagement. Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan met with Kissinger here two weeks ago to present Israel's disengagement plans.

The Secretary was due to meet with the Syrian delegation late this afternoon although there were indications that this may be postponed until tomorrow in order to give Kissinger and other top U.S. officials a chance to evaluate the situation in Israel following Mrs. Meir's resignation. Asked by reporters yesterday if Mrs. Meir's resignation would affect the Israeli-Syrian talks, Kissinger said: "It isn't going to speed them up."

He also hinted that he might not resume the kind of shuttle diplomacy which succeeded in securing a disengagement agreement last Jan. between Israel and Egypt. The Secretary indicated that he would be in a better position to know whether he would make another Middle East trip after his talks with the Syrians and after seeing how Israel would resolve its present crisis. Kissinger had planned to visit Israel and Syria after April 20 to help conclude a disengagement accord.

This afternoon President Nixon met with Algerian President Houari Boumediene for talks that could lead to the resumption of U.S.-Algerian relations, broken off during the Six-Day War in 1967. The two Presidents discussed diplomacy aimed at bringing a permanent settlement to the Middle East and the recent decision of Arab oil-producing states to end their embargo against the U.S. Kissinger attended the White House meeting but was also expected to meet separately with Boumediene.

Assad Seeking Support in Moscow

Meanwhile, as the Syrian delegation here prepared to meet with Kissinger, Syrian President Hafez Assad arrived today in Moscow for a five-day state visit, reportedly to discuss the framework of conducting disengagement talks with Israel and to ascertain the extent of the Soviet Union's support for Syria's approach to the talks. The USSR has already replaced all of Syria's losses during the Yom Kippur War.

Earlier this week Assad told a rally in Damascus that his country would continue to build up its armed forces until victory is achieved. He did not however, rule out a political approach toward ending the conflict. But he added that a political approach must include an "honorable solution" for Syria. Sources here note that Assad's visit to Moscow is to get assurances that this solution will not be thwarted in negotiations with Kissinger. If Syria decides to extend its current war of attrition to full-scale war once again Assad needs the Kremlin's approval.

UNITED NATIONS (JTA)--Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger is expected to meet here with Egyptian Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmy on Sunday and address the special session of the General Assembly Monday, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency learned Thursday. Kissinger reportedly will discuss with Fahmy the prospects for disengagement between the forces of Israel and Syria on the Golan Heights. Israeli sources said that they did not expect Kissinger to meet with Israeli officials here while he is in New York.

BRUSSELS (JTA)--A conference of European rabbis will be held in the city of Knocke in Oct. to deal with the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War.