

# JTA daily news bulletin

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## ISRAELI CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT IN WEST BANK ORDERS REMOVAL OF EL BIREH'S ELECTED MAYOR, CITY COUNCIL

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 18 (JTA) — The elected mayor and municipal council of El Bireh, north of Jerusalem, were removed from office today on grounds that they refused to cooperate with the Israeli civilian regime set up on the West Bank late last year by Defense Minister Ariel Sharon.

The order ousting the local officials was signed by Menachem Milson who heads the civilian government. According to Israel Radio it was the first time Israel has disbanded a municipal council on the West Bank since it occupied that territory in 1967.

The ouster was followed by a violent demonstration in El Bireh. Rocks were hurled at a bus carrying Israeli troops, shattering the windshield. Several demonstrators were arrested. Although the El Bireh council was replaced by one headed by an Israeli officer from the civilian administration, the deposed Mayor Ibrahim Tawil declared that he was still the legal mayor and that the townspeople continue to regard him and the council as their duly elected leaders.

In Nablus, the largest city on the West Bank, Mayor Bassam Shaka announced a three day shut-down of all municipal offices in protest against the Israeli action in El Bireh. He vowed that he and his town council would never cooperate with the Israeli civilian government.

### Defense Ministry Explains Move

The Defense Ministry issued a statement today saying that Tawil and his colleagues were removed in the interests of the citizens of El Bireh who were being adversely affected by the municipality's refusal to cooperate with the civilian government.

The Israeli move climaxed 10 days of sustained unrest on the West Bank which spread to the outer suburbs of Jerusalem. Earlier this week a bus was stoned near the Jewish suburb of Neve Yaacov and similar incidents occurred on the roads from Jerusalem to Bethlehem and Hebron.

Israel's troubles on the West Bank were compounded by a series of defections by local Arabs from the Village Leagues after the Jordanian government warned that they would be tried in absentia for collaborating with Israel and executed.

The Village Leagues were established by Israel to counteract Palestine Liberation Organization influence on the West Bank. Arabs prepared to cooperate with Israel were given local functions under the civilian regime and their villages were supplied with cash.

Mustafa Dudein, who heads the Village Leagues in the Hebron area, is trying to stem the tide of defections. He met today with Eliahu Ben-Elissar, chairman of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Security Committee, to urge more Israeli support for the villages.

Reaction in Israel to the removal of El Bireh's elected officials was split along party lines. Labor Party Secretary General Haim Barlev accused

the government of heightening tension on the West Bank instead of defusing it.

But Likud MK Ronnie Milo said the move was much less harsh than what would have occurred if there was no civilian administration on the West Bank and it was left to the Military Government to remove an inept local council.

### SHARON SAYS TERRORISTS ARE STEPPING UP THEIR ACTIVITIES

TEL AVIV, March 18 (JTA) — Defense Minister Ariel Sharon told a Herut meeting here last night that terrorists had carried out 15 acts of sabotage in Israel and another five in southern Lebanon during the past two weeks.

He warned that Israel "might be forced to take action" if such attacks continued. He disclosed that shellfire had been directed at an Israeli naval vessel on patrol off southern Lebanon yesterday, but it was not hit.

United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) sources said today they had observed two incidents of firing at Israeli boats in recent days. The first, on Monday, was not disclosed by Sharon or other Israeli spokesmen. The UNIFIL sources said they could not say whether the Israeli boats concerned had been within Lebanese territorial waters at the time of the attacks.

### SCIENTISTS WARN AGAINST SELLING EVEN LOW GRADE NUCLEAR FUEL TO IRAQ

By Edwin Eytan

PARIS, March 18 (JTA) — French scientists warned President Francois Mitterrand today that even low grade nuclear fuel sold to Iraq could result in the production of a nuclear weapon.

The scientists said, in a report just issued, that the construction of a new Iraqi reactor based exclusively on "Caramel," the code name for a non-military fuel, could "still be highly dangerous" and enable Iraq to eventually build atomic weapons.

The report was released to the press by Georges Amsel, a senior research fellow of the National Scientific Research Center in Paris. It was signed by four other prominent scientists, including another expert on nuclear physics. The five conducted their research into the military capabilities of a new French reactor for Iraq in view of recent French official declarations indicating that Paris is about to replace the Tamuz reactor destroyed by Israeli planes in June 1981.

Amsel's report stressed: "The use of Caramel does not guarantee that the reactor will be used for the production of peaceful energy only." The scientists explained that although the low grade fuel is not capable of producing weapons, the addition of a layer of natural uranium could transform it into weapon grade material from which a bomb can be produced.

Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson recently indicated that France is ready to replace the destroyed Osirak reactor on condition that it is based on low grade fuel of the Caramel type. Israel has since repeatedly indicated that it opposes any nuclear aid to Iraq or other Arab countries. Israeli Defense

Minister Ariel Sharon told a French weekly last month that Israel "will not permit any Arab country" to develop the means of manufacturing an atomic weapon. Sharon said "We did not allow Iraq to do it and we won't allow it in any other Arab state."

**ARENS: EGYPT'S CONTINUATION OF THE PEACE PROCESS AFTER APRIL 25 DEPENDS A 'GOOD DEAL' ON THE U.S.**  
By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, March 18 (JTA) — Israeli Ambassador Moshe Arens said last night that a "good deal" depends on the United States as to whether Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak continues the peace process with Israel after Egypt regains the Sinai April 25.

"If it is clear to Egypt, to Mubarak, that he will compromise his relationship with the United States if he abandons the peace process, then I think there is a good chance that he will continue that process," Arens said in an interview on ABC-TV's "Nightline."

The envoy stressed that Israel has no intention of moving into Lebanon, despite constant reports it will do so soon, "unless there is a violation" of the cease-fire by the Palestine Liberation Organization. He explained that such a violation would be an attack on Israeli civilians.

Arens noted that special United States envoy Philip Habib had assured Israel that the cease-fire, which has been in effect since last July, applies to all of Israel's borders and not just with Lebanon. He noted that PLO leader Yasir Arafat, in an interview on "Nightline" Tuesday night, said the cease-fire applied only to the Israeli-Lebanese border.

#### Says Terrorists Are Increasing Their Weapons

Arens said he believed that it is only a matter of time before the PLO commits a violation which would require Israeli retaliation. "I hope I am wrong," he said. But he noted that the terrorists forces now have some 15,000 men in Lebanon and have been increasing their weapons since the cease-fire began. He noted that Arafat is only the "god-father" of a "terrorist Mafia" in which any of eight separate groups, each controlled by various anti-Israel countries, could act on its own.

Arens said that Israel has been cooperating with Habib and has been assured that Habib will be successful not only in getting the Syrian SAM-6 missiles out of central Lebanon but also removing the Syrian army from Lebanon. He said that 70 percent of Lebanon is controlled by the Syrians and the PLO. The "worst sufferers" have been the Lebanese people, the envoy said.

#### An Offer Palestinians Can't Refuse

On the negotiations for autonomy for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, Arens said he hoped an agreement could be worked out. Arens noted that Judea and Samaria has been under Israeli military rule for 15 years, a condition which, he said, is "distasteful" both to the people who live there and to the Israeli government. "Israel has made an offer, which, in my opinion, really cannot be refused by the Palestinian Arabs," he said.

He said the Israeli offer of autonomy goes a long way to even "the announced goals" of the Palestinians. But if they refuse to negotiate, either because they are "foolhardy" or because they are afraid of threats from Arafat and his terrorists, then Israel should go ahead and extend civilian authority to the areas as it did for the Golan Heights.

But he stressed, as Premier Menachem Begin made it clear in the Golan Heights situation, such a move would not foreclose any future negotiations and would leave all options open.

**FEDERAL COURT UPHOLDS LOWER COURT RULING THAT SCHOOL BOARD CAN'T LIMIT NUMBER OF 'EXCUSED DAYS' OFF BY STUDENTS FOR RELIGIOUS REASONS**  
By Ben Gallob

NEW YORK, March 18 (JTA) — A federal appeals court, in what was termed today an unprecedented decision, sustained Tuesday a lower federal court ruling which held unconstitutional an arbitrary decision by a Texas public school board which had limited to two days a year "excused absences" by students for religious reasons.

The description of the ruling as unprecedented was given by Howard Zuckerman, president of the National Jewish Commission on Law and Public Affairs (COLPA). A COLPA attorney took part in the litigation.

Specifically, the Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, sitting in New Orleans, struck down the Amarillo school board policy on "excused absences" for students for religious reasons, in accordance with the lower court ruling.

Twelve students, citing religious reasons, had absented themselves for eight days. When, under the school board's policy, they were penalized, they filed suit in the federal district court February 8, 1980. Faced with the threat of a request by the student plaintiffs for an injunction, as part of their suit, the school board voluntarily then suspended the two-day maximum absence policy, pending the outcome of the lower court hearing.

When the lower court banned the school board policy as unconstitutional, one effect was to permanently void that policy, an action sustained by the appeals court in its Tuesday ruling, according to Dennis Rapps, COLPA executive director.

#### Case Is Significant For The Jewish Community

Zuckerman said the first ruling was made by Federal District Court Judge Marylou Robinson, when she held in April, 1981 in favor of the students' claim for excused absences for all their religious holiday requirements. The school board appealed the lower court ruling to the appeals court.

Zuckerman said that because the case involved the issue of allowable limits on the right to accommodation by school boards to students to be absent for religious reasons, the case is significant for the Jewish community.

He noted that the 12 plaintiff students are members of the World Wide Church of God and that student adherents absent themselves from school from eight to 10 days each school year because of the sect's religious requirements. He pointed out that Judaism has substantially more than two "no-work" holidays each year.

Zuckerman said Michael Kusin, a member of COLPA's Houston chapter, argued before the courts for the plaintiffs after filing a friend-of-the-court brief which contended that the Amarillo school board had a constitutional obligation to permit religious absences without penalty. Penalties under the court-voided school board policy had included imposition of lower grades and a ban on making up missed examinations. Zuckerman said Kusin's brief was joined in by major national Orthodox Jewish organizations.

The school board had maintained throughout the litigation that it could not permit some students to be absent, without penalty, "far in excess" of the two days of absence permitted to the majority of students.

The board contended that permitting more than two absences for student members of a particular faith would be an impermissible preference, in violation of the religious clauses of the First Amendment.

The board also contended that since the policy had been uniformly applied to students of all religions, an exception for student members of the World Wide Church would be, in effect, a grant of official board "recognition" of that church, in violation of the established clause of the First Amendment.

Kusin argued that absence from school for religious reasons was "clearly" a protected right under the "free exercise" of religion clause of the First Amendment, which could be overridden only by "a compelling state interest."

Noting that the two-day limited absence policy was adopted by the Amarillo school board in March, 1979, Kusin told the court that no problems resulted from the pre-March 1979 policy of unlimited absence of students for religious observance. He argued that, therefore, there had been no "substantial countervailing interest" to support the board's subsequent refusal to accommodate the religious interests of the 12 plaintiff students.

Zuckerman said he understood the Amarillo board was considering an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court, adding that COLPA would welcome such an appeal to get a definitive ruling on the issue.

#### **HABIB CONFIDENT THAT ALL PARTIES IN THE MIDEAST ARE COMMITTED TO MAINTAINING CEASE-FIRE IN LEBANON** By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, March 18 (JTA) — Philip Habib, President Reagan's special envoy, said today that after returning from his recent trip to the Middle East he is confident that all parties concerned are committed to maintaining the cease-fire in Lebanon. But at the same time he indicated that no progress has been made in getting the Syrians to remove their missiles from central Lebanon.

"At the moment, the cease-fire was of more immediate interest and the affirmation of the cease-fire in light of recent events" overshadowed the missile question, Habib maintained. He made his remarks after a 30-minute meeting at the White House with Reagan at which he reported on his recent trip to Lebanon, Syria, Israel, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

Habib said he was given two tasks by Reagan: to "strengthen and reinforce" the cease-fire which he helped establish last July, and to express U.S. support for the independence of Lebanon and for that country to regain sovereignty over all its territory within the recognized international borders.

He said that with a presidential election in Lebanon later this year, he was confident that if the Lebanese people were "not subjected to undue pressure and influence," they could strengthen their national sovereignty themselves. He added that the U.S. welcomed the recent addition of 1,000 troops for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and believed this would "help stabilize the southern part of the country."

#### **Says Situation In Lebanon Is 'Fragile'**

Habib stressed that Israel had given its assurances that it will not "attack" Lebanon un-

less provoked. Without naming the Palestine Liberation Organization, he expressed the hope that nothing occurs in Lebanon that will be provocative.

"All parties realize more than ever the grave implications of a major breakdown of the cease-fire," Habib said in a written statement. He said the situation in Lebanon was still "fragile" and while there had been some cease-fire violations, they were of "minor significance" compared to the situation that existed last spring. But he stressed that all parties realized that "military action would serve no useful purpose and would be extremely damaging to the peace process."

Habib's recent trip to the Mideast was the fifth since Reagan sent him to Lebanon last May after Syria placed SAM-6 missiles in central Lebanon and Israel threatened to remove them by force. Habib conceded today that the missiles were "still a problem." The retired diplomat said he now plans to return to his home in California but is at the call of the President if he is needed further in the Mideast.

#### **Claims U.S. Position Not Changed**

Meanwhile, Habib rejected the notion that the State Department had changed the U.S. position when it had declared that the cease-fire barred terrorist attacks on Israel from Jordan and Syria as well as Lebanon. "That has always been the case," Habib said, noting that the cease-fire agreement had never been put in writing.

On earlier occasions the State Department said that the cease-fire barred any military action from Lebanon into Israel or Israel into Lebanon. Today spokesman Dean Fischer repeated this and added:

"Therefore any hostile action originating from Lebanon but going through Syria and Jordan into Israel would be a violation of the cease-fire. The same would apply to an Israeli action into Lebanon" through "international waters or foreign territories."

Israeli Ambassador Moshe Arens said in a television interview last night that Habib has assured Israel that terrorist actions coming from Jordan or Syria were considered cease-fire violations. (See separate story P. 2.)

#### **HIKE IN PRICES OF COMMODITIES**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 18 (JTA) — The price of oil and of all other government-subsidized commodities went up between five to nine percent today in what the Treasury said would be the last price hike "before Passover, and perhaps the last till Yom Haatzmaut." But the Histadrut branded the rise "unfair" since it came only a month before the Passover holiday.

The rise affected milk and milk products, bread and flour products, eggs, meat, chicken, gasoline, heating oil, food oil and oil-products. The rise in gasoline will automatically trigger a wider wave of price rises involving transport and haulage.

Industrialists told reporters today they would be unable to "absorb" the fuel hike, as the government urged, and would have to "pass it on" to the consumer.

Finance Minister Yoram Aridor told reporters he believes he is keeping inflation controlled (the most recent month's figure was over five percent), and doomsday predictions of 200 and 300 percent annual inflation were proving completely unfounded.

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NEW YORK (JTA) — More than 150 Jewish leaders from communities throughout the United States pledged a total of more than \$5.7 million to the 1982 United Jewish Appeal/Community Campaign during the second UJA National Leadership Mission to Washington.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

## A NEW ANSWER TO AN OLD QUESTION

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, March 18 (JTA) -- Israelis will have a sadder answer than usual this year when they reply to their youngster's query on seder nights: "Why is this night different from all other nights?" And the answer will be even sadder to a similar question asked a month later, on Independence Day.

For Israelis will this year be telling the Passover story of the Biblical exodus from Egypt just a week after the date fixed by the Israel government, at the end of March, as the last date for civilians to be living in the Sinai.

And April 26, the date fixed by the Israel-Egypt peace treaty as that on which the last Israeli soldier should have left the Sinai, comes on the very eve of Memorial Day, the day before Independence Day.

Since 1967, when Israeli forces captured the Sinai peninsula after Egypt declared sudden war, Israelis have gradually come to regard the vast triangular desert area as part of Israel itself.

Changing Feelings And Attitudes

At first, the feeling was largely based on the security and defense aspects of the region, a large empty area forming a security belt between the populated sections of Israel and Egypt. But as the years passed, feelings towards the region turned more, in the minds of the civilians, at least, to the recreation and playground aspects of Sinai, especially its coastal areas.

Lately, as the withdrawal date approached, a religious tinge has been given, especially to the northern Sinai coastal area, as members of the Stop the Sinai Withdrawal movement, almost all of them members of the religious and ultra-nationalist Gush Emunim group, have begun squatting in the town of Yamit and surrounding villages.

The religious veneer is purely artificial. There are no religious links between Jews and the Sinai as there are between Jews and the West Bank. Even Mount Sinai itself has no religious significance for Jews, as the actual site of the Biblical granting of the Torah to Moses is a matter for speculation and arguments between archaeologists.

When the late President Anwar Sadat of Egypt suggested construction of a church-mosque-synagogue complex at Santa Katerina, there was no Jewish response to his proposal. No Orthodox Jew even acknowledged his suggestion. The Gush Emunim - Stop the Withdrawal enthusiasts are probably more worried by the implications of the Yamit withdrawal on any possible West Bank withdrawal demand than they are on the actual sanctity of northern Sinai.

A Matter Of Recreation And Ecology

For the average Israeli, however, the sorrow of the Sinai withdrawal, apart from sadness at having to give up an area won at the cost of blood and toil, is a matter of recreation and ecology.

Scores or even hundreds of army camps and bases which grew up in the Sinai wastes have had to be relocated in the far smaller Negev area, with inevitable harm to beauty spots and rare sites of unusual flora, fauna and geographic areas of interest.

And for vacation-seeking Israelis, the loss of the Sinai is a severe blow. No longer can Israelis merely get in their cars and drive south for a holiday or weekend rest at beauty spots and deserted

stretches of beach between Eilat and Sharm El-Sheikh, without having to obtain a visa and go through the problems of a border crossing.

Both Israeli ecologists and local tourism officials are concerned by the effects of the closure of Sinai to Israelis seeking a local vacation spot. The hundreds of thousands of Israelis who for the past 15 years have grown accustomed to driving south for a brief holiday, will henceforth have to find camping and recreational grounds in other areas.

And this means that they will be packed like sardines around Eilat and its narrow coastline confined to the few miles between Jordan and Egypt, or around Lake Kinneret. At either spot, the masses expected there will probably prove to be too many for their own comfort, or a severe hazard to local ecology.

RABBINATE DECREES FAST DAY NEXT WEEK TO MARK WITHDRAWAL FROM SINAI

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 18 (JTA) -- The Chief Rabbinate Council decreed yesterday that a fast day will be held next Wednesday to underline the "seriousness and painfulness" of the withdrawal from Sinai and to pray that the government "consider its steps and decisions" in this respect. But the Council stopped short of actually opposing the withdrawal.

Wednesday is the day before Rosh Hodesh Nisan, also known as "Yom Kippur Katan" (minor Yom Kippur), on which ultra-Orthodox Jews always fast and recite special prayers. The Council decision linked the day specifically to the imminent withdrawal from Sinai.

Chairing the meeting was Sephardic Chief Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, who is regarded as more moderate than his Ashkenazi counterpart, Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren. The decision was unanimously approved by the ten man Council.

SINAI MILITANTS SABOTAGE EQUIPMENT

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, March 18 (JTA) -- Militants attempting to block Israel's withdrawal from Sinai sabotaged two large cranes last night which were being used to dismantle buildings in Talmi Yosef for relocation in Israel. Jewish Agency contractors said the motor of one crane was set on fire and sand and gravel was put in the gears of the other although both pieces of equipment were, ostensibly, guarded by Israeli soldiers.

A replacement crane was brought to the village today, but the contractors said they would be unable to complete the dismantling work before the April 25 withdrawal deadline because of the sabotage.

Interior Minister Yosef Burg visited the Yamit area of northern Sinai today where militants are reported to be digging in for last ditch resistance to troops sent to evacuate them. Burg said he came to the region at the invitation of residents and members of the Stop the Withdrawal movement. He said his purpose was "to see but not to talk or express any opinion."

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TEL AVIV (JTA) -- A few hundred youthful demonstrators attended a demonstration here Wednesday, organized by the Israeli Women for Ida Nudel Committee, to demonstrate solidarity with the imprisoned Soviet Jewish activist. Ida Nudel is due to end her four-year exile in Siberia next week and her sister, Ilana Friedman, appealed at the demonstration to the Soviet Union: "Let Ida Nudel go. Let her be with us, in our homeland."