

ISRAELI MIA MAY BE ALIVE IN DAMASCUS, A PRISONER OF A TERRORIST ORGANIZATION
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Aug. 15 (JTA) — A glimmer of hope emerged today that an Israeli soldier missing in action from the war in Lebanon is alive in Damascus where he is being held prisoner by the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, an extremist group led by Nayef Hawatmeh. The whereabouts of Zecharia Baumel was reported last night by Jordan TV, but no other details were given.

Premier Shimon Peres immediately initiated diplomatic action in an effort to obtain Baumel's release and his return home. He asked U.S. Ambassador Thomas Pickering to contact Richard Murphy, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, who was in Jordan until this afternoon, to try to get more information on Baumel's fate. Upon his arrival at Ben Gurion Airport today, Murphy said he had no further information.

Baumel is one of four soldiers still missing. He, Zvi Feldman and Yehuda Katz were reported missing near Sultan Yaackoub in eastern Lebanon following a tank battle with Syrian forces in 1982. Another soldier, Sasmir Asad of the Druze village of Beit Jann in the Galilee, was captured near Sidon during another battle.

Peres told a group of families of missing soldiers that As was being held in Damascus by Hawatmeh's group. The Premier said Israel is holding Syria responsible for the fate of the missing soldiers.

THREE TEHIYA MKS TAKE OVER EMPTY APARTMENT IN HEBRON AND REFUSE IDF ORDERS TO LEAVE THE PREMISES
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Aug. 15 (JTA) — Three Knesset members representing the Tehiya Party locked themselves inside an empty apartment in the central Arab marketplace in Hebron today. The trio—Geula Cohen, Eliezer Waldman and Gershon Shafat — asserted they would remain in the building until the Cabinet discusses the question of expanding the Jewish presence in Hebron.

Their action took place after a group of Kiryat Arba settlers took over the apartment and were evicted from it by the Israeli Defense Force twice this week. Kiryat Arba residents said the apartment was one of about a score bought in recent months from Arab owners with money raised in Israel and abroad for the purpose of "liberating" Hebron houses from Arabs.

Premier Shimon Peres said today that the settlers' action in expanding their presence in Hebron was a contravention of the status quo. Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir of Likud charged that the IDF acted improperly in ejecting the settlers from an apartment they had bought.

The first time the group of eight settlers broke into the empty apartment was Monday night; they were ejected without incident by the IDF on Tuesday night. The occupation of the apartment was carried out despite the curfew in effect in Hebron following the stabbing of Kiryat Arba settler Yaacov

Reiter in the marketplace last Saturday. The squatters said they did not take over the apartment in reaction to the stabbing but were merely implementing a decision by the previous Likud government that Jews had the right to reside anywhere in Eretz Yisrael.

The second take-over of the apartment by the group of West Bank settlers — and their eviction by the IDF — took place this morning. The Knesset members also were ordered by the IDF to leave the apartment but they refused to do so. They could not be removed because of their parliamentary immunity.

EDUCATION SECRETARY URGED TO ABANDON 'EFFORTS TO SUBVERT' SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE IN AMERICAN EDUCATION
By Kevin Freeman

NEW YORK, Aug. 15 (JTA) — Education Secretary William Bennett was urged this week to abandon "efforts to subvert" the separation of church and state in American education, and to cease attempts to inject religious values into public schools that "will convert our schools and communities into religious battlegrounds."

The American Jewish Congress, in a statement issued here, said that only when strict neutrality, in constitutional terms, is enforced "can religious schools enjoy the necessary independence to fulfill their religious mission. And only with neutrality can public institutions provide an atmosphere... free of subtle coercion and feelings of religious isolation."

The AJC was responding to remarks by Bennett and Attorney General Edwin Meese in separate speeches in Washington last week to the Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus, a Roman Catholic society for men.

Both Meese and Bennett assailed recent Supreme Court decisions involving the separation of church and state. Bennett focused specifically on the July 1 Supreme Court decision invalidating public school programs that sent public school teachers into parochial schools — and yeshivas — to provide remedial instructions.

The court ruled, in its decision striking down a program in the New York City school system and another similar program in Grand Rapids, Michigan, that such programs forge "a symbolic union of government and religion" that is forbidden by the Constitution.

The loss of the federally financed program in New York was described as devastating to Jewish schools, and the court's decision was assailed by Orthodox groups. However, the AJC filed friend of the court briefs in the case urging the court to rule the programs unconstitutional.

Bennett Slams Supreme Court's Decisions

Bennett, in his remarks, said the Supreme Court's decision last July and others in the past years seeking to separate church from state had been "misguided attempts to apply neutrality to religion." He said the court failed to "reflect sufficiently on the relationship between our faith and our political order."

That relationship, he added, is "our values as a free people and the central value of the Judeo-Christian tradition are flesh of the flesh and blood of the blood." According to the Education Secretary, in

other remarks, religious intolerance had now given way to a "new aversion to religion" manifested "in the guise of Constitutional interpretation."

Bennett declared: "The same Constitution that had protected the rights of religious parents, and under whose aegis a host of religions had found happy accommodation, now became, in the hands of aggressive plaintiffs and beguiled judges, the instrument for nothing less than a kind of ghettoizing of religion."

Hints That Court Threatens Religious Freedom

Meese, meanwhile, in remarks to the same group earlier in the day, did not mention specifically the court's decisions, described as severe setbacks for the Administration and its policies. He did suggest that religious freedom in American society had been threatened by the court.

"In its application, the principle of neutrality toward all religions has been transformed by some into hostility toward anything that is religious," he said. "In order to protect the religious liberty of the American people, this Administration has argued against the idea of religious nihilism as a principle of government."

Theodore Mann, president of the AJC, said it regretted the statements by Meese and Bennett, and hailed the court's affirmation of church-state separation. The AJC, Mann asserted, remains convinced that efforts to inject either the Jewish or Protestant or Catholic religious values into the schools will not only deeply offend the numerous other religious groups... but will convert our schools and communities into religious battlegrounds."

The AJC said that while it supported the right of religious schools to receive publicly-funded remedial education, it did so only as long as it takes place off the premises of religious schools. Local chapters of the AJC are currently engaged in efforts to aid local school districts to restructure programs invalidated by the court so remedial aid "can be provided religious school students in a Constitutional manner."

RECORD-BREAKING C.O.L. HIKE IN JULY

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Aug. 15 (JTA) -- The cost-of-living index in Israel rose by 27.5 percent in July, breaking all previous monthly records, the Central Bureau of Statistics reported today, attributing the massive increase to price hikes stemming from decreases or cancellation of government subsidies, and currency devaluation.

The subsidy cuts and devaluation took place when the most recent stage of Israel's austerity package was put into effect on July 1.

Treasury officials predicted that the cost-of-living indices would drop by between four and six percent in August and September, predictions slightly higher than earlier forecasts for those months of two to four percent increases, when, officials said, the effect of the government's efforts to reduce inflation by austerity measures would become apparent.

The bureau said the large price increases stemmed from higher costs of all consumer items apart from those of fruits and vegetables, which experienced seasonal reductions. Food went up in July by 39 percent, household outlays by 34 percent, and transport and communications fees by about 36 percent.

Officials said that, during the past 12 months, the annual inflation rate has been 445 percent, with the inflation rate at an annual rate of 380 percent during the first six months of the year.

Israeli wage earners will receive a one-time compensation of only 12 percent this month, instead of the "normal" rate of 25 percent normally called for by the current inflation rate increase.

The Histadrut called for special help for the lower-paid workers. The opposition Mapam Party said that real wages were being eroded by 13 percent in August and by another 23 percent in September, claiming this was being caused by the lower rate of compensation to workers under the economic recovery plan.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL DENOUNCES SYRIAN HANGINGS, AMAL ATROCITIES

LONDON, Aug. 15 (JTA) -- Amnesty International, the London-based human rights organization, has conveyed its concern to Syrian President Hafez Assad over recent public hangings staged in Damascus. In a separate development, it also protested to the Lebanese government about atrocities committed by Shiite Amal forces against Palestinians at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps, the World Jewish Congress reported here.

According to the United Kingdom Office of the WJC, Amnesty International reacted to the public hangings of six individuals on May 14. All six had been convicted of spying for Israel and "jeopardizing state security." Three were hanged in the Abbasids Square in the Syrian capital and the others at Artuz near Damascus.

On receiving reports of these executions, Amnesty International expressed its concern to Assad and reiterated its unconditional opposition to the death penalty. The organization publicized its protest in its regular monthly newsletter, which included a photograph of the hangings.

On May 30, Amnesty International telexed Lebanese President Amin Gemayel and Justice Minister Nabih Berri (who is also the leader of the Amal militia) calling for an investigation into reports that Palestinians captured by Amal forces in the refugee camps were tortured and killed.

Among the allegations, the human rights body said, were that some of the prisoners had been beaten, that 50 bodies had been taken out of Amal's interrogation centers in Beirut, and that others, including some in hospitals, had been summarily executed.

Amnesty International noted that such abuses were violations of international human rights agreements, including the Geneva Convention, and added that charges that Lebanese troops had been involved in such acts made government action even more imperative.

JEWISH GROUPS DENOUNCE KAHANE

NEW YORK, Aug. 15 (JTA) -- Twelve major national Jewish organizations today joined in vehemently denouncing Rabbi Meir Kahane, the leader of the Kach Party in Israel, calling his policies "racism," "demagoguery," and "a perversion of Jewish religious, ethical, and traditional values and practices."

The joint statement was issued hours before Kahane was scheduled to arrive here from Israel for a month-long visit to the United States. The Kach Party advocates ousting all Arabs from Israel and has used violent tactics to express its views.

The statement, which strongly decries the tactics, views and goals of Kahane, declares that he "is not representative of the Israelis, is not representative of American Jewry, (and) more fundamentally, his words

and actions are alien to Judaism." The national organizations that signed the statement were the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, B'nai B'rith, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, Hadassah, Jewish Labor Committee, Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A., National Council of Jewish Women, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, United Synagogue of America, Women's League for Conservative Judaism, and Women's American ORT.

Noting that the signers "represent the overwhelming majority of America's organizationally affiliated Jews," the statement, alluding to recent press reports that "Kahaneism" was becoming an "epidemic" in Israel, says:

"We do not dismiss the findings of polls that, under unrelenting economic, military, political, and terrorist pressure, 'Kahaneism' has found a few more sympathetic listeners. . . . But to confuse this still isolated virus with an epidemic threatening Israel's vibrant democracy is to misconstrue the phenomenon and exaggerate its threat far beyond its troubling but limited dimensions."

"(Kahane) and what he stands for," the statement continues, "have been emphatically rejected by Israel's government leaders and its parliament. The record is clear and should be known." On that record, the statement says, are these facts:

* Israel's Declaration of Independence proclaims equal rights to all "irrespective of religion, race or sex."

* Israel's President, Chaim Herzog, when meeting with the political leaders whose parties won Knesset seats, "pointedly refused to meet with Kahane, whose ideology he considered repugnant to (Israel's) democratic principles . . ."

* On July 31st the Knesset unanimously passed a bill banning from parliamentary elections any party that "incites people to racism or negates Israel's democratic character . . ."

* Israelis "in government and in the private sector are intensifying their ongoing efforts to promote better relations between Arabs and Jews, as have many of the organizations" signing the joint statement.

* "Ironically, it was Israel's tradition of democracy that enabled Kahane to run for his current seat in the Knesset, since he was ruled off the ballot and subsequently restored by a judgment of Israel's Supreme Court. In several previous attempts to attain office in Israel, he had failed. Finally gaining a seat, Kahane received only 26,000 votes, barely one Israeli vote in a hundred . . ."

The statement concludes: "We reject (Kahane's words and actions) and what they stand for; we reject this affront to our history, to our tradition and beliefs, and to our abiding commitment to peace and brotherhood."

KAHANE PREVENTED FROM SPEAKING

JERUSALEM, Aug. 15 (JTA) — Rabbi Meir Kahane, leader of the Kach Party, was prevented from speaking at a rally last night in downtown Jerusalem by angry demonstrators. Hundreds of Jerusalemites, many of them members of the Labor youth movement, heckled the extremist leader as he tried to speak. After half an hour of this, Kahane was forced to leave. It was the second time this week that opponents of Kahane have broken up a rally at which he was to speak. On Monday night, a similar incident took place in Givatayim, a traditional stronghold of the Labor movement.

FCC RULING ON RACIST RADIO STATION IS ASSAILED BY THE ADL

By Kevin Freeman

NEW YORK, Aug. 15 (JTA) — The Federal Communications Commission ruled yesterday that the license renewal hearing involving a Dodge City, Kansas radio station, K TTL-FM, will not include consideration of the station's anti-Jewish and anti-Black broadcasts in 1982 and 1983.

The FCC ruling was immediately assailed by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, whose director, Nathan Perlmutter, said the FCC's decision "strains credulity. By any standard of public interest, of democratic fairness, of plain common sense, K TTL does not merit a broadcast license."

The FCC ruling was a formal order, and reiterated the Commission's April 26 action that broadcasts such as those aired on K TTL-FM fall within the First Amendment guarantee of freedom of speech. The next step will include a hearing before an administrative law judge.

The hearing, for which no date has yet been set, will include a review of the operations of the station, including review of log books, financial records, and the character of the licensees, Charlie and Nellie Babbs.

A petition against renewal on grounds of the program's content had been denied by the FCC. Another group, calling themselves Community Service Broadcasting, has petitioned for the station's license, saying that the present holders are unfit under FCC rules to hold the license.

Background Of The Controversy

K TTL-FM was the subject of controversy after widespread reports that it was broadcasting racist programming, primarily sermons and speeches supplied by right wing extremist groups, notably the Posse Comitatus, a small anti-tax group. In Latin, Posse Comitatus means "power to the county."

An example of the messages broadcast on K TTL-FM in 1983 is as follows: "You better start making dossiers, names, addresses, phone numbers, car license numbers, on every damn Jew rabbi in this land and every Anti-Defamation League leader or JDL leader in this land, and you better start doing it now. And know where he is . . . You get these roadblock locations, where you can set up ambushes, and get it all working now."

Perlmutter said broadcasts by K TTL-FM urging listeners to attack Jews and others "must be grounds for refusing to renew a station's license to broadcast." He added that the FCC's decision yesterday was "a detour around the FCC's legal obligation to serve the public interest."

According to ADL civil rights division director Justin Finger, K TTL-FM has ceased broadcasting its racist programs. Finger noted that the FCC said last April that since the remarks in the broadcasts did not incite violence, the programs were protected under the First Amendment.

According to the commission's ruling last April, the FCC is barred from "censoring broadcast material or interfering with the licensee's discretion in selecting and broadcasting programming." The Commission said it would not punish licensees for airing the programs in question "unless, speech no matter how abhorrent, creates a clear and present danger of serious evil that rises far above the public inconvenience, annoyance or unrest" or unless the programs were broadcast in violation of the Communications Act or its regulations.

**SPECIAL INTERVIEW
THE LABOR-LIKUD COALITION HAS A
'REASONABLE CHANCE' TO SURVIVE
By Yitzhak Rabi**

NEW YORK, Aug. 15 (JTA) — MK Dan Meridor of Likud, who is a close associate of Foreign Minister and Deputy Premier Yitzhak Shamir, says he believes that there is a "reasonable chance" that the Labor-Likud coalition government will survive its full term and that Shamir will replace Shimon Peres as Premier, as agreed, in October 1986.

"I am not a prophet but I believe that the coalition government will complete its full term despite the differences between Labor and Likud," Meridor, who is a member of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Security Committee, said in an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency here.

"There are some members of the Labor Party who are pressuring Peres to dissolve the government and not let Shamir assume the Premiership as the 'rotation agreement' (between Labor and Likud) stipulates," Meridor asserted.

"But I probably have more moral faith in Peres than those members of the Labor Party. I do not believe that Peres will play a trick and break the unity government just to stop Shamir from being the Premier. We agreed to a national unity government only because it had the 'rotation agreement' in it."

No Basis For Dissolving The Government

The 38-year-old Meridor, who was the Cabinet Secretary from 1982 to 1984 while the Likud was in power, said there are no serious differences at present between Labor and Likud to warrant the dissolution of the coalition and holding new elections.

"Look," Meridor said, "had King Hussein come forward and said that he agrees to a territorial compromise with Israel, then, maybe, there would be reason to dissolve the coalition government. But the differences between Labor and Likud all can be dealt with according to the agreed guidelines of the coalition government, which were the basis for the unity government."

Meridor said that the disagreement between Labor and Likud as to how to solve the dispute with Egypt over Taba, the tiny strip of beachfront south of Eilat, is a marginal one. "You do not dissolve a government on such an issue. This is a technical issue—whether to go to arbitration or reach a compromise. Sooner or later, I believe, a solution will be found," he said.

As to the issue of Judaea and Samaria, Meridor said that the guidelines of the coalition government clearly show that Labor has agreed to continue to build new settlements in the territories, to adhere to the Camp David Agreements, and to oppose the creation of a Palestinian state.

Therefore, Meridor pointed out, all the major aspects of Israel's foreign policy, over which Labor and Likud sometimes have sharply different approaches, were dealt with before the coalition was formed and cannot now serve as a cause for not completing the scheduled term of the government.

Asked about the possibility that the power struggle among top Herut leaders, such as Shamir, Ariel Sharon and David Levy, might influence the future of the coalition government, Meridor stressed that Shamir is the leader of Herut who will replace Peres as Premier in October next year.

"The question of Herut's leadership is clearly solved until 1988, if not beyond that. Shamir was elected by the Party (Herut) to be the candidate for Premier twice. There are political arguments in Herut," Meridor continued, "but I don't think they can have an impact on the future of the coalition government."

Says Kahane Is Dangerous

Meridor, who was in New York after attending the conference of the Coalition for Alternatives in Jewish Education in Chicago this week, was asked about reports that Rabbi Meir Kahane's popularity in Israel is growing steadily and that the Kach Party which he heads might increase its power at the expense of Herut and other rightwing parties.

"Kahane is the opposite of Herut," Meridor responded somewhat passionately. "He is a man with dangerous, immoral and un-Jewish ideas that revolt me and are against all the basic ideals I was brought up on. In order to fight this dangerous phenomenon we recently passed a bill in the Knesset that will outlaw racist lists from participating in the election. Kahane advocates and incites racism" Continuing, Meridor said:

"There is some exaggeration on the part of the media regarding Kahane's growing power. When Jews are murdered by Arab terrorists there is a surge of anger and growing emotions, and some people in the margin of society tend to support Kahane.

"But when people calm down they see that Kahane is not the answer, because if you develop an attitude that all the Arabs are terrorists and they have to be ousted (from Israel) that in itself can turn a great deal of Arabs into terrorists. In a way, the stronger Kahane gets — the stronger the PLO gets. Kahane claims that Jews and Arabs cannot live together in a Jewish state — this is exactly what the PLO wants to prove.

"But we, the Zionists, say that Arabs and Jews can indeed coexist in a Jewish state. It is difficult. But we have to learn together how to do it. We Jews cannot make generalizations (about the Arabs) as Kahane does, especially because we were the victims of generalizations throughout our history."

Warns Of PLO Inroads In The U.S.

Meridor said that during his current visit here, as well as in previous ones, he realized that the PLO is making some inroads in the United States. "I found the beginning of a process of legitimization of the PLO among some policy-makers in the U.S.," Meridor warned.

"It is still unofficial and is not pronounced clearly, but there is the danger that the PLO will enter the U.S. through the back door. We must make it clear in America that peace in the Mideast cannot be achieved through dealing with the PLO nor through dealing with a joint Jordan-PLO delegation."

Meridor is one of the few people in Israel who has been in close, constant contact with former Premier Menachem Begin, who stepped down in October, 1983. He said that he meets with Begin every Friday and discusses with him various issues concerning the situation in Herut and in the country.

"I last saw him at his 72nd birthday party in his home in Jerusalem last Saturday. He feels fine and is interested in everything that happens in the country," Meridor said.