

PEACE PROCESS IN SEARCH OF A FORMULA
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Feb. 23 (JTA) — Two prominent West Bank Palestinians have urged the Arab population in the administered territories to exert pressure on King Hussein and Palestine Liberation Organization chief Yasir Arafat to renew their talks aimed at finding a formula for joint participation in the Middle East peace process.

But the Jordanian ruler, in his latest remarks in Amman Saturday, appeared to be asking the Palestinians under Israeli rule to seek an alternative to the PLO as their representative.

Amwar Al-Hatib, who was Governor of Jerusalem during the Jordanian occupation before 1967, and Hikmat Al-Masri, Deputy Speaker of the Jordanian Senate, who lives in Nablus, proposed that a West Bank delegation go to Amman to mediate between Hussein and Arafat. Their call was published Friday in the East Jerusalem Arabic daily Al-Kuds.

Both men, considered very close to the King, stressed the need to continue the Jordanian-PLO dialogue which Hussein declared, in a 3 1/2 hour-television speech last Wednesday, had come to an end.

Premier Shimon Peres, in an interview in Yediot Achronot Friday, issued a call of his own. "King Hussein and ourselves should lead the wagon of peace and the residents of the territories can join," he declared.

The proposal by Al-Hatib and Al-Masri was the first political ripple in the West Bank since Hussein's speech Wednesday in which he expressly blamed PLO intransigence for the impasse in putting together a Jordanian-Palestinian negotiating team.

The View From Amman

Interviewed in his palace in Amman, Hussein said "The Palestinians must now make a decision. Are they happy with creeping annexation of their land by Israel and their possible expulsion from Palestine? If they're unhappy, what do they want us to do about it?"

Hussein said he would "respect" a decision by the Palestinians to keep the PLO as their "sole legitimate representative" — the language of the 1974 Arab League summit decision in Rabat, Morocco — but would also welcome a move by the Palestinians to find another "apparatus" for political expression.

He denied he was asking the Palestinians to renounce the PLO or to make a choice of leadership. "I am simply saying that the Palestinians must begin their own dialogue. They must say whether we are right or wrong, or come up with something else."

But in light of the King's harsh words about the PLO last week, most observers saw his remarks as a challenge to the Palestinians to decide soon who would speak for them. Hussein said in his Wednesday speech, "We are unable to continue to coordinate politically with the PLO leadership until such time as their word becomes their bond, characterized by commitment, credibility and constancy."

Hussein rejected the notion, suggested in many quarters, that his break with Arafat meant the peace process has foundered. Some Israeli analysts agreed with his remark that "This is the end of a chapter, not of the book."

But Hussein left open the possibility that he might enter into negotiations with non-PLO Palestinians through an international conference if the Palestinians choose such a scenario. He discounted speculation that he would now seek Syria as a negotiating partner, stressing that Jordan's recent rapprochement with Damascus was a bilateral matter.

A leading Israeli Mideast expert, Hebrew University Prof. Emanuel Sivan, maintained that under present circumstances Hussein would find it hard to convince the residents of the territories to adopt an independent stand. Sivan pointed out that Jordan has neglected the Palestinians in recent years. He said Hussein appealed to them to make their own decisions because he does not feel he has a mandate to enter into separate talks with Israel.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES
A PERIOD OF REFLECTION

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Feb. 23 (JTA) — The Reagan Administration seems to be in a quandary about what to do next in the Middle East peace process now that King Hussein of Jordan has abandoned his effort to work out a common strategy with Palestine Liberation Organization chief Yasir Arafat.

"It is obvious that we have embarked upon a period of reflection on the part of all parties," State Department deputy spokesman Charles Redman said last week.

But Redman would not say where this reflection would lead, except to stress that both Hussein and Israel are still committed to seek peace. "We intend to continue our efforts to help the parties advance toward our shared goal of direct negotiations for a just, durable and lasting peace in the Middle East," he said.

Hussein announced in a three-and-a-half hour speech on television last Wednesday that he was abandoning his year-long effort to work with the PLO leadership "until such time as their word becomes their bond, characterized by commitment, credibility and constancy."

Redman agreed with the King in placing the blame on the PLO. "The record is clear that the PLO leadership has failed to seize the opportunity offered it, and all parties have to find another basis to move toward the undiminished imperative of a negotiated peace, including a resolution of the Palestinian problem," he said.

U.S. Agreed To Invite The PLO To A Conference

Redman confirmed Hussein's revelation that the U.S. had agreed to invite the PLO to an international conference if the PLO accepted United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, agreed to negotiate with Israel and renounced terrorism.

Redman would not comment on whether the U.S. had informed Israel of this proposal. Israel refuses to

deal with the PLO under any circumstances. However, the conditions listed have long been laid down by the U.S. for it to talk to the PLO. Hussein's speech, however, was welcomed in Israel where Israeli officials both in Labor and Likud have denounced the effort by Jordan to work with the PLO. The Israelis have called for direct negotiations with Jordan with the participation of Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza.

However, Hussein in his speech said the U.S. proposed this to him last month and he rejected it. Hussein, who wanted an international conference as an "umbrella" for negotiations with Israel, said nothing in his speech about direct negotiations with Israel. The U.S. has maintained that it will support an international conference only if it leads to direct negotiations and not as a substitute for it.

Focus May Return Full Circle

Now that Hussein has dropped the PLO, at least for the time being, the focus may return to where it should have been all along, on direct talks between Israel and a delegation comprising Jordanians and Palestinians from Judeea, Samaria and Gaza.

Secretary of State George Shultz has repeatedly said that there are Palestinians who realize that the way to find a solution to their problem is through negotiations.

The first reaction from the West Bank has not been positive, with Palestinians maintaining, at least publicly, that there is no alternative to the PLO.

But if progress is to be made, the Palestinians will have to take the choice offered them by Premier Shimon Peres during his address to the World Jewish Congress in Jerusalem last month. "They have to make a choice between the PLO without a solution or a solution without the PLO," Peres said.

This advice should be heeded not only by the Palestinians, but also by Washington and Amman.

ISRAEL CALLS OFF SEARCH FOR TWO MISSING IDF MEN IN SOUTH LEBANON

By Gil Sedan and Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Feb. 23 (JTA) — The Israel Defense Force called off its massive search in south Lebanon for two Israeli soldiers kidnapped by Shiite Moslem extremists February 17 and still missing.

The search, begun last Tuesday when Israeli infantry, supported by tanks, half tracks, armored personnel carriers and helicopters fanned out of the border security zone into south Lebanon, eased off on Friday. On Saturday morning, Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin, chief of Staff Gen. Moshe Levy and the commander of the northern region, Maj. Gen. Ori Orr, brought the operation to an end.

Virtually all IDF units are now back in Israel, the Cabinet was told at a briefing Sunday morning. Rabin said Israel would continue to seek "relevant information" as to the whereabouts of the missing soldiers. "Once we get the relevant information," Rabin told Voice of Israel Radio, "we shall decide how to act." Military sources said earlier that the search will now be carried out "by other methods."

Some 3,000 Shiite Villagers Questioned

In the course of the four-day operation, the IDF conducted house-to-house searches in some 20 Shiite villages in south Lebanon. About 3,000 villagers were questioned and 90 were detained. Large caches of weapons and ammunition were seized in many of the villages.

The arms were said to belong to the Hezbollah (Party of God) movement, the fanatical Iran-linked Shiite group which was believed behind the kidnapping of the soldiers, and Amal, the mainstream Shiite militia and political organization.

The two soldiers were seized after their convoy was ambushed in the Lebanese border security zone by a group calling itself the Islamic Resistance Movement. It is believed to be a front for Hezbollah. They were identified by the IDF as Yossi Fink of Raanana and Rahamim Alsheich, of Rosh Haayin, both 20 and both yeshiva students doing their military service.

Their captors announced Thursday that one of the two had been "executed" because Israel ignored an ultimatum to pull the IDF out of south Lebanon. There was no evidence to confirm this. The whereabouts of the men remain unknown.

IDF Suffers Two Casualties

The IDF suffered two fatalities in the course of the search operation. A 19-year-old soldier, Sgt. Alon Ben-Shahar of Jerusalem, was killed Thursday when Shiite gunmen attacked his unit with bazooka and machine-gun fire from an ambush near Sreifa village outside the border security zone. Eight of the attackers were killed in the hour-long skirmish.

On February 18, the day the search began, Daniel Amar of Netanya, a 19-year-old naval rating, was killed by a sniper who fired at his patrol boat from a Lebanese beach near Tyre.

Reasons For Calling Off Search

Military and political sources indicated that the search was called off for several reasons apart from the fact that it was proving fruitless. Israel wanted to avoid renewed friction with the largely Shiite population in south Lebanon. According to Uri Lubrani, government coordinator for south Lebanon, the Shiites were beginning to doubt that Israel had any intention to withdraw and there was mounting pressure for guerrilla action against the IDF.

In addition, the continued search posed a threat of retaliation against Israeli towns and settlements in the north. About a dozen Katyusha rockets were fired toward Israel territory without causing casualties or damage. Several explosions were heard in western Galilee Sunday morning. Soldiers searched the area for impact signs. It was not immediately clear whether rockets fell in Galilee or inside the security zone.

Premier Shimon Peres had high praise for the search operation at Sunday's Cabinet meeting. He said it demonstrated the concern of the army for the welfare of each and every soldier. Lubrani expressed the view Sunday that the pullback of the IDF would restore calm in the area.

FRANCE RELEASES TWO TERRORISTS

By Edwin Eytan

PARIS, Feb. 23 (JTA) — France has released two Palestinian terrorists serving 15-year prison sentences for murder, apparently as part of a deal with the terrorist group headed by Abu Nidal to refrain from terrorist acts inside France.

The deal reportedly dates back to 1982, after French police found conclusive evidence that the Nidal gang was responsible for the machinegun and grenade attack on a Jewish restaurant on the Rue Des Rosiers in the summer of 1982 in which six people were killed.

The government apparently was anxious to prevent a recurrence of such outrages in France. But newspapers here said the two terrorists were set free this month to

improve chances of freedom for four French nationals being held hostage in Lebanon by pro-Syrian, pro-Iranian extremists. Husni Hattem, 32, and Assad Kayed, 28, drew 15-year sentences for the cold-blooded slaying of Palestine Liberation Organization representative Ezzedine Kallak in August, 1978. Kallak and one of his aides were on Nidal's hit list because they were allegedly "too moderate" and "traitors to the Palestinian cause." As part of the deal, the French insisted the two men serve part of their sentences.

They were freed on February 5 and flown out of the country, their lawyers said.

WIESENTHAL CENTER SUIT SETTLED

LOS ANGELES, Feb. 23 (JTA) — The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the Simon Wiesenthal Center have announced the settlement of an ACLU lawsuit challenging a State grant of \$5 million for the Center's construction of a Museum of Tolerance on its Yeshiva University campus.

The ACLU filed the lawsuit last October in Los Angeles Superior Court on behalf of David and Rosetta Cohen contending that the grant violated the State's mandated separation of church and state. The grant was approved by the State Legislature and signed into law by Governor George Deukmejian last July.

The settlement was announced last week at a news conference at the Greater Los Angeles Press Club. In a 12-page document outlining the terms of the settlement, the agreement asserted that the new building must be operated "in a non-sectarian manner" and its seminar rooms cannot be used for Yeshiva classes.

Terms Of The Settlement

Other terms of the settlement include a limitation on cross-participation by board members of the Center and the University, and that the Wiesenthal Center "shall make no loans, grants or other uncompensated transfers of its funds to (Yeshiva) or for scholarships to students attending" the Yeshiva.

The new building "will not be decorated with religious symbols," the agreement stated. It also said that the title to the land on which the museum will be built is to be transferred from the Yeshiva to the Wiesenthal Center.

Wiesenthal Center officials said a major stumbling block in the protracted negotiations leading to the settlement was whether the Center would remain open on the Sabbath and Jewish holidays. Agreement was finally reached which asserted that the museum will remain closed on these days, Center officials said.

In a statement, the Center said it "has always been committed to the constitutional doctrines which separate church and state. This agreement recognizes this while at the same time does not compromise in any ways the goals and independent nature of the Center's agenda."

Construction costs for the Museum of Tolerance are expected to reach \$20 million. The Center has already raised about \$17 million including the State grant. The museum will be an 80,000-square-foot, four-story complex with a 30,000-square-foot exhibit area, which will include space for permanent exhibits and for visiting exhibits. Construction is expected to begin soon, with an expected completion date set for the summer of 1987.

PROMINENT FRENCH JEW GETS HIGH POST By Edwin Eytan

PARIS, Feb. 23 (JTA) — Robert Badinter has been appointed President of France's Constitutional Council, one of the country's highest legal bodies, in some way the equivalent of the Supreme Court. He replaces in this post Daniel Mayer who resigned the Presidency but remains a member of the Council. Both Badinter and Mayer have been active in Jewish communal organizations.

Badinter, 57, who served until his resignation last Wednesday as Minister of Justice; is a former member of the executive committee of the Fond Social Juif Unifié and has served on the Board of dozens of other Jewish organizations. He is married to Elizabeth Badinter, a writer and the daughter of Marcel Blaustein-Blanchet who is a prominent French Jewish philanthropist.

As a Minister, Badinter will be remembered as the man who abolished capital punishment and liberalized France's 200-year-old criminal code. A personal friend of President François Mitterrand, he will head the nine-member Council which rules on basic constitutional matters. In spite of his official functions, he has remained active in campaigning for the rights of Soviet Jews and especially for Anatoly Shcharansky's liberation.

Mayer, 77, is the former president of the ORT International Executive and a former president of the League for the Rights of Man. Active in the French anti-Nazi resistance, he was a member of several French post-war governments and also served from 1953 to 1957 as President of the National Assembly's Foreign Affairs Commission.

Both Badinter and Mayer have often visited Israel and have shown their personal commitment to the Jewish State. Badinter's appointment is for nine years, starting March 5.

ISRAEL'S FIRST ENVOY TO SPAIN PRESENTS HIS CREDENTIALS TO KING

JERUSALEM, Feb. 23 (JTA) — Shmuel Hadass became Israel's first Ambassador to Spain when he presented his credentials last Thursday to King Juan Carlos in Madrid. Hadass has been Israel's unofficial representative in Spain since 1981 while serving as representative to the World Tourism Organization in Madrid.

Spain and Israel announced the establishment of diplomatic relations last month. The announcements were made simultaneously in Jerusalem, Madrid and The Hague where the documents of mutual recognition were signed by Yeshayahu Anog, deputy director general of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, and Maximo de Cajal, director of the European Affairs Department of the Spanish Foreign Ministry.

Spain is the last Western European nation to establish full diplomatic ties with Israel, a move sought for many years by the Jewish State. The two countries stated that the decision to establish formal diplomatic ties was made, among other reasons, because of the deep historic connections between the Spanish and Jewish people.

Both countries made political statements indicating that their new formal relationship will not affect their respective policies which differ sharply on the Middle East. Just a few days after the formal announcement, the new relationship was sealed with a meeting between Premier Shimon Peres and Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez of Spain in The Hague.

NATIONWIDE JEWISH AIDS PROJECT SET UP TO HELP VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES

By Aviva Cantor

NEW YORK, Feb. 23 (JTA) -- A National Jewish AIDS Project was established here Friday to generate, mobilize and coordinate efforts in the community to respond to the needs of victims of the fatal disease and their families.

The project was launched at a meeting at the Reconstructionist Foundation which brought together key figures from Jewish religious organizations and welfare agencies with gay activists. The impetus for the meeting and the project came from Foundation executive director Rabbi David Teutsch.

Describing AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) as "the most rapidly developing health crisis in American society since World War II," Teutsch pointed out that the number of people affected by it goes beyond the gay Jewish population and their families, and "is much vaster than people realize." People who have had blood transfusions longer than six months ago are at risk, he said.

The project will provide education and information to the Jewish community about AIDS and how to help its victims, galvanize the "pooling of resources" on their behalf, and function as a clearinghouse for the victims themselves as to whom to turn to in the community for pastoral counseling, family and home care services and legal assistance.

A Top Priority

A top priority, Teutsch told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, will be to educate rabbis, rabbinical students, chaplains, and Jewish communal service professionals on AIDS and how to work with the victims and their families.

"Members of synagogues are afraid to tell their own rabbis their children are dying in another city," he said. Educating rabbis, Teutsch believes, is crucial, not only because they do pastoral counseling but also because through their sermons and influence "they can open up the issue in the community."

It is not only rabbis who need sensitization on the issue, Teutsch continued. It is also funeral directors, who need to treat AIDS victims in the same manner as other deceased persons; doctors and dentists; and synagogue groups doing "bikur cholim" (visiting the sick). All of these need information to be able to "overcome their fears" of contact with AIDS victims and their families, he said.

Other Goals And Aims

A second major goal -- mobilizing, developing and coordinating home care resources for AIDS victims -- derives from the fact that they are "best cared for at home," he said. Provisions need to be made for their meals, including kosher food for those who need it, and occasional transportation. Various Jewish agencies and bikur cholim groups could provide them with such services.

A third aim is to involve various Jewish civil rights organizations in "advocacy" on behalf of AIDS patients. This includes legal work for AIDS victims who are fired or evicted, and legislative lobbying for government funding of hospice programs and other non-hospital services.

The director of the project will be Daniel Najjar, a Board member of Bet Mishpacha, the 20-year-old gay and lesbian synagogue in Washington, D.C. who organized Friday's meeting. Najjar told the

JTA that Jewish AIDS victims feel "they can't turn to the community for help even when they are dying. They have a desperate need to link up" with the Jewish community, he said.

Number Of Jews Involved

Najjar estimated that at least 300 to 500 Jews have been diagnosed as AIDS victims since 1979. This estimate is based on taking 2.2 percent (the Jewish percentage in the population) of the Center for Disease Control (CDC) figure of 17,361 reported diagnosed cases. Of these 48 percent -- about 163 Jews -- are still alive.

However, he noted, CDC stated that 15,000 to 20,000 new cases will be reported diagnosed by the end of 1986 -- bringing the estimated number of additional Jewish victims to 440.

Najjar pointed out that "thousands of Jews may also be assumed to be carriers of AIDS since the federal government has estimated that up to one million persons are possibly HTLV-III positive (having the virus that causes the disease). These persons may become ill at some later time in their lives, even if they do not develop full-blown AIDS symptoms within the near future."

Synagogues in Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York "have lost members to AIDS, and most major cities' Jewish communities currently have members who are sick and dying," Najjar said. "Those areas of the country which have been hardest hit by the disease are also the largest areas of Jewish population -- New York, California and Florida."

Rabbi Yoel Kahn, spiritual leader of Shaar Zahav, the gay congregation in San Francisco, told the meeting Friday that he is being referred one AIDS case per week. Everyone in his congregation, he said, "has lost a close friend. Most lost several. Older members ... have stopped counting after 20."

Jewish Groups Involved In Project

The Jewish organizations whose key figures are involved with the project include the (Reform) Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the (Conservative) Rabbinical Assembly, the Association of Jewish Family and Children's Agencies, the Council of Jewish Federations, the Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations and Havurot, and the World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations.

Najjar said the project has already had some initial pledges of funds and that it will be seeking additional seed money to get it underway. The National Jewish AIDS Project will initially operate out of offices at 2025 I St. N.W. (#721), Washington, D.C. 20006, (202) 387-3097.

"AIDS victims feel a sense of abandonment, which augments and intensifies their tragedy," Teutsch told the JTA. The community can and must deal with this sense of abandonment by "reaching out" to them, and showing them that "the vast majority of Jews are deeply concerned."

CORRECTION

Princeton Lyman was misidentified in a story on Ethiopian Jews in the February 18 Bulletin. He is Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, not Assistant Secretary.