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JEWISH GROUPS WELCOME DECISION TO DENY ARAFAT ENTRY TO U.S.

by Andrew Silow Carroll

NEW YORK, Nov. 27 (JTA) -- Major American Jewish organizations are gratified that the United States will not allow Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasir Arafat to enter the country for a speech Thursday at the United Nations.

In a number of public statements made after the decision was announced Saturday, groups praised the Reagan administration for rejecting terrorism and for repeating its dissatisfaction with the outcome of the Palestine National Council's recent session in Algiers.

In more personal conversations, leaders of many of the groups also expressed satisfaction that the United States rejected Arafat's visa request without a major lobbying effort by Jewish organizations.

Arafat requested the visa in order to address the annual U.N. General Assembly debate on the Palestinian situation, which begins this week.

The State Department said that since Arafat is responsible for PLO elements that "have engaged in terrorism against Americans and others," he would continue to be denied a visa under a law that prohibits identified terrorists from entering the country.

Arab nations immediately denounced the U.S. decision. European nations, who have been more supportive than the United States of the PLO's statements in Algiers, and U.N. officials may also weigh in with criticism.

But Jewish groups were expansive in their praise.

"Once again the United States has taken a world leadership role by rejecting terrorism and clearly stating that those who are its advocate are not welcome," Milton Shapiro, president of the Zionist Organization of America, said in a statement released Sunday.

Quiet Lobbying Effort

The government's decision "gives the lie to recent attempts by the PLO to camouflage its true nature and goals," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive director of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

In the weeks prior to the decision, the Conference of Presidents was among those groups who were uncharacteristically reserved in pressing the government to deny the visa.

While most groups communicated their concern over the Arafat visit to U.S. officials during the last few weeks, the lobbying effort was mild, compared to an earlier attempt to close the PLO observer mission to the United Nations.

While the Justice Department did order the mission closed earlier this year, a federal judge in Manhattan overturned the order. The battle over the mission's closure and the subsequent court order was seen as a public relations victory for the PLO.

Administration officials and legislators were credited this time for their clear opposition to any entry request by Arafat. Earlier this month, 51 U.S. senators sent a letter to Secretary of State Shultz urging him to deny a visa request

from Arafat. Shultz, in turn, was reported to have resisted pressure from other State Department officials in turning down Arafat's application.

"We waited to see what the government wanted to do, without putting on a campaign or battle," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

"The message was passed that the American Jewish community would not like to have him here, without threats. When the 51 senators signed, it sent a clear message," he said.

Ira Silverman, executive director of the American Jewish Committee, said organized Jewry's reaction to Arafat's visa request represents a cooler approach on so-called symbolic issues.

That approach allows organizations to "reserve all our efforts for direct support for Israel, when major items are on the table," Silverman said.

One major effort was planned in the event Arafat was granted a visa: a public demonstration and educational campaign to be coordinated by the Conference of Presidents and the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York.

Although that initiative has been canceled, there is concern that Arafat will be given a platform if Arab nations try to move the General Assembly debate on the Palestinians outside the United States, possibly to United Nations headquarters in Geneva.

EUROPEANS SHUN ARAFAT, TOO; GREECE MAY RECOGNIZE ISRAEL

By Jean Cohen

ATHENS, Nov. 27 (JTA) -- Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasir Arafat will not be invited to the summit meeting of European Community leaders in Rhodes next weekend, Greek Foreign Minister Karolos Papoulias assured Jewish leaders here.

He also said that Greece would extend de jure recognition to Israel in the very near future.

Papoulias met Thursday with Jean Kahn, vice president of the European Jewish Congress; its director, Serge Cwaajenbaum; and Joseph Lovinger, president of the Central Jewish Board of Greece.

He laid to rest rumors that Arafat would be asked to Rhodes by the chiefs of state and heads of government of the 12 nations of the European Community, who will be meeting on the Greek island Dec. 2 to 3.

Greece currently holds the rotating chairmanship of the E.C. Council of Ministers.

It is the only European Community nation that does not have full diplomatic relations with Israel, and Papoulias indicated that would soon be rectified.

Greece reportedly was prepared last week to recognize the Palestinian state Arafat proclaimed Nov. 15 in Algiers. At the same time it would upgrade its diplomatic ties with Israel.

But the idea apparently was dropped because the E.C. foreign ministers were unable to formulate a joint position on the Palestinian state at their Nov. 21 meeting in Brussels.

The Jewish leaders asked Papoulias to pressure the PLO to recognize Israel explicitly and to abandon its covenant calling for the destruction

of Israel. Greece is believed to have some influence over the PLO, which maintains a diplomatic mission in Athens.

Papoulis replied that Greece would like to bring all parties to the dispute to the negotiating table.

The Jewish delegation also asked Papoulis to raise the plight of Syrian Jews with President Hafez Assad of Syria and, specifically, to seek the release of six Jews in Syrian prisons.

Papoulis promised to do what he could. The Jewish leaders told reporters afterward that they left their meeting with the Greek foreign minister with "a positive feeling and a good impression."

They also met with Moshe Gilboa, Israel's diplomatic representative in Greece.

SECOND WAVE OF DIASPORA LEADERS LOBBYING ISRAELIS ON 'WHO IS A JEW'

By Andrew Silow Carroll

NEW YORK, Nov. 27 (JTA) -- Leaders of 20 national Jewish organizations, more than half representing Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist groups, were scheduled to depart for Jerusalem Sunday night to protest proposed changes in the legal definition of who is a Jew in Israel.

The high-level mission, joining a delegation of leaders who arrived over the weekend, is another in a barrage of such lobbying visits by Diaspora Jews, leading to quips that Israel's tourism industry is being saved by the controversy.

The missions are focusing their efforts on Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and members of his Likud bloc, who are in a position to give in to the demands of the Orthodox religious parties to amend Israel's Law of Return.

The amendment would exclude non-Orthodox converts to Judaism from automatic Israeli citizenship, a move viewed by non-Orthodox groups as an effort to delegitimize their rabbis, if not the viability of their various movements.

Shoshana Cardin, past president of the Council of Jewish Federations and head of a special task force on the issue, urged federation leaders around the country last week to send delegations to Israel to meet with Shamir, who she said has promised to set aside time for as many visits as possible.

Cardin also chaired a delegation representing major North American philanthropic organizations that met last week with Shamir, Labor Party leader Shimon Peres, the Sephardic and Ashkenazic chief rabbis, and members of the new Knesset.

They got no commitment from Shamir.

Abram, Hoenlein Meet With Shamir

On Sunday, Morris Abram, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, and its executive director, Malcolm Hoenlein, spent 90 minutes meeting with Shamir.

Abram denied later that they had specifically discussed the "Who Is a Jew" controversy. Hoenlein said that traditionally, the Conference of Presidents, which represents Orthodox and non-Orthodox groups, has not dealt with the issue.

But the two men met later with Rabbi Avraham Ravitz, leader of Degel HaTorah, the smallest of the four religious parties in the Knesset.

On Monday, they will be joined by Max Fisher of Detroit, one of the most influential

American Jewish leaders, for meetings with President Chaim Herzog and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, head of the Labor Party.

Also participating in the meetings will be Robert Asher, chairman of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the powerful pro-Israel lobby in Washington.

Local organizations are also headed to Jerusalem. On Sunday night, five New York rabbis were scheduled to leave for Israel, followed on Tuesday by senior leaders of the United Jewish Appeal-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York.

Participants in the rabbinical mission include two prominent leaders of modern Orthodoxy in the United States, Rabbis Louis Bernstein and Haskell Lookstein.

Both have been close to the National Religious Party in Israel and both oppose the "Who Is a Jew" amendment at this time.

Local Federations Going

Chicago is typical of other local communities that plan to send delegations. Maynard Wishner, president of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, was one of a number of leaders who participated in a live closed-circuit television conversation last week with Yossi Ben-Aharon, a top aide to Shamir.

Ben-Aharon wavered on whether the prime minister would reconsider his pledge to the Orthodox parties that he would ensure adoption of the "Who Is a Jew" amendment. Wishner's disappointment with that position strengthened his resolve to head a delegation to Israel.

"It was precisely what we didn't want to hear," Wishner said Wednesday. "It means that the very issue is one of the matters for negotiation. It is our plea that it be removed."

The high-level delegation leaving Sunday is co-chaired by Ruth Popkin, immediate past president of Hadassah, and Rabbi Daniel Syme, vice president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

Other organizations sending representatives on the mission include: American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, Americans for Progressive Israel, Association of Reform Zionists of America, Central Conference of American Rabbis, Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations and Havurot, Mercaz, Na'amat USA, National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, National Council of Jewish Women, Rabbinical Assembly, Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, United Synagogue of America, Women's League for Conservative Judaism, Workmen's Circle, World Union for Progressive Judaism and the World Council of Synagogues.

SHARON URGING SHAMIR TO FORM GOVERNMENT WITHOUT LABOR SOON

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Nov. 27 (JTA) -- Ariel Sharon, Likud's most outspoken hard-liner, is urging his party to establish a new government quickly with the extreme right-wing and ultra-Orthodox parties.

He was quoted Sunday as saying Premier Yitzhak Shamir "can present a government this week."

Sharon seems to be spurred by speculation that Shamir may be having second thoughts about aligning Likud with the ultra-Orthodox and the

secular right.

According to Israel Radio, some Likud members are urging the prime minister to reject the small parties and cut a deal with Labor. The purpose would be to avoid paying the price demanded by the ultra-Orthodox factions.

They have exacted from Shamir a promise to push through the Knesset the divisive "Who Is a Jew" amendment to the Law of Return.

The amendment, introduced by the religious parties last week, would deny automatic Israeli citizenship to persons converted by non-Orthodox rabbis.

If Shamir wavers, it would have much to do with the unprecedented opposition by Diaspora Jewry, especially in the United States, to the "Who Is a Jew" amendment.

Though the measure would directly affect relatively small numbers of potential citizens, it would be a devastating slap at Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist Judaism, which represent the vast majority of affiliated Jews in the United States and other nations of the Diaspora.

No other issue in Israel's 40 years of statehood has so galvanized the Diaspora leadership.

Efforts To Woo Labor

A Likud alliance with Labor would offer a way out of the controversy. Although Labor formally broke off coalition talks last Tuesday, Shamir's top lieutenants reportedly are trying to revive them.

Shamir was quoted Sunday as saying he had no option but to align with the religious extremists. But Likud sources said the party's position will emerge only after a meeting of its ministers Monday, to be chaired by Shamir.

Against that background, Sharon is assuring the Orthodox and right-wing parties that Shamir will not abandon them.

He complained that the news media persist in calling a rightist government a "narrow Cabinet." According to Sharon, it would be "a Cabinet that can take decisions" and "that above all is what we need at this time."

He added that he has "heard nothing" to substantiate reports that Shamir is prepared to offer the Finance Ministry to Shimon Peres, a portfolio Labor is said to be willing to accept.

There have been other reports that Shamir would like Laborite Yitzhak Rabin to remain on as defense minister, a job Sharon once held and apparently still covets.

AGUDAT YISRAEL ATTACKS LETTER TO SHAMIR FROM RESERVE OFFICERS **By Hugh Orgel**

TEL AVIV, Nov. 27 (JTA) -- High-ranking Israel Defense Force reservists who urged Premier Yitzhak Shamir not to form a government with the religious parties were attacked Friday by the Agudat Yisrael newspaper Hamodia.

It accused them of a "military revolt intended to force the hand of Shamir."

The delegation of 38 officers, ranging in rank from colonel through major general, handed Shamir a letter Wednesday expressing surprise and indignation over his plans to establish a narrow coalition government with ultra-Orthodox parties that oppose military duty for yeshiva students or actively support their exemption.

According to the reserve officers, the ultra-Orthodox position is unfair to the scores of

thousands of military-age youngsters called up each year, who make heavy personal sacrifices for the national good.

The Mapam newspaper Al Hamishmar reported Sunday that according to the IDF, only 3 percent of all yeshiva students who get deferrals in any given year do some sort of national service and of them, only 1 percent do military duty.

Hamodia charged that "the officers' letter is nothing short of military intervention in the forming of the new government."

It alleged that "the use of officers in a political issue comes across as a kind of military revolt intended to force the hand of Shamir, who according to the law and democracy has been entrusted with the task of forming a government as he sees fit."

JEWISH LEADERS MEET WITH QUAYLE FOR 'GET-ACQUAINTED SESSION'

NEW YORK, Nov. 27 (JTA) -- Vice President-elect Dan Quayle conferred last week in Washington with a delegation of Jewish leaders for a get-acquainted visit and an exchange of views on current developments in the Middle East.

The meeting took place in the George Bush-Dan Quayle transition office in Washington. Morris Abram, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, led the delegation.

Abram said Quayle was skeptical about the declaration issued at the recent meeting of the Palestine National Council in Algiers. The vice president-elect reportedly described PLO statements indirectly recognizing Israel and renouncing terrorism as entirely insufficient.

The Indiana senator recognized the PLO's failure in Algiers to come to terms with the reality of Israel, Abram reported.

Quayle also said he rejected as "entirely inappropriate" any comparisons of the Palestinian uprising in the West Bank and Gaza Strip with the civil rights struggle in the United States or the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, Abram said.

Quayle registered particular concern about the danger of chemical warfare, which he noted had been introduced into the Middle East by Iraq during its war with Iran.

The vice president-elect told the group that the introduction of poison gas by the Baghdad regime is an ominous development that carries with it dangerous portents, not only for the Middle East but for international conflicts everywhere.

According to Abram, Quayle told the delegation that he is fully committed to the U.S.-Israeli strategic alliance; that he strongly supports U.S. efforts to win reversal of the U.N. resolution equating Zionism with racism; and that he hopes to emulate Vice President Bush's role in American efforts to rescue Ethiopian Jews.

Quayle said he would closely examine reports of a shortage of visas for Soviet Jewish refugees seeking admission into the United States, Abram reported.

The vice president-elect also voiced concern at the fragility of Israel's economy and expressed understanding of the problems Israel faces in seeking to promote trade and investment.

Abram also reported that Quayle has accepted an invitation to meet with the full Conference of Presidents shortly after he takes the oath of office.

BILL INTRODUCED TO DECRIMINALIZE VIOLENCE BY JEWS AGAINST ARABS

By Gil-Sedan

JERUSALEM, Nov. 27 (JTA) -- Nine right-wing Knesset members have introduced a bill that would in effect decriminalize acts of violence by Jews against Arabs.

The measure was given impetus by the stiff punishment the Israel Defense Force handed out to more than 20 soldiers who damaged private property during a rampage through a Palestinian refugee camp in the West Bank a week ago.

The IDF chief of staff, Gen. Dan Shomron, made clear the army takes a serious view of such breaches of discipline.

In addition to jail sentences of up to two weeks, the men involved were removed from a platoon commander training program, which will hurt their chances for promotion.

Likud Knesset member Pinhas Goldstein demanded the IDF immediately revoke that sanction. He was backed at the Cabinet level by Ministers Ariel Sharon of Likud and Yosef Shapira of the National Religious Party.

They maintained the jail terms were sufficient punishment.

Much more significant in shaping the long-term character of Israel is the measure being vigorously pushed by nine Knesset members representing Likud; the right-wing Tehiya, Tsomet and Moleket parties; and the Orthodox National Religious Party.

Underground Gang Would Be Freed

Those parties may be the core of the next coalition government led by Likud, if negotiations to form a national unity government fail. Their bill, if approved, would retroactively annul sanctions against Jews who used violence against Arabs, either in the course of rioting or out of "security strain."

If the bill is adopted, the last three members of a Jewish underground terrorist gang still in prison would be freed automatically.

They are serving sentences for the murder of three Arab students at the Islamic University in Hebron five years ago and for conspiracy to blow up Arab buses in East Jerusalem.

But not all rightists back the proposed legislation. Justice Minister Avraham Sharir of Likud warned over the weekend that he opposes ad hoc bills that emerge from certain political quarters for a specific purpose.

Legal analysts have pointed out that the new legislation would make rulings by the judicial system null and void, would overrule the presidential prerogative to grant amnesty and would violate the judicial principle that laws are not enacted to effect retroactive changes.

Charges Against Levinger

Since Israel has no constitution, there would be no way to challenge the validity of such a law. Once it passes the Knesset, it is binding.

It is quite likely that the bill, once under scrutiny by the Knesset, will not be able to muster the necessary support for adoption.

But the fact that such radical legislation has been introduced promises that the newly elected 12th Knesset may become a battleground not only of political issues but of basic concepts of law.

At the moment, the legal system seems to be functioning under a double standard.

The police recommended last week that

criminal charges be pressed against Rabbi Moshe Levinger of Hebron, one of the most extreme Gush Emunim activists.

He is suspected of shooting to death one Arab and wounding another in downtown Hebron after his car was stoned. The final decision to bring charges against him will be made by the state attorney's office.

Stoning also was responsible for the incident involving IDF soldiers on Nov. 20.

'Got Carried Away'

A busload of members of an IDF paratroop brigade was passing by the Kalandiya refugee camp, near Jerusalem. A rock smashed a side window, injuring one soldier.

His comrades, just back from a week of active duty in the territories, stormed out of the bus and, in the words of Chief of Staff Shomron, "they got carried away." They invaded the refugee camp, breaking the windows of at least 20 houses and smashing four cars.

Fourteen soldiers and their senior officer received 14-day jail sentences. Four sergeants were sentenced to 28 days in jail, but 14 of those days were suspended.

Three other soldiers not directly involved in the vandalism each got a seven-day jail sentence. The platoon commander, a second lieutenant, was jailed for 14 days and relieved of his duties. The company commander was reprimanded.

VAST MAJORITY OF PALESTINIANS IN CUSTODY HAVE NOT BEEN TRIED

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Nov. 27 (JTA) -- Only 377 of the 5,656 Arabs arrested for alleged participation in the Palestinian uprising have been tried and convicted in court, Haaretz reported Sunday.

According to official Israel Defense Force statistics quoted by the newspaper, another 2,064 remain confined, pending completion of legal procedures, and 1,625 are in detention awaiting trial.

But 1,590 others will never get a trial. They are administrative detainees, who may be held for up to six months at the discretion of the military authorities without having charges brought against them.

Haaretz quoted the IDF as reporting that 240 Palestinians have been killed in clashes with Israeli security forces since the uprising began on Dec. 9, 1987 -- 163 in the West Bank and 77 in the Gaza Strip.

Arab sources and foreign media reports place Palestinian fatalities at over 300.

In the same period, six Israeli civilians and two soldiers have been killed in incidents linked to the uprising.

500,000 VISITED ISRAEL FOR ITS 40TH

By Cathrine Gerson

JERUSALEM, Nov. 27 (JTA) -- The celebration of the 40th anniversary of Israel's independence this past year not only attracted more visitors than expected, but ended with a \$1 million budget surplus, according to outgoing Education Minister Yitzhak Navon.

Despite the Palestinian unrest in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, more than 500,000 visitors came to Israel during the anniversary year, although no more than 300,000 had been expected, Navon said.