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ITALIAN LAWMAKERS UPGRADE STATUS OF PLO DELEGATION

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME, May 4 (JTA) -- Italy's Chamber of Deputies overwhelmingly approved a motion Wednesday raising the status of the Palestine Liberation Organization's representation in Rome from "information office" to "general delegation of Palestine."

The measure, proposed by Foreign Minister Giulio Andreotti, was seen by some as a step toward Italy's possible recognition of the Palestinian state proclaimed in Algiers last year.

But others, including Andreotti, maintained it was a compromise between elements pressing for formal recognition of the declared Palestinian state and those concerned that such an act would isolate Israel.

The legislative body also passed a resolution proposing that both Israel and the Palestinians be admitted into the European Community.

Andreotti paid an official visit to Israel last month. Seeking to play the role of mediator in the Middle East, he is in frequent contact with Israeli, Palestinian and other Arab representatives.

In a speech to the chamber, Andreotti reiterated his support of the Palestinian cause and of Israel's right to secure borders.

In order to make peace, he said, "the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to have a state" and "the right of Israel to live within secure borders, internationally recognized and guaranteed, have to be respected."

PLO Representative Pleased

Andreotti warned that "if Italy tended to favor only one of these aspects, the risk would be run of dismantling the delicately balanced mechanism on which rests any hope of a global solution."

He said that is why the chamber was right in choosing an intermediate step.

By raising the PLO's rank but not recognizing a Palestinian state, it did not run the risk of "provoking a rigid response from those who feel their existence neglected." He appeared to be referring to the Israelis.

"Formal recognition without a substantive prospect of peace would not serve the security of either the Israelis or the Palestinians," Andreotti said.

Nemar Hammad, the PLO representative here, told the newspaper La Repubblica that he was satisfied with the chamber's move, "not just because Italy, along with France, is taking an important step toward Palestine, but above all because the step will have an impact among all European countries."

On Tuesday, French President Francois Mitterrand held a 90-minute meeting with Yasir Arafat at the Elysee Palace, the first time the Palestine Liberation Organization leader was officially received by the head of a major Western state.

Hammad maintained that Europe was of vital importance to Israel. "A Europe that takes a clear position, that recognizes the right of existence of an Israeli state but also recognizes the right of Palestinian self-determination cannot

leave (Prime Minister Yitzhak) Shamir indifferent," he said.

There was no immediate reaction from Israeli officials here.

REPORT ON NAHALIN INCIDENT URGES SUSPENSION OF OFFICERS

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 4 (JTA) -- A military inquiry into the April 13 raid on Nahalin village ended Thursday with recommendations to remove one senior Israel Defense Force officer and two border police officers from duty and to reprimand the military commander of the Judea district.

Five Palestinians were killed and 50 wounded in the pre-dawn assault on the West Bank village, which lies less than 10 miles south of Bethlehem.

The casualties occurred when border police conducting the raid opened fire with live ammunition to disperse villagers who were attacking them with rocks.

The findings of the inquiry were announced at a news conference at the central army command.

"The incident was an aberration from standard operating procedure in its execution," said Maj. Gen. Amram Mitzna, commander of the central sector.

Although the report stressed the violent behavior of the villagers and said some of the border police officers were in danger, it noted that "there was excessive use of gunfire."

Nahalin was reputed to be the base of several groups of Arab youths who regular threw rocks at Jewish traffic on the Jerusalem-Hebron highway. Security forces have raided the village several times to try to apprehend local troublemakers.

According to the military report, when the border police raided on April 13, the local youths were expecting them. They blocked the entrances to the village, forcing the police to leave their vehicles and enter on foot.

They then surrounded and pelted them, endangering some lives, the report said.

Lack Of Coordination Cited

The main confrontation occurred between the village mosque and cemetery. The report stressed that the police did not shoot in inhabited areas and did no damage to property.

But the report found that the operation was conducted without the necessary preparations and, as a result, there was lack of coordination between local forces.

The report rejected allegations that the border police are unfit for such operations, saying that as professional police officers deployed in the territories on a long-term basis, they could in principle conduct similar operations in the future, provided they were properly prepared.

The inquiry into the Nahalin incident, considered one of the worst confrontations of the Palestinian uprising, ended just as the army reversed its policy to stay out of remote Arab villages.

This means that raids on villages such as Nahalin will continue, with the participation of border police units.

ISRAEL BURIES TWO LAWYERS KILLED IN WEDNESDAY'S ATTACK

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, May 4 (JTA) -- "We shall carry on our struggle for this land -- because we have no other land . . . We have no choice."

With these grim words, Justice Minister Dan Meridor on Thursday eulogized two fellow lawyers who fell victim Wednesday to the terror attack on Jerusalem's Jaffa Road.

Nissim Levy, 90, and Kalman Vardi, 60, were both well-known attorneys in the capital.

At both funerals Thursday, a strong representation of bench and bar joined in paying last respects to the two men.

Levy was born in the Old City, the scion of a family that originally hailed from the Balkans and had lived in Jerusalem for generations.

He studied law in Beirut and practiced in Jerusalem, specializing chiefly in land law, until the age of 85.

Even after that, he kept up contacts with a few veteran clients and was on his way home from visiting a client when he was struck down at the bus stop on Jaffa Road opposite the central post office.

It was Levy's only son, Yossi, who has often been cited as the person who left such a deep and lasting impression on George Shultz, when the former secretary of state was a professor of economics at the University of Chicago in 1967.

During the waiting period before the Six-Day War, Yossi, who was close to getting his doctorate, told Shultz that he must rush back to Israel to take part in the impending battle for national survival. Yossi was subsequently killed in battle.

Shultz has often recounted that incident to explain the depth of his own empathy with the Israeli experience.

Kalman Vardi was born in Poland, where he was a Zionist youth activist until he immigrated to Palestine in 1934.

One of the founders of Kibbutz Tel Yitzhak, Vardi served in the British army in World War II and worked for the Jewish Agency in Turkey after the war, in aliyah and rescue operations.

He received his law degree from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, specializing in family law.

The three persons wounded in the attack were pronounced out of danger Thursday. They are Eliahu Waknin, a 62-year-old Jerusalemite; Ya'acov Schiff, 25, a yeshiva student; and 81-year-old Rivka Babkhanov, who was initially identified incorrectly as Levy's wife. The first two were stabbed in the chest, the third in the stomach.

STATE DEPT. CALLS KILLING OF TWO ISRAELIS 'SENSELESS'

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, May 4 (JTA) -- The State Department on Thursday condemned the attack by a knife-wielding Arab in Jerusalem on Wednesday that left two Israelis dead and three others wounded.

But department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler said she did not know if the attack on Jerusalem's main shopping street was an act of terrorism.

"I don't know, to be personally honest with you, what is the literal definition of terrorism here," Tutwiler said in response to a reporter's question. "It certainly is violence."

She said that the department has never defined terrorism, although she agreed Secretary of State James Baker has said he would know terrorism when he sees it.

Tutwiler refused to say whether this act was a violation of the Palestine Liberation Organization's renunciation of terrorism, which was one of the conditions the United States insisted upon before agreeing to open a dialogue with the PLO.

Israeli police said the attacker, who was from the West Bank town of Ramallah, is a Moslem fundamentalist. There is no indication he is connected with the PLO.

"I don't know who this man was and I don't see how you could connect the two," she said, apparently referring to the PLO promise.

Reading a prepared statement on the incident, Tutwiler said: "We condemn yesterday's senseless and tragic murder of two Israelis, as well as the wounding of three others. We are shocked and saddened by the increase in violence and senseless killing arising from confrontations between Israelis and Palestinians in the occupied territories."

"We urge all those who truly seek peace to condemn such acts and to work together to achieve a durable Arab-Israeli peace."

WEST BANK JEWISH SETTLERS CLASH WITH ARABS IN HEBRON

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 4 (JTA) -- The Israel Defense Force was hard pressed to maintain order as rampaging Jewish settlers and Arab rock-throwers clashed in and around Hebron on Thursday, for the second consecutive day.

The military kept a high profile in the West Bank town, chasing Palestinian youths and keeping an eye on militant settlers in adjacent Kiryat Arba, who threatened to open fire if stoned, regardless of regulations.

Two firebombs were thrown Thursday evening at Beit Romano, in the Jewish section of Hebron. There were no injuries or damage.

The precarious relations between Jewish settlers and Arab residents of the West Bank flared into violence Wednesday night.

Dozens of settlers from Kiryat Arba surged through downtown Hebron, smashing Arab cars and damaging homes.

The vandalism was triggered by reports that Jewish cars were being stoned at Halhoul, about six miles up the road from Hebron. The settlers set out in their cars for Halhoul, but were stopped by army roadblocks.

Frustrated, they turned their wrath on Arabs in Hebron.

The Arabs retaliated by stoning Kiryat Arba buildings from an adjacent road. Jews, in turn, stoned nearby Arab homes.

The situation escalated when a burning tire thrown at the Kiryat Arba fence was thrown back by the settlers in the direction of a mosque.

It ignited a pile of wood. Moslem worshippers, emerging from prayers ending the Ramadan fast day, thought the tire was intended to set the mosque on fire.

They approached the Kiryat Arba fence chanting "Allah akhbar" (God is great). They reportedly dispersed when settlers opened fire. No one was hurt.

Aharon Domb, a leader of the Kiryat Arba community, said Thursday the situation in Hebron has reached an all-time low.

**DANISH POLICE UNCOVER ARMS CACHE
LINKED TO PRO-PALESTINIAN GROUP**
By Eli Kohen

COPENHAGEN, May 4 (JTA) -- The discovery here of an arms cache Danish police said was sufficient to start a small war has resulted in the arrests of 10 people suspected of staging robberies in support of a Syrian-based Palestinian terrorist organization.

The suspects are all Danish nationals, one of them born in Jordan. They were remanded in custody for 21 days, during which time the police hope to gather enough evidence to support a charge sheet.

A number of suspects have been under investigation for some time. Six arrests were made April 14, when five men and a woman were charged with a series of robberies in and around Copenhagen between 1980 and 1983.

They were also accused of kidnapping a bank director in 1980 and holding him for ransom.

The proceeds of those and other robberies since 1983 amounted to about 70 million Danish kroner, the equivalent of \$10 million.

According to the police, the money was sent by Syrian diplomatic mail to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a hard-line faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization headed by George Habash.

Diplomatic mail can be dispatched from a special desk at Copenhagen airport, free of customs inspection or control.

Discovery of the weapons stock resulted from a road accident. Police searching a wrecked car found a quantity of money and the address of an apartment in a Copenhagen suburb.

Searching the premises, they found weapons, ammunition, forged passports and drivers licenses, and a police uniform.

**SHAMIR AND RABIN COOPERATE
BUT DIFFER ON ELECTIONS PLAN**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, May 4 (JTA) -- Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir said Thursday he was working in close coordination with Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin on details of Israel's peace plan, involving elections for Palestinian delegates from the administered territories to negotiate an interim agreement with Israel.

Shamir will present the complete plan to the United States, as the Bush administration requested when he visited Washington last month.

He said differences between himself and Rabin, a ranking Labor Party minister, were "not great, and anyway they do not interfere" at this stage. Shamir spoke to reporters during a tour of military facilities in southern Israel.

Rabin discussed aspects of the plan on television Wednesday night. He said it was an elaboration of the principles conveyed by Shamir to the Americans last month.

One thorny issue is whether Arabs living in East Jerusalem would be eligible to vote.

Rabin said he favored it as long as they cast their ballots outside Jerusalem city limits, because Jerusalem is Israeli territory. Shamir last month ruled out their participation, but it is not known whether his position has changed since then.

Likud hard-liner Yitzhak Moda'i, the minister of economics and planning, served notice Thursday that he strongly opposes allowing East Jerusalem Arabs to vote.

Moda'i, who heads the Liberal Party wing of Likud, said his position is shared by the National Religious Party, a partner in the unity coalition government.

No Explicit PLO Role

Rabin stressed that the elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip would be held throughout the territories rather than locally in each municipality. Shamir reportedly wants the voting confined to municipalities.

Rabin said the government flatly opposes any role for the Palestine Liberation Organization. He said the whole idea is to bring out an indigenous Palestinian leadership, separate from the PLO, with which Israel could negotiate.

Israel's official policy is never to negotiate with the PLO under any circumstances.

But some observers believe that Rabin and other policymakers tacitly acknowledge that PLO approval will be necessary if the elections are to take place.

Ehud Olmert, a Likud minister without portfolio, said Thursday that the election plan is intended to keep the PLO out of the peace process, and that is why the PLO opposes it.

Rabin and Olmert contend that many West Bank and Gaza leaders quietly support the plan, but were frightened into silence or opposition by PLO threats.

**ARAFAT REFUSED TO RECONSIDER BID
TO JOIN U.N. BODY, SAYS DIRECTOR**

By Tamar Levy

GENEVA, May 4 (JTA) -- The director general of the World Health Organization said Thursday that he appealed to Yasir Arafat not to press for the Palestine Liberation Organization's admission to the U.N. agency when its governing body meets here Monday.

But the PLO chief refused to back off, even when he was told that a successful bid by the PLO would backfire against Palestinians, because the WHO would lose the American aid that accounts for a quarter of its annual budget.

Dr. Hiroshi Nakajima, the Japanese physician who runs the agency, told reporters of his conversation with Arafat at a news conference Thursday, upon his return from Washington.

He flew there Monday to try to convince the Americans not to suspend their contribution, in the event the PLO is voted into the WHO. But he said his request to meet with President Bush or Secretary of State James Baker was refused.

Baker announced Monday that the United States would withhold funds from any U.N. body that gives the PLO full membership. His statement came after the PLO said it would seek full membership in the WHO with the rights of a sovereign state.

"I told Yasir Arafat that his request that the PLO be admitted as a state with full rights to the World Health Organization is made at the most inappropriate time and place," Nakajima said. "If it passes, it will bring the complete destruction of the organization."

He said the WHO would then have only \$30 million at its disposal until the end of this year. The American contribution for fiscal 1990 is \$73.8 million.

"Arafat refused to postpone, even when I told him that if the well-being of the Palestinians was important to him, he should agree to postpone the issue," Nakajima said.

CARMELITE OFFICIAL SAYS AUSCHWITZ CONTROVERSY A 'MISUNDERSTANDING'

By Yossi Lempkowicz

BRUSSELS, May 4 (JTA) -- A Carmelite official here has said the controversy over the Carmelite convent on the site of the Auschwitz death camp arises from a "misunderstanding," because "the Nazi gas chambers were located in Birkenau and not in Auschwitz."

Father Anastazy Gegotek, who made the remark on behalf of the provincial Carmelite order that is responsible for the convent, was interviewed last week in Krakow by the Austrian Catholic press agency Kathpress.

In this interview, Gegotek is seen as clearly supporting the presence of the Carmelite nuns in the convent, arguing that the building was technically outside the camp grounds.

"It is true that Auschwitz is for the Jews the symbol of the Holocaust," said Gegotek. "But the concentration camp was composed of Auschwitz and Birkenau," and the gas chambers where the Jews perished "were located in Birkenau."

The building the nuns have appropriated, which straddles the fence of the Auschwitz camp, was used to store the Zyklon B that was used to gas the prison inmates to death. Gegotek did not mention how the building was used.

"Very close to the building, numerous Poles were executed and a little farther, Saint Maximilian Kolbe was imprisoned," Gegotek said. "That's why this place is also of great importance for us Poles."

He termed the Jewish reaction against the nuns' presence "very painful and incomprehensible." He also said he was annoyed by young Jews who distributed leaflets in Auschwitz to protest the convent's presence.

Major European Catholic cardinals signed an agreement with Jewish leaders in Feb. 22, 1987, saying the nuns would vacate the convent within two years. Gegotek made no reference to this agreement in the interview.

Another site farther away from Auschwitz was to be readied for the nuns, but it appears that no work on the alternative building has begun.

Added A Cross

Within the last couple of months, the nuns have added a 23-foot cross to the grounds, which has been roundly criticized by Jews who visited there. It is evidence, the witnesses say, that the nuns are not leaving but digging in further.

Gegotek took umbrage at this criticism, saying he found the remark by Jews that the cross "casts a gloom on the concentration camp" as "conflicting the spirit of dialogue."

He said the Catholic Church would not oppose at all the presence of a synagogue at Auschwitz.

Gegotek's comments are seen as an additional sign that local Polish Catholics are still reluctant to respond positively to Jewish calls for the removal of the convent.

In February, a papal nuncio told members of the World Jewish Congress that in effect the Vatican was powerless to act to move the nuns.

According to a letter released by WJC Executive Director Elan Steinberg, the papal representative, who some Jewish leaders consider very sympathetic to the Jewish position, reported that the Council for the Public Affairs of the Church on the Carmelite convent stated that the

Jews "have been listened to with courtesy."

The council said it had been explained, nevertheless that "the Holy See was no more implicated in that project and had taken no engagements in that respect, since the problem concerns the exclusive competence of the local Ordinary."

The ordinary would be the cleric responsible for that area, in this case the cardinal of Krakow, Franciszek Macharski.

Macharski signed the 1987 agreement and gave signs earlier this year that the alternate convent site was being readied.

Words encouraging that alternate site were put into writing by Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, head of the Vatican Commission on Religious Relations with the Jews.

In addition, the Polish minister of religious affairs, Wladyslaw Loranc, has supported the alternative convent.

The WJC plans to raise the convent issue at the general meeting of UNESCO in the fall, said Steinberg, "because Auschwitz is on the World Heritage List of the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and National Heritage of 1972, which aimed at preserving natural or cultural sites or places of historical import."

"The character and the physical appearance of Auschwitz has now been changed by the nuns' occupation of the convent there," said Steinberg. "Therefore, we will be raising this as a violation of the convention."

(JTA staff writer Susan Birnbaum in New York contributed to this report.)

BRITAIN WON'T SELL ISRAEL GAS MASKS FOR CIVILIAN USE

London Jewish Chronicle

LONDON, May 4 (JTA) -- Several members of Parliament have demanded that the British government explain why it rejected an Israeli request to purchase gas masks to protect its civilian population from the threat of chemical warfare.

The members, not all of them supporters of Israel, were incensed by a report that the gas masks Israel wanted were child-sized. They directed their questions to the Foreign Office and the Department of Trade and Industry.

According to reports, an informal request by the Israeli Defense Ministry was rebuffed because the equipment is among the items banned under the arms embargo Britain imposed when Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982.

A Foreign Office source told the Jewish Chronicle, "It was made clear that, in the present climate, Britain would refuse to export to Israel any equipment related to chemical warfare."

An Israeli official here said the gas masks were being purchased from several countries in a major civil defense effort to meet the threat posed by the Arab world's growing chemical warfare arsenal.

"We were surprised by the British response," he said.

The issue was raised in Parliament by Labor member Jeff Booker, who questioned Sir Peter Levene, chief procurement officer at the Defense Ministry.

Sir Peter replied that it was a matter for the Department of Trade and Industry.

Another Labor member, Clare Short, who supports the arms embargo against Israel, nevertheless called the ban on gas masks "crazy."