

# **PARTIES URGE INTERIOR MINISTRY NOT TO CIRCUMVENT CONVERT RULING**

By Gil Sedan and Hugh Orgel

JERUSALEM, July 25 (JTA) -- Israeli parties on the left and right have joined in urging the Interior Ministry not to circumvent the High Court of Justice ruling Monday that persons converted to Judaism by non-Orthodox rabbis have the right to be registered as Jewish citizens.

But Interior Minister Arye Deri of the ultra-Orthodox Shas party declared that his ministry will no longer sign official identity cards that list Israelis as either Jews or Arabs.

Deri has instructed Orthodox registrars not to regard the ID cards as proof that a person is Jewish. As affirmed in a second court ruling Monday, the Orthodox rabbinate retains a monopoly on all matters of personal status, meaning that only Orthodox rabbis can issue birth, marriage, divorce and burial certificates.

Most of Israel's political parties, with the exception of the ultra-Orthodox Degel HaTorah and Agudat Yisrael parties, were swift to reject Deri's announcement. Even parties that agree on little else joined in condemning the Interior Ministry tactic.

Haim Ramon, head of the Labor party's Knesset faction, called on Deri to obey the High Court ruling and not to resort to "administrative tricks" to circumvent it.

The dovish Shinui party called Deri's maneuvers "unacceptable absurdity," while the hawkish Tehiya party called them "brilliant but dirty." Tsomet, also on the political right, said they deserved the strongest condemnation.

Degel HaTorah, however, welcomed Deri's move, saying it exposed the ID card as a document with no halachic, or Jewish legal, significance.

## **Agudah May Leave, But Not Shas**

The only reaction from Likud was to criticize Agudat Yisrael for threatening to quit the coalition government over what a Likud spokesperson called a "narrow, sectarian issue."

A spokesman for Agudah said Tuesday his party was "on the way out" of the government and that the party's Council of Torah Sages would decide in the next few days.

Agudah's Menachem Porush called on the other Orthodox parties to take a harder line on the court ruling, warning Tuesday that the decision would lead to two kinds of Jews -- real Jews and "doubtful" Jews.

But the Shas party's Council of Torah Sages had already met Monday night and decided there was no reason to leave the government now.

Agudah and Shas respectively hold five and six seats in the Knesset. And the National Religious Party, which is also in the government, holds five seats.

But even if all three pulled out, the Likud-Labor coalition would be able to govern with a comfortable majority. The Orthodox parties are no longer in a position to make or break a governing coalition as they were following November's inconclusive elections.

The Interior Ministry's refusal to yield to the spirit of the court ruling is expected to lead

to a new round of legal battles, in which the courts will be asked to enforce Monday's ruling and order the state to accept its own ID cards as valid.

Orthodox sources say that rabbinical courts and local council officials already pay scant attention to the ID cards. Instead, they invariably demand witnesses or corroborative evidence that applicants for marriage or birth licenses are Jews as defined by halacha.

## **Potential Battle Over Burials**

One legal battleground may be the graveyard. Jewish burials are also the sole legal domain of Orthodox hevrei kadisha, or burial societies.

The societies are now likely to pay little attention to the ID cards and may demand evidence of the deceased's Jewishness before allowing internment in a Jewish cemetery. Observers foresee unsavory interrogations and delays in burials as a consequence.

The Orthodox establishment will also have to face the renewed wrath of Diaspora Jews, the majority of whom identify with the non-Orthodox denominations.

Amnon Rubinstein of Shinui, in a televised debate on the subject, said the Interior Ministry is "writing off the majority of U.S. Jewry, especially those who are the leaders of and main contributors" to the State of Israel Bonds Organization and the United Jewish Appeal.

These are the leaders, he said, who "form Israel's major political allies and propagandists in America."

Indeed, Deri's actions angered one Diaspora leader enough to prompt him to demand the interior minister's resignation.

Rabbi Alexander Schindler, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, sent a telegram Tuesday to Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir urging him "to order your minister to obey the court or to resign."

## **SHAMIR'S MEETINGS WITH PALESTINIANS RAISE QUESTIONS ABOUT PLO INFLUENCE**

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, July 25 (JTA) -- Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's recent talks with Palestinian representatives in the administered territories have touched off a volley of assertions and denials by Israeli leaders, Palestine Liberation Organization officials and the representatives themselves.

The exchange began Monday when an Italian newspaper quoted PLO leader Yasir Arafat as saying that meetings between Palestinians and Israeli officials were taking place and that they had been sanctioned by the PLO.

Shamir vigorously denied that the PLO had anything to do with the talks, though his aides conceded that the Palestinians Shamir met with might be supporters of the PLO.

The PLO's second-ranking official, Salah Khalaf, then made public the names of four Palestinians who he said met with Shamir. Their names were published in Israeli newspapers Tuesday.

On Tuesday afternoon, one of the Palestinians named confirmed that he met with Shamir several days earlier.

Attorney Jamil a-Tarifi, former deputy mayor of the West Bank town of El-Birih, said he had originally planned to meet with Shmuel Goren, the government's coordinator for the administered territories, but after his arrival at a Jerusalem hotel, he was told he would meet Shamir as well.

"I went, and after 15 minutes he (Goren) told me I have a meeting with the prime minister, so we went there," Tarifi said at a news conference held at his home.

### Says He Supports The PLO

Asked whether he supported the PLO, Tarifi replied, "I support the PLO, of course. I think every child in the occupied territories supports the PLO."

He added that Shamir's meeting with him showed that Israel is concerned about the Palestinian problem. He said he was prepared to hold further talks if he received a positive signal from Palestinian leaders.

Shamir spokesman Avi Pazner refused to confirm whether Tarifi was among several Palestinians the prime minister consulted about his peace plan.

The other three Palestinians named by Khalaf denied they participated in any talks with the Israeli government.

They were identified as Mahmoud Abu-Zuluf, editor of the East Jerusalem newspaper Al-Kuds; Azzadin al-Aryan, head of the Red Crescent medical society in Ramallah; and Gaza businessman Mansur a-Shawwa.

Khalaf's decision to disclose the men's names is being viewed as a sign that the PLO wants to make sure that no contacts take place between Palestinians and the Israeli government without its approval.

But the three denials appear to indicate that there is a limit to the PLO's influence in the territories. Even with PLO approval, it is still too dangerous for some Palestinians to acknowledge talking with the Israelis. There have been too many who have paid for such cooperation with their lives.

The meetings between Israel and the Palestinians could represent a sign of life for the Israeli government's embattled peace initiative.

For if the PLO is sanctioning talks with the Israelis, it indicates that the organization may be close to accepting the idea of elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as the plan proposes.

But there are clearly still obstacles to the implementation of the plan.

Tarifi said he told Shamir that Palestinians wanted to know the final status of the territories before agreeing to participate in the proposed elections.

"We are not against elections in principle," he said, "but we want to know where we will arrive after these elections."

### **SENATE AND HOUSE ADOPT MEASURES ON FOREIGN AID, WEST BANK SCHOOLS** By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, July 25 (JTA) -- The Senate and House of Representatives passed a flurry of measures on Jewish interests last week, most in the form of amendments to bills regulating the State Department's budget.

The Senate approved a non-binding resolution proclaiming that "the United Nations is an inappropriate forum for a Middle East peace conference."

The resolution, sponsored by Sen. Pete Wilson (R-Calif.), contends that U.N. approval of a 1975 resolution equating Zionism with racism "makes the U.N. or any of its associated organizations an inappropriate forum for sponsorship" of such a conference. It was approved July 20 by a vote of 90-8.

Also last week, after a bruising debate, the Senate and the House adopted virtually identical resolutions commending Israel for planning to reopen Arab schools in the West Bank, while urging that they not be closed again "for political purposes."

The schools were reopened Saturday.

The Senate actions came as amendments to the same 1990 State Department authorization bill that contains restrictions on U.S. contacts with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The House adopted its resolution on the West Bank schools as an amendment to the 1990 foreign aid appropriations bill, which contains \$3 billion in aid to Israel, all of it grants that do not have to be repaid.

The foreign aid bill, which has not yet been voted on by the Senate, also provides \$25 million to resettle an estimated 10,000 Soviet, East European and other refugees in Israel. This fiscal year, \$28 million was provided for that purpose.

### Israel Chastised By Senators

It provides \$12 million for assistance to the West Bank and Gaza Strip through private voluntary organizations. Under U.S. law, the funds can only be used for projects that help Palestinians.

The foreign aid bill earmarks \$7.5 million to cooperative U.S.-Israeli projects in developing countries, many of which are in Africa.

The Senate resolution on the schools was sponsored by Sen. John Chafee (R-R.I.) and modified by Sen. Nancy Kassebaum (R-Kan.). While Kassebaum eliminated language sharply critical of Israel, many senators participated in one of Israel's biggest human rights beatings on the Senate floor this year.

The House resolution was sponsored by Rep. Howard Nielson (R-Utah) and modified by Rep. David Obey (D-Wis.).

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee did not oppose the resolutions as amended.

Chafee argued that when youngsters are kept out of schools, particularly younger children, "it greatly slows their cognitive development." He also complained that Israel authorities "would not even allow the distribution of homework."

"By denying the children of the West Bank an education in recent months," said Sen. Mark Hatfield (R-Ore.), "Israel has been squandering the very basis of trust and cooperation by turning its back on the hopes and dreams of tens of thousands of children."

Hatfield said he was "very pleased" to hear that the schools were being reopened.

But the senator added, "I worry that some people in the Israeli government continue to believe, contrary to international law, that schools can be opened and closed at will -- at political will."

"If these children cannot learn in school, surely they will learn on the streets," he said. "But the lessons they learn will not be reading and writing and arithmetic. They will be lessons of hatred and violence."

Sen. Rudy Boschwitz (R-Minn.) retorted that Palestinians had been using the schools "as a place to congregate stone-throwers."

## HOUSE SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL STRONG DESPITE SOME DOUBTS, SAYS GRAY

By Andrew Silow Carroll

NEW YORK, July 25 (JTA) -- The new majority whip of the House of Representatives told a Jewish audience here Monday that he does not "see any slippage in support" for Israel in the House, especially in the key Foreign Affairs and Appropriations committees.

But along with warm words of praise for Israel, Rep. William Gray (D-Pa.) gave hints that some legislators are concerned about the implications of the 19-month-old Palestinian uprising and the "lack of definition" in the Israeli government's peace plan.

Speaking before the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, Gray reported on his trip earlier this month to Egypt and Israel. He and a delegation of 12 other members of Congress met with Egyptian leaders in Cairo and Alexandria on July 1 and 2, and with Israeli leaders on July 3 and 4.

Gray said he and the other delegates were surprised to find the extent to which Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak was open to the Israeli peace plan.

The plan, reaffirmed by a Cabinet vote Sunday, calls for Palestinians in the administered territories to elect representatives to negotiate with Israel on the terms of an interim autonomy settlement and, eventually, the final status of the territories.

But, like many members of the House of Representatives, Mubarak remained concerned about the plan's lack of specificity, Gray said.

### No Israeli 'Political Consensus'

Among the details Mubarak would like to see outlined are whether Israel plans to withdraw its troops from the territories during the elections and whether it would allow Palestinians to openly campaign for votes.

Gray himself had praise for the peace plan, saying he and the other congressional delegates see it as "an opportunity to move the peace process forward and begin a dialogue."

He indicated, however, that their discussion with Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir about the plan took place before the July 5 meeting of the Likud Central Committee, in which Shamir agreed to Likud hard-liners' conditions for implementing the peace plan.

Gray called the results of Sunday's meeting "good news" in that Shamir seemed to have endorsed the original plan, without the hard-line conditions.

But he said he is troubled that "there is no solid political consensus within Israel" and that members of Israel's national unity government are "constantly looking over their political shoulders before risking any decisions."

Gray was joined at the podium by Rep. Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.), a member of the Middle East delegation, and Ronni Milo, Israel's minister of environmental protection.

Milo, a Likud minister close to Shamir, said he was in the United States for meetings with "administration officials."

Gray spoke at the law offices of Kenneth Bialkin, the former chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

Bialkin was elected Monday as president of the New York JCRC, succeeding Lester Pollack.

## PANEL URGES BRITISH GOVERNMENT TO PROSECUTE NAZI WAR CRIMINALS

London Jewish Chronicle

LONDON, July 25 (JTA) -- A government panel has recommended changing British law to allow the prosecution here of those who committed war crimes in Eastern Europe during World War II.

The War Crimes Inquiry Report, released Monday, also says there is now sufficient evidence to prosecute three people residing in Britain for such crimes and that at least 75 other cases warrant further investigation.

The report has been sent to Parliament for study. It is expected to debate the report this fall and recommend appropriate action. After the debate, the government will make a final decision on whether to introduce a bill in line with the panel's recommendations.

"We want to hear the views of Parliament before taking a final view on the principle of legislation," Home Secretary Douglas Hurd, who released the report, said in a statement to Parliament.

The home secretary's office set up the panel of inquiry in February 1988, in order to verify allegations that there are war criminals living in Britain and to determine whether they should be prosecuted.

Members of the panel included Sir Thomas Hetherington, the former director of public prosecutions, and William Chalmers, former Crown agent.

### Extradition Option Rejected

The recommendation to put war criminals on trial in Britain was made, Hurd said, "after examining and rejecting other courses of action."

Among the options considered, he said, was extraditing the suspects to stand trial in the Soviet Union. But the panel found the arguments in favor of extradition unconvincing.

The report was met with "cautious optimism" by representatives of the Simon Wiesenthal Center. Rabbi Marvin Hier, the center's dean, called on the British Parliament "to act swiftly" to change the law.

In 1986, the Los Angeles-based center presented the British government with a list of 17 suspected Nazi war criminals reported to be living in the United Kingdom. It has provided documentation and witness testimony regarding a number of the suspects.

## FOUR ISRAELI ARABS ARRESTED

By Cathrine Gerson

JERUSALEM, July 25 (JTA) -- Four Israeli Arabs were arrested Tuesday on suspicion of membership in a terrorist organization and attacks against civilians.

A police spokeswoman said that three of the arrested Arabs are from Jaffa and the fourth, a minor, is from Ramla.

The four are alleged to be members of Al Fatah, the military wing of the Palestine Liberation Organization controlled by Yasir Arafat.

According to the police, their mission was to buy weapons and ammunition from Israeli criminals, conduct firebombing attacks and murder Arabs suspected of collaborating with the Israeli authorities.

The police identified only one of the suspects, 18-year-old Said Siri of Jaffa.

**PAPP BLAMES HIMSELF, NOT PRESSURE, FOR CANCELLATION OF PALESTINIAN PLAY**  
By Andrew Silow Carroll

NEW YORK, July 25 (JTA) -- Somewhere between the time he agreed to present a play by a Palestinian theater group and the moment it came to close the deal, Joseph Papp had a change of heart.

But just what, or who, caused the famed theater impresario to cancel a planned appearance by the El-Hakawati Palestinian Theater Company has been a cause for speculation here.

Conjecture ranges from charges that Papp was pressured by his Jewish supporters to Papp's own contention that now was "not the time" to present a single play on so sensitive a topic as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Either way, El-Hakawati's "The Story of Kufur Shamma" will not be seen at Papp's Public Theater this month, and instead will be presented at the smaller Dance Theater Workshop in lower Manhattan.

But while the play has moved on, the controversy hasn't.

Reeling from charges that he had violated the First Amendment rights of the Palestinian troupe and insulted both Jewish- and Arab-Americans, Papp met for an hour-and-a-half Monday with delegates of the American-Arab Relations Committee of the National Council on Islamic Affairs.

Emerging from what both sides agreed was a cordial meeting, Papp said he would present a Palestinian play, possibly "Kufur Shamma," by the end of the year.

But Papp said he would present the play within a spectrum of other performances, possibly including Israeli or other Palestinian plays.

Papp's cancellation of El-Hakawati came amid a debate on the willingness of cultural institutions to present controversial programming, especially on the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In September, the local PBS affiliate, WNET, will present "Days of Rage," a documentary about the intifada that has been lambasted by Jewish groups as pro-Palestinian propaganda.

Responding to the outcry -- what some have called pressure -- from Jewish groups, PBS said it will "wrap" the documentary with two-and-a-half hours of analysis and documentary material in order to balance the film's pro-Palestinian view.

**Denied Being Pressured**

At Monday's news conference, Papp denied published reports that he was pressured into his decision by Jewish patrons of his theater and the New York Shakespeare Festival, who objected to the play's ostensibly anti-Israeli content.

Papp said he was "sensitive to their beliefs," as he would be to any minority's, but that he "didn't respond to pressure."

"There was no Jewish pressure, no board pressure," he said. "That conjures up all the anti-Semitism that 'Jews want this or that.'"

Papp also denied that he personally objected to the content of the play. "Kufur Shamma" tells the story of a Palestinian who returns to his village looking for survivors of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. The play was performed last year in Israel without any political commotion.

Papp indicated that his decision was a highly personal one, one tied into his own Jewishness and his ambivalence about the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Earlier this year, the former Yosef Papirofsky founded the Joseph Papp Yiddish Theater, which staged a highly successful Yiddish play, "Songs of Paradise." He also began an involvement with the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

As the decision to sign the deal with El-Hakawati neared, Papp said he received a letter from an elderly woman associated with the Baltimore Hebrew College, who didn't think presenting the play would "be a good idea."

Papp said that, having so recently reasserted his Jewishness but having never presented an Israeli or Palestinian play, he didn't want his first statement on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to be seen as pro-Palestinian.

"I didn't want that to express my view alone," he said. "El-Hakawati would have been shown at a time when no other play was occupying the theater," he added. "It could, in my opinion, be construed as a declaration of my position on the Palestinian-Israeli issue."

Papp's explanation is not likely to satisfy critics, who still consider his decision censorship. But it did satisfy the Arab delegation he met with Monday.

"His decision was not based on any pressure on him, but was a personal decision. We accept that," said Mohammed Mehdi, president of the American-Arab Relations Committee, who later planted three kisses on Papp's cheek.

After its appearance in New York, El-Hakawati will perform in Lexington, Va.; Woodstock, N.Y.; Vancouver, British Columbia; Seattle; Pittsburgh; and Atlanta.

**DANISH WOMAN EXPELLED FROM ISRAEL WAS LINKED TO PLO COMMANDO SQUAD**  
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, July 25 (JTA) -- A visiting Danish schoolteacher, arrested in Israel July 8 and subsequently expelled, was suspected of belonging to the Palestine Liberation Organization's Force 17 commando squad and of planning a terrorist attack against civilians in Israel.

According to the minutes of a court hearing released this week, Ulla Lyngsby, 25, was charged with membership in Force 17 and specifically of planning a terrorist attack, probably at the closing ceremonies of the Maccabiah, which took place July 13 at the Western Wall.

Force 17 is the elite commando unit of the PLO responsible for many killings. Lyngsby denied the charge.

The story had gone unreported in Israel, but wide media coverage of the case in Denmark prompted journalists in Haifa to appeal to the High Court of Justice to end the ban imposed on publishing any of its details.

The court ruled that Haifa District Court release parts of the transcripts of the hearing, which took place behind closed doors.

District Court Judge Rafael Harsonsky ordered Lyngsby held in custody for 11 days. She was deported, however, after six days.

Lyngsby, who teaches in a suburb of Copenhagen, complained about harsh Israeli treatment, in interviews after she returned to Copenhagen on July 14. She claimed she did not know that her boyfriend, Jihad Jishlawy, belonged to Force 17.

But the Israeli ambassador to Denmark, Amos Ganor, said Lyngsby had signed a confession implicating herself in a plot to assassinate Danish Chief Rabbi Bent Melchior.