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DAILY NEWS BULLETIN

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COURT TEMPORARILY BARS WOMEN'S GROUP FROM PRAYING ALOUD AT WESTERN WALL By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Aug. 21 (JTA) -- A group of women that has been trying to conduct prayer services at the Western Wall suffered a legal setback Monday.

Israel's High Court of Justice ruled that the group, known as Women of the Wall, cannot chant prayers aloud at the holy site until the court holds a final hearing on the case on Dec. 27.

In the ruling, the court rejected the women's application for an order instructing the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the rabbi in charge of the Wall to allow the women to pray together undisturbed.

Instead, the court ordered that they pray "according to the customs of the site" as determined by Rabbi Yehuda Getz, the rabbi in charge there.

Getz strongly opposes the women's activities and had petitioned the court, contending that the women's chanting of prayers was disruptive to worship at the site.

Following Orthodox religious tradition, the plaza in front of the Wall is divided into separate men's and women's sections. While men conduct group prayer services in their section, prayer in the women's section customarily is private and silent.

The women's prayer group was formed last December. It began holding monthly prayer sessions on Rosh Hodesh, complete with Torah readings and vocal chantings of the Hallel and other musical sections of the service.

The prayer sessions triggered vociferous and violent opposition from the ultra-Orthodox, both male and female. On more than one occasion, the women were bodily removed from the site by female ushers hired by the Religious Affairs Ministry.

Court Bars Evidence

In May, the High Court ruled that the women could pray at the Wall and should be protected from harassment, as long as they did not wear tallitot (prayer shawls) and did not carry the Torah.

However, when the women attempted to pray abiding by the court's restrictions, they continued to be harassed.

Nilli Arad, an attorney for the state, argued in court that the women caused a breach of the peace at the Wall, even without the Torah or tallitot. Arad noted that according to halachah, or Orthodox religious law, women's voices are considered sexually alluring and therefore not to be sounded in synagogue.

In New York, Rivka Haut, a member of a support group for the Women of the Wall, said the women attempted to argue in court that they had not been praying loud enough to disturb those in the men's section.

She said that the women have made a concerted effort to pray in low voices and that they tried to prove this in court with videotapes of their prayer and testimony from witnesses.

The court, however, refused to allow them to introduce this material into evidence.

The court also rejected the women's request that their case be heard earlier than December.

Presiding Judge Aharon Barak said that the issues raised in the case "are by no means simple" and accepted the state's contention that the Religious Affairs Ministry and Rabbi Getz needed time to prepare their position.

Ultra-Orthodox Parties To Testify

In another ruling favorable to the state's case, the court agreed to allow representatives from two ultra-Orthodox parties, Degel HaTorah and Shas, to testify at the hearing in December as interested parties.

Haut said the women "are definitely" planning to carry on their fight and continue their prayer. Haut, who is Orthodox, said that nowhere in Jewish law is it expressly forbidden for women to pray in a group.

"It's not a halachic problem," said Haut.
"It's really an issue of women asserting their rights to pray."

Haut's group, the International Committee for Women of the Kotel, will continue to organize support for the women's case. Kotel is the Hebrew term for the Western Wall.

"We are going to search for rabbinic opinions to help them," Haut said, "and we are also trying to contact major American Jewish organizations to support them."

At least one organization has come out in support of the women. The Governing Council of the American Jewish Congress adopted a resolution June 25 calling on the Israeli government to prevent and condemn acts of violence against the women and to take whatever actions are necessary to allow them to worship in peace.

Haut also said that Israel's ambassador to Washington, Moshe Arad, has agreed to meet with her organization, though a date for the meeting has not yet been scheduled.

She said her group was raising money to buy a Torah for the group, which it will present to the women in December as demonstration of support.

(JTA staff writer Allison Kaplan in New York contributed to this report.)

MOST PALESTINIAN WORKERS COMPLYING WITH BOYCOTT OF THEIR JOBS IN ISRAEL By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Aug. 21 (JTA) -- A boycott intended to keep thousands of Arab day laborers away from their jobs in Israel for a week was almost fully observed Monday in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Whether or not it continues will be a test of strength between the Israeli authorities and the local leadership of the Palestinian uprising.

The strike was called by the command of the intifada to protest the strict controls instituted by Israel last Friday.

Strip to show a special magnetized identification card to be admitted to Israel. The purpose is to screen out persons with criminal or security offense records.

Palestinian activists are furious and hope to strike a blow at the Israeli economy by depriving

WITH AN EYE ON THE EUROPEAN MARKET, ISRAEL BUILDING SEPARATE E.C. MISSION By David Kantor

BRUSSELS, Aug. 21 (JTA) -- Israel plans to spend \$1 million to construct a separate embassy here to deal exclusively with the affairs of the European Community and its legislative body, the Parliament of Europe, which is based in Strasbourg, France.

The move is an indication of the increasing importance Israel attaches to its relations with the 12 E.C. nations, which are working toward complete economic integration by 1992.

The plans were outlined over the weekend by Reuven Merhav, director general of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, who came here from Jerusalem to discuss the matter with the Brussels Embassy staff.

At present, the embassy in Brussels, where the European Community is headquartered, houses Israel's diplomatic missions to Belgium, Luxembourg and the E.C.

Avi Primor, the ambassador to Belgium and Luxembourg, also serves as Israel's envoy to the E.C. He is now slated to head the separate E.C. mission. Another ambassador will be appointed for Belgium and Luxembourg.

Israel is preparing for 1992, when the 12 E.C. countries will eliminate all existing trade barriers to create a vast unified European market.

Israeli policymakers believe their country must be ready to adapt to this emerging political and economic reality.

According to Merhav and other officials here, legal and economic expertise will play a key role in gaining access to the post-1992 European markets.

To Begin Functioning Next Year

By placing new emphasis on relations with the E.C., Israel hopes to open possibilities for joint ventures with European companies and institutions, and to benefit from a wide range of programs of international cooperation.

The planned separate embassy will accommodate experts from the Israeli Treasury and the Ministries of Industry and Trade, Ecology, Energy, and Science and Development.

At least two experienced diplomats will arrive here soon from Jerusalem, one to strengthen relations with the E.C. and the 518-member European Parliament, and the other to serve as a public relations and media officer.

It is widely believed here that Israel already has missed some opportunities to improve its economic standing with the E.C. because of a lack of expertise and staffing to deal with complex technical problems arising from the mountain of regulations.

The two-embassy system is expected to begin functioning in the summer or fall of 1990.

Merhav admits it will cost an additional half million dollars a year to maintain the extra diplomatic establishment and staff. But he said it was the cheapest option available.

If it helps Israel repair its chronic trade deficit with the E.C. countries -- now running at about \$3.5 billion a year -- it will be well worth the expenditure, he said.

Although the Cabinet has yet to endorse the Foreign Ministry's plan, observers here have little doubt that it will do so. They expect construction of the new building to start in a matter of months.

BONN TO SPONSOR GERMAN STUDIES CENTER AT HEBREW UNIVERSITY By David Kantor

BONN, Aug. 21 (JTA) -- The West German government will sponsor a center for German studies at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Bernhard Doell of the Ministry of Science and Research announced here.

He said it would be heavily subsidized by the federal government, which has increased its budget for such undertakings worldwide.

There has been a department of German studies at the Hebrew University for more than 20 years. The new center will include research in the German language, literature and German history.

The Bonn government sponsors similar centers in London, Paris, Rome, Florence and Washington.

Ten years ago, such an undertaking in Israel would have been unthinkable, for historical and political reasons.

But times have changed. One indication is the success of the German cultural center in Tel Aviv, with a branch in Jerusalem.

Unlike similar West German institutions abroad, the Tel Aviv center went for years under the name "Cultural Center," without advertising its nationality for fear of stimulating negative emotions.

Five years ago, the center was renamed the Goethe Institute, which identified it as a branch of the worldwide, state-financed institution, based in Munich, for the promotion of the German language and general knowledge about Germany abroad.

BEGIN'S HOSPITAL STAY EXTENDED By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Aug. 21 (JTA) -- Former Prime Minister Menachem Begin will remain in the hospital for a few more days. But there is no cause for concern over his health, Dr. Yonatan Halevy, director general of Sha'are Zedek Medical Center, said Monday.

Begin was hospitalized there on Aug. 16, a few days after celebrating his 76th birthday. He had complained of "weakness," so a series of tests was ordered.

Halevy said the tests revealed that the sodium level in Begin's blood was down. That condition has been corrected.

Doctors decided to use Begin's "rare" presence in the hospital to conduct more extensive tests, Halevy said.

For that reason he is being kept longer than the two or three days originally announced and will be released "within the next few days," Halevy said.

400-YEAR-OLD MIKVEH UNCOVERED By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Aug. 21 (JTA) -- Construction workers excavating for a housing project in Safed recently unearthed a rare archaeological find, the Ministry of Construction and Housing reported.

The workers uncovered a mikveh (ritual bath) that served residents of the old city of Safed about 400 years ago.

They also found traces of a bakery that operated underneath the bathhouse, as well as a furnace that served both establishments.