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**JEWISH GROUPS WELCOME SUSPENSION  
BY BUSH OF U.S. DIALOGUE WITH PLO**  
By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, June 20 (JTA) -- President Bush's announcement Wednesday suspending the U.S. dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organization was welcomed by Jewish organizations, even though it clearly left the door open for a possible resumption of the talks.

Bush suspended the dialogue as a result of the PLO's refusal to clearly renounce the attempted May 30 terrorist attack on Israeli beaches by the Palestine Liberation Front, a PLO constituent group headed by Mohammed (Abul) Abbas. The United States had also called on the PLO to remove Abbas from its executive committee, which it refused to do.

The president announced his decision to cut off the talks during a news conference Wednesday afternoon in Huntsville, Ala.

"Based on the recommendation of the secretary of state, I have decided to suspend the dialogue between the United States and the PLO, pending a satisfactory response from the PLO of steps it is taking to resolve problems associated with the recent acts of terrorism," the president said.

But he added that if "at any time the PLO is prepared to take the necessary steps, we are prepared to promptly resume the dialogue."

Bush conceded that suspending the dialogue could further stall the effort to bring about Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. But he said he had to "weigh the whole question" of the dialogue with the PLO's failure to comply with its own commitment to renounce terrorism.

The size of the attack force that sought to hit beaches in the Tel Aviv area "strongly indicated that civilians would have been the target" had the attack succeeded, the president said.

**PLO 'Could Not Avoid Responsibility'**

Bush said that beginning the day after the thwarted attack, the United States told the PLO in Tunis "that it could not avoid responsibility for an attempted terrorist action by one of its constituent groups and needed to take steps to deal with this matter, by condemning the operation, disassociating itself from it, and by beginning to take steps to discipline Abul Abbas."

The United States has "given the PLO ample time to deal with this issue," but it has not "provided a credible accounting of this incident" nor acted on the U.S. demands, Bush said.

Praise for the administration action poured in from a number of Jewish organizations.

Most groups said that Bush's announcement enhances American credibility, since the United States predicated its talks with the PLO on its renunciation of terrorism.

The suspension "restores American credibility and leadership in the war against worldwide terrorism," said Seymour Reich, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, which speaks for 46 national Jewish groups.

"Our country cannot lead such a campaign while holding ongoing discussions with the world's most notorious terrorist organization in the face

of blatant violations of the PLO's commitments to end terrorism," said Reich, who received a telephone call informing him of the U.S. decision Wednesday from Vice President Dan Quayle.

Arden Shenker, chairman of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, sent a letter to Bush on Wednesday, commending the president for suspending the dialogue.

"The U.S. gave the PLO every opportunity to respond in a manner that would have enabled the dialogue to go forward. Their failure to do so left the U.S. with no alternative but to take this action," wrote Shenker, whose organization represents national Jewish organizations and local community relations councils across the country.

But Rita Hauser, one of five American Jews who met two years ago with PLO leader Yasir Arafat, called the suspension "regrettable and unfortunate," and a costly blow to the peace process.

"This will have a very negative effect on the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. They will view this as shutting the door in their face," said Hauser, an attorney who chairs the American section of the International Center for Peace in the Middle East.

**'Whitewashing' Of PLO Activity**

The group's meeting with Arafat in Stockholm at the beginning of December 1988 is credited with helping to convince the PLO leader to renounce terrorism and recognize Israel's right to exist.

Shortly afterward, Arafat met the three U.S. conditions for speaking with the PLO, laid down in 1975 by Henry Kissinger, who was secretary of state at the time. These were recognition of Israel's right to exist, acceptance of U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 and renunciation of terrorism.

When Arafat recited this formula at a news conference in Geneva, the Reagan administration, in its final days of office, announced it would begin a dialogue with the PLO, to be conducted exclusively by its ambassador in Tunisia, Robert Pelletreau.

The United States maintains that the dialogue has facilitated the peace process by bringing about PLO acquiescence to a dialogue between Israel and Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

That is why the administration has rejected charges, leveled for the past 18 months by Israel and members of Congress, that the PLO was still engaged in terrorism, despite Arafat's promises.

Jewish leaders, in turn, had accused the State Department of "whitewashing" clear evidence of terrorist activity on the part of the PLO.

"It was increasingly our sense that the administration was so committed to the U.S.-PLO dialogue that they were ignoring reality," said Kenneth Jacobson, Middle East affairs director for the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

After the May 30 incident, pressure increased, with resolutions being introduced in the Senate and House of Representatives calling for a suspension of talks until the PLO condemned the thwarted attack and ousted Abbas.

Ambassador Pelletreau met at least six times

with the PLO, in an attempt to get it to specifically renounce the attack.

But when the PLO executive committee met in Baghdad during the first week in June, it did not even discuss the matter. Last week, the PLO issued a statement saying it was a "against any military action which targets civilians."

#### Israel Expresses 'Satisfaction'

Bush said Wednesday that this statement was not sufficient. He said while the dialogue has advanced the peace process, it is "based on the assumption that the PLO is willing to abide by the conditions it adopted in December 1988, including renunciation of terrorism."

Asked if the break plays into the hands of hard-liners, Bush replied, "Yes, I'm concerned." But he denied that the decision was done to placate Israel. He said it was consistent with the U.S. anti-terrorism policy.

The Israeli Embassy here expressed "satisfaction" with Bush's decision, saying that the May 30 terrorist attack "is a reminder of the true nature of the PLO."

"The PLO was and remains a terrorist organization that continues to practice terrorism in all forms against Jews and Arabs, and therefore is a serious threat and a major obstacle to any peace process in the Middle East," Ruth Yaron, the embassy's spokeswoman, said in a written statement.

"Israel believes that the administration's decision will enhance and promote the peace process and will encourage those Palestinians seeking peace with Israel to seize upon this opportunity to begin a direct dialogue with Israel," she said.

Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole (R-Kan.), who in recent months has been critical of Israeli policies, said the president "made the right decision," because the dialogue could not be continued "when any of the parties quite literally tries to hold a gun to the head of the other parties through the use of terrorism."

Sen. Connie Mack (R-Fla.), one of the leaders of the Senate movement urging a break with the PLO, said, "The president did the right thing for the fight against terrorism, for U.S. interests, for the freedom and security of our ally Israel, and for the search for peace in the Middle East."

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

#### **ARENS INTENDS TO BEGIN DIALOGUE WITH LOCAL PALESTINIAN LEADERS** By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, June 20 (JTA) -- Defense Minister Moshe Arens is planning to begin a dialogue with Palestinian leaders in the administered territories.

Arens would consent to talk with representatives of all political camps, including those identifying with the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Moslem fundamentalist Hamas movement, according to his aides.

But his aim, they say, is to start a process that would lead to the creation of an alternative Palestinian leadership to the PLO.

Creation of an alternative leadership has been a goal of several Likud defense ministers, beginning with Ezer Weizman in the late 1970s.

Weizman at the time encouraged the operation of the National Guidance Committee, a local force that did not blindly follow the PLO. But the

committee turned out to be even more extreme than the PLO in some instances, and Israel eventually outlawed the organization.

The present Palestinian leadership identifies totally with the PLO or with even more extreme organizations. Former Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin played down the importance of talks with leaders such as Faisal Husseini of East Jerusalem, because those leaders used to refer him time and again to the PLO.

Arens has the opportunity to weigh his policy in the territories in an atmosphere of relative quiet. Unrest in the territories has decreased in the very short time since the new government was sworn in. The lull follows a rash of violence that broke out after the May 20 murder of seven Arab laborers near the Israeli town of Rishon le-Zion.

On Wednesday, Arabs in the territories held a general strike to commemorate the 30th day following the massacre. The strike was observed throughout the territories and East Jerusalem.

The Association of Civil Rights announced Wednesday that despite improvements in the last year, violation of civil rights in the territories has continued.

Presenting its annual report to journalists in Jerusalem, the association warned that ongoing violation of civil rights had a detrimental effect inside Israel.

One of the association's major achievements in the past year has been the liberalization of family reunion regulations, as a result of a plea the association made to the courts.

Other achievements that the association claimed include the bringing to trial of Col. Yehuda Meir, charged with misconduct toward Arab detainees; the closing down of detention facilities with poor living conditions; and improvement in the efficiency of military trials.

#### **U.N. CRITICIZES ISRAELI ARMY FOR USE OF TEAR GAS AT CLINIC** By Allison Kaplan

UNITED NATIONS, June 20 (JTA) -- The Security Council criticized the Israeli army Tuesday for using tear gas last week against a U.N.-administered maternity clinic in the Gaza Strip.

A statement issued by the council said its members were "dismayed" that the penalty imposed on the officer who threw the tear-gas grenade had been commuted.

The officer had been sentenced to 10 days in jail for the incident, but the penalty was later reduced to a 21-day suspended sentence.

The reduction in the sentence came after the officer asked for leniency, contending that Palestinians had been throwing stones from the clinic, which is run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, known as UNRWA.

Pierre-Louis Blanc, the French ambassador currently serving as president of the Security Council, released the statement after consultations with council members, including the United States.

The June 12 incident, in which 60 children were treated for tear-gas inhalation, has been condemned by both U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar and the White House.

Pointing out that "several innocent Palestinian women and children were wounded" by the grenade, the Security Council called on Israel to "abide by its obligations" under the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which relates to the protection of civilians in occupied territories.

**MANDELA WARMLY WELCOMED TO U.S.  
BY MOST AMERICAN JEWISH LEADERS**  
By Allison Kaplan

NEW YORK, June 20 (JTA) -- Nelson Mandela was warmly welcomed here Wednesday by a wide spectrum of New Yorkers, including representatives of local and national Jewish groups, who participated wholeheartedly in the festivities.

A shofar was even scheduled to be blown in Mandela's honor during an ecumenical ceremony Thursday at Manhattan's Riverside Church, as part of a blessing to be offered by Rabbi Alexander Schindler, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

Diana Aviv, assistant director of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, said that similarly enthusiastic greetings from Jewish groups are expected as Mandela travels to seven other U.S. cities.

"In a number of cities, the Jewish community relations councils are putting ads in local papers and black papers welcoming Mandela," said Aviv, who was one of a small group of Jewish leaders who met last month in Cincinnati with another black anti-apartheid leader, Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

The deputy president of the African National Congress got his initial welcome from the Jewish community as organizational leaders joined those greeting him Wednesday at Kennedy Airport.

On hand for the ceremony were Seymour Reich, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations; Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith; Henry Siegman, executive director of the American Jewish Congress; and Al Vorspan, executive vice president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

**Sensitivity To Jewish Concerns**

All of those leaders but Reich met in Geneva with Mandela on June 10, to seek a clarification of his views on Israel. It was after Mandela convinced them of his support for the Jewish state that most mainstream national Jewish groups decided to join in the festivities.

The Zionist Organization of America was believed to be the only national Jewish organization that refused to join the festivities, while other groups, such as Americans for a Safe Israel, declined to take a position on the visit.

Mandela arrived in New York from Toronto, where he and his wife, Winnie, met with Les Scheininger and Moshe Ronen, respectively president and chairman of the National Executive of the Canadian Jewish Congress.

In New York, a dozen U.S. Jewish leaders were to join religious leaders of other faiths in a meeting with Mandela on Thursday morning before an ecumenical service at Riverside Church.

Sources said the religious leaders would be asked to pledge that they will oppose any relaxation of U.S. sanctions against South Africa until it abolishes the apartheid laws and grants full amnesty to all political prisoners.

According to Aviv, who was on the committee planning the Riverside Church ceremony, the number of invitations extended to the Jewish community to participate in the Mandela festivities has been generous.

She said that Mandela's representatives have made special efforts to avoid stirring up controversy on the Palestinian issue, in order to protect Jewish sensitivities.

"Efforts to include Palestinian children at the Riverside service were rejected, so as to not make it a political event," Aviv said. "The Jewish community has been given special consideration."

Despite this, Bronx Rabbi Avraham Weiss chose to protest Mandela's past statements comparing Israeli policies to South African oppression and his embrace of Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasir Arafat.

Weiss, who is religious leader of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale, an Orthodox congregation in the Bronx, led a vigil Tuesday night outside Gracie Mansion, the mayoral residence where Mandela was to stay, and demonstrated Wednesday during the welcoming ceremonies at City Hall.

Aviv said that she was not aware of any similar protests planned for Mandela's scheduled visits to Boston, Washington, Atlanta, Miami, Detroit, Los Angeles and Oakland, Calif.

**CONTROVERSY ARISES OVER PLAN  
TO IMPORT HOUSES FOR IMMIGRANTS**  
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, June 20 (JTA) -- A controversy has developed over a proposal to import prefabricated houses, an idea that seeks to solve the problem of the growing gap between supply and demand for housing.

Newly appointed Housing Minister Ariel Sharon reportedly has considered the proposal seriously, in order to overcome the immediate need for housing, which is at an all-time high because of the large numbers of arriving Soviet Jews, as well as other immigrants.

One of the serious obstacles to a resolution to the problem has come from the Histadrut labor federation, which seeks to decrease the number of unemployed persons in Israel.

Chaim Haberfeld, head of the trade unions division of Histadrut, threatened that "blood would be spilled" if houses were imported.

This puts the government in somewhat of a Catch-22 situation.

The government has already decided to build some 45,000 apartments and has allocated a budget deemed necessary for this.

But although more and more funds have been directed toward the building industry, construction has so far largely failed to get started, primarily due to bureaucratic obstacles.

Since the beginning of the year, the government has begun construction of only 7,500 apartments, and the shortage already has caused a considerable increase in housing costs.

Yediot Achronot reported Wednesday that the local construction industry can only manufacture between 1,200 and 3,000 prefabricated houses, a far cry from present needs.

Instead of waiting for the slow process to take its course, Sharon reportedly decided to import houses as a quick solution to the long-term problem.

Sharon reportedly had suggested immediately importing of tens of thousands of houses, probably from South Africa.

The cost of each such housing unit is estimated at between \$17,000 and \$25,000, to which one would have to add some \$10,000 for infrastructure.

According to Yediot Achronot, the Housing Ministry wants to place the houses mostly in the Galilee and Negev.

There is no mention of plans to direct them to the West Bank.

## FRENCH MINISTER IS SUING LE PEN FOR LIBEL OVER CARPENTRAS AFFAIR

By Edwin Eytan

PARIS, June 20 (JTA) -- Interior Minister Pierre Joxe is suing Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the extreme right-wing National Front, for libeling him in connection with the desecration of the Jewish cemetery in Carpentras last month.

Joxe also has asked the Parliament of Europe to lift Le Pen's immunity.

On Tuesday, Le Pen claimed the interior minister had ordered evidence in Carpentras destroyed to cover the traces of the real perpetrators of the desecration, in order to lay the blame on supporters of the National Front.

Police in Carpentras last week arrested four teen-agers for vandalism of 24 Jewish graves in the cemetery, which took place during the night of May 9-10. But all of the suspects have been released, and the investigation has hit a dead end.

In the aftermath of the desecration, in which the recently buried body of an 80-year-old man was exhumed, many prominent French figures blamed the deed on the atmosphere of racial hatred created by the National Front.

At Joxe's request, Paris state attorney Pierre Bezard began proceedings against Le Pen on Tuesday, charging him with "libel against a Cabinet minister."

Bezard also forwarded a request to the European Parliament to suspend Le Pen's diplomatic immunity. Le Pen is a deputy to the European Community legislative body, which convenes in Strasbourg, France.

The European Parliament has twice before suspended Le Pen's immunity, in order to enable French authorities to sue him on charges of spreading racial hatred and propaganda.

Le Pen favors deporting North African immigrants. And although he claims not to be anti-Semitic, Le Pen has made snide comments about the Holocaust, which he dismisses as a "footnote to history."

## CZECHOSLOVAK RABBI RESIGNS POST AFTER CONFESSING HE WAS INFORMER

By Josef Klansky

PRAGUE, June 20 (JTA) -- The Council of Czech Jewish Communities on Tuesday accepted the resignation of Rabbi Daniel Mayer from his post as rabbi of Prague and the Czechoslovak republic, following his confession last week that he had served as a government informant under the ousted Communist regime.

Mayer confessed to have signed a cooperation pledge for the Czechoslovak secret service a decade ago, at the age of 22.

The council took into consideration Mayer's assurances that he had never knowingly done any harm to any individual and that he had done his best to serve the Jewish community. Nevertheless, it concluded that for moral and political reasons, the rabbi could not remain in his present post.

The Prague Jewish congregation, however, offered to employ Mayer, the only person in the country with a rabbinical degree, in its ritual questions division, allowing him to work as a teacher of religion and the Hebrew language.

Mayer received his ordination from the Rabbinical Seminary in Budapest, the major rabbinical school in Eastern Europe. It was in 1979, during Mayer's second year at the seminary, that he was recruited by the secret service.

Without consulting the council and his congregation, Mayer had decided to run as a candidate in the parliamentary elections held earlier this month. During inquiries into the histories of all candidates running for seats in the new parliament, Mayer's cooperation pledge to the Communist secret police came to light.

Once the information was revealed, Mayer admitted his role and withdrew his candidacy.

Mayer's removal from the post creates a problem for Prague's Jews, according to Desider Galsky, president of the Czech Jewish community.

"We need a rabbi, but prior to Mr. Mayer's taking up of the rabbi's post, we had not had any for about 10 years," Galsky said in an interview.

A rabbi from abroad may be invited to serve temporarily in Prague, if the problems of language and finances can be overcome.

Galsky also mentioned possibly hiring the writer Karol Sidon, who had to leave Czechoslovakia years ago as a signatory of the Charter 77 human rights document, which President Vaclav Havel also signed as a dissident playwright.

After leaving the country, Sidon studied at the Jewish studies department of Heidelberg University in West Germany. He plans additional studies at Ariel Yeshiva in Jerusalem, which may qualify him to become the new Prague rabbi.

The Prague rabbinical post is a prestigious one, once held by Rabbi Yehudah Loew, the famous 16th-century rabbi who legend says created the Golem. Loew, famous for his Talmudic wisdom, was known by the acronym "Maharal."

## STUDY ON MIGRATING BIRDS DELAYS NEGEV VOA STATION FOR TWO YEARS

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, June 20 (JTA) -- Construction of the Voice of America radio relay station in the Negev will be delayed for two years, pending completion of a two-year survey on its possible damage to migrating birds, the National Council for Building and Planning announced Tuesday.

The National Planning Council voted 8-6 Monday, with one abstention, to approve the two-year delay to allow for another two-season study of the bird migration problem.

Advocates for the protection of nature base their opposition to the placement of the giant transmitters on the fact that Israel's Negev is a traditional path for migratory birds on their annual journey between their summer homes in Europe and their wintering grounds in Africa.

Most migratory birds in Central and Eastern Europe use the Israeli land bridge between Europe and Africa.

Critics of the VOA relay station claim that high antennas directly under the birds' flight path, and especially the high-level electromagnetic radiations from the transmitters, can upset their navigational instincts.

Reuven Irador, the Israeli coordinator of the VOA project, said opponents of the plan hoped the Americans would become so sick and tired of the battle with local protest groups that they would finally abandon its construction.

Bilateral negotiations for building the station began six years ago, and the formal agreement was signed three years ago.

But despite delay and the thawing of the Cold War in the meantime, the U.S. government has continued its enthusiasm for the project, which would provide hundreds of permanent and thousands of temporary jobs in Israel.