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ISRAEL WON'T CONDONE APPEASEMENT OF SADDAM HUSSEIN, LEVY WARNS U.N.

By Allison Kaplan

UNITED NATIONS, Oct. 1 (JTA) -- Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy warned the General Assembly on Monday that the Jewish state adamantly refuses to pay the price for international appeasement of Saddam Hussein.

"The Iraqi ruler cocks a gun at Israel's head, demanding to extricate himself from the wrath of international law," Levy said in an address to the General Assembly.

"The free world should know that Israel will not sacrifice its security as the price of United Nations decisions aimed at safeguarding their economic well-being and freedom. Israel will know how to defend itself if attacked, and its response will be harsh and painful," he vowed.

The Israeli foreign minister described the Iraqi president as a "megalomaniac dictator" and an "unrestrained ruler" who has "already proven to the world his willingness to employ lethal chemical weapons, using them against thousands of Kurds, his own countrymen."

President Bush, who addressed the General Assembly immediately before Levy, used milder language, but also detailed Hussein's "genocidal, poison gas war" against its Kurdish citizens.

"Iraq's unprovoked aggression" against Kuwait is "a throwback to another era, a dark relic from a dark time," the president said. He called for an unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait.

Bush said such a withdrawal could create "opportunities" in the Middle East, including the opportunity for "all the states and peoples of the region to settle the conflict that divides the Arabs from Israel."

A Suggestion Of Linkage?

There were suggestions Monday that by mentioning the Arab-Israeli conflict, Bush was moving toward some sort of indirect linkage between resolution of the Persian Gulf crisis and the Palestinian issue.

But Yuval Rotem, spokesman for the Israeli Mission here, rejected that interpretation, saying his government did not perceive any policy change in Bush's remarks.

"It is not our impression" that Bush was linking the resolution of the two conflicts in any manner, he said.

Rotem said that Israeli policy is in line with American policy for bringing about peace in the Middle East. He said that both governments believe that the Gulf crisis must be solved first; only afterward, can other conflicts be addressed.

In his General Assembly speech, Levy openly challenged the Arab states to pursue peace with Israel.

He stressed the core component of the current Israeli government's approach to the peace process: that any settlement with the Arab nations is a precondition to accommodation with the Palestinians.

"First and foremost," the foreign minister said, "the states of the region should proclaim forthwith the termination of the state of war."

He said the "willingness on the part of Arab states to foreswear the state of war" would "help also in advancing the solution of the Palestinian problem."

He spoke of Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's peace initiative of May 1989 and said the biggest obstacle in its path is the terrorist activities of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

He added, however, that "our war against terrorism and rejection of its perpetrators as partners and interlocutors should by no means debar the peaceful forces among the Palestinians from joining us forthwith in talks to further the peace initiative, as we have proposed."

Levy touched on the historic mass immigration of Soviet Jews to Israel and the thawing of the Eastern bloc. He praised Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, calling him "a bold and sagacious statesman, a leader who has instituted a dramatic transformation in his country, which is tearing down in its wake barriers of hostility between nations."

During Levy's speech to the international body, a number of delegates from Arab and Moslem nations left the assembly hall, including representatives of Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the Palestine Liberation Organization, which has observer status. Of the Arab states, only the representatives of Kuwait, Bahrain and Jordan remained in the hall.

U.S. PROVIDING PATRIOT MISSILES TO ISRAEL BECAUSE OF IRAQI THREAT

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Oct. 1 (JTA) -- President Bush is giving Israel two batteries of Patriot surface-to-air missiles to meet the "increased threat" from Iraq, the White House announced Monday.

The Patriot units are being provided under a law allowing "emergency military assistance from U.S. military stocks," according to a White House statement issued in New York, where Bush addressed the U.N. General Assembly.

"The Patriot system will help Israel to upgrade its air defenses, including an increased threat from ballistic missiles in the Iraqi inventory," the White House said.

The missile systems, valued at $200 million, are being provided at no cost to Israel, according to sources within the administration and on Capitol Hill.

Bush notified Congress of his decision Saturday, two days after officially announcing a $6.7 billion arms sale to Saudi Arabia.

The president's latest move is being seen here as a quiet show of support for Israel, in the face of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's threat last week to attack the Jewish state if his country is squeezed economically by U.N. sanctions.

Last Friday, a senior State Department official warned that the United States would respond "immediately and forcefully" against Iraq if it attacked Israel. Both U.S. and Israeli officials agreed the warning was aimed more at deterring Iraq than assuring Israel.

There was no indication from the White House on Monday whether Israel would also receive 15 F-16 fighter planes and 10 cargo helicopters, items agreed upon in principle during a Pentagon meeting last month between Defense Secretary Dick Cheney and Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Arens.

Congressional hearings on the $6.7 billion Saudi sale are scheduled this week. The package includes Patriot missile systems, armored personnel carriers, Bradley fighting vehicles with 1,570 TOW anti-tank missiles, Abrams tanks, Apache attack helicopters with Hellfire anti-tank missiles, and nine multiple-launch rocket systems.

The package was split from a larger $21 billion arms sale following congressional opposition. But the administration said it will propose the rest of the package, including more F-15s, in January.

GAS MASK DISTRIBUTION TO BEGIN, BUT ISRAEL STRESSES NO EMERGENCY

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Oct. 1 (JTA) -- Israel has advanced the timetable for the distribution of gas masks to the civilian population, but has stressed at the same time that there is no emergency.

An Israel Defense Force spokesman announced Monday that the phased distribution of masks and poison gas antidote kits would begin shortly and should be completed in about two months.

He said the public will be notified on or about Oct. 15 where the masks will be available, and distribution will begin about a week later.

"Next week, the personal kits will be distributed in three towns. Following that, the distribution will encompass other areas," the IDF said.

The distribution process has already been tested in the northern town of Shlomi and in the Morasha neighborhood of Ramat Hasharon, the IDF disclosed, adding that further distribution "will take place in phases and over an extended period of time."

"The distribution of gas masks in no way whatsoever constitutes a change to an emergency status," the statement explained. "The purpose of this action is to transfer the kits to the citizens' homes in order to shorten the time of distribution, should a need arise."

The IDF maintained its action conforms to earlier Cabinet decisions on the issue. The mass distribution of gas masks was originally set to begin only at the end of the year, and the authorities seemed to Israelis to be unnecessarily slow in responding to the people's concerns.

A Charge For Arabs In Territories

According to some sources, the decision to start distribution now means that Israel has acquired sufficient gas masks for its entire civilian population, including Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The Arabs in the territories will, however, be charged for the masks. The IDF explained that the Jewish population has already paid for them in the form of taxes.

That does not apply to Palestinians in East Jerusalem who, while not Israeli citizens, live in territory now legally part of Israel.

They will get their masks at the same time as the Jewish population in western Jerusalem, the IDF said.

The masks will be distributed in sealed boxes, which may not be opened until proper instructions are given, or special warnings, such as air raid sirens are sounded.

ARMY COURT CONVICTS IDF SOLDIERS OF USING EXCESSIVE FORCE IN GAZA

JERUSALEM, Oct. 1 (JTA) -- A military court convicted four Israel Defense Force soldiers Monday for the brutal beatings more than two years ago of two Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, one of whom subsequently died of his injuries.

The verdict immediately became politically divisive and raised anew the question of whether soldiers on duty should be held responsible for executing policies established at the top of the defense establishment.

The four soldiers, all members of the crack Givati Brigade, were found guilty of inflicting excessive bodily harm as a form of punishment.

All four said they would appeal. In their defense, they pointed to the higher echelons.

The highest-ranking defendant, reserve Maj. Yitzhak Levit, who was found guilty of ordering the beatings, showed no remorse.

He said the court had established a norm whereby "only those who do not take responsibility do not pay the price."

There was strong reaction to the verdict in political circles. Likud said that once the legal process is over, it will seek a pardon, and it expects the opposition Labor Party to cooperate.

But the dovish political factions insisted that the inquiry into the treatment of Arabs be broadened into the "senior military ranks and the political ranks."

The trial, held in a military court of the Southern Command, dealt with an incident on Feb. 7, 1988, less than two months after the intifada began. The two Palestinians beaten by soldiers were residents of El-Bureij refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, then as now a hotbed of intifada-related unrest.

SLA FREES SHI'ITE PRISONERS

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Oct. 1 (JTA) -- Gen. Antoine Lehad, commander of the Israeli-backed South Lebanon Army, announced Monday the release of several score Moslem prisoners from El-Khiam detention camp in the southern Lebanon security zone "as a goodwill gesture on the occasion of the birth date of the prophet Mohammed."

Lehad, a Lebanese Christian, said he ordered the gesture on his own initiative "but with the consent and welcome" of the Israel Defense Force, which relies on the SLA to police the security zone.

Lehad said the prisoners set free were mostly Shi'ites from the security zone, but also some Sunni Moslems and Druse.

They include detainees arrested for possession of explosives believed intended for terrorist acts against the SLA and IDF.

Lehad said in an SLA radio broadcast that Israel joined him in the hope that release of the prisoners "on humanitarian grounds" would result in a lessening of the internecine fighting and kidnappings that are a frequent occurrence in southern Lebanon.

There were reports several months ago that Lehad was about to release El-Khiam detainees. That led to speculation that his step was part of a multinational deal that would include freeing foreign hostages held in Lebanon and Sheik Abdul Karim Obeid, the Shi'ite religious leader kidnapped by Israeli commandos in the summer of 1989. But no prisoner exchange materialized.

ISRAELIS ELATED ON DIRECT FLIGHTS, MAINTAIN USSR WILL HONOR ITS WORD

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Oct. 1 (JTA) -- Israeli officials were jubilant Monday in anticipation of direct flights between Moscow and Tel Aviv, which are expected to begin at the end of this month.

They said the Kremlin would honor its commitment, even though Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze seemed vague on the subject when he met Sunday with Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy at the United Nations in New York.

The carriers will be El Al and Aeroflot, the national airlines of Israel and the Soviet Union respectively.

Shevardnadze and Levy announced that their countries have upgraded their diplomatic representation to the consular level.

But when asked about direct flights, the Soviet diplomat said it was "a complex question, and we decided that we will return to that question again."

Transport Ministry officials noted here that Shevardnadze did not rule out direct flights but only remarked that the issue was complicated and needed time to work out.

Absorption Minister Yitzhak Peretz thought the Soviet foreign minister's statement was "tactical, intended to take Arab pressure off the Kremlin."

Other officials suggested that Shevardnadze, who has been in New York since the U.N. General Assembly opened last month, was not current with the moves and thinking of President Mikhail Gorbachev.

He also may have been surprised by the prior announcement in Jerusalem, they said.

Professor Eliahu Zamtov, who is adviser to Science and Energy Minister Yuval Ne'eman and has himself met with Gorbachev, referred to the telephone call that Soviet Finance Minister Valentin Pavlov made right after Yom Kippur to Israeli Transport Minister Moshe Katsav about inaugurating direct flights.

Zamtov said this had not come about by chance and was no surprise.

There have been several important developments in the past month, he noted. He referred to Gorbachev's meeting with Ne'eman and Israeli Finance Minister Yitzhak Moda'i last month, which he arranged.

SOVIET IMMIGRATION TO ISRAEL PASSES THE 100,000 MARK FOR 1990

NEW YORK, Oct. 1 (JTA) -- The number of Soviet Jewish immigrants arriving in Israel topped the 100,000 mark last month for the first time in a single calendar year, the Soviet Jewry Research Bureau of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry announced Monday.

The bureau, which started tabulating emigration statistics in 1968, said the arrival of 18,725 Soviet Jews during September placed the total for the first nine months of 1990 at 100,926.

An additional 598 Jews left the Soviet Union for the United States in September under the U.S. government's family reunification refugee program, the National Conference reported.

But as Soviet Jews continued to pour into Israel over the holiday weekend, the minister in charge of absorption, Yitzhak Peretz, was sharply critical of the way immigrant absorption is being handled.

On Sunday, Peretz submitted his first comprehensive report to the Cabinet in six months. He complained about delays in the construction of new housing and in the arrival of temporary housing, which come under the aegis of other ministries.

Meanwhile, an estimated 1,400 olim landed at Ben-Gurion Airport last Friday, on the eve of Yom Kippur. Their flights arrived from Warsaw, Bucharest and Budapest.

(JTA correspondent Hugh Orgel in Tel Aviv contributed to this report.)

SURVEY OF SOVIET OLIM REVEALS 69 PERCENT FACED ANTI-SEMITISM

By Debra Nussbaum

NEW YORK, Oct. 1 (JTA) -- A survey of recent Soviet immigrants in Israel has revealed that 69 percent encountered some form of anti-Semitism while in the Soviet Union.

The study, commissioned by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith and conducted in August in Jerusalem by Hebrew University student Yaakov Khazanov, showed that the majority of the incidents took place in Moscow and Leningrad.

Those cities are the main centers of organized anti-Semitic movements such as Pamyat.

The Moscow City Council, meanwhile, has just set up a special subcommittee to deal with anti-Semitism, in part a response to the recent visit of Abraham Foxman, national director of ADL, and Melvin Salberg, ADL's national chairman.

This special subcommittee will report its findings to the Soviet legislature, according to Myrna Shinbaum, director of ADL's Soviet Jewry Project.

The lowest number of anti-Semitic incidents in the Soviet Union was reported in the Baltic states, Trans-Caucasus and the Ukraine.

One reason, according to the ADL study, is that the regional autonomy movements have strongly opposed anti-Semitism.

These nationalist movements are eager to foster a pro-Western, pro-democracy image, and they want to disassociate themselves from Moscow's policy, which is suspected of supporting or tolerating anti-Semitic organizations, the study said.

Another explanation cited was that the conflict with other ethnic groups overshadows the "Jewish problem" in the republics.

A total of 467 incidents were reported by the 500 people polled.

Verbal attacks and the distribution of anti-Semitic leaflets accounted for 56.2 percent of the total.

A common motif in the verbal assaults was "Go to your Israel," accompanied by insults such as "Dirty Jews." These remarks were often made in food lines, the study says, along with statements like "Jews are to blame for the shortage."

Many of the people interviewed for the study said the verbal attacks took place "constantly," and thus they did not pay much attention to them.

The harassment of children accounted for another 15 percent of the reported incidents, as did graffiti and property damage.

Many interviewees said that the insults their children were subjected to at school had a profound impact, and were one of the main reasons they decided to leave the Soviet Union.

RED CROSS TO RELEASE NAZI DATA RECENTLY ACQUIRED FROM SOVIETS

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Oct. 1 (JTA) -- U.S. Jewish groups have welcomed a decision by the International Red Cross to make available a wealth of data on Nazi concentration camp victims recently acquired from the Soviet Union.

But the Simon Wiesenthal Center, while praising the new offering, has called on the Red Cross to make available to advocacy groups documents that could help them in their search for Nazi war criminals.

Diane Paul, program manager at the American Red Cross' new Holocaust and War Victims Tracing and Information Center, said, however, that no outside scholars will be able to access the archives any time soon.

"Confidentiality is such an important principle for the Red Cross movement," she explained.

Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Wiesenthal Center, acknowledged the privacy consideration. But "the price for safeguarding their privacy was to make it much more difficult to find the Eichmanns, to locate the Mengeles and to capture the Barbies," he said, referring to three of the more notorious Holocaust criminals, Adolf Eichmann, Josef Mengele and Klaus Barbie.

Paul, whose Baltimore-based facility started operations last week, said that Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust memorial and museum, and several scholars have expressed an interest in conducting research at the Red Cross' Holocaust archives, which are based in Arolsen, West Germany.

She defended the policy on several other grounds, including a concern that revisionist scholars may "want to use the information in a distorted way to represent to the world that the Holocaust never happened."

For example, she said, the American Red Cross "never debates numbers with people and never releases original documents" because once documents are released, it "opens it up to all kinds of questions and debates."

Hundreds Of Calls

The policy, Paul explained, is necessary to preserve the "neutrality" of the Red Cross, whose certificates ascertaining a concentration camp victim's death, internment or forced labor are "recognized as valid proof by over 40 countries," including the United States.

The certificates, which sometimes contain excerpts from the original documents, can be used to receive retirement benefits.

The latest additions to the West German archives include 46 books containing nearly 70,000 death certificates from the Auschwitz concentration camp; the names of 130,000 prisoners used for forced labor in German firms; and 200,000 names of victims in other camps, including Buchenwald, Dachau, Gross Rosen and Sachsenhausen.

The documents, and some of the estimated 46 million more on file in Arolsen, can be accessed by filling out forms with the American Red Cross. The forms can be received by calling (800) 848-9277.

Tracing services are available in the United States and Canada by contacting local Red Cross chapters, and in other countries through their national Red Cross office, or by directly contacting the West German facility.

Paul said that since the Baltimore center opened Sept. 24, it has received hundreds of calls from people seeking traces.

Cooper called the new access for survivors to the Soviet archives a "very wonderful gesture" to help them "deal with their grief, both as individuals as well as collectively."

But the Red Cross "has not really come forward in any significant way to get involved in the final hunt for Nazi war criminals," he added.

The Wiesenthal Center would like to examine the group's documents that specify when postwar refugees boarded ships to America and what day they got off.

Cooper said that in the last two years, the center has uncovered 900 possible war criminals. He argued that had the Red Cross records been released decades ago, the number could have been as high as 25,000.

ISRAELI ENCOUNTERS WALDHEIM'S WIFE

By Tamar Levy

GENEVA, Oct. 1 (JTA) -- The Israeli charge d'affaires in Vienna recently had an unplanned encounter with the wife of Austrian President Kurt Waldheim at a concert hall.

The Israeli diplomat, Gideon Yarden, a lover of classical music, was occupying his reserved loge recently when Sisi Waldheim and her daughter Elizabeth entered and sat next to him.

When the concert ended, the president's wife told Yarden, "What a shame, if only Kurt had known you would be here, he would have joined me. He is dying to meet you."

The Israeli diplomatic mission in Vienna has gone out of its way to avoid Waldheim ever since he was elected president of Austria in 1986, following revelations of his Nazi past.

Israel did not replace its ambassador after his term ended, and its Vienna legation has been headed by a charge d'affaires ever since.

So far, Yarden has successfully avoided meetings with Waldheim, who has had few successes in breaking out of his diplomatic isolation.

Yet the Austrian president, who concealed his World War II service in a Wehrmacht unit charged with atrocities against civilians, has persisted in trying to make contact with Israelis. He reportedly has asked prominent Jewish families who still invite him to their homes to ask Yarden over at the same time. Yarden has refused.

EAST GERMANY ISSUES JEWISH STAMPS

By David Kantor

BONN, Oct. 1 (JTA) -- On the eve of unification, East Germany has issued two postage stamps in honor of the Jewish New Year, which was celebrated Sept. 20 and Sept. 21.

The stamps, which are of 50 and 30 pfennig denominations, will remain in use after Wednesday, when the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of West Germany unite to become a single state.

One pictures the famous former synagogue on Oranienburgerstrasse in East Berlin, which is undergoing extensive renovation to become a Jewish administrative and cultural center. The other honors Louis Lewandowski (1821-1894), who served as the synagogue's choral director.

Part of the revenue from the sale of the stamps has been earmarked for the foundation financing the renovation work. Purchasers who want to contribute add 15 pfennigs to the price of the stamps.