

**ISRAEL PROPOSES HOLDING TALKS  
IN WASHINGTON FIVE DAYS LATER**  
By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Nov. 27 (JTA) -- After a tense session of the policy-making Inner Cabinet, Israel advised the United States on Wednesday that it is prepared to start bilateral talks with the Arabs in Washington on Dec. 9.

That is five days later than the Dec. 4 date on the invitations that the State Department sent to all of the parties late last week.

Israel also suggested that the three sets of talks -- with Syria, Lebanon and a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation -- be separated by gaps of four or five days, rather than be held simultaneously.

Nervous Cabinet ministers seemed relieved when Washington promptly acknowledged Israel's response to its invitation as an acceptance.

In Washington, State Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler said the United States was "delighted" that Israel had accepted in principle holding the talks in Washington, after insisting on a Middle East venue or a site close to the region.

There was speculation here that the Americans might set back the talks to Dec. 11, to show the Arabs they are not endorsing a date proposed by Israel.

But Tutwiler scuttled such notions when she said that inasmuch as Lebanon, Jordan and the Palestinians have accepted the Dec. 4 invitation, "we will have the negotiating facilities ready and open on Dec. 4.

"They will be available on dates after Dec. 4," she added. "We ask those parties that have not already responded to us to let us know when they plan to arrive and to start the negotiations."

Syria is now the only invitee that has not responded, though the Palestinians have only accepted the U.S. invitation in principle.

**A 'Positive' Response**

Israeli ministers, notably Foreign Minister David Levy, said Israel's response should be seen as "positive." Levy professed to be dismayed that some international news services portrayed it as negative.

He also lashed out at Knesset opposition factions for accusing the government of trying to stall the peace talks until the process gets bogged down in the U.S. and Israeli elections next year.

There was no explanation of what the government thought it could gain, other than saving face, by agreeing to go to Washington five days later than asked.

The eight-day Chanukah festival, which ends Dec. 9, was a possible pretext, but a weak one inasmuch as no restrictions on secular activities apply to Chanukah.

Another source of suspenseful concern here was how Washington will react to Israel's terms of acceptance, even though they were formulated as proposals rather than conditions.

The State Department made clear to all parties Tuesday that "we are not in the business, at this point of the game, in dealing with conditions to acceptance."

But the Cabinet statement submitted to the

Americans stated firmly that Israel wants the talks shifted to the region after "one or two" sessions in Washington.

Possibly even more controversial is the proposal for four- or five-day gaps between the bilateral sessions Israel will hold separately with Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and the Palestinians.

Cabinet sources pointed out that the Israeli timetable would allow for only one round of talks in each working group before the process adjourns for Christmas.

According to those sources, the multinational talks on regional issues, tentatively planned to open in Moscow in mid-December, could not take place before the new year.

**Another Procedural Obstacle?**

Israel is demanding a separation in time and place between the working groups to avoid the impression of an ongoing international conference and also to prevent hard-line Syria from influencing the outcome of Israel's negotiations with the other Arab parties.

But Knesset opposition circles see that demand as merely another procedural obstacle raised by the Likud government to delay the start of a substantive dialogue.

Reports of the Inner Cabinet meeting quoted Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir as saying, in response to a challenge by Levy, that the Washington talks would embrace substance as well as procedure.

The session was described as a stormy clash between hard-liners and moderates.

Opposed to peace talks in principle or practice were Likud Housing Minister Ariel Sharon, Science and Energy Minister Yuval Ne'eman of the Tehiya party, and Agriculture Minister Rafael Eitan of Tsomet.

They reportedly urged that Israel immediately suspend its participation in the peace process because of recent strains with the United States.

Cabinet sources said Shamir proposed initially that Israel's terms for participation be delivered in the form of conditions. But moderates, led by Levy and Interior Minister Arye Deri, forcefully opposed that idea.

(JTA correspondent Howard Rosenberg in Washington contributed to this report.)

**NEWS ANALYSIS:****ISRAEL REPLY TO WASHINGTON SEEN  
AS SIGN OF ANXIETY OVER U.S. MOVES**  
By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Nov. 27 (JTA) -- Israel's proposal to convene the next round of bilateral peace talks five days later than the United States had planned is seen here as a sign of Israeli anxiety over the Bush administration's activist posture in the peace process.

The Israeli decision, which was revealed after a meeting Wednesday of the Inner Cabinet, offers an agreement to come to Washington on Dec. 9, the last day of Chanukah, for the start of negotiations.

But the Israelis want the talks in Washington to be procedural and then move to the Middle East for substantive negotiations.

Middle East experts now believe the talks

will be held in Washington before the end of December, but not necessarily on Dec. 4 or 9.

"Israel and the Arabs are destined for a cold embrace in Washington in December," said Adam Garfinkle, coordinator of the political studies program at the Foreign Policy Research Institute in Philadelphia.

The Israeli counterproposal does not jeopardize the peace talks, said Robert Satloff, deputy executive director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

But it "does reflect anxiety over how Americans are handling the process and underlying tension over how America views its own role in process," he said.

Secretary of State James Baker offered Washington as the site for negotiations Israel would hold separately with Syria, Lebanon and a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, after the parties could not agree on a location.

Israel's concern is that by breaking the deadlock over the site, the administration is encouraging the Arabs to believe that it will intervene whenever there is a deadlock over substantive issues, Satloff said.

#### Upset Over U.S. Proposals

He said Israel is also concerned that the U.S. invitations were accompanied by proposals to each of the parties on issues they could raise in the bilateral talks.

The most controversial was the suggestion that Israel and Syria consider what could be offered in return for an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

Although Washington has stressed that the proposals were offered only as suggestions, Satloff said Israel is anxious about even hypothetical suggestions.

Garfinkle agreed that the Israelis are upset by recent U.S. actions.

"The Israelis feel like they have been beaten up lately" by the United States, which has made "a number of promises which have not been kept," he said.

He said there are limits to what Israel can be told to do by the United States.

Garfinkle added that the Israeli people feel Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and the nation itself were insulted when the United States sent out the invitations Nov. 21, after promising Shamir they would not go out until he met with President Bush the following day.

Jess Hordes, director of the Washington office of the Anti-Defamation League, also expressed reservations about how Washington has handled the whole issue.

"There is the danger of the United States creating a sense in the Arab world that they really don't have to negotiate," Hordes said.

"If U.S. intervention becomes a given, it may encourage the Arabs to say no and turn to the United States, rather than negotiate directly with Israel."

Henry Siegman, executive director of the American Jewish Congress, said the administration should understand that it has been insensitive to Israel's feelings.

At the same time, he urged the Israeli government to "keep its eye on the ball and save its ammunition, because there are going to be tough confrontations on substance."

Siegman said that the location of talks is "essentially a trivial" problem and not a substantive issue.

#### **BRITAIN AND U.S. DEMAND SURRENDER OF 2 LIBYANS INDICTED FOR BOMBING**

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Nov. 27 (JTA) -- Britain and the United States ordered Libya on Wednesday to surrender two of its citizens that they have each indicted for the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland.

In a joint statement, they said Libya must "surrender for trial all those charged with the crime," which killed 270 people, 193 of whom were U.S. nationals.

State Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler refused to rule out any U.S. military options should Libya not cooperate with the allied demands. She said the United States is "deadly serious."

The two countries also demanded that Libya "accept responsibility for the actions of Libyan officials." That was a reference to the two men indicted, Abdel Basset Ali al-Megrahi and Lamen Khalifa Fhimah, whom the United States and Britain have linked to Libya's intelligence service.

Libya was also ordered to "pay appropriate compensation" for the bombing.

#### **FINANCE MINISTER STUNS COLLEAGUES BY SUGGESTING ISRAEL FORGO U.S. AID** By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Nov. 27 (JTA) -- Finance Minister Yitzhak Moda'i has stunned government colleagues by suggesting that Israel would be prepared to give up the \$1.2 billion in economic aid it receives each year from the United States in exchange for the \$10 billion in U.S.-guaranteed loans it is seeking over the next five years for resettlement of Soviet immigrants.

Moda'i was quoted by the Washington Post on Tuesday as saying Israel could live without the economic assistance if the U.S. government underwrote the loans, enabling it to borrow the \$10 billion at low interest rates from commercial banks.

He proposed that at the end of the five-year loan period, the U.S. aid package could be reduced by a third, or \$400 million, each year for three years, after which point Israel would receive no further economic aid.

Moda'i said nothing about the \$1.8 billion in military aid Israel gets from the United States each year, also in the form of a grant.

"The suggestion seems to be too generous," said Amos Rubin, economic adviser to Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.

Senior Treasury officials said it was too early to consider foregoing U.S. economic aid, given the delicate state of the Israeli economy. In any event, Moda'i did not coordinate his statement with them, they said.

But at least one respected economist thought Moda'i's suggestion was "not a bad idea."

Gideon Eshet, writing in Yediot Achronot, observed that the annual American aid services Israel's debts for security assistance received in the past.

Inasmuch as payments on those debts will decrease by the end of the decade and since the Americans are likely to reduce assistance anyway, "why not look good now and announce we can do without it?" Eshet wrote.

**REMINDER: The JTA Daily News Bulletin will not be published on Friday, Nov. 29.**

## ISRAEL BRINGS PLIGHT OF SYRIAN JEWS TO ATTENTION OF U.N. GENERAL ASSEMBLY

By Larry Yudelson

UNITED NATIONS, Nov. 27 (JTA) -- Israel brought the plight of Syrian Jewry to the attention of the United Nations this week, making the issue the exclusive topic of its 15-minute presentation Tuesday to the General Assembly's Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee.

"The situation of Syrian Jewry has not improved at all," despite repeated promises made by the Syrian regime and entreaties made by American and European officials, Israeli representative Ilan Mor told the panel.

Mor said the estimated 4,500 Jews remaining in Syria are subject to "continuous surveillance, intimidation and harassment" from the Syrian secret police.

"Every time there is a knock on the door, mothers and fathers shake with fear for their children," he told the committee, which includes representatives from all U.N. member nations.

The Jews of Syria have been under tight travel restrictions since the formation of the modern Syrian state in 1947. They are the only Jewish community in the Arab world that has never been allowed to emigrate.

Mor testified that six Jews are presently in prison for attempting to leave Syria: Eli and Salim Swed, brothers who were arrested after Eli visited Italy and who recently staged an unprecedented hunger strike in prison; Rahmun Darwish and Joseph Rafal Sabato, charged with trying to flee Syria and detained without trial since September 1990; and Subhi and Sa'id Castica, two brothers arrested, along with their wives and two infants, and imprisoned without trial for attempting to escape the country.

While Mor's presentation will not lead to any General Assembly resolution, the speech places the issue on the desks of foreign ministries around the world, which will receive copies of the testimony from their U.N. missions.

The human rights organization Amnesty International has already requested a copy of Mor's speech, according to an Israeli diplomat.

### Syrian Representative Responds

When the Syrian representative, Bachar Jaafari, was given an opportunity to reply to Mor's charges, he countered by alleging Israeli human rights abuses against both Arabs and Jews from Arab lands.

Jaafari maintained that Jews enjoy full equality in Syria. Those in prison were jailed for contacts with Israel, he claimed.

But unlike in past years, the speeches preceding and following Mor's did not bring up Israel's treatment of the Palestinians.

Instead, Portugal denounced the Indonesian slaughter in East Timor, Pakistan protested Indian brutalities in Kashmir, and Greece called attention to the "illegal occupation" and "transfer of residents" taking place in Cyprus.

Israel's representative to the U.N. committee, Asher Naim, said the fact that these speeches did not mention the Palestinians points to the "normalization" of Israel's position in the world body.

On hand for Mor's presentation were representatives of the Council for the Rescue of Syrian Jews, the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, Anti-Defamation League, B'nai B'rith International, Hadassah and the National Conference on Soviet Jewry.

## FORMER PLO OFFICIAL REJECTED IN BID FOR CANADA REFUGEE SLOT

By Gil Kezwer

TORONTO, Nov. 27 (JTA) -- Canada has denied refugee status to a former official of the Palestine Liberation Organization, contending that he is a security threat to the country.

But for Mahmoud Abu Shandi, held in detention since he landed at Montreal's Mirabel Airport nearly a month ago, the Immigration Department's rebuff last week does not necessarily mean his swift ouster from Canada.

His case will be heard by the Federal Court, which will have to decide whether Abu Shandi is indeed a security risk, as the immigration authorities contend, or whether he should be released while his refugee claim is processed.

If earlier security cases are any guide, the legal machinery grinds exceedingly slowly.

One of the most notorious terrorists dealt with by Canada's Security and Intelligence Service is Mahmoud Mohammad Issa Mohammad, a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, who arrived in Canada as an immigrant in February 1987, was ordered deported in December 1988 but is still in the country.

Mohammad, 49, was convicted of the 1968 terrorist bombing of an El Al airliner in Athens, in which one man was killed. In 1970, a Greek court sentenced Mohammad to 17 years and five months in prison, but he was released a year later in a hostage exchange and deported to Lebanon.

Although an immigration hearing determined that Mohammad had concealed his criminal past when applying for permanent residence, he was permitted to stay in the country, pending action on a request for refugee status.

Under Canada's refugee status determination process, revised in January 1989, a claimant must pass a credible basis hearing before going before a full adjudication panel.

Owing to the heavy backlog, Mohammad's case has not yet been heard.

## RED CROSS CONFERENCE POSTPONED OVER ISSUE OF PALESTINIAN STATUS

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, Nov. 27 (JTA) -- A major conference sponsored by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement was postponed indefinitely Tuesday, after the Palestine Liberation Organization refused to yield to American opposition to its participation.

The conference, which had been scheduled to open Friday in Budapest, is considered the "parliament" of the Red Cross movement. It last met in 1986.

While the United States has consistently opposed PLO participation in world bodies, even as only an observer, the Red Cross is considered particularly sensitive because of its responsibility for implementing the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

The conventions are frequently cited as banning Israeli settlement activities in the territories it captured in 1967, though Israel has staunchly denied their applicability.

In its announcement, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent explicitly blamed the postponement on the inability to resolve the question of Palestinian participation.

The United States had said it would not participate unless the PLO withdrew its request.

**JEWISH GROUPS GET INVOLVED IN EFFORT TO TRY TO SAVE HAITIAN BOAT REFUGEES**  
By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Nov. 27 (JTA) -- Recalling the plight of Jews fleeing the Holocaust who were sent back to Europe after setting sail for countries of refuge, American Jewish groups have become involved in the effort to prod the White House to save the Haitian boat refugees.

Secular and religious groups expressed support this week for a bill compelling President Bush to grant asylum to the boat people, who have been fleeing violence that erupted in Haiti following a military coup there Sept. 30.

The Bush administration made a highly unpopular decision last week to repatriate, against their will, the boatloads of Haitian refugees who have tried to find safe haven in Miami. Hundreds of the refugees died at sea last week in a storm.

On Nov. 19, a federal judge in Florida issued a restraining order barring the U.S. government from returning the refugees to Haiti, at least until Dec. 2.

Congress tried to step in. But House Resolution 3844, the Haitian Refugee Protection Act, was unable to muster adequate votes as Congress rushed to recess for the Thanksgiving holiday.

Instead of repatriating the refugees, the Bush administration on Tuesday began giving temporary refuge to some 4,000 of an estimated 5,000 boat people at the U.S. naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

In recent days, the U.S. government has also sent about 350 boat people to temporary camps in Honduras and Venezuela.

But only 120 of these boat people have demonstrated a "plausible claim to asylum," said the State Department spokeswoman, Margaret Tutwiler. As of Wednesday, some 5,180 Haitian boat people had been picked up by either U.S. Coast Guard cutters or Navy ships, she said.

The administration maintains the Haitians are fleeing for economic, not political, reasons.

**Expression Of 'Deep Sympathy'**

Commenting on the parallels to the Jews during World War II, and calling for the White House to demonstrate compassion, Jewish groups Jews issued statements supporting the Haitians.

"Our country has proudly granted asylum to Cubans, and safe haven to Salvadorans, Lebanese, Liberians and others; we can, in view of both our traditions of welcome and international law, do no less for Haitians," said E. Robert Goodkind, chairman of the American Jewish Committee's National Affairs Commission, and Gary Rubin, AJCommittee's director of national affairs.

Also expressing concern was a coalition of groups from Brooklyn, including the United Jewish Organizations of Williamsburg, a Satmar Hasidic group; the Jewish Community Council of Crown Heights, a Lubavitch organization; and the Council of Jewish Organizations of Boro Park.

In a joint statement, they said, "Having lived through the evils of lawlessness and violence in other lands ourselves, we are in deep sympathy with those Haitians who are now seeking asylum in the United States."

Kenneth Bialkin, president of the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, said that the political upheaval and violence in Haiti have "created a refugee crisis which speaks to our minds and hearts. America was founded as a haven for the persecuted," he noted.

**THAILAND SAYS IT'S 'SYMPATHETIC' TO REPEAL OF ZIONISM RESOLUTION**

NEW YORK, Nov. 27 (JTA) -- Thailand will give "sympathetic consideration" to moves to rescind the U.N. General Assembly's 1975 resolution denigrating Zionism as a form of racism, the Thai foreign minister told a visiting World Jewish Congress official Tuesday in Bangkok.

But in his conversation with WJC Co-Chairman Isi Leibler, Foreign Minister Arsa Sarasin pointed out that his government is subject to constraints, the WJC reported here.

Thailand abstained when the resolution was voted on in 1975.

Leibler, who is from Melbourne, Australia, was accompanied to the Foreign Ministry by the Australian ambassador to Thailand, Richard Butler. Butler said his government is prepared to co-sponsor any U.N. resolution aimed at expunging the offending resolution from the record.

Leibler said he pointed out that the resolution is morally indefensible and insulting to Jews throughout the world.

Leibler, owner of a travel agency based in Melbourne, visited Thailand in the course of an official mission to win Asian support for rescission of the resolution.

According to the WJC, Leibler has had encouraging responses from China and India.

**INDIA CLAIMS IT IS 'MENTALLY PREPARED' FOR ISRAEL TIES BUT HAS NO TIMETABLE**  
By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Nov. 26 (JTA) -- India is "mentally prepared" to review its relationship with Israel but will not be held to any timetable, Prime Minister Narashimha Rao told World Jewish Congress Co-Chairman Isi Leibler at a meeting last week in New Delhi.

According to the WJC, Rao intimated that his country's longstanding hostility toward Israel was "under review" and that "visible" changes could be expected. But he refused to say when, insisting that India would proceed at its own pace, dictated by its own priorities.

The two countries do not have full diplomatic relations.

"I would like to have heard something more immediate," Leibler said. "But I am nevertheless encouraged by Mr. Rao's generally positive and open-minded attitude on the question of relations with Israel," he added.

He described Rao's position as "light years ahead of the negativity and hostility displayed by his predecessors."

Leibler raised several issues, such as India's continued refusal to establish full, reciprocal diplomatic ties with Israel, its trade boycott of the Jewish state and its continuing support of the 1975 U.N. General Assembly resolution denigrating Zionism as racism.

But a visiting Anti-Defamation League delegation got the same answers when they visited New Delhi three years ago and met with Rao, who was then foreign minister.

"We received the same promises that Isi Leibler received," Abraham Foxman, ADL's national director, said Tuesday.

"I think the Jewish people are losing their patience with the promises," Foxman said. "I think it is sad that such a large, democratic nation with such a glorious tradition of freedom keeps itself hostage to Arab and Moslem threats."