

75th ANNIVERSARY YEAR**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 1992****VOL. 70, NO. 30****REPORTED ARAFAT REMARKS ON JEWS
DRAW SHARP PROTEST FROM THE U.S.****By Howard Rosenberg**

WASHINGTON, Feb. 12 (JTA) -- The U.S. State Department has reacted sharply to threatening anti-Jewish remarks allegedly made last month by Yasir Arafat, the head of the Palestine Liberation Organization, in a telephone conversation with the PLO's Paris representative.

State Department deputy spokesman Richard Boucher on Wednesday described as "clearly outrageous" Arafat's reputed description of Jews as "dogs, filth, dirt."

"Comments like this," he said, "can only be described as disparaging and obnoxious."

However, Boucher said the remarks, which were recorded from a private conversation, would have no impact on the Arab-Israeli peace talks in progress.

But he added, "Racist and hateful rhetoric have no place in the peace process."

A U.S. Jewish organizational leader was also incensed by the vituperative comments, which were recorded in Arabic by an unidentified Western law-enforcement agency and broadcast in English on the Cable News Network.

Malcolm Hoenelein, executive director of the Conference of Major American Jewish Organizations, called Arafat's reported characterization of Jews "loathsome and despicable" and said it proved "that this international terrorist is not only anti-Israel and anti-Zionist, as he has claimed, but also a vicious Jew-hater."

Hoenelein urged that Arafat not be allowed to address the U.N. Human Rights Commission currently meeting in Geneva. The commission announced Monday that the PLO chief had been invited to speak from the podium, an honor reserved for heads of state.

PLO Official Denies Comments

In the conversation with PLO representative Ibrahim Souss, Arafat also blasted the French government for the furor that erupted in Paris at the end of January over the admittance to France of George Habash, head of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

Habash was at a Red Cross clinic for unspecified medical treatment. For permitting his brief stay there, six top French government officials were forced to resign.

The telephone call was made Jan. 30, presumably from PLO headquarters in Tunis, according to Steven Emerson, a special assignment correspondent for CNN who broke the story.

Emerson said the conversation was confirmed to be that of Arafat and Souss by a journalist and Arab specialists.

And CNN stood by the tape's authenticity.

But in Paris, Souss denied it and threatened to sue CNN for defamation of character.

He said, "I categorically deny the comments attributed to President Yasir Arafat and myself and reserve all my rights to action against the authors of this media manipulation."

Souss said playing the tape had been intended to cover up "bellicose" Israeli goals in the peace talks.

The voice that appears to be Arafat's even

indicated awareness that the telephone had been tapped. In fact, he said, "Let them record this and play it on television."

Habash checked into the Red Cross hospital with an undisclosed illness and returned to Tunis on Feb. 1.

The voice that appeared to be Arafat's expressed outrage at the treatment of Habash and the clamor that he be arrested for questioning about past terrorist acts attributed to the PFLP.

He complained that a sick man was being hounded out of France.

Will 'Settle Accounts' With Jews

The voice attributed to Souss assured the other that "the (French) government had nothing to do with this matter at all. It's the opposition and the Jews. The Jews, they are at work."

The voice said to be Arafat's responded: "The Jews at work. Damn their fathers. The dogs. Filth and dirt. All for this one sick man. I took care of and treated their ill and sick (POWs). But trash is always trash."

"And thanks to the rotten Jews, with whom I will settle accounts in the future. For a sick man. What did we send him, to have fun on the Champs Elysees? We sent him to the Red Cross."

Emerson remarked that Arafat also unleashed "a broadside at the French, often seen as the PLO's best friends in Europe."

He noted that "publicly, over the last few years, Arafat and the PLO have been conciliatory toward Israel. Yet if Arafat's comments are interpreted as provocative, this episode could damage the new Middle East peace talks launched by the United States."

Emerson did not say why his source had leaked the bugged conversation to CNN.

Habash's group, the PFLP, was founded in 1967 under the PLO umbrella but broke away from Arafat's mainstream Fatah faction, saying it was too conciliatory. But while Habash and Arafat have been fiercely at odds over policy, their personal relationship seems not to have been affected.

Arafat is reported to have summoned a French ambulance plane to Tunis to transport Habash to Paris and to have personally escorted him to the plane.

(JTA correspondent Michel Di Paz in Paris contributed to this report.)

**U.S., ISRAEL LOBBY U.N. PANEL
TO RESCIND ARAFAT INVITATION**
By Tamar Levy

GENEVA, Feb. 12 (JTA) -- The United States and Israel are lobbying hard in an 11th-hour attempt to have the U.N. Human Rights Commission cancel an invitation to Yasir Arafat to address its current session here Thursday.

John Bolton, the U.S. assistant secretary of state for international organization affairs, arrived from Washington to take charge of the effort. But there is little chance it will succeed, inasmuch as the Palestine Liberation Organization chief has received and accepted the invitation.

Nevertheless, the U.S. delegation organized a special hearing Wednesday for the European Group at the Human Rights Commission's annual gather-

ing, to listen to a recording of a wiretapped telephone conversation purported to be between Arafat in Tunis and the PLO's Paris representative, Ibrahim Souss.

In it, Arafat vilifies Jews as "dirt, filth and trash." The transcript has already been broadcast by Cable News Network, which says it got the tape from "a Western law-enforcement agency."

The Americans say they are disappointed by the lethargic reaction of the Europeans to the Arafat invitation. They are especially disturbed by the commission's acquiescence to Arafat's request to speak from the podium, an honor reserved for heads of state.

That precedent was established when Arafat addressed the Human Rights Commission in 1988. He had complained that speaking from a chair in the hall would be a "terrible humiliation."

"The bureau made a mistake accepting his demand in 1988 and is repeating it today," a senior American diplomat remarked.

'A Cynical Exploitation'

Israel's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, Yitzhak Lior, stressed "Israel's very strong position that Yasir Arafat should not take part in this meeting" in a letter to the Human Rights Commission chairman.

"It is quite obvious that his appearance can make no contribution whatsoever to the theme of human rights observance throughout the world, and will amount to no more than a cynical exploitation of this forum for political purposes," the Israeli envoy wrote.

In an unrelated development Wednesday, Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev created a stir when he suggested the United Nations create a special police force to protect human rights around the world.

His proposal was a radical departure from decades of insistence by the Soviet Union that citizens rights were an internal affair.

Earlier, the commission heard a report on religious intolerance, delivered by Andree Farhi, representing the International Council of Jewish Women. The council has non-governmental organization status on the U.N. commission.

Farhi spoke of cases of racism and anti-Semitism in Europe where, she said, more than 200 Jewish cemeteries were vandalized in 1991 in Germany alone.

She referred to video games in Japan in which Adolf Hitler is the hero; the election of a former Ku Klux Klan leader and self-proclaimed American Nazi, David Duke, to the Louisiana state legislature; and the success of Jean-Marie Le Pen's neo-fascist National Front in France.

PATHOLOGIST SAYS PRISON CONDITIONS CONTRIBUTED TO PALESTINIAN'S DEATH

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, Feb. 12 (JTA) -- The American pathologist who investigated the death of a Palestinian in Israeli custody last week says the security suspect's fatal heart attack was "triggered by the conditions under which he was kept."

Dr. Michael Baden said that for 10 of Mustafa Akawi's last 12 hours, he was sitting in an unheated, freezing corridor of the Hebron prison in the West Bank, with his hands cuffed behind his back and a sack over his head.

Baden is director of forensic sciences for the New York State Police and sits on the board

that reviews all deaths in the state prison system. He traveled to Israel on behalf of Physicians for Human Rights and reported his findings at a news conference here Wednesday.

Israel has maintained that Akawi, an alleged member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, died of a heart attack resulting from arteriosclerosis.

But the U.S. State Department has expressed concern about the death and requested an investigation.

Baden said the Israeli authorities cooperated with his investigation. He drew his conclusions from both the autopsy, which he witnessed, and interviews with personnel in Israel's General Security Service, widely known as the Shin Bet, including the interrogator in the Hebron prison.

Baden said the treatment admitted by the interrogators and prison officials "would be considered torture and totally prohibited" in the United States. Under American law, he said, a heart attack triggered by illegal actions is considered homicide.

Baden said inadequate medical care also contributed to Akawi's death on Feb. 4.

After the 33-year-old suspect complained of chest pains, the paramedic on the floor above asked that he be brought up. The paramedic, who told Baden his training consisted of a 40-day army course 12 years ago, checked Akawi's pulse and blood pressure and returned him with instructions that he be placed in a heated room and given a hot beverage.

While the interrogator was making tea, Akawi fell into a coma. Only then was the prison's medical doctor summoned.

Some 'Physical Pressure' Allowed

Baden criticized the paramedic for making Akawi walk in the cold as he was having a heart attack. He noted that severe cold and physical exertions often lead to heart attacks in those, like Akawi, with severely clogged arteries.

The pathologist said that in New York State, prisoners are given electrocardiograms upon entry. The Hebron prison had such a device, but Akawi never received an EKG.

On the day before his death, Akawi appeared before a military judge and complained of being beaten. Baden said the two large, 5-inch bruises on the prisoner's chest were not a cause of death, having produced no internal bleeding.

He said Israeli officials said the bruises resulted from an interrogator grabbing Akawi by the lapel and violently shaking him back and forth. A bruise on Akawi's third vertebra indicated a whiplash from that treatment, said Baden.

Current Israeli policy regarding torture of security suspects was established in 1987 by the Landau Commission. While much of its specific recommendations remain secret, the commission permitted the use of a "moderate measure of physical pressure."

Under international law, physical and psychological torture is forbidden, said Dr. Robert Kirschner of Chicago, who is deputy chief medical examiner of Cook County, Ill.

"Leaving someone hooded and cuffed in a freezing temperature constitutes torture under international law," said Kirschner, an executive committee member of Physicians for Human Rights.

"As often happens in medical investigations, this brings up problems that are systemic, but ignored until somebody dies," said Baden.

ISRAELI OFFICIAL PONDERES PROSPECT OF LIFE WITHOUT LOAN GUARANTEES

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Feb. 12 (JTA) -- The pessimism spreading in government circles here about Israel's chances of getting U.S. guarantees for \$10 billion in immigrant resettlement loans was confirmed Wednesday by Finance Minister Yitzhak Moda'i.

He told economic correspondents here that if the Americans do not underwrite the loans, Israel will seek financing elsewhere and will make unprecedented efforts to get investments from Diaspora Jews.

While the finance minister's remarks reflected waning hope for the guarantees, he also seemed to be saying that Israel could manage without them if necessary.

That was a far cry from a statement Moda'i made earlier this week. The Israeli daily Ma'ariv published a story Wednesday quoting him as saying that if the United States did not provide the guarantees, it would eventually have to airlift food aid to Israel for "1 million hungry people, immigrants to Israel," just as it is now airlifting food to the republics that succeeded the Soviet Union.

Ma'ariv reported that Moda'i had just spoken to Israel's ambassador to Washington, Zalman Shoval, who gave him a discouraging account of the state of negotiations with the Bush administration over the loan guarantees.

The United States has conditioned the loan guarantees on a freeze of Israeli settlement-building in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Shamir government has balked at this.

Although Israel has previously relied on its bipartisan support in Congress in disputes with the White House, Congress this time seems supportive of the administration's position.

A Postponement Until Summer?

Moda'i said he expected the dispute with Washington to continue in the weeks ahead but could not say whether it would be on a political or economic plane.

Several Cabinet ministers said earlier this week that Israel would scale down settlement-building for practical economic reasons, but never under political pressure from abroad.

The Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported Wednesday that the Bush administration may postpone a decision on the loan guarantees until after the June 23 Knesset elections and the seating of a new government in Jerusalem.

Top U.S. policy-makers believe the guarantees could be "a determining factor in the Israeli election campaign," Ha'aretz wrote.

But the newspaper added that many members of Congress do not relish the idea of approving the guarantees in late summer, just before their own re-election campaigns, because the guarantees are unpopular in American public opinion.

The guarantees would enable Israel to borrow \$10 billion from private banks over the next five years. The money would be used to help provide housing and jobs for hundreds of thousands of immigrants from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia.

Joblessness is a growing problem in Israel. The government reported this week that unemployment rose by 6 percent in January. There are now 144,000 job-seekers, 43,000 of them new immigrants, of whom half are university trained.

EGYPT ARRESTS FOURTH SPY SUSPECT, A JEW THEY SAY IS TIED TO ARAB CLAN

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Feb. 12 (JTA) -- Egypt officially notified Israel Wednesday that it has arrested a fourth Israeli national in connection with an alleged spy ring.

This time, the detainee is a Jew, David Ovitz, whom the Egyptians have linked to an Israeli Arab family detained in Cairo over the past week.

Israel vehemently denies it has any knowledge of alleged spies in Egypt. Sources in Jerusalem suggested that the Egyptian authorities were being hoodwinked by Libya.

The Israeli daily Yediot Achronot said Wednesday that the three Israeli Arabs arrested in Cairo may be the victims of an espionage plot by the Libyan secret service to embarrass Israel.

They are Farres Mussarti, 41, of Ramla and his 17-year-old daughter, Faya, who were arrested for questioning last week; and Farres' 21-year-old son, Majed, arrested Sunday when he entered Egypt from Libya.

Ovitz was identified as a secondhand furniture dealer with a shop in the Jaffa flea market. The Egyptians say he had "commercial links" with Mussarti, who served as Arabic interpreter on Ovitz's furniture-buying expeditions in Egypt.

The affair has strained Israel's relations with Cairo, although Egyptian Interior Minister Mohammad Abdul Halim Mussa met Tuesday with the Israeli envoy to Cairo to soothe tensions.

The Israelis were angered that they had not been given access to the accused Israelis and had to learn about the matter through the Egyptian media.

The Egyptians directly notified Israel of Ovitz's arrest, a day after Egypt's interior minister met with Israeli Ambassador Ephraim Dubek.

At their meeting Tuesday, Mussa denied he had told the press that the Israelis were working for Mossad.

Nevertheless, the official Egyptian news agency, MENA, repeated Wednesday evening that the Mussartis were acting for Israel.

OFFICIAL SAYS CHINA IS READY FOR DIRECT FLIGHTS FROM ISRAEL

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Feb. 12 (JTA) -- China, which last month established full diplomatic relations with Israel, is preparing for the inauguration of direct air service between Tel Aviv and Beijing by Israel's national air carrier, El Al, Israel Radio reported Tuesday.

The news was conveyed in a telephone interview with Isi Leibler of Australia, co-chairman of the World Jewish Congress, who was speaking from Beijing.

Leibler, who owns a large travel business, had just had an hour-long meeting with Yung Yu Lin, director general of the Chinese Civil Aviation Corp., at which they discussed tourism.

Leibler said Yung told him he was ready to meet with a delegation from Israel's Civil Aviation Authority to discuss direct charter flights by El Al from Tel Aviv, to begin in about three months.

The Chinese official thought regular flights could start in about nine months, Leibler said. He quoted Yung as saying, "We will do everything possible to cut through all the normal obstacles and settle this matter very quickly."

AMERICAN RED CROSS OPENING FILES ON THOUSANDS KILLED BY THE NAZIS

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Feb. 12 (JTA) -- Records on 300,000 to 500,000 people killed by the Nazis will soon become available for the first time through the American Red Cross and its international counterpart.

The U.S. records, stored at the National Archives in Washington, were declassified in 1972. But it was not until recently that the American Red Cross became aware of their existence, said Ann Stingle, a spokeswoman for the agency.

Researchers from the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum alerted the American Red Cross in late 1990 to the records' existence.

The American Red Cross has transferred an initial batch of microfilm, containing information on 7,000 people, to the International Tracing Service in Arolsen, Germany.

The records include death books, transport lists and records on victims of medical experiments and euthanasia. Also included are records from forced labor camps including Buchenwald, Mauthausen and the Hadamar Institute, where deformed children were killed.

The records can be accessed by filling out a tracing request with a local Red Cross chapter in the United States, with a national Red Cross office in countries outside the United States, or by directly contacting the center at Arolsen.

The forms can be obtained in the United States by calling (800) 848-9277. The requests are translated into German and take up to a year to research.

The Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center, which tracks down Nazi war criminals in order to bring them to justice, has been clamoring for years to gain access to the Red Cross' archival holdings.

But the Red Cross has refused such requests in order to maintain political neutrality, a policy it credits as having helped it acquire certain archival material in the first place.

Diane Paul, program manager at the American Red Cross' 17-month-old Holocaust and War Victims Tracing and Information Center in Baltimore, has expressed concern as well that such material, if made public, could be used "in a distorted way" by revisionist scholars who deny many aspects of the Holocaust.

But Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Wiesenthal Center, said would support an open access policy, even if it meant that revisionists could see the material.

Since its inception, the Baltimore tracing center has helped reunite 52 long-separated relatives from 26 families who filed requests for information, Stingle said.

SPANISH COURT CLEARS HOLOCAUST SATIRE

By Judith Lew

MADRID, Feb. 12 (JTA) -- A Spanish court has ruled that a Barcelona publishing house did not violate the law when it published a cartoon book satirizing the Holocaust.

But the plaintiffs, who include the local B'nai B'rith chapter and an organization of Holocaust survivors, plan to appeal the lower court's decision, which absolves Editorial Makoki and its director, Damia Carulla.

The court dismissed requests by B'nai B'rith and Amicale Mauthausen, a Holocaust survivors

collective in Barcelona, to penalize Carulla, who might have faced one to six months in jail. B'nai B'rith lawyer Dalia Levinson said he got off on grounds of freedom of expression and because the court decided that no offense had been intended.

The book, titled "Hitler-SS," treats the Holocaust sarcastically as black humor. Before Editorial Makoki ran off 5,000 copies in 1990, it was the subject of a lawsuit in France.

The cartoons were drawn by the French illustrator Vuillemin, and the dialogue is by a scriptwriter named Gourio.

NEED FOR BLACK-JEWISH COOPERATION STRESSED AT CEREMONY FOR M.L. KING

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Feb. 12 (JTA) -- The need for blacks and Jews to continue working together for justice in the United States and abroad was stressed this week as the Israeli Embassy marked the birth of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

"Despite the scars and tension, the strong and abiding foundation of our relationship continues," declared Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

"We know that if America cannot make room for blacks, it will not have room for Jews," he said.

Saperstein spoke Tuesday as he and Dr. Dorothy Height, president of the National Council of Black Women, received the 1992 Civil Rights Award from the Jewish National Fund for their years of work for civil rights.

This is the eighth year the Israeli Embassy and the JNF have held the ceremony commemorating the slain civil rights leader. The program was postponed from January, when King's birthday is normally marked, because at the time Israeli Ambassador Zalman Shoval and other members of the embassy were engaged in the bilateral Middle East peace talks.

Saperstein spoke of the close working relationship between Jewish and black members of Congress and between Jewish and black organizations in Washington on issues close to their communities.

Height said that by working together "we have achieved a great deal."

But she warned that the "clear effort to do away with bigotry" that existed in the 1960s "is not here now." She called for a return to this struggle.

King's "legacy and message continue to resonate in our hearts," Shoval said. He said that in Israel, which has had to fight five wars, "Dr. King's message of non-violence speaks to our deepest sorrow about the past and our fondest hopes for the future."

The ambassador said it was fitting that King was memorialized by a 10,000-tree JNF forest in Israel because he was a supporter of the Jewish state and saw anti-Zionism as a code name for anti-Semitism.

He expressed sorrow that King had not lived to see the beginning of freedom for South Africa's blacks and the homecoming to Israel of thousands of Jews from the Soviet Union and Ethiopia.

Shoval also used the occasion to urge Iran and Shi'ite groups in Lebanon to release Ron Arad, the Israeli air force navigator believed to be held in Lebanon since 1986. Arad's wife, Tami, who was in Washington seeking help from the Bush administration, was in the audience.