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**LEVY AND BAKER FAIL TO RESOLVE DISPUTE ON MULTILATERAL TALKS**

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, April 28 (JTA) -- Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy's meeting here Tuesday with Secretary of State James Baker failed to clear up differences between the two sides over the issue of Palestinian representation at the scheduled upcoming round of multilateral talks on Middle East regional issues.

But despite the disagreements, Levy told reporters that Israel wants to continue exploring all avenues that could lead to peace.

The Palestinians want representatives of their diaspora to be allowed to participate in two of the five sets of talks on regional issues: one dealing with refugee affairs, set to take place May 13-15 in Ottawa, and the other dealing with economic development, slated for May 12-14 in Brussels.

Their view is that diaspora Palestinians are an integral constituency that should benefit from any accord on refugee resettlement or economic development.

Israel opposes Palestinian diaspora representation for fear it would bolster international support for a right of return of Palestinians to Israel on par with the right enjoyed by Jews.

In a briefing for reporters Tuesday, Israel's ambassador to Washington, Zalman Shoval, accused Palestinians of wanting to slip in the right of return "through the back door."

Diaspora Palestinians, meaning those who live outside the West Bank and Gaza Strip, have been barred from participating in the five rounds of bilateral talks involving Israel, Syria, Lebanon and a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation.

That was part of the understanding Israel reached with the Arabs when Baker negotiated the terms of the current peace process last summer and fall.

**No Discussion Of Loan Request**

The Palestinians tried to bring diaspora representatives to the opening of the multilateral talks in Moscow in January. When the United States and Russia refused them entry, the Palestinians boycotted the talks. Syria and Lebanon also did not participate.

Israel argues that the conditions for the bilateral talks should apply to the multilateral talks as well. But Baker left the door open in Moscow to broader Palestinian participation in the various sets of talks on regional issues.

Levy told reporters Tuesday after his 75-minute meeting with Baker that Israel is seeking "changes in determining Palestinian representation in the multilateral talks."

The United States and Israel are in agreement, though, that no Palestinians should participate in the talks on arms control, slated to take place here May 11-13.

But the United States feels that Palestinians, though not those from outside the territories, should be allowed to take part in the talks on water resources, convening May 12-14 in Vienna, and the talks on the environment, set for the week of May 18 in Tokyo.

The Levy-Baker meeting was hastily arranged

after the Israeli foreign minister informed the Bush administration that he would be in New York on Monday evening for a dinner celebrating 500 years of Jewish life in Turkey.

During the meeting, Levy and Baker reportedly did not discuss the standoff over Israel's request that the United States guarantee \$10 billion in loans to help resettle immigrants.

But they did delve into such items as the need to maintain Israel's qualitative military edge and the creation of a joint U.S.-Israeli team to study this issue.

There was also discussion of U.S.-Israeli cooperation in providing Israeli technical help for the newly independent Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union.

**NEWS ANALYSIS:  
ELECTION PLAN, PALESTINIAN REPLY  
GIVE MIDEAST PEACE TALKS A BOOST**  
By David Landau

JERUSALEM, April 28 (JTA) -- Israel's proposal to hold municipal elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was an auspicious beginning to the fifth round of bilateral talks that opened in Washington on Monday.

The absence of outright Palestinian rejection was another refreshingly upbeat development.

This latest round of talks, which was to end Thursday and be followed by a round in Rome, proceeded in a businesslike manner, without the acrimony that marred the previous sessions.

That does not signify by any means that a breakthrough between Israelis and Palestinians is in sight; nor is there any sign of a break in the rock-solid impasse that seems to have developed between the Israelis and their separate Syrian, Lebanese and Jordanian interlocutors.

The Arab side, particularly the Palestinians, is marking time until Israel's parliamentary elections on June 23.

Labor Party leader Yitzhak Rabin, currently ahead in the polls, has promised an agreement on Palestinian autonomy in the administered territories "within six to nine months" after he takes office as prime minister.

The Palestinians therefore have a comfortable time frame in which to wait and see.

Observers here have detected relative moderation in the Palestinians' conduct, if not their position, during this final Washington round. They ascribe it largely to pressure brought to bear earlier by the United States, Egypt and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Each of those parties is anxious to avoid a crisis that could precipitate a walkout by any delegation. They have therefore urged the Palestinians to focus on the issue at hand, Palestinian autonomy, and refrain from the public posturing that marked the previous sessions.

The Palestinians cooperated by bringing to Washington this week reasoned written comments on the broad autonomy plans presented to them at the last round of talks in March by the chief of the Israeli delegation, Elyakim Rubinstein.

In the interim, the Israelis came up with the idea of municipal elections, which Rubinstein presented in general terms Monday.

The plan drew a measured response from the

Palestinians, a far cry from the earlier declamations by the Palestinian delegation's spokeswoman, Hanan Ashrawi, who had flatly rejected the proposal in advance.

#### An Image-Enhancing Move

The plan is understood to have originated with the Israel Defense Force's Civil Administration, which controls the day-to-day lives of Palestinians in the territories.

It rests on the observation that while the intifada is waning somewhat in terms of popular unrest, clashes between the IDF and hard-core activists have intensified.

The Civil Administration believes that local elections in the territories would ease tensions and quiet the situation.

Israel's political decision-makers were quick to see the image-enhancing potential for the incumbent government at home and abroad.

While the autonomy talks with the Palestinians have gotten nowhere, the local elections idea would be perceived as a step forward by Israeli voters and by friendly governments overseas.

Some seasoned observers see the Israeli proposal as a calculated effort to discredit the PLO-linked Palestinian negotiators by driving a wedge between them and the Islamic fundamentalist forces in the territories, which are gaining influence and popularity.

According to Danny Rubinstein, respected commentator of the Israeli daily Ha'aretz, the Islamic forces, in discreet contacts with Israeli authorities, have welcomed the idea of municipal elections.

They are convinced they would do well in an electoral confrontation with the PLO-affiliated local politicians, especially in places like the West Bank city of Hebron.

Whatever the reason, the Palestinians in Washington found it politic this week not to reject the Israeli proposal. They said instead that they would take it into consideration.

#### Plan's Fate Tied To June Vote

Here in Israel, the Labor Party has kept a low profile during these maneuverings. Rabin's basic campaign theme has been that serious progress is impossible between the Likud government and the Palestinians, given Likud's hard-line ideological stance.

Under Labor governments, elections were held twice in the territories. In 1972, traditional Arab mayors were retained in office without serious opposition.

In 1976, however, when Rabin was prime minister and Shimon Peres was defense minister, radicals with strong ties to the PLO swept the slate, except in Bethlehem.

They were removed from office by the Israeli authorities and replaced by IDF officers after the first Likud government took office in 1977.

But much has changed since then. Like it or not, the Likud government is negotiating indirectly with the PLO.

Many Israelis, moreover, view the rising tide of Islamic fundamentalism as a more dangerous threat than the Palestinian nationalism of the PLO.

At any rate, the new idea of local elections is now "on the table."

But its fate depends on the results of the Knesset elections in June.

### **A CHRONOLOGY OF THE PEACE TALKS**

*NEW YORK, April 28 (JTA) -- Following is a chronology of the highlights of the Middle East peace negotiations begun in Madrid last fall.*

**Oct. 18, 1991:** Secretary of State James Baker sends out invitations to a conference in Madrid that would launch direct peace negotiations involving Israel, the Arab states and the Palestinians.

**Oct. 30:** The peace conference opens, under the sponsorship of United States and Soviet Union, with speeches at the Royal Palace in Madrid. Israel, Syria, Lebanon and a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation participate, with the European Community and the United Nations attending as observers.

**Nov. 3:** Israeli working groups have their first-ever direct talks with Syrian, Lebanese and joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegations. The conference adjourns with no agreement on where future sessions will take place.

**Nov. 22:** The United States invites the Arabs and Israelis to resume bilateral talks in Washington on Dec. 4. The invitations are issued just before Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir was to discuss the venue issue at a meeting with President Bush. Angered, Israel later announces that it will show up for the talks five days late.

**Dec. 9:** The Israeli delegation arrives at the State Department for the bilateral talks, but the Arab delegations fail to show up.

**Dec. 10:** The Arab delegations show up for the second round of bilateral talks. Israel's talks with Syria and with Lebanon get under way, but the negotiations with the Jordanians and Palestinians are stalled when the Palestinians insist on meeting the Israelis as a separate delegation. The three parties try to resolve the issue during discussions in the State Department corridors.

**Dec. 18:** The second round of bilateral talks adjourns with no resolution of either the venue question or the Palestinians' demand to be treated as a separate delegation.

**Jan. 12-16, 1992:** The third round of bilateral talks convenes in Washington with Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians reaching agreement on meeting in separate working groups on Israeli-Jordanian issues and Israeli-Palestinian issues. The United States asks each party to list 10 cities as possible sites for future bilateral talks.

**Jan. 28-29:** A multilateral conference on Middle East regional issues convenes in Moscow under the sponsorship of the United States and Russia. Syria, Lebanon and the Palestinians boycott the talks, but Saudi Arabia, the Persian Gulf states and the Maghreb states of North Africa take part, as do 18 European nations, Turkey, Canada, Japan and China, which has just established diplomatic ties with Israel. Five working groups on various issues are set up and meet for the first time. They are to reconvene in May.

**Feb. 24-March 4:** The fourth round of bilateral talks convenes in Washington. There is much acrimony, but the Israeli and Jordanian-Palestinian delegations begin discussing an interim self-government arrangement for the Palestinians in the administered territories.

**April 21:** The State Department announces that Rome will be the site of the sixth round of bilateral talks, set to take place sometime after the Israeli elections on June 23.

**April 27:** The fifth round of bilateral talks opens in Washington.

## SYRIA CONFIRMS LIFTING TRAVEL BAN BUT JEWS STILL NOT FREE TO LEAVE

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, April 28 (JTA) -- The Syrian government has confirmed that it has lifted travel restrictions on its 4,500-member Jewish community. But according to reports reaching North America, the first Jews to apply have been rejected.

"Apparently no one was given an exit permit today," Seymour Reich reported Tuesday, a day after the U.S. State Department announced the change in Syrian policy. Reich chairs the Task Force on Syrian Jewry of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

The National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council sent a telegram Tuesday to Secretary of State James Baker expressing concern over the reports that the new travel policy in Syria was not being implemented.

The Syrian policy shift was first conveyed privately to leaders of the Syrian Jewish community by government officials before Passover, and the news quickly spread to excited friends and relatives in North America and Israel.

On Monday, the State Department and White House reported that Syria had informed U.S. officials that travel restrictions against Jews had been lifted.

But Reich said Jews were denied exit visas this week in Damascus and Aleppo, two centers of the country's Jewish community.

In some instances, applicants were told by officials that new instructions had not yet been issued; other Jews were told to come back in three weeks; and some were told that the permission to leave would be granted only for cases of family reunification.

### Activists Remain Cautiously Optimistic

Nevertheless, activists for Syrian Jewry remain cautiously optimistic. Some say that Syria could not be expected to move faster, given the bureaucratic realities of the Middle East.

"We believe we have to wait to see how the policy is implemented, and how people come out, and give the lifting of regulations a chance to work," said Gilbert Kahn, executive director of the Council for the Rescue of Syrian Jews.

The activists have not forgotten that Syria has not delivered on past promises.

At the same time, both Secretary of State Baker and his Syrian counterpart, Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa, emphasized that Syria has announced free travel, not free emigration.

In Damascus, the Syrian news agency Sana quoted Sharaa as saying: "The matter deals with the freedom of travel for Syrian citizens and not emigration."

But he also said that Syrian President Hafez Assad had "directed the concerned authorities to facilitate the travel of all citizens regardless of their religion and to remove the existing routine procedures."

These procedures included leaving a family member behind to serve in effect as a hostage, and posting a bond officially quoted at \$1,000 but in reality many times that amount.

In Washington, during a photo opportunity with Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy, Baker was asked whether there was reason to believe Syrian Jews would be given the right to emigrate freely from Syria.

"No, and I don't think that's what the announcement contemplated," Baker replied. "But I do think that if implemented, the decision will mean that Syrian Jews will be entitled to all of the rights and privileges that other Syrian citizens have; that is, the freedom to travel."

In their meeting, Levy thanked Baker for American efforts on behalf of Syrian Jews.

According to U.S. government sources, President Bush has written a letter to Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir explaining that while the Syrians have not changed their formal position on emigration, the door is now open for Jews to leave the country.

Syrian Foreign Minister Sharaa said that Syrian Jews do not want to emigrate, a statement echoed to the foreign press by the community's chief rabbi, Ibrahim Hamra.

But Syrian Jewry activists say the majority of the community would emigrate, given the chance, and the elimination of travel restrictions would, in practice, permit such emigration.

Reich said the White House had promised to monitor the situation through the American Embassy in Damascus.

In Toronto, Judy Feld Carr, chair of the Task Force on Syrian Jewry of the Canadian Jewish Congress, recalled that in 1989 the State Department announced that Syria had agreed to allow unmarried Jewish women unable to find husbands in Syria to emigrate.

"They didn't leave. It didn't materialize," she said. "I have seen so many false hopes dashed that I'd rather not raise them," she said.

### JEWS EVACUATED FROM SARAJEVO IN WAKE OF FIGHTING IN BOSNIA

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME, April 28 (JTA) -- More than 300 Jews have been safely evacuated during the past three weeks from Sarajevo, capital of the embattled republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

They were brought to Belgrade, the Yugoslav capital, on two airlifts, according to Srdjan Matic, executive vice president of the Croatian Jewish community, who spoke to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency by telephone from Zagreb.

Sarajevo has been the scene of heavy fighting in recent days between the Serbian-led Yugoslav army and the local militia of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which declared independence from Yugoslavia earlier this year.

But all the Jews "who wanted to get out got out," Matic said. "I don't know how many Jews are left in Sarajevo. Before, there were more than 1,000."

He said some of the evacuees went to Budapest, Hungary. One group of children went to Sofia, Bulgaria.

Others went to Slovenia and Croatia, two other former Yugoslav republics that have since declared independence.

Very few had plans to go to Israel, Matic said. He discounted a Jewish Agency proposal to airlift Yugoslavia's estimated 5,000 to 6,000 Jews all at once to Israel.

"There are no grounds for something like that. Most Jews want peace and then to return home," he said.

Most of the Jews who fled Croatia during the fighting there last summer have returned, Matic reported. Jewish life in Zagreb is getting back to normal.

"Everyone who left came back," he said.

**ADL PROTESTS JESUS STATUE  
DISPLAYED ON CAPITOL STEPS**

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, April 28 (JTA) -- A Jewish group's letter protesting the display of a statue of Jesus on the steps of the U.S. Capitol building could trigger a review of that practice, a government lawyer said.

In the April 27 letter to George White, architect of the Capitol, the Anti-Defamation League objected to the "unambiguous sectarian religious message" conveyed by the placement of the statue.

John Caulfield, general counsel to the Capitol Police Board, which sets policy on displays, said he was unaware of any organization having protested religious displays. But he said such a protest could lead to a review of the board's policy on displays.

Caulfield said the three-member board, whose members are White and the House and Senate sergeant-at-arms, has tried to "maintain the content neutrality" of its displays.

The Easter-week display consisted of a life-size figure of Jesus surrounded by a collection of flowerpots in the shape of a cross.

Located near the visitors entrance to the building, the scene "gives the impression to visitors from abroad that Christianity is the officially preferred religion of the United States government," Jess Hordes, ADL's Washington representative, wrote.

This display and other similar ones have been sponsored by Rita Warren of Fairfax County, Va. She told The Washington Times in 1989, "We the people own this building just as the tourists have a right to come here."

The Times said that each weekday "from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. she's out there with her display -- a statue of Jesus Christ and tablets of the Ten Commandments -- playing religious or patriotic music and talking to visitors."

Michael Lieberman, ADL's Washington counsel, said that under a 1987 Supreme Court ruling, County of Allegheny vs. American Civil Liberties Union, such displays are unconstitutional unless accompanied by another display that neutralizes its impact, such as symbols of another religion.

**ISRAELI TRAVEL AGENTS CHARGE  
LUFTHANSA RAN ANTI-SEMITIC AD**

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, April 28 (JTA) -- The Association of Israeli Travel Agents has accused the German airline Lufthansa of anti-Semitism and denounced an advertisement it ran in the local press Monday as worthy of the Nazi newspaper, Der Sturmer.

But the airline, which aggressively wooed Israeli customers, called the charges nonsense. And a Hebrew University professor backed Lufthansa up with a warning against unjustified attributions of anti-Semitism.

The travel agents, who sell most airline tickets on commission, published their complaint against Lufthansa in a full-page advertisement in the Hebrew press Tuesday.

It followed an ad by the German air carrier announcing that it would henceforth sell flights to Germany directly to Israeli travelers at a reduced rate, bypassing the travel agents.

The Lufthansa advertisement featured a line-drawing caricature of a typical Israeli customer, which the Israeli travel agents association said

looked like "a Yid with a long nose and a horn growing out of his head."

The Travel Agents Association's ad, signed by its chairman, Kobi Karni, reproduced the drawing and ran a typical anti-Semitic caricature from Der Sturmer next to it, under the headline: "This is the way we appear in their (German) eyes."

The association also objected to Lufthansa's depiction of a travel agent as a "fat, cigar-smoking slob with his feet on the desk."

Denying an anti-Semitic slur, a Lufthansa spokesman said Tuesday that the airline chose a lighthearted, comic approach for its advertisement.

He said a so-called "Jew's hat" on one of the cartoon figures was no more anti-Semitic than the headgear of the Simpson Family, the animated American television series very popular in Israel.

Israel Radio suggested Tuesday that the travel agents were overreacting.

Hebrew University Professor S. Simon, an authority on Nazism and anti-Semitism, seemed to confirm that view. He hinted that the travel agents might be using the charge of anti-Semitism to get back at the airline, whose new policy would eliminate their services and commissions.

He decried indiscriminate charges of anti-Semitism, especially during Holocaust Remembrance Week, when Jewish emotions run high.

In another development, Lufthansa denied the travel agents' contention that its officials refuse to visit Jerusalem.

"At this very moment, an official Lufthansa delegation is on its way here and will go straight from the airport to Jerusalem for negotiations with Israeli Tourism and Transportation ministries officials," a spokesman said.

**JAPANESE LIBERATORS OF DACHAU  
JOIN IN YOM HASHOAH CEREMONIES**

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, April 27 (JTA) -- Fifty Japanese-American veterans of World War II who helped liberate the Dachau concentration camp will participate in the Holocaust memorial ceremonies here preceding Israel Independence Day this week.

The veterans will attend the opening of an exhibition of snapshots they made when they entered the death camp in Germany 47 years ago.

The exhibit, assembled by the San Francisco Holocaust Oral History Project, was mounted under the patronage of Bnai Zion, an American Zionist fraternal order.

It is the first time the photographs have been publicly displayed.

The veterans, whose average age is 72, were recruited from among the Japanese-Americans incarcerated in internment camps after the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.

Their division of Nisei, Americans of Japanese descent, became the most decorated unit of the U.S. armed forces in World War II. It received a total of 18,000 citations, an average of three per soldier.

For reasons still shrouded in mystery, the soldiers were forbidden, on penalty of court martial, to speak of their Dachau experience while still in the armed forces.

Since then, however, much attention has been focused on their exploits and a recent reunion with local Jewish survivors of Dachau in the San Francisco Bay Area attracted national media interest in the United States.