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**TALKS WITH SYRIA BACK ON TRACK,
WHILE PALESTINIAN TALKS FLOUNDER**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Sept. 20 (JTA) -- Israeli peace talks with Syria appear to be back on track and those with the Palestinians seem to be floundering as the negotiations continue in Washington.

The minicrisis that erupted with Syria at the end of last week may have been designed to convince the United States to intervene directly in the talks, Israeli Cabinet ministers said Sunday after receiving a report on the negotiations.

They seemed less sanguine about negotiations with the Palestinians, who appear to lack both authority and clarity.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin reiterated that Israel would decline to enter into territorial negotiations with Syria in the absence of a signal by Damascus that it is ready for a full, contractual peace with the Jewish state, involving both security arrangements and normalized relations, the ministers said.

Rabin's implication, though, was that in exchange for such terms, he would indeed be prepared to trade land on the Golan Heights.

The talks are now in their fourth week. They will adjourn before the Jewish New Year, which starts next Sunday night. No date has been set for their resumption.

The Israeli news media reported Sunday that Jerusalem is proposing a round in October, but the Arabs seem reluctant to reconvene before the U.S. presidential election in November. There was no official confirmation of this report, however.

The negotiations with Syria are continuing in the absence of any new American presence, Interior Minister Arye Deri, the Shas party leader, told reporters after the Cabinet meeting.

"They have found a formula to resolve the crisis," he said.

Israel is insisting on clarity regarding the "nature of the peace" before entering into any territorial dimension of the dispute, he said.

Don't Know 'What The Syrians Want'

Housing Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, a confidant of the prime minister's, spoke of the prospect of arrangements under which "the Syrians pull their army back to Damascus, in addition to full, normal relations with Israel."

Education Minister Shulamit Aloni, who heads the left-wing Meretz bloc, said the domestic dispute over the future of the Golan Heights is "premature."

"We still don't really know what the Syrians want," Aloni said. She envisaged a scenario in which Israel would recognize Syrian sovereignty over the Golan and lease back sections of it for a long period of time.

Aloni referred specifically to areas "where our people are living" as those which Israel would wish to lease.

Rabin said in an interview with army radio that the Palestine Liberation Organization leadership in Tunis is playing a "harmful role" in the peace process.

Similarly, Deri said there is "no clear address" on the Palestinian side.

"The leadership is not united," he said. "We

have evidence that the PLO in Tunis is actively seeking to block certain members of the delegation and certain other leaders in the territories."

Former Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir has strongly attacked the Rabin government's readiness to concede land on the Golan for peace.

Speaking over the weekend to army radio, Shamir said: "We should do everything possible for peace, but without prejudicing the vital interests of the State of Israel.

"No one on Earth rushes to give up territory under his control. Nothing has been said by Syria that attests to a significant change of its positions regarding Israel. Everything has come from our side," he said.

"We should be talking about peace and about the conditions for peace, but why rush with declarations about readiness to give up territory on the Golan Heights? If we do not give up the Golan Heights they will remain in our hands."

Shamir said the Likud had left the country in a good condition which the present government "has not yet succeeded in spoiling, save for spreading fear and despondency among our own people, and heightening expectations among the Arabs regarding territorial concessions in the Golan, and in Judea, Samaria and Gaza."

Shamir repeated his pledge to quit as party leader and to quit political life altogether once the Likud embarks upon a process of selecting a new leader.

**TALKS ON REGIONAL WATER RESOURCES
FOCUS ON PRAGMATISM, NOT POLITICS**

By Cynthia Mann

States News Service

WASHINGTON, Sept. 20 (JTA) -- There was an effort to play down political conflict and promote pragmatic solutions at the two-day round of multilateral talks on Middle East water resources held here last week.

Indeed, the urgency of the region's water problems could provide an important impetus for Arab-Israeli cooperation, according to the head of Israel's delegation to the talks, Dan Zaslavsky.

Five sets of multilateral talks on various regional issues being held throughout the world are designed to supplement and build confidence for the bilateral peace talks now in progress here involving the Israelis, Palestinians, Jordanians, Syrians and Lebanese.

There is "no question" that the talks "affect each other," Zaslavsky, who is a professor at the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, said Friday, in an appearance at the National Press Club.

"The multilaterals help by making open contacts" between Arabs and Israelis "possible and acceptable," he said.

Zaslavsky, who was Israel's water commissioner until earlier this month, said the Washington round, attended by technical experts from more than 30 nations, was characterized by a sense of urgency.

There was a recognition that "unless we do something quickly," he said, "we will damage the system and destroy the few resources" of the Middle East.

There was a feeling, he said, "that we

shouldn't wait until every (regional) conflict is settled but get to work and make up for the time lost."

He said even the thorny question of water rights would have to take a back seat to Arab-Israeli cooperative efforts to address enhanced water management.

'We All Sit In The Same Boat'

Zaslavsky said there was an attempt at the talks to "forego politics" and emphasize water technology to find some answers that will ultimately provide a model for the rest of the world.

"The trouble with arid land" in the Middle East is "its extreme sensitivity to misuse," said Zaslavsky, but "humid areas will suffer from the same problems."

Experts from countries with bountiful water supplies are therefore participating in the talks because "the lessons learned in the Middle East can be transferred to the rest of the world" to "meet the coming crisis," he said. "We all sit in the same boat."

The experts concluded that better water management is key, he said, adding that more efficient farming techniques could increase water production as much as fivefold.

Zaslavsky said the other fundamental conclusion reached was that desalination is the most important technology for the future.

With the proliferation of chemical compounds that become more and more difficult to track, countries will resort increasingly to desalination as the "ultimate technology to be sure water is free from all chemicals," he said.

Finally, the participants agreed an effort must be made to close the current gap between the cost of water and agriculture's ability to pay for it. But even countries with an ample water supply cannot afford to subsidize water so that it is nearly free to farmers, said Zaslavsky.

He said a system where water is sold at cost would encourage farmers who are more efficient.

Meanwhile, more water must be transferred from agriculture to municipal and industrial use, he said, citing his own recent initiative as water commissioner to cut by one-third the allotment of water to Israeli farmers.

Of all the countries in the Middle East, Israel and Jordan have the severest water problems, said Zaslavsky. They have the lowest amount of potential water and lack other resources, such as oil, to help solve technical problems.

He also said the West Bank aquifer is particularly subject to overuse and that the solution must be approached cooperatively by the Israelis and Palestinians who live there.

Change In Stance On Representation

Zaslavsky said the concrete accomplishments of last week's talks were small but significant. Several countries outside the region agreed to survey desalination techniques and recommend sites for pilot programs, while others agreed to review and report back on water management techniques when the talks resume in January in Switzerland.

Also last week, the multilateral talks on arms control resumed in Moscow, while the next round on the environment is scheduled to start in The Hague on Oct. 26. Talks on economic development will open Oct. 29 in Paris and talks on the refugee problem will begin Nov. 11 in Ottawa.

Israel has boycotted the talks on refugees

and economic development because of a dispute over the participation of Palestinians who do not live in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Israeli officials recently declared they will relax their opposition to Palestinian experts from the Diaspora, but remain opposed to the presence of residents of East Jerusalem. It is unclear at present how that will affect their role in the two rounds of talks.

Meanwhile, Syria and Lebanon have boycotted all the multilateral talks.

ARAFAT BEHAVIOR REPORTED ERRATIC BY PALESTINIANS WHO CONSULT HIM

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Sept. 20 (JTA) -- Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasir Arafat has been behaving erratically, causing indecision among Palestinian delegates to the Middle East peace talks, according to the Israeli daily Ma'ariv.

Members of the Palestinian delegation wishing to consult with him have been embarrassed by his stubborn responses and say he does not advise them on how to act in the negotiations with Israel, according to Palestinian sources in the territories quoted by the paper Sept. 17.

The sources have labeled recent meetings with Arafat as "disgraceful," saying he bursts into shouting fits at the delegation members, apologizes, then shouts again.

His behavior has been the cause of a breakdown in the Middle East peace talks being held in Washington, sources report.

They say that in effect, he directs the delegation members not to advance toward Israel in the negotiations.

The Palestinian sources say Arafat is also under pressure from within the PLO, with vocal opposition coming from a plethora of senior PLO members, including those in the mainstream Al Fatah group.

Among his critics is the head of the special commando unit called Force 17, whose name was only given as Abu Tayyeb.

But despite the inability to depend on clear advice from Arafat, the delegation must still consult with him, the sources say.

Even if they do not put all his directives into practice, at least outwardly they are still under his authority, and express willingness to fulfill his orders, Ma'ariv reported.

ISRAELI ARABS TO SEE KING IN JORDAN

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Sept. 20 (JTA) -- A delegation of seven Israeli Arabs will go to Jordan on Thursday to convey greetings to King Hussein, who is recovering from kidney surgery he recently had in the United States.

The visit is unusual, in that ordinarily, Israeli citizens are not permitted to travel to Jordan, with which Israel is technically at war.

But it is not without precedent. Fifteen years ago, missions of Israeli Arabs went to Amman to convey condolences to the king on the death of his wife, Queen Alia. Others were invited on an individual basis, to attend ceremonies such as the king's birthday or anniversaries of his rise to the throne.

The seven who are making the current visit are Ibrahim Nimer Hussein, chairman of the Arab Local Councils Committee, and four other mayors, as well as two local religious leaders.

STABBING OF SOLDIER IN GAZA STRIP MAY SIGNAL RADICALISM IN TERRITORIES

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Sept. 20 (JTA) -- The brutal stabbing of a soldier in the Gaza Strip over the weekend has heightened concern here that progress at the peace talks in Washington will accelerate terrorist attacks by groups fearing the diminishing of the intifada as a mass popular movement.

The victim of the attack, Pvt. Alon Karavani, 21, was reported to be out of danger at Soroka Hospital in Beersheba on Sunday. He sustained multiple stab wounds, which he said were inflicted by Arabs disguised as religious Jews.

Two terrorist organizations claimed responsibility for the assault.

In a separate incident, a grenade was thrown Sunday morning at an Israel Defense Force unit patrolling the marketplace in the West Bank city of Nablus. None of the soldiers was hit, but nine local residents were wounded by a grenade fragment, one of them seriously.

Meanwhile, authorities announced that on Sept. 1, they arrested a terrorist leader who had eluded capture for 16 years. Mahmoud Sulaiman Ktamash, 42, who was reportedly found in a villa in Ramallah, was identified as the commander of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine in the West Bank.

Also seized at the time were lists of PFLP activists in the territories. The discovery is expected to lead to massive arrests, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported Sunday.

Ktamash, described as one of the most dangerous terrorists active in the territories, reportedly received his orders directly from PFLP chief George Habash.

His arrest took place at the same time that Israeli security forces were releasing some 800 Palestinian prisoners from detention camps, a conciliatory gesture toward the Palestinians which was widely reported.

'Cried And Prayed To God'

The stabbing incident began Friday afternoon when Karavani was given a lift at a hitchhiking stop near the Bureij refugee camp, in a car carrying yellow Israeli license plates. The three men inside wore skullcaps and appeared to be religious Jews.

Following standard regulations, he sat in the back seat. As the car drove off, he was stabbed a number of times and thrown out at the side of a road near an olive grove.

Sometime later, two Arab passersby summoned help, and Karavani was rushed to the hospital in serious condition. He was transferred out of the intensive care unit Sunday.

Deprived of speech by a wound to his throat, Karavani reconstructed the attack for doctors and relatives in writing. He also said the experience had turned him toward religion.

"When I was on the verge of death, I cried and prayed to God, and vowed that if I remained alive, I would observe the Sabbath and the mitzvot."

Claiming responsibility for the incident was a group calling itself the Fath Hawks, previously known as the Black Panthers, and the Az al-Din al-Kassam group, the military branch of the Hamas fundamentalist movement.

The Kassam group is held responsible for the murder of two IDF soldiers, Ilan Sa'adon and Avi

Sasportas, by terrorists apparently using the same technique as that employed against Karavani.

Three other abduction attempts over the past five years of the intifada failed after the soldiers who were seized managed to make their escape.

JEWISH LEADERS, UPSET AT IMPASSE, PLAN TO REBUFF GESTURE FROM SAUDIS

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, Sept. 20 (JTA) -- For the first time, Saudi Arabia has invited American Jewish leaders to attend a national holiday reception at the kingdom's embassy in Washington.

But many of those invited do not plan to attend.

Invitations to attend a reception this Wednesday in honor of Saudi Arabia's National Day were extended to officials of a number of Jewish organizations, apparently those who met with the Saudi ambassador, Prince Bandar Ibn Sultan, last November.

That meeting, with more than 60 representatives of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and the American Jewish Congress, followed four years of private talks between the ambassador and AJCongress officials.

But Saudi Arabia's failure to go beyond goodwill gestures toward American Jews and announce substantive policy changes toward Israel has disappointed Jewish leaders.

As a result, many of those invited have decided not to attend the reception in Washington, while others are undecided.

Phil Baum, associate executive director of the AJCongress, hailed the invitation as "a good sign, a sign that they intend to open up and be available to the Jewish community. It would be wrong to just be indifferent to it."

But Baum said he is disturbed by the Saudi failure to drop the Arab secondary boycott against firms that do business with Israel, as well as harsh comments concerning Israel that were made last week by the Saudi ambassador to the United Nations.

"They have not progressed as rapidly as they should," said Baum. "Whether that should be an adequate reason not to go, we don't know. In all likelihood, it will be worthwhile to go, to intimate to them that more progress is desirable."

Lawrence Rubin, executive vice chair of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, said, "We're not going to be there."

He said there had been indications last month that Saudi Arabia would make a breakthrough statement on the boycott during a visit there by James Baker, then the U.S. secretary of state.

When no statement materialized, "we were disappointed," said Rubin.

Malcolm Hoenlein, executive director of the Conference of Presidents, said he did not plan to be at the reception.

Asked about the outcome of last year's meeting, he said "there were many promises that remain unfulfilled. And we remain upset that they have not acted on the boycott of Israel and remain in a state of war with Israel."

At the November 1991 meeting, Prince Bandar denied that his country had asked to buy more sophisticated F-15 fighter jets from the United States. Earlier this month, the White House announced it would sell the Saudis up to 72 of the aircraft, despite objections from Israel.

JEWISH LEADERS EXPRESS RELIEF AT FRENCH VOTE ON EUROPEAN UNITY

By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, Sept. 20 (JTA) -- The French people's narrow vote Sunday to approve a treaty on European unity has come as a big relief to the Jewish leadership here, which believes integration of the European nations spells greater security for Jews.

"To us Jews, this vote means we are heading toward" a Europe "of democracy, of more tolerance, of greater mutual respect -- a Europe in which we will be able to bring an end to ethnic and religious wars and advance human dignity," Jean Kahn, head of CRIF, the representative body of French Jewry, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

Kahn said the Holocaust could not have happened in a unified Europe. "Had this Europe existed back in the '30s, I am convinced 6 million Jews would not have been murdered."

The so-called Maastricht Treaty, which calls for closer economic, monetary and defense cooperation among the 12 nations of the European Community, was approved by a slim 50.95 percent of the French electorate in a referendum Sunday.

Had the vote gone the other way, it would likely have scuttled the entire process of European integration.

Right-wing extremist leader Jean-Marie Le Pen, a leading opponent of the treaty, told JTA before results were tabulated that French President Francois Mitterrand should step down no matter what the result.

Le Pen, who heads the far-right National Front, said he was confident of winning up to 20 percent of the vote in the parliamentary elections next March.

The Jewish community has watched Le Pen's progress with great concern. So far he has openly attacked North African immigrants while being careful to avoid attacking Jews.

But from time to time he has let down his veil and referred to "cosmopolitans" or "the alien party," seen as code names for Jews.

Many hope increasing European unity will lead to the fading away of far-right parties such as the National Front.

But others believe it may have a contrary effect. To those who fear an over-centralized Europe, Le Pen may seem the only alternative.

HUNGARIAN PRESIDENT VISITS ISRAEL, URGES SOLIDARITY TO FIGHT RACISM

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Sept. 20 (JTA) -- Concerned over allegations of anti-Semitism in his country, the president of Hungary, Dr. Arpad Goncz, opened an official visit to Israel this week by urging international solidarity against any resurgence of fascist or racist ideas.

Goncz spoke at a formal ceremony ushering in a four-day state visit that reciprocates one that Israeli President Chaim Herzog paid to Hungary earlier this year.

In his remarks, Herzog spoke of the long history shared by Hungary and the Jews, some of it marked by tolerance and amity, some by discrimination and persecution.

Hundreds of Israelis of Hungarian origin were invited to a dinner at the president's residence to meet the Hungarian head of state.

On the eve of his departure from Budapest,

Goncz sought to assure Israelis that anti-Semitism was confined to the far-right wing of his country.

But the president, making the first-ever visit by a Hungarian chief of state to Israel, acknowledged that recent anti-Semitic utterances by prominent Hungarian figures could harm his country's image in the West.

Although this is his first visit to Israel, the Hungarian prime minister, Jozsef Antall, came here in May.

Antall had asked Istvan Csurka, vice president of the ruling Hungarian Democratic Forum, to accompany him. But Csurka's regular anti-Semitic diatribes make him a subject of scorn here and among Jews worldwide, and demonstrations against him here made him cancel his visit.

Possibly angered by the upcoming visit by Goncz, who is a political rival, Csurka let rip a barrage of anti-Israel, anti-Semitic statements. His remarks raised concern here and prompted a visiting U.S. congressman, Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), to warn that such fascist words could prompt a freeze in U.S. investment in Hungary.

Csurka's latest anti-Semitic outburst blamed Jews, liberals and Western financiers for undermining the Hungarian government.

No 'Clear Condemnation' From Government

Goncz, a 70-year-old playwright and former prisoner of the Communists, expressed concern that Csurka's fascism could indeed affect Western investment in his country and help generate economic momentum there following the collapse of communism.

He talked of this both with reporters in Israel and earlier with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency in the Hungarian capital, as he prepared to depart.

Goncz said Eastern Europe has been left with a legacy of deeply rooted anti-Semitism, which he compared to Western European xenophobia. But he said Hungary should not be branded fascist because of the actions of some far-right elements.

Still, fascism seems to be pervasive. The most recent expression of this came last weekend from the vice president of the World Federation of Hungarians, which held a gathering here that brought together Hungarian expatriates.

A statement by Jeno Fonay that "those who condemn fascism are paid agents of the Bolsheviks" who should "not be allowed to live and dictate (matters)" in Hungary brought forth a call for his resignation from Leslie Keller, chairman of the East European Commission of the World Jewish Congress.

"It is a pity that the Hungarian government has not until now issued a clear condemnation of such manifestations," said Keller, who is also president of the World Federation of Hungarian Jews.

Concerns over anti-Semitism in Hungary have prompted a number of Jews to consider aliyah. Some 39 Hungarian Jewish families are to leave for Israel at the end of October to explore possible settlement there. They are being directed to a development area in the Galilee by the Settlement Department of the World Zionist Organization.

They met last week with the chairman of the WZO Settlement Department, Yehiel Leket.

It is estimated that between 80,000 and 100,000 Jews live in Hungary. Some observers believe the number is much higher.

(Contributing to this report was JTA correspondent Agnes Bohm in Budapest.)