

**SENATE ADOPTS FOREIGN AID BILL WITH LOAN GUARANTEES FOR ISRAEL****By Kimberly C. Moore**  
States News Service

WASHINGTON, Oct. 1 (JTA) -- The Senate overwhelmingly approved a foreign aid bill Thursday that provides guarantees for up to \$10 billion in commercial loans long sought by Israel to help aid immigrant absorption.

The bill, which must be reconciled with a version adopted earlier by the House of Representatives, also contains \$3 billion in U.S. aid to Israel, including \$1.2 billion in economic assistance and \$1.8 billion in military aid. It was expected to go to President Bush for signature as early as Monday.

The foreign aid bill, adopted by a vote of 87-12, was one of numerous pieces of legislation that Congress was racing to pass before adjournment, now tentatively scheduled for Tuesday.

Other bills of special interest to the Jewish community include one containing funds for Jewish refugee resettlement in this country and another that would circumvent a 1990 Supreme Court ruling seen as restricting religious freedom.

Adoption of the loan guarantee package for Israel ends a more-than-yearlong battle that sharply strained the Bush administration's relations with Israel and the U.S. Jewish community.

The legislation adopted Thursday, which authorizes guarantees for \$2 billion over each of the next five years, leaves tremendous discretion to the president to suspend the loan program if he determines that the "terms and conditions have been breached."

Those terms include an understanding that Israel will virtually freeze the construction of Jewish housing in the administered territories.

The Senate version of the bill differs from that passed by the House in that it includes language calling on the Arab League countries to renounce their boycott against Israel and the so-called secondary boycott of companies that do business with the Jewish state.

The provision urges Bush to take "more concrete steps" in ending the boycott, including encouraging American allies to enact laws prohibiting business companies from participating in it.

**Bush Criticized On F-15 Sale**

Another issue currently before Congress is the administration's proposed sale of up to 72 advanced F-15 fighter jets to Saudi Arabia.

During a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on the subject Thursday, Sen. Paul Wellstone (D-Minn.) said he planned to introduce a resolution in the Senate urging delay of the sale until March.

He accused the Bush administration of "giving lip-service to arms control in the region."

The committee chairman, Sen. Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.), criticized the administration for failing to follow the custom of notifying Congress informally of the sale 20 days prior to formal notification.

Once Congress receives formal notification, it has 30 days to vote down an arms sale; otherwise, it automatically goes through.

Calling it "the largest single arms sale in

U.S. history," Pell said there are "serious questions as to whether or not this sale might upset the delicate military balance that exists between Israel and its neighbors."

But despite the sharp rhetoric, the sale is expected to go through without a serious challenge. That is because it is seen as preserving jobs in the defense industry, a benefit lawmakers would be loath to thwart in an election year.

Israel is also not mounting a strong challenge to the sale, despite concerns that it might alter the strategic military balance in the Middle East.

That is because the administration has decided to offset the sale, in part, by providing Israel with 25 Apache and 10 Black Hawk assault helicopters, as well as 70 Patriot missile defense systems. The United States will also store \$300 million worth of military equipment in Israel, which can be used in an emergency.

**Compromise On Refugee Funding**

In other legislation of interest to the Jewish community, a House-Senate conference committee has reconciled language on a bill that would provide \$385 million in funding next year for the resettlement of refugees in the United States, including Jews from the republics of the former Soviet Union.

While that is below the current funding level of \$410 million, it is substantially higher than the administration's budget request of \$227 million, which would have represented a 45 percent cut in funding.

Such a cut would have been a serious financial blow to Jewish community federations, which together received \$39 million of the funding this year to help resettle the nearly 47,000 Jewish refugees who arrived here from the republics that formerly constituted the Soviet Union.

The refugee resettlement funds are contained in a labor, health and human services appropriations bill that was expected to be sent to the White House for signature over the weekend.

Meanwhile, Jewish groups are watching anxiously to see if Congress will manage to adopt the Religious Freedom Restoration Act before adjournment next week.

The bill cleared the House Judiciary Committee on Thursday morning, making it available for floor action. But the Senate Judiciary Committee postponed a hearing on the act that had been scheduled for Thursday, and there was no immediate word on when it would be rescheduled.

The bill would reverse the impact of the Supreme Court's 1990 ruling in *Employment Division vs. Smith*, which said that states no longer needed to prove a "compelling interest" in adopting laws that could encroach on religious practices.

Mark Pelavin, Washington representative of the American Jewish Congress, said supporters of the bill are "hopeful that time can be found" to consider it before Congress adjourns. Otherwise, the bill would have to be reintroduced next year.

President Bush reportedly has not yet decided whether to sign the bill if it does pass Congress. But Pelavin said preliminary discussions with low-level administration officials have been good.

## PERES CALLS ON ARAB STATES TO JOIN ISRAEL IN NEW MIDEAST

By Larry Yudelson

UNITED NATIONS, Oct. 1 (JTA) -- Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres called on Arab states Thursday to join Israel in creating a new Middle East.

And unlike in years past, representatives from most of the Arab countries were present in the General Assembly chamber to hear the invitation.

The Iranians and Iraqi delegates were the only ones who could be seen leaving the room before Peres spoke, while both Lebanon and Jordan had more diplomats on hand than most other countries.

Speaking later before American Jewish leaders, Peres asked for their help as well in promoting the peace process.

Both talks were well received, a reaction most notable at the United Nations, where the warm applause contrasted sharply with the perfunctory response given earlier speakers, who included leaders from several other countries.

Peres sketched out the progress in the bilateral negotiations, which he hopes will "bring an end to the conflicts of the past." He also discussed his hopes for the multilateral negotiations "to lay the foundation for the future."

The Israeli foreign minister said that the negotiations between Syria and Israel need "new approaches and creative thinking."

To that end, echoing calls from other Israeli ministers, he urged Syrian President Hafez Assad to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Such a summit was rejected earlier in the week by Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa.

"Meetings at a higher level, as requested by Israel, are an attempt to undermine the framework and mechanism according to which the Arab and Israeli parties have met in the Madrid peace conference," Sharaa told the General Assembly on Monday.

### Rabin Says Summit Is 'Premature'

And in Jerusalem, Rabin told his Labor Party that talk of such a summit meeting was "premature."

Addressing the Labor Party's Knesset faction, Rabin said a long process of negotiations is needed to bridge the gaps between the two countries' positions.

Only then, he said, would a summit be essential, in order that peace would be "felt by the peoples, and specifically by the Syrian people."

Rabin's remarks were seen by some observers as an attempt to cool speculation, rife in recent days, concerning such a summit.

Peres also called for changes in the multilateral talks, which, he complained, suffer "from loose organization, which has resulted in seminars rather than negotiations."

The multilateral talks are the only way for Peres to make a mark on the peace process, after being frozen out of the direct negotiations by Rabin, his longtime rival in the Labor Party.

Peres proposed that the talks be conducted in a coordinated manner, with the steering committee being made up of foreign ministers. The talks should also be intensified through more frequent and longer meetings, he said.

Calling the multilateral talks "essentially

economic," Peres said the real danger facing the Arab states is not Israel, but "the poverty that creates protest, even if it's occasionally cloaked in a religious mantle."

"We have to build a common market in the Middle East," he said.

Besides economic growth, Peres cited the need for arms control, dignity for refugees without threatening the existing demographic balance, environmental protection and water resources, as well as religious freedom, pluralistic values and human rights.

"We need to build a new Middle East of, by and for the people," he said.

### A Return To The 'Golden Age'

In his address to the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, Peres said he had asked the secretary-general of the United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organization to convene a conference of intellectuals, academics and journalists from the Middle East.

"Let's try to come back to the golden age of cooperation between Jews, Moslems and Christians," said Peres.

The chief of UNESCO promised to work on it, said an Israeli diplomat.

The warm and almost jocular tone of Peres' remarks contrasted with the cool address Rabin gave Jewish leaders in August, a difference that could be based as much as anything on the difference between the two men's personalities.

Peres asked American Jewry to identify "totally and completely" with his government's effort to "bring peace to the Middle East on a secure basis."

He articulated a vision that included drafting "every person of good will" to support his broader efforts for a new Middle East.

"In 1948, we built a state. In 1992, we have to build a region," Peres said.

American Jews should be "mobilizing the business community of Arabs, Jews, Americans, Europeans. Tell them, 'Don't trust the governments, but let us, the business community, intervene immediately to make peace.'"

(Contributing to this report was JTA correspondent David Landau in Jerusalem.)

### FRENCH OFFICIAL IS OFF TO MIDEAST

By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, Oct. 1 (JTA) -- Amid official denials that he is seeking to arrange an Israeli-Syrian summit, French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas will travel to Syria, Egypt and Israel over the weekend.

Political analysts believe that while the trip was not explicitly mandated by Jerusalem, Dumas is acting with the approval of the Israelis. He will meet with Syrian President Hafez Assad, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Dumas flew unexpectedly to Damascus last month to meet with Assad in a meeting that came two days after he held extensive consultations in Paris with visiting Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.

At the time, a Foreign Ministry spokesman in Jerusalem denied that Dumas had gone to Damascus at Peres' request.

Dumas himself has declined to elaborate on whether he had carried a message from or to the Israeli Cabinet.

## ALIJAH FROM NORTH AMERICA, EX-SOVIET LANDS UP SHARPLY

By Michele Chablin and David Landau

JERUSALEM, Oct. 1 (JTA) -- Aliyah from the republics of the former Soviet Union rose by more than a third in September, fueling hopes that immigration is finally on the upswing.

September was, in fact, the best month for overall immigration to Israel this year, with a total of 7,585 newcomers arriving. That represents a 21 percent increase from August, when 6,281 people immigrated.

One of the biggest gains was in aliyah from North America, which reached a four-year high, with 418 immigrants arriving in September. That brought North American aliyah for the year to 1,449, a 43 percent increase over the same period last year.

There was also an increase in immigration from India. A total of 113 Indian immigrants have arrived this year, a 30 percent increase over 1991.

Jewish Agency officials attributed the increased interest in aliyah among India's 6,000 Jews to the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel earlier this year.

A total of 6,725 immigrants arrived here from the former Soviet Union, bringing immigration from that region for the year to 43,936, according to the Soviet Research Bureau of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry in New York.

September was also a banner month for immigration of Jews from the former Soviet republics to the United States. According to the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society in New York, 6,073 arrived under the U.S. government's refugee program, bringing the total for the 1992 fiscal year, which ended Wednesday, to a record 46,870.

### Record Number Of Jewish Refugees In The U.S.

"What we experienced this fiscal year is part of the largest movement of Jewish refugees to this country since the passage of the National Origins Act of 1924," said Martin Kesselhaut, president of HIAS.

In Israel, immigration officials are optimistic that the steady rise in aliyah during the past few months is a trend that will continue.

Jewish Agency Chairman Simcha Diniz predicted at a news briefing last week that some 70,000 immigrants would arrive by the end of this year, and that as many as 120,000 would immigrate in 1993.

The rise in aliyah is due in large part to political and economic tensions in the Soviet successor states, especially in the Moslem areas, according to Baruch Gur, head of the Jewish Agency's Soviet Jewry department.

"Due to ethnic tensions and the threat of war, more Jews are trying to leave the republics, and we have stepped up our efforts to get them out," he said.

Gur said the situation in the Moslem republic of Tajikistan is "almost at a state of anarchy, with fighting on the streets and people carrying weapons."

A direct flight carried Jews out of Tajikistan last week, and more are scheduled, he said.

The Jewish Agency official also spoke of tensions in Uzbekistan and the ethnic unrest in Azerbaijan. He said there is "growing fear in Georgia, where children are being kidnapped, and continuing problems in Moldova and Yugoslavia."

In the war-ravaged former Yugoslav republic

of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the vast majority of Jews have been evacuated from the capital of Sarajevo, but a small number apparently remain and now wish to come to Israel.

A delegation from the community spent Rosh Hashanah in Israel and met with Jewish Agency officials about further rescue efforts. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, meanwhile, is providing assistance to the community, in cooperation with the Jewish Agency.

Economic concerns have also played a role in the aliyah recovery, said Gur of the Jewish Agency. "We see increasing numbers of people making aliyah from small towns in Russia and the Ukraine, where things are quiet politically, but difficult economically."

Similarly, the poor state of the U.S. economy is said to be a leading factor behind the jump in aliyah from North America.

According to Akiva Werber, director of the North American section of the Jewish Agency, "the recession in the U.S. has motivated a lot of people to make aliyah. People are saving less money than they used to, and many professionals have lost their jobs. The financial security that kept them in the U.S. just isn't there anymore."

Werber stressed, however, that most North Americans consider aliyah for many years before taking the plunge.

"The vast majority of those who recently immigrated have wanted to try living in Israel for a long time. The bad economy and the growing crime rate in many cities have simply acted as a catalyst," he explained.

"For some of these immigrants," he added, "America is no longer the 'golden medinah,' " the golden land.

### ISRAELI COPTERS STRIKE HEZBOLLAH IN ONGOING BATTLES IN LEBANON

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Oct. 1 (JTA) -- Israeli clashes with Hezbollah fighters in Lebanon continued this week, with an Israeli helicopter attack against the pro-Iranian terrorist bases on Wednesday night.

The Israeli strike followed a massive attack by Hezbollah on Israeli-backed Lebanese forces over Rosh Hashanah.

The Israeli air force helicopters returned safely to their base after hitting targets in two villages southeast of Tyre.

The attack destroyed the home of a Hezbollah leader in the village of Deir Kanoun, near Tyre, Lebanese news reports said. The leader, Ahmad Kasseir, was not home at the time. Targets in the village of Ein Abu-Suwair were also reportedly hit.

Heavy Hezbollah fire Tuesday across a broad front in the Israeli-controlled security zone of south Lebanon triggered fighting that left at least nine dead.

The Hezbollah terrorists killed an Irish member of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and wounded another when they pushed through a checkpoint to attack a position of the Israeli-trained South Lebanese Army.

The aggressive push occurred after Hezbollah directed Katyusha rockets, mortars and fire from anti-aircraft guns, Sager anti-tank missiles and machine guns at the security zone.

Two SLA soldiers, at least two Lebanese civilians and four Hezbollah gunmen were killed in the fighting, which was described as one of the heaviest in recent months.

## GERMAN JEWISH LEADERS VOICE CONCERN AS FOREIGN MINISTER VISITS TORCHED CAMP

By David Kantor

BONN, Oct. 1 (JTA) -- The Jewish community here welcomed official government acknowledgement of the danger represented by the torching last weekend of a Holocaust memorial at the site of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp.

But Jewish leaders voiced concern at the absence of decisive action by the authorities against the right-wing thugs responsible for the recent wave of anti-Semitic attacks and assaults against asylum-seekers.

German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel laid a wreath at the Sachsenhausen site on Tuesday, accompanied by leaders of the Jewish community.

Kinkel later told reporters he had been delegated by Chancellor Helmut Kohl to express shock and indignation at the attack and at the ongoing assaults on foreigners in the country. He said the government would take action to stop the violence and put the perpetrators behind bars.

But the promises did not placate Jewish leaders, who expressed deep disappointment at the failure of the government to take decisive action.

"When left-wing extremists resorted to violence, police acted effectively to stop them," said Ignaz Bubis, the newly elected chairman of the German Jewish community. "Unfortunately, we haven't seen that kind of resolve when neo-Nazi attack refugees night after night."

He called on Germany to take immediate action "for its own sake," and not because of image problems abroad.

### Doubts About A Jewish Community in Germany

Max Willner, an 86-year-old survivor of Sachsenhausen, who also accompanied Kinkel, said, "I have serious doubts whether it was right to re-establish a Jewish community in this country."

"Many Jewish youths ask me if it is right for them to stay in Germany. Today, I can hardly answer those questions," Willner said.

Kinkel laid the wreath at the site of a destroyed barrack that had housed Jewish prisoners. Demolished with it was a new exhibit on the Nazi persecution of the Jews, an issue that was downplayed during decades of communist rule in eastern Germany.

The wreath-laying gesture came as German President Richard von Weizsacker pledged to denounce the wave of anti-Semitic and racist attacks in a major address on Saturday.

In a meeting Wednesday with Jean Kahn, head of the umbrella group for French Jewish organizations, CRIF, Weizsacker said that on the occasion of the second anniversary of the unification of Germany he would urge perseverance "in efforts to combat all forms of racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia."

The German president met with Kahn, who is also chairman of the European branch of the World Jewish Congress, when visiting Lyon to receive an honorary degree at Lyon University.

In his visit to Sachsenhausen on Tuesday, Willner said much had changed since he left the camp exactly 50 years ago. Gone from the concrete gate, for example, was the notorious concentration camp inscription "arbeit macht frei" (work liberates).

He said the area of detention for Jews was called "das kleine lager" (the small camp).

Barrack number 37, where he was held, no longer exists. A massive stone marks the site

where Willner and other inmates were imprisoned and tortured.

It was at that spot that Kinkel and the Jewish leaders laid wreaths and observed a moment of silence. The arson attack destroyed adjacent barrack number 38.

Investigators updated the visitors, including officials of the state of Brandenburg, on the status of the inquiry into the attack on the camp.

Kinkel and his guests followed the route taken exactly two weeks before by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on his visit to the now-destroyed barrack and museum.

Kinkel said his government had a commitment to the well-being of non-Germans living in the country. He said he understood the critical reactions both in Israel and among Jews worldwide to the recent manifestations of hatred and violence in Germany.

From the United States, a high-level delegation from the American Jewish Committee arrived in Germany this week for a firsthand look at the spreading violence and for talks with government and community leaders. They were scheduled to visit Sachsenhausen as part of their trip.

## TUNISIAN RULER SEES FRENCH RABBI, PARDONS TWO JEWISH PRISONERS

By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, Oct. 1 (JTA) -- The Tunisian president has received France's chief rabbi in a special visit and used the occasion to pardon two Jewish prisoners, including a teen-ager who murdered an Arab.

Rabbi Joseph Sitruk was visiting the Tunisian Jewish community on the eve of Rosh Hashanah. During his much-publicized trip, he secured the release of the prisoners.

President Zin Ben Ali, after granting the pardons, said, "The Jews in this country are full-fledged Tunisians, with the same rights and same duties as any other Tunisian."

Ben Ali also promised he would help solve a problem many French citizens of Tunisian origin have, of exporting possessions they left behind.

According to informed sources, the Tunisian president wants to boost local industry with investments by Jews of Tunisian origin.

Sources close to the rabbi described the president's welcome as "exceptionally warm." Ben Ali reportedly showed his visitors around the presidential palace in Carthage.

Sitruk described the Tunisian president as "courageous, moderate and perceptive."

Ben Ali "wanted to show to the Jewish community throughout the world that he was making a gesture by receiving me while being very close to the most extremist" Arabs, said Sitruk, hinting at the presence in that country of Palestine Liberation Organization headquarters.

Sitruk was accompanied by Pierre Bansard, the newly elected chairman of the French Consistoire, the body in charge of the religious institutions of French Jewry.

Tunisia has embarked on an attempt to repair any negative images it has in the West. In keeping with this, local authorities gave the visiting Jews a warm reception and billeted them in the capital's best hotel.

Sitruk was harshly but privately criticized by several members of the French Jewish leadership, who said it was not the duty of France's chief rabbi to help promote the interests of a foreign country.