

EGYPTIAN OFFICIAL PERSUADES ISRAEL TO JOIN REGIONAL TALKS IT BOYCOTTED

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Oct. 8 (JTA) -- In a policy shift, Israel has agreed to join multilateral peace talks on refugee affairs and regional economic development, which it previously boycotted.

The announcement was made Thursday evening after Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa made a lightning visit to Jerusalem.

Sources here credited Moussa with persuading Israel to join the two multilateral working groups, which it had until now boycotted because of participation by delegates linked to the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Israel's agreement to participate in the talks was announced at the end of a meeting that Moussa held with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres before flying back to Cairo.

He had reportedly handed Rabin "practical" proposals from President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt to advance negotiations with the Palestinians, who had recently complained that their talks with Israel were lagging behind those with Syria.

Israel had boycotted both working groups in the past because the Palestinians insisted on including representatives from outside the administered territories in those talks. This had been viewed here as an attempt to include the PLO in the talks.

Israel has now agreed to negotiate with representatives of the so-called Palestinian exile on three conditions: that they are not members of the Palestine National Council, that they are not residents of Jerusalem, and that they do not raise as an issue the right of Palestinian refugees to return to parts of Israel they fled after Israeli independence.

Visit No Longer A 'Sensation'

It was not clear whether Israel's consent to join the two working groups involved any Palestinian concessions.

It was also not clear whether Israel's action would prompt Syria or Lebanon to join the multilateral talks. They have boycotted not only the talks on refugees and economic development, but also the other three working groups: on disarmament, the environment and water resources.

Moussa's previously unannounced visit came as the country commemorated the fallen of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, when Israel beat back surprise attacks by Egypt and Syria after sustaining heavy losses.

The symbolism of the visit by the Egyptian minister was underlined by Rabin.

In an address at a memorial ceremony at the Mount Herzl military cemetery in Jerusalem, the prime minister took note of the fact that he was about to meet with his Egyptian guest. He said a lesson of the Yom Kippur War was the need to avoid a repetition of the mistakes that had led to the hostilities.

Moussa divided his tight schedule between Rabin and Peres, whom he met separately twice each before the three-way meeting later in the day.

Peres welcomed the surprise visit of the

Egyptian guest. "There were times when a visit by Egypt's foreign minister to Israel was a sensation and an event. Today it is part of ongoing working relations," he said.

Moussa began his long day with a half-hour meeting with Peres, before moving on to discussions with Rabin, to whom he handed the special message from Mubarak.

Rabin did not give Moussa an immediate reply to Mubarak's message nor to Egyptian suggestions on the Palestinian issue.

Coming out of the meeting with Rabin, Moussa said he was optimistic about negotiations with the Palestinians. Referring to a term used by former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, he said, "Sometimes constructive ambiguity is important." He did not elaborate.

He said Egypt expected more flexibility from Israel. "We want to launch a new Middle East, based on the common understanding that land for peace is the basis for this process," he said.

"The Palestinians have rights to be met, and all the countries in the region -- Israel included, of course -- have the right for a secure present and future."

Moussa and Peres differed on the linkage between the multilateral talks and the bilateral negotiations that have been taking place in Washington. Peres suggested one track should not impede the progress of the other.

His Egyptian counterpart argued that the two are linked.

PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CLASHES IN GAZA POINT TO A CONTINUED VIOLENT UPSURGE

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Oct. 8 (JTA) -- Arab violence in the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem over the Yom Kippur holiday has made it clear that Palestinian unrest is on the upswing despite the progress being made in Washington toward a peace settlement.

In fact, analysts attributed the upsurge in nationalist violence to Palestinian efforts to divert the focus away from the progress being made with Syria to their own cause.

The unrest in Gaza erupted Wednesday, when Israeli troops opened fire and used tear gas against thousands of Palestinians throwing stones and firebombs at a demonstration in solidarity with a hunger strike by Palestinian prisoners.

Arab sources claimed 63 hurt, including 43 by live fire and the remainder by rubber pellets. Five were said to be in serious condition, including a girl who lost an eye. Scores suffered from inhalation of tear gas, they said.

However, an Israeli army spokesman reported only 12 wounded, one seriously, based on reports at local hospitals. Several others were sent home after treatment.

A soldier sustained slight injuries in a stone-throwing attack.

In other Yom Kippur incidents, vandals in Jerusalem smashed windshields in several cars owned by Jews and daubed nationalist slogans on 25 Jewish gravestones on the Mount of Olives.

But they left untouched a nearby grave where the late Prime Minister Menachem Begin is buried.

BUSH SIGNS LEGISLATION PROVIDING LOAN GUARANTEES AND REFUGEE FUNDS

By Kimberly C. Moore
States News Service

WASHINGTON, Oct. 8 (JTA) -- President Bush has signed a bill adopted by Congress earlier this week that will provide Israel with guarantees for up to \$10 billion in loans over the next five years, to be used for immigrant absorption.

The president also signed a bill Tuesday evening that would provide \$381.5 million over the next fiscal year for the resettlement of refugees in the United States, including Jews from the republics of the former Soviet Union.

The loan guarantees were included in a foreign aid appropriations bill that also earmarks \$1.2 billion in economic assistance to Israel and \$1.8 billion in military aid -- the same amounts Israel has received annually since the mid-1980s.

Bush's signature on the bill ends a 13-month battle between the administration and the Israeli government over the loan guarantees, which soured relations between the White House and the American Jewish community.

Much of the friction focused on the administration's attempt to link the loan package to an Israeli settlement freeze in the administered territories. But that issue subsided over the summer, after Israel elected a Labor government committed to reducing settlement activity sharply.

Israeli officials expressed satisfaction that the loan guarantees have finally cleared Congress and the president's desk.

"Israel can now move to materialize those loans for the benefit of the newcomers" to the country, said one official at the embassy here.

The domestic refugee resettlement funds are contained in a bill appropriating funds for the Labor and Health and Human Services departments.

A portion of the funds will be funneled through local Jewish federations to provide language training, clothing and living quarters for newly arrived immigrants from Russia and the other republics of the former Soviet Union.

ALONI AGAIN ASSAILED BY ORTHODOX, THIS TIME OVER KASHRUT AND SHABBAT

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Oct. 8 (JTA) -- Education Minister Shulamit Aloni appears to be in hot water with Israel's religious parties again. Now the complaint is that she worked on Saturday and ate in non-kosher restaurants during a recent trip to Europe.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin had hardly recovered from a crisis Aloni triggered with his Shas coalition partners when the National Religious Party said he should tell her "to stop shaming Israel by desecrating the Sabbath."

NRP Knesset members, meeting with the prime minister on Thursday, produced a schedule of Aloni's meetings in Europe to back up their criticism and urged him to call his education minister to order.

Although NRP is in the opposition, its criticism of the outspoken education minister could make it more difficult for the fervently Orthodox Shas party to remain in the government.

Shas is still upset over a series of controversial remarks Aloni made last month. The party had threatened to quit the coalition after Aloni said Israel's non-Orthodox schoolchildren were

being "force-fed" the biblical account of creation. She also called for the removal of references to God in a memorial prayer for the dead.

Rabin, still smarting from that crisis, lost no time in phoning his education minister about the NRP complaint.

But Aloni, who heads the left-wing Meretz bloc, claims she has been specially targeted by the NRP since taking over the Education Ministry in July. For the better part of the last decade and a half, the ministry was under NRP control.

And Meretz politicians, who agreed their leader may have unnecessarily offended the Orthodox community last month, were furious with the NRP complaint.

The party's parliamentary whip, Yossi Sarid, said the NRP should stop spying on Aloni's work schedule and on the contents of her dinner plate.

Aloni helped calm down the previous crisis after apologizing to the spiritual leader of Shas, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, for the furor she had caused.

Meretz is anxious to keep intact a government that is committed to reaching a peace settlement with the Palestinians and neighboring Arab states. A withdrawal by Shas would keep the government intact, but only with the tacit consent of the Arab parties' five Knesset members.

A HINT OF CHRISTMAS IN THE AIR AS ISRAELIS PREPARE FOR SUKKOT

By Michele Chabira

JERUSALEM, Oct. 8 (JTA) -- Why are dozens of Israeli street vendors selling Christmas tree lights and tinsel snowflakes in Jerusalem's fervently Orthodox neighborhood of Mea Shearim?

It's Sukkot, of course.

Every year, thousands of people jam into narrow Mea Shearim streets to purchase lulavs, etrogs and decorations for their sukkahs.

On Thursday, the neighborhood was closed to traffic, and vendors set up hundreds of stalls for holiday shopping. While many customers chose traditional posters relating to religious themes, several purchased the tinsel ornaments and strings of lights usually associated with Christmas.

But since most fervently Orthodox Israelis have never seen Christmas being celebrated, they are unaware of the connection.

The scene was much the same next to the Machaneh Yehuda market, where enterprising vendors set up shop. Here the crowd was more mixed, with everyone from backpackers to Hasidim picking through the merchandise.

Lulavs ranged in price from \$5 to \$20, while etrogs went for \$10 to \$25. According to Nachman, a recently demobilized soldier who had set up a stall, the closer to the holiday, the lower the prices.

Behind the open-air market on Agrippas Street, several shops were selling "make-your-own sukkahs." The sukkahs, which are made of metal poles and curtains, range from \$125 to \$400, including the thatching, or skhakh.

An artist who had just purchased a sukkah with white curtains said she intended to tie-dye her own pattern.

The Nature Reserves Authority has stepped up patrols in public forests to prevent people from cutting down trees to be used as thatch.

Toward that end, various municipalities have timed their seasonal "tree-trimming" to coincide with the holiday. The excess foliage, which has been placed at authorized distribution points, is free to the public.

**MENGELE WAS TWICE IN U.S. CUSTODY,
U.S. JUSTICE DEPT. REPORT CONFIRMS**

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Oct. 8 (JTA) -- Josef Mengele, the notorious Nazi death camp doctor, was in U.S. custody twice in 1945 but was mistakenly released, the U.S. Justice Department has confirmed.

In a long-awaited report released Thursday, the department said Mengele, who died in 1979, was held in two prisoner-of-war camps in Germany but released because the U.S. Army never learned he was a war crimes suspect.

The 197-page report, hailed by Jewish groups, said Mengele masqueraded as a member of the German army.

But it is possible, though unconfirmed, "that he was later registered and discharged under his own name," the report says.

"It is likely that he passed as a regular soldier and was released in routine fashion in the chaotic conditions that prevailed in the summer of 1945," the report says.

Mengele then lived in hiding in Germany for several years before making his way to South America.

There is no evidence that U.S. authorities knew of or aided his escape from Europe, the report says.

The Justice Department document confirms information repeated in a 1986 book by Gerald Posner, titled "Mengele: The Complete Story."

Posner's information was based on a quasi-diary that Mengele kept in Brazil, which was turned over to a German magazine, Bunte, by Mengele's son, Rolf, in 1985.

According to Posner, Mengele "told the American camp authorities his real name."

Posner said Thursday that the Justice Department report is "not news in the sense of news." But he added that it has become "news since everyone has forgotten" what he disclosed six years ago.

"We are confirming and documenting some things that have been said before," acknowledged Eli Rosenbaum, principal deputy director of the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations, which prepared the report.

Delay Blamed On Family

What is important about the report, he said, is that it is a confirmation, an actual documentation of the events, whereas Mengele's diaries were more of "an autobiographical novel."

The OSI, which prepared the report at the behest of the attorney general, acknowledged Posner's help in the report.

The purpose of the investigation, begun in 1985, was to determine Mengele's whereabouts and activities between 1945 and 1949, and his whereabouts in 1985, so that authorities in Germany or Israel could try him.

The investigation, by the United States, Germany and Israel, resulted in the disinterring in June 1985 of Mengele's remains on a beach in Brazil.

The report was withheld from the public until now because of a U.S. understanding with the Germans and Israelis that it would not be published until the conclusion of DNA testing of Mengele family members, said Rosenbaum.

That took place this past March and confirmed beyond a doubt that the man buried near Sao Paulo, Brazil, was definitely the Auschwitz doctor known as the "angel of death."

He died of a stroke at age 67 while swimming off the Brazilian coast near Sao Paulo.

Rosenbaum blamed the delay in issuing the report on the Mengele family's resistance to the testing.

The report also says there is no evidence American authorities knew of Mengele's whereabouts during the long search for the physician, who conducted terrible experiments on Jews and took part in mass murders.

'Should Have Been Put On Trial'

The report confirms that after Mengele was released from U.S. custody, he lived under an alias on a farm in the U.S.-occupied zone of Germany before going to Italy in 1949 and then used a false identity to travel to Argentina.

He moved to Paraguay in 1959 and Brazil a year later.

The investigation established that while he was in hiding, he received funds regularly from his wealthy family in Germany.

This new information adds Mengele's name to a list of Nazi war criminals who were captured by U.S. forces after the war and released. Some were even used by U.S. intelligence forces and helped to escape.

But that was not the case with Mengele.

"Mengele fled Europe without U.S. assistance," the report says. "There is no evidence that he ever had a relationship with U.S. intelligence. Nor is there any evidence that he ever entered the United States, either under his own name or any known alias."

In Los Angeles, the Simon Wiesenthal Holocaust Center applauded the release of the report. But, the center's associate dean, Rabbi Abraham Cooper, said the findings "confirm this mass murderer could and should have been put on trial for his crimes as early as 1946."

He said the report "shows that no Allied government, including the U.S., was properly motivated or committed in the immediate months and years after the Second World War to systematically pursue Nazi war criminals."

Here in New York, the Anti-Defamation League welcomed the report but said it continued to have questions about the case.

Said Abraham Foxman, ADL national director, "One can only wonder how so notorious and well-known a Nazi could have lived so long in freedom. Mengele's death may have closed the book for some, but the story is yet to be complete for those who suffered directly or indirectly by his hand."

ICELAND DROPS WAR CRIMES CASE

JERUSALEM, Oct. 8 (JTA) -- A Simon Wiesenthal Center official has labeled as "scandalous" Iceland's failure to investigate a suspected Nazi war criminal living there.

A judicial commission in Iceland recommended recently that no action be taken in the case of Ewald Mikson, a suspected Nazi collaborator in Estonia who is now living near Reykjavik under the name of Edward Hinriksson.

He is suspected of serving as a Gestapo investigator at the Tartu concentration camp and carrying out executions at the anti-tank ditch near the camp.

In a letter to Prime Minister David Oddsson of Iceland, Efraim Zuroff, director of the center's Israel office, said the decision would remain a blot on Iceland's record.

SOMALIAN CHIEF TO ACCEPT AID FROM ABIE NATHAN AND ISRAEL

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Oct. 8 (JTA) -- Gen. Mohamed Farah Aided, chairman of the Somali National Alliance, has accepted an offer of aid for starving and homeless refugees from Israeli philanthropist Abie Nathan and said he welcomes humanitarian aid from Israel and its non-governmental organizations.

Aided also invited Nathan and representatives of his Voice of Peace organization to visit Somalia to discuss the establishment of refugee camps there.

Responding to a letter from Nathan, Osman Hassan Ali, adviser to the general, wrote that the "Somali National Alliance has requested (the) international community for help to contain and rehabilitate the displaced people in Somalia, and Israel and their non-governmental organizations are indeed equally wholeheartedly invited to participate in this vital project."

The acceptance seems to mark a reversal for Somalia, a Moslem nation which had recently rejected any aid from Israel that was identified by an Israeli emblem, according to a spokesman at the Israeli Consulate in New York.

Somalia, a member of the Arab League, has had a history of hostility to the Jewish state.

Aided is one of several warring leaders in Somalia, where he controls a part of the southern region that includes the airport and port. International relief agencies have been dealing with Aided.

Somalia's longtime leader, Mohamed Siad Barre, fled the country in January 1991 and the country has since descended into a warring patchwork of feuding fiefdoms.

'Will Make Abie's Job Easier'

The invitation to Nathan was announced by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, which has been coordinating his efforts to get the organized Jewish community to contribute \$1 million for a tent city for Somali refugees in neighboring Kenya.

Fourteen Jewish groups calling themselves the Jewish Coalition for Somali Refugee Relief recently sponsored an advertisement in The New York Times seeking money for that project.

The Somali invitation will not interfere with the plans for the Kenyan tent city, said Rabbi Eric Yoffie, vice president of the UAHC.

Yoffie welcomed the acceptance of Israeli and Jewish help by ruling parties in Somalia. "To the extent that the Somalian authorities are going to be positive and authoritative, that is good. It will make Abie's job easier," said Yoffie.

He said Nathan had been distressed over published reports of hostility by the Somalis to Israel.

"He has no desire to offend them," Yoffie said. "He apprised us of the fact that there have been some changes there which appear to indicate a new attitude toward his endeavor."

But the country's instability remains a major issue. On Thursday, the U.S. government warned Somalia's sparring warriors that Washington will not help that country rebuild unless it accepts a U.N. peacekeeping force.

Deployment of some 3,500 U.N. troops has been delayed because of objections by the various Somali factions, who fear losing control of their respective turfs.

MAGAZINE RETRACTING TIP OFFERED ON EMPLOYEES' RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, Oct. 8 (JTA) -- Inc. magazine has decided to retract an article that suggested how a company could avoid hiring workers who take time off for religious holidays.

The article first appeared last year, but it received attention after being reprinted by New York Telephone Co. and sent to nearly 200,000 small businesses.

New York Telephone apologized for the article Monday, after it was publicized by New York State Assemblyman Dov Hinkind (D-Brooklyn).

The article was entitled "Questions You'd Love to Ask a Job Prospect -- But Can't."

Bob LaPointe, vice president of Inc., said the article was "intended to point out questions that appear to be innocent" in a job interview, "but are against the law."

One such question, said the article, was "Will you be taking time off from work to observe Passover?"

The article said that the question was valid because it is job-related, but inappropriate. Instead, it advised employers to ask, "Will the times of your religious observance conflict with the regular work periods at this company?"

Bad advice, say Marc Stern of the American Jewish Congress and other legal experts.

Under New York state law and federal employment guidelines, employers can only ask about taking off for religious observance after they have offered the prospect a job.

That makes it much easier for employees to sue if they are then denied the job, forcing employers to prove they cannot accommodate the religious observance.

Denied Aim Was Discrimination

In fact, employees who asked the question suggested by Inc. and New York Telephone could find themselves paying damages in New York state.

LaPointe said the next issue of the Small Business Adviser newsletter mailed out by New York Telephone will contain a retraction, most likely in the form of a letter from the editor.

LaPointe said the error "really hurts." But he and New York Telephone firmly denied Hinkind's charge that the article constituted a "deliberate attempt" to instruct business owners "to circumvent the law in order to practice discrimination.

"Basically, the entire article was intended to help prevent discrimination based on religion, race, age, nationality or health," he said.

But Diane Steinman, executive director of the New York chapter of the American Jewish Committee, said she wanted to see a number of assurances in the retraction.

"The retraction has to make it clear that the intention was never to assist companies in discriminating without being liable under the law," she said.

"We, quite frankly, had expected more of such an important company," she added, referring to New York Telephone.

Because of the Sukkot holiday, the JTA Daily News Bulletin will not be published Tuesday, Oct. 13.