ISRAEL BITTERLY PROTESTS REPORT URGING U.N. ACTION ON DEPORTATIONS
By Gil Sedan and David Landau

JERUSALEM, Jan. 26 (JTA) — Israel has bitterly criticized a report by U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali urging the Security Council to “take whatever measures are required” to force Israel to reverse the deportation of nearly 400 Palestinians.

In the report, delivered to the Security Council on Monday, Boutros-Ghali said Israel's refusal to take back the Moslem fundamentalists it deported to Lebanon last month “challenges the authority” of the world body.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin called the secretary-general's request that the council act against Israel “almost unprecedented.”

Emerging Tuesday from a Knesset committee meeting, Rabin charged that the report “completely ignored the acts of extreme Islamic terror” and instead cited only the steps that Israel had taken against the terrorists.

Similarly, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations issued a statement in New York calling the report “one-sided, ill-conceived and counterproductive to the cause of Middle East peace, because it would reward militant fundamentalist groups and encourage them to step up their efforts to murder Israelis and scuttle the peace process.”

In the report, Boutros-Ghali said he also wanted to discuss with Israel the possibility of placing U.N. monitors in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to protect Palestinian rights.

But a statement issued Tuesday by the Israeli Mission to the United Nations said Israel “categorically rejects the secretary-general's recommendation to establish a U.N. monitoring mechanism in the territories.” It said such a mechanism would “serve only to agitate the extremists” and “encourage further unrest.”

U.S. LOBBIES ARAB DIPLOMATS

Boutros-Ghali's report was a significant setback for Israeli officials, who had made a major effort in recent days to convince the Security Council to delay its review of the deportation crisis until after Israel's High Court of Justice rules on the legality of the deportations.

The High Court decision, expected within a week, could provide a way out of the crisis if it orders the action reversed.

At Rabbin's request, former Defense Minister Ezer Weizman phoned Boutros-Ghali to request that the Security Council put off its debate on punitive resolutions. But Weizman, who knows Boutros-Ghali since the two worked together on the Camp David accords, was rebuffed by the Egyptian secretary-general.

In Washington, U.S. officials have also been lobbying for a delay in U.N. action. Edward Dierje, who is being kept on by the Clinton administration as assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, met last week with diplomats from several Arab countries and reportedly asked them to postpone any U.N. action on the issue until after the Israeli High Court decision.

State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said Tuesday that the United States prefers to resolve the deportation crisis “through active diplomacy. We would like to see those efforts exhausted before the Security Council considers taking action.”

But in the United Nations, the Palestine Liberation Organization was already hard at work this week on a proposed resolution that would impose sanctions on Israel unless it complied with a Dec. 18 resolution demanding that the deportees be returned to the administered territories.

The PLO proposal reportedly would ban all U.N. member states from any dealings with Israeli companies or establishments involved in violations of the Geneva Conventions, which protect the rights of inhabitants of occupied areas.

Such a resolution is likely to be amended before it comes to a vote in the Security Council, and in any case, Israeli officials are confident the United States will exercise its veto power as a permanent member of the 15-nation body.

Rabin pointed out that no U.S. administration has ever permitted sanctions against Israel to be adopted by the U.N. Security Council.

STATE DEPT. WON'T PROMISE VETO

And Foreign Minister Shimon Peres told Israeli Bonds leaders here that Jerusalem has received promises from the Clinton administration that it would do its “very best not to let a situation (develop) in which sanctions against Israel will be at all necessary.”

Likewise, the U.S. ambassador to Israel, William Harrop, said Tuesday he believed it was “most unlikely” that President Clinton would allow sanctions to be imposed against Israel.

Speaking on Israel's army radio, Harrop noted, however, that it has been two years since Washington exercised its veto in the Security Council and would prefer not to do so now.

And in Washington, State Department spokesman Boucher refused to say Tuesday whether the United States would veto a sanctions resolution.

“At this point, that's a hypothetical question,” he told reporters.

In Jerusalem, both Peres and his Foreign Ministry warned that U.N. action against Israel could disrupt the peace process.

“The United Nations must take into consideration that this time the issue is not whether to punish or not to punish Israel,” Peres said.

“This time the problem is either to continue the peace process or not.”

The Foreign Ministry issued a statement urging the Security Council to “refrain from extreme and unbalanced declarations or resolutions that could jeopardize the peace process.”

It pointed out that despite the deportations, “all the Arab parties have expressed their desire to continue the negotiations.”

But the head of the Palestinian delegation to the peace talks welcomed Boutros-Ghali's move, especially his call for U.N. monitoring in the territories.

At a news conference in eastern Jerusalem, Haidar Abdel-Shafi said it is “high time that the United Nations asserts its authority as an organization that is responsible for keeping peace.”

In southern Lebanon, meanwhile, the Pales-
ISRAEL DECIDES AFTER ALL TO BAR ENTRY OF THOSE WITH AIDS VIRUS
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Jan. 26 (JTA) -- New immigrants to Israel and visitors who plan to stay longer than three months must prove they are free of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, to get their visas, according to new restrictions taking effect within a week.

Interior Minister Arye Deri and Health Minister Haim Ramon met Sunday to finalize the restrictions, which are less severe than those originally proposed several months ago.

The original proposal, which caused a public outcry here and abroad by civil rights groups and other organizations, applied restrictions to nearly all people coming to Israel, even for short trips.

Immigrants from the former Soviet Union and other countries that previously imposed emigration restrictions under authoritarian regimes will be exempt from the new Israeli requirements.

The government apparently does not want to risk slowing down immigration from potentially unstable regimes out of fear that exit restrictions might be reimposed in the future.

New immigrants and travelers from Western countries will now have to show proof before entering Israel that they are not infected with HIV "or other dangerous diseases."

Those persons failing to show proof will not automatically be barred from entering the country, as stipulated in the original proposal, but instead, each individual case will be reviewed by the Interior Ministry.

Ira Cohen, director of national programs at the Association of Americans and Canadians in Israel, said he thought the new order would not affect immigration from Western countries.

JEWISH GROUPS WELCOME APPOINTMENT OF PICKERING AS U.S. ENVOY TO MOSCOW
By Deborah Kalb
States News Service

WASHINGTON, Jan. 26 (JTA) -- In a move welcomed by organizations dealing with Jews in the former Soviet Union, President Clinton this week named career diplomat Thomas Pickering ambassador to Russia.

Jewish organizational officials feel that Pickering, a well-regarded former U.S. ambassador to Israel and the United Nations, will bring an accessible style and a sensitivity to human rights issues to his new job.

"I think he's a very high-caliber individual," said Mark Levin, executive director of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry.

"He's assuming the position at a very crucial stage, not only in U.S.-Russian relations, but in terms of which direction Russia will go: Will it continue in a reform-minded manner or will it turn in the other direction?"

"To us, it sounds like an inspired choice," said Micah Naftalin, executive director of the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews. "It is terribly important that the U.S. send a really world-class, seasoned ambassador to Moscow."

Levin said he hoped to meet with Pickering to discuss ongoing concerns facing Russian Jews, including prohibitively high emigration costs and processing problems, and the "unholy alliance" between former Communists and ultranationalists, who each blame the Jews for the current economic crisis in Russia.

ISRAELI AND SYRIAN MEET IN GERMANY, SIGNALING DIPLOMATIC BREAKTHROUGH
By Igal Avidan

BERLIN, Jan. 26 (JTA) -- In a diplomatic breakthrough, an Israeli official visiting Germany met here last week with Syria's ambassador to this country for a private half-hour meeting.

Although Israeli and Syrian officials have been meeting for the bilateral peace talks in Washington, it is unprecedented for the countries to publicly acknowledge any formal contact with each other outside the framework of the peace negotiations.

Walid Zadek, an Arab who serves as Israel's deputy agriculture minister, said he met privately with Syria's ambassador to Germany, Michel Chadad, during a Jan. 22 reception given by German President Richard von Weizsacker.

Zadek was in Berlin to attend the international agricultural fair "Green Week" and was invited by von Weizsacker to attend a reception at his official Berlin residence for delegates to the fair.

Zadek said Chadad had agreed to publicly disclose the meeting and Syrian Embassy officials indirectly confirmed it as well.

According to Zadek, Chadad called upon Israelis to recognize that the Syrian people and their president, President Hafez Assad, are interested in a just and long-lasting peace.

The Syrian diplomat stressed that this desire was genuine, and not just a political ploy, Zadek said.

But Chadad also cautioned Israel not to ask for the impossible and claimed the Golan Heights belonged to Syria.

Chadad added that a peace agreement between the two countries should not demand that ambassadors be immediately exchanged. The Syrian described such a request as being strange, given the long and bloody history of conflict, Zadek recounted.

Chadad explained to Zadek that Syrian public opinion must be changed gradually before that degree of normal relations could be established.

At the agricultural fair, Zadek was warmly received at the information stands of several Arab countries.

The Moroccans offered him kosher red wine, and an Egyptian dealer asked Zadek to look into the possibility of cooperation with Israel in marketing.

Jordanian Crown Prince Hassan visited the Jordanian exhibit at the same time as Zadek, but the two did not talk privately.

tinian deportees, who are stranded in a makeshift tent camp between Israeli and Lebanese army lines, rejected an Israeli offer to let them meet with their lawyers.

The offer was included as part of the government's argument to the High Court that the deportees still had some legal means to fight against their deportation. Lawyers for the Palestinians argued that the deportations were illegal since the army did not allow any chance to appeal the order.

Abdul Aziz Ghantissi, a spokesman for the deportees, branded the offer as "an Israeli maneuver to reduce the pressure."

(Contributing to this report were JTA correspondents Larry Yudelson at the United Nations and Deborah Kalb of States News Service in Washington.)
MINISTER ASSURES ISRAEL BONDS GOVERNMENT WON'T DismANTLE IT

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Jan. 26 (JTA) -- Seeking to allay fears sparked by Israeli news reports, Finance Minister Avraham Shohat has assured delegates to a State of Israel Bonds conference here that the government has no intention of dismantling the Bonds Organization.

On Tuesday, Shohat told the Israel Bonds Prime Minister's Conference that he values the contribution that Israel Bonds Organization makes to Israel's economy.

But, he stressed, there is a need to change the terms by which the organization raises funds.

He said change is necessary because after Israel receives promised American loan guarantees it will be able to raise money for development purposes under better terms.

Shohat confirmed that Israel would borrow $2 billion this year, thanks to the American guarantees. The first billion will be borrowed in March and the second billion in September.

Shohat will pay an official visit to the United States in March, using the opportunity to meet with the economic policy-makers in the Clinton administration.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, also addressing the delegates, said that the Israel Bonds Organization remains "an important tool in the development of Israel."

Peres told the delegates that if Israel fails to answer its economic challenges, it will not be able to go ahead with the peace process.

FRANCE, ISRAEL TO SET UP FUND TO DEVELOP HIGH-TECH INDUSTRY

By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, Jan. 26 (JTA) -- Israel and France will set up an $18.5 million fund for industrial cooperation in 1993, according to an agreement signed Tuesday by France and Israel.

Israeli Minister of Industry Michal Harish signed the accord in Paris, along with her French counterpart Dominique Strauss-Kahn.

Each partner will put up half the money for the fund, which will be devoted to high-tech development.

"This is the first real effort to upgrade our economic relations in decades," said Strauss-Kahn, who explained that the aim was to double the trade between France and Israel within five years.

Various projects involving Franco-Israeli cooperation are being discussed, including a railway linking Tel Aviv to Eilat.

Harish invited French industrialists to work more with Israel. He stressed that they should not be afraid of the Arab boycott of Israel.

"Cooperation with Israel is useful for the peace process," Harish said.

Strauss-Kahn, a Jew originally from Tunis and a member of the Socialist Party, is running for re-election in March to the French Parliament. His district is a Paris suburb containing a large Sephardic Jewish community.

Strauss-Kahn took advantage of Harish's visit to France to organize a public meeting in his district last weekend with the Israeli Cabinet minister.

Strauss-Kahn's opponent in the election race, Pierre Lellouche, is also a Jew but belongs to the right-wing opposition and is a close aide of Paris Mayor Jacques Chirac.
BEHIND THE HEADLINES: JEWISH MEDITATION CATCHES ON AS A WAY BACK TO TRADITION

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, Jan. 26 (JTA) -- A dozen men and women recently sat on the floor of a Manhattan living room lit only by candles, eyes closed as they listened to the sound of their own breathing.

They were a diverse group, and included a Hasid, a "black-hat" Orthodox man, a Conservative rabbi and several men and women with little Jewish education.

After moving into a meditative state, they focused on the seforiot, the kabbalist term for the manifestations of the hidden God, and the traits they hoped to integrate into their lives. They went on to concentrate on the person in the Torah who best embodied the sefirah they wanted to incorporate.

And then, after opening their eyes, they eased back into the Manhattan night by slowly chanting the word "shalom."

This eclectic collection of Jews was one of a small but growing number who are finding their spiritual lives enhanced by meditation.

And though for decades virtually the only places that Jews could be found meditating were in ashrams and with Zen masters, a growing number are now reclaiming the Jewish contemplative tradition.

In its contemporary incarnation, Jewish meditation brings together Jews from every corner of the community as they share a common quest for a deeper Jewish spiritual connection.

And meditation provides a connection not just to the Jews who learn about it through extensive study of Jewish texts, but for those who have been long alienated from Judaism and once sought their spirituality in other traditions.

Despite the fact that some Jewish religious leaders, particularly the Orthodox, are suspicious of the origins and influence of meditation, the history of Jewish contemplation is an ancient one, according to its practitioners.

Mentioned In Psalms

The earliest Jewish writer to record evidence of meditation was the biblical poet who composed Psalm 19: "May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable."

And the students of the biblical prophets were also known to meditate, according to Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, who in the late 1950s was one of the first spiritual leaders to reintroduce North American Jews to the practice.

But "suspicion runs very deep," says Rabbi Jonathan Omer-Man, director of the School of Traditional Jewish Meditation, in Los Angeles. "It's part of modernism's horror with the non-rational, the non-linear."

Omer-Man, who says that he has 350 students, started the school in 1990 with the help of a $200,000 grant from the Nathan Cummings Foundation with the goal of making "meditation have an impact on mainstream Jewish life."

Many come to the practice with a great deal of experience in Eastern meditation and little Jewish background.

Mindy Ribner, who runs the Jewish Meditation Circle in Manhattan, followed a path that is not unusual. She describes herself as a lifelong "spiritual seeker" who found the Judaism of her youth spiritually empty.

She learned meditation in the 1970s, when she began practicing yoga and following the guru Amrit Desai at the Kripalu ashram.

She then began living communally in the Manhattan ashram of Swami Muktananda. It was while living there, on the Upper West Side, that she met Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach and started attending his synagogue.

After 18 months of longing for more of a Jewish spiritual connection, she moved out of the ashram and began leading a Jewishly observant life. But still she felt spiritually unfulfilled.

Then, while studying in yeshiva in Jerusalem in the early 1980s, she was invited to participate in a Jewish meditation group.

There she found the spiritual avenue she had been searching for. "I was looking for something else beside dry yeshiva learning. I was searching for the mystical connection," she says.

Jews Flock To Eastern Religions

Estimates vary, but experts say that as many as 70 percent of participants in Buddhist and Hindu groups in North America are Jews.

People at Ribner's ashram used to joke that "if it weren't for the guru, we'd have a minyan."

According to Rabbi David Cooper, a meditation instructor near Boulder, Colo., "Virtually all of the teachers of Vipassana Buddhism, one of the most popular forms of Buddhism in America, are Jews."

Cooper, who became Jewishly observant after more than 15 years of meditating with American Sufi and Hindu groups, continued to attend Buddhist retreats after becoming observant.

"I would walk into a retreat wearing tizitit and a kippah. And all these Jews who thought they were Buddhist would come up to me saying they wanted to find the same kind of experience in a Jewish way. Jews came to me in hordes."

Cooper is presently creating a retreat center near his home, on a mountaintop 40 miles northwest of Boulder, which will provide a kosher environment for Jews.

It will be free of the idols present in many of the Eastern environments, which abrogate the Jewish prohibition against idol worship, and will provide kosher food and observance of Shabbat.

While Jewish meditation really began gaining supporters in the 1980s, the first person to introduce the Jewish practices and concepts to a popular audience was Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan.

In the mid-1970s, his books on Jewish mysticism and meditation began appearing in New Age bookstores, where they attracted the attention of many Jews.

For many meditators who were estranged from the Jewish community and traditional practices, and who have little Jewish education, contemplation has provided a port of re-entry.

"It reaches people who are disaffected because you don't necessarily need to know Hebrew and it doesn't operate in a standard format," explains Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl, spiritual leader of Albany, N.Y.'s Congregation Ohav Shalom.

According to Boulder's Cooper, meditation can be used to bring Jews closer to observance because "as beginners, it's hard to step into halachah and appreciate it right away."

"I've told Ribner put it," he says. "I try to help people to have this very personal and dynamic experience with God, and then show them how they can transfer it into traditional Jewish forms, so that keeping Shabbos is exciting," she says.