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**PERES MEETS WITH JACKSON  
AT BEGINNING OF U.S. VISIT**  
By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, Feb. 11 (JTA) -- After a meeting with the Rev. Jesse Jackson that kicked off his week-long visit to the United States, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said Thursday that relations between Jews and African Americans showed "new promise, not just a new beginning."

The discussion, Peres said afterward, "focused on the future, rather than the past. The main item was the growing understanding between African American and Jewish life."

"We hope to arrive at a fuller understanding," he said.

Jackson said it was "a joy, really, to talk about a range of concerns."

He praised Israel's "rather aggressive policy of bridge-building," including its aid programs to Africa and its decision this week to accept 100 Moslem refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Jackson has met previously with Peres, as well as with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Peres extended an invitation to Jackson to visit Israel.

Jackson accepted the invitation in principle, but said no time has been set for the trip, which would be his first to Israel since 1979.

Peres met later on Thursday with a group of 50 African American leaders, who expressed how pleased they were to be setting this precedent.

**A 'First' For Peres**

"This is the first time for me too, meeting with Jesse Jackson in the morning and you instead of going first to UJA and (Israel) Bonds," said Peres, who has already infuriated some American Jewish community activists by criticizing the fund-raising leadership.

The meeting with the African American leaders fit in well with the main purpose of the foreign minister's trip, an address Sunday at the annual plenum of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council.

NJCRC, more than other umbrella organizations in Jewish life, is concerned with intergroup affairs. Black-Jewish relations is a topic high on the organization's agenda.

Peres is also scheduled to meet next week with Vice President Al Gore, Secretary of State Warren Christopher and National Security Adviser Anthony Lake.

Peres is the first top Israeli official to visit Washington since President Clinton's inauguration, and his meetings are expected to focus on reviving the stalled peace talks.

But his trip may have been overshadowed by the presence this past week in Washington of the heads of the Israeli negotiating teams involved in the peace process. The negotiating teams for the bilateral talks report directly to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, bypassing the Foreign Ministry.

Speaking to reporters after meeting with U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali on Thursday, Peres said that "deportation is not the policy of Israel, but the exception of its policies."

He said as well that Israel considered its decision to accept the return of the deportees by the end of the year to be in accord with U.N.

Security Council Resolution 799, which demanded the reversal of the deportations.

When asked about statements by Rabin apparently taking a more hard-line position, Peres said the prime minister was "misquoted."

Peres said he also raised with Boutros-Ghali the fates of Israeli air force navigator Ron Arad and three other servicemen missing in Lebanon since 1982.

"The secretary-general said he will do whatever he can, openly and in a quiet way, to clarify their fate and enable the families to know exactly about their whereabouts."

Peres also met on Thursday with Cyrus Vance, who is negotiating a U.N. settlement of the crisis in Bosnia, and with a group of leaders from the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

On Friday he was to meet with Cardinal John O'Connor of New York, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright and the board of trustees of the American Jewish Congress.

The discussion with Jackson, which lasted about 45 minutes, revolved on "matters of the heart, not the mind," said Peres.

Jackson downplayed his implicit disagreement with Israel over one of its most contentious issues, the deportation of 415 Palestinians to southern Lebanon last December.

"There's a basic concern about the deportees, and how that will be handled," he said. "I expressed my concern about the humanitarian situation. 'It's a very touchy situation. Nonetheless, we discussed it. But we hope nothing will stop the peace process.'"

**CHRISTOPHER TRIP MAY BE A MISTAKE,  
SAYS BUSH'S FORMER MIDEAST ADVISER**By Deborah Kalb  
States News Service

WASHINGTON, Feb. 9 (JTA) -- Secretary of State Warren Christopher may be making a big mistake by traveling to the Middle East next week, according to the man who served as George Bush's top adviser on the Middle East.

Richard Haass, who until last month served as director of Near Eastern and South Asian affairs on the National Security Council, also said he believes it is now up to the Palestinians to make a concession to help resolve the controversy over Israel's expulsion of 415 Moslem fundamentalists to Lebanon.

Haass made the comments about the deportation issue and the timing of the Christopher trip in a wide-ranging interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency in which he assessed the current Middle East situation and reflected on the often-turbulent years he spent as Bush's White House adviser on the region.

Christopher is scheduled to visit the Middle East from Feb. 17 to 24 to push for some movement in the stalled Middle East peace negotiations.

But according to Haass, "the jury is out" on whether the trip will result in progress.

"The danger in going now," Haass said, "is that almost the entire trip could be consumed" with trying to resolve the controversy over the

Palestinian deportees, who were expelled from the administered territories in December.

Haass considers the issue peripheral to the more important question of advancing the peace process.

"I'm not sure in a sense it's the best use of the secretary's first trip to the region," he said in an interview at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, where he is now a senior associate.

Going to the Middle East now, with the deportation issue still a major concern in the region, could result in the Palestinians and possibly other Arabs urging Christopher to continue to pressure Israel on the issue, Haass said. And that is not a situation that Christopher "wants to put himself in."

He added that "rushing out" to the Middle East "reinforces the notion that all the answers lie in Washington." It would be more productive, he said, for the United States to stress that the answers lie in the region.

Haass, who served four years on the National Security Council staff, said he feels the next move to resolve the impasse over the deportees should come from the Palestinians and other Arab participants in the peace talks, because Israel has already made a major concession.

Israel, in a deal worked out with the United States, has agreed to take back 100 of the deportees almost immediately and shorten the terms of exile of the 300 or so others.

The Palestinians have rejected this offer, saying that they will not return to the peace table with Israel until all of the deportees are allowed to return to the territories.

But Haass believes Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has now "gone about as far as he can go or should go," given Israel's domestic political situation. "It's up to the Arab side to meet him halfway," he said.

"It's really up to the Palestinians and the Arab side whether they want to work with the Israelis in finessing this so that everybody can get back to the table, or not," he said. Haass, who taught at Harvard before joining the White House staff, said it is important that when the talks resume, they be serious and that the people involved "address the issues."

"And this particularly applies to the Palestinians," he said, "who have spent, I think, an inordinate amount of time trying to get ground rules changed and, in a sense, discussing the shape of the table, rather than the real issues."

#### 'A Frustration With The Status Quo'

"One should not simply let the process string out," he said, observing that time is not on the side of the Palestinian moderates.

Haass pointed to the emergence of Hamas and other Islamic fundamentalist groups, to which many of the deportees belong, as "symptomatic of a larger trend in the region" and "a frustration with the status quo."

The group is opposed to the peace talks and seeks Israel's destruction.

But if Haass is gloomy about rising fundamentalism, he is optimistic about the "potential for real progress" in the negotiations between Israel and Syria.

Syria is in a better position to negotiate than are the Palestinians, he said, because of Syria's "political leadership and structure."

"Without putting anybody up for sainthood" in Syria, Haass said, he sees an evolution in

Syrian policy over the past few years in what he called a constructive direction.

The differences between Syria and Israel are not "theological," but about "security, territory and peace," he said, and "it ought to be in the realm of the possible to concoct a formula that will take all of that into account."

Haass said he did not know of any rumored secret negotiations between Israel and Syria over a possible settlement. But he did say the official Israeli-Syrian negotiations "compare favorably to some of the others."

Haass is clearly proud of the record the Bush administration amassed on Middle East issues. "I defy anyone to find a period of four years when the United States and Israel accomplished more together that benefited Israel," he said.

But along with the administration's accomplishments came controversies, most notably the upheaval in U.S.-Israeli relations over the issue of \$10 billion in U.S. loan guarantees to help resettle immigrants in Israel.

The loan guarantees, which the Bush administration attempted to link to an Israeli freeze on settlements in the territories, caused friction between Washington and the Shamir government in Jerusalem. And it frayed relations between the Bush administration and American Jews, many of whom felt the United States was being too hard on Israel.

#### Experience Was 'Frustrating'

Haass, who is Jewish, found the experience "frustrating," on a personal and political level.

"I felt that people were focusing too much on the mood and on certain statements," he said, "and not nearly enough on the substance."

"I'm not claiming that we were perfect," he conceded. "We weren't. Indeed, in some cases, by what we said, or how we said it, I think we created unnecessary problems for ourselves."

"I think the record of accomplishment deserved" a better reception within the American Jewish community, he said, adding that he thinks most Israelis, by contrast, "know just how much the Bush administration accomplished."

"I just don't think the Bush administration got a fair shake" from the American Jewish community, he said.

Haass said that dealing with the Shamir government on issues like the loan guarantees was "more difficult" than with the Labor government of current Israeli Prime Minister Rabin.

But he said that the difficulties with Shamir did not stem as much from personalities, a factor he said was given "exaggerated" importance, but from a "difference in ideology."

With the Rabin government, Haass said, the "differences largely went away." Following the loan guarantee fight, "the bitterness diminished between the U.S. and Israel," he said. "There was a sea change."

In addition, the "temperature cooled, in the good sense," between the American Jewish community and the U.S. administration, he said.

Haass said that while he may have some regrets over the "public packaging" of some of the Bush Middle East policies, the policies themselves were "exactly right. I do not have regrets or second thoughts" about policy matters.

**REMINDER: The JTA Daily News Bulletin will not be published Monday, Feb. 15.**

# ISRAEL FREES ONE OF THREE U.S. ARABS ARRESTED FOR HELPING TO FUND HAMAS

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Feb. 11 (JTA) -- One of three Palestinian Americans arrested by Israel last month for alleged involvement with the Islamic fundamentalist group Hamas has been freed.

Mohammed Omar, an American citizen who lives in a West Bank village near Ramallah, was released Thursday after a military judge ordered the army to set him free after a court hearing.

At the time of Omar's arrest, Israeli authorities said he was an active member of a Hamas gang operating in the West Bank.

But Omar, who spent 20 days in detention, never had formal charges brought against him. The army did not explain Thursday why the court ordered his release.

At his home in the West Bank village of Beit Naballah, Omar said: "The reason they let me go is that I am innocent. There is no evidence whatsoever against me."

He also said on television that his interrogators used psychological pressure and at one point slapped him.

Earlier in the week, the United States had formally complained to Israel about delays in providing Omar and two other arrested Arab Americans with access to lawyers and American consular officials.

Israel had responded by saying it was "giving full and serious consideration" to the American requests.

In Washington, diplomatic officials said they were aware of Omar's release and would continue to monitor the situation.

The other two American citizens still in prison have been accused by Israel of coming to Jerusalem in order to funnel money to Hamas and revitalize the movement after many of its leaders were deported to southern Lebanon last December.

The two men who remain in detention, Mohammed Abdul Hamid Salah, 39 and known as Abu Ahmed, and Joma Hilmi Jarad, 36 and known as Abu Anas, came here in mid-January from the United States, allegedly with the intention of distributing \$650,000 to local activists.

Police found \$100,000 of cash in Abu Ahmed's possession.

With their funds, Abu Ahmed and Abu Anas were apparently planning to recruit more Palestinian youth to the military wings of the movement.

Last week, a military judge ordered the detention of Abu Ahmed and Abu Anas extended for two weeks. They too have not been charged with any crime.

# BELGIAN LEADER WHO MET ARAFAT BRINGS WARNING MESSAGE ON TALKS

By Joseph Kopel

BRUSSELS, Feb. 11 (JTA) -- Belgian Foreign Minister Willy Claes returned from his meeting with Yasir Arafat in Tunis and said the Palestinian leader warned him the Middle East peace negotiations "will be very difficult" to renew unless the deportation crisis is resolved.

The chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization was referring to the 415 Palestinians activists deported by Israel to southern Lebanon last December.

Arafat told Claes he wanted the European Community to play a more active role in the

Middle East peace negotiations, Belgian sources said.

"These negotiations began more than one year ago and the result is null," the PLO leader added.

Claes said he visited Arafat as part of an "information mission" in preparation for Belgium's chairing the European Community in the second half of this year.

Since the Persian Gulf War, E.C. countries, with the exception of France and Spain, have abstained from any high-level contact with the PLO leader, who was criticized during the war for his support of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

Claes already visited Israel and Egypt last December as part of an effort to become more involved in the peace process.

In the meeting with Arafat, Claes insisted on the need for Israel to implement the U.N. Security Council resolutions regarding the Palestinians deported by Israel.

"We must work to implement the U.N. resolutions," Claes said, hinting that a "compromise acceptable for all the parties can be found."

Claes told Belgian reporters that he would report on his visit to U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher in a meeting in Washington planned for Feb. 16.

# ISRAEL TO ACCEPT BOSNIAN MOSLEMS TO LIVE WITH ARABS TILL WAR'S END

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Feb. 11 (JTA) -- Israel has agreed to accept 101 Moslem refugees from war-torn Bosnia and settle them temporarily in two Israeli Arab villages until the fighting subsides in their own country.

The suggestion to allow Bosnian Moslem refugees entry into Israel was first raised some six months ago by Knesset member Yossi Sarid, now minister of the environment, during a visit to Zagreb.

Various Arab Israeli groups, including members of the Arab Israeli Islamic movement, have also backed the idea.

Last week, the Council of Mayors of Arab Towns and Villages received approval for the plan from the government.

A delegation of the Council of Arab Mayors is to go to Zagreb at the beginning of next week and escort the refugees back to Israel.

The 25 families will be flown from Zagreb to Israel aboard a plane put at their disposal by the French government and arranged at the urging of French Jewish organizations led by Jacques Kahn, chairman of the European Jewish Congress.

The refugees will be given open-ended tourist visas to Israel, as well as work permits.

The Housing Ministry will be supplying mobile homes for the families, who will be hosted in the two Israeli Arab towns of Umm el-Fahm and Tira.

Until the homes are ready, the refugees will be housed in a school in the nearby kibbutz of Ma'agan Michael.

A spokesman for the Bosnian authorities welcomed the move, but stressed that the Bosnia-Herzegovina government did want to encourage emigration.

"We welcome anybody trying to help our refugees, but are certain that the refugees themselves will return home to Bosnia as soon as the situation quiets down," the spokesman said.

# **FORMER SUPPORTER OF NETANYAHU CLAIMS HE MADE BLACKMAIL THREAT** By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Feb. 11 (JTA) -- In the latest twist to "Bibi-gate," the sex-and-politics scandal surrounding the popular Likud politician Benjamin Netanyahu, one of his former supporters has claimed he fabricated the episode of political blackmail himself.

The claim set off a volley of charges and countercharges Wednesday between rival camps in Likud supporting Netanyahu and his chief competitor in the upcoming primary for the party leadership, former Foreign Minister David Levy.

The scandal broke last month when Bibi, as the American-educated Knesset member is known, went public with an accusation that he was being blackmailed by rivals in the Likud bloc.

Netanyahu claimed that an anonymous person had phoned his wife and threatened that a secret videotape showing him in compromising circumstances with another woman would be published if he did not withdraw his candidacy for the leadership of Likud, the country's largest opposition party.

Netanyahu startled and amused the Israeli public by admitting on public television that he had been having an extramarital affair with another woman but had ended it some months ago.

At the time, he indirectly pointed the finger at Levy for threatening him with blackmail and said he planned to sue aides to the former foreign minister over the affair.

The latest development came this week as a certain Baruch Mahlouf, 27, a Likud member formerly of Netanyahu's camp, told police he invented the whole story of the threat to expose Netanyahu's extramarital affair in order "to impress Netanyahu himself."

Levy supporters applauded the news and blamed Netanyahu for wrongly accusing them of the blackmail.

But Netanyahu's backers claimed Mahlouf was associated only briefly with Netanyahu and was now employed by the city of Lod, whose mayor is Maxim Levy, David Levy's brother.

According to sources in Netanyahu's camp, Mahlouf has served as David Levy's driver and has helped organize political rallies for the former foreign minister.

Netanyahu's attorney, Dan Avi-Yitzhak, insisted Wednesday that he was in possession of evidence of a campaign to blackmail his client.

"It was not an isolated phone call," he said, "but a sophisticated operation that ran and financed a smear campaign against Netanyahu."

In the meantime, another political scandal broke out with Likud Knesset Member Michael Eitan claiming that the computer firm engaged by the Likud in the last election was supplying secret data to the Labor Party. Labor party officials rejected the charges.

## **MAN JAILED FOR 30 YEARS FOR REFUSING WIFE A GET** By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Feb. 11 (JTA) -- An 80-year-old man who has already spent 30 years in prison for refusing to grant his wife a religious bill of divorce has ignored fresh appeals made by a panel of seven rabbis to reverse his position.

The man, Yihye Avraham, told the rabbis

this week that he would rather stay in jail than free his wife from marriage by granting her a get, or religious divorce.

"Can't do it, can't do it. Go away," Avraham told the rabbis, according to the Yediot Achronot newspaper.

Jewish law stipulates that both husband and wife must agree to a divorce, although only a man can actually give the get. Jewish law allows imprisonment as a method of last resort to put pressure on a stubborn spouse.

Avraham's 64-year-old wife, Ora, first applied for a divorce after 12 years of marriage. "His behavior was abhorrent. He treated me like chattel," Ora said in an interview published in Yediot.

The couple were married in their native country of Yemen when Ora was 12 and Yihye was 28. She bore him two daughters, but he berated her and abused her for not bearing sons.

When Ora left her husband at age 24, the couple was already living in Israel. Yihye consistently refused to grant her a divorce and was sent to prison in 1962.

Israel follows religious law in matters of marriage and divorce and Yihye was duly ordered to remain behind bars until he granted his wife the get.

Avraham has refused all these years and, due to his age, he is now being held in the hospital wing of the Ayalon prison in Ramla.

According to Yediot, the panel of seven rabbis who called at the prison hospital this week promised Avraham his freedom, a fancy apartment and religious blessings.

One of them even sang melancholy Yemeni songs to soften the old man's heart. But to no avail.

"Go away. Leave me alone," he said.

His wife commented afterwards: "He's destroyed my life. May his name be destroyed. I haven't seen his ugly face since 1967, and I hope to never see him again."

## **THOUSANDS OF PALESTINIANS MOURN MUFTI AND FORMER GOVERNOR IN DOUBLE FUNERAL** By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Feb. 11 (JTA) -- Thousands of Palestinians mourned the loss of two of their leaders in a joint funeral Monday that was one of the largest Palestinian gatherings to be held in east Jerusalem in recent years.

The two men buried were Sheikh Sa'ad al-Din al-Alami, the mufti, or senior Moslem clergyman, of Jerusalem, and Anwar al-Khatib, who was governor of Jerusalem during the Jordanian regime.

Al-Alami, who was also the head of the Supreme Moslem Council, responsible for the religious affairs of all Moslems in the administered territories, died Saturday of a heart attack.

Al-Khatib, who continued to serve as the unofficial representative of King Hussein after Israel conquered Jerusalem in 1967, died Sunday.

The double funeral began with prayer services at the Al-Aksa mosque on the Temple Mount and was attended by some 1,500 worshippers, including representatives of the Christian community.

The two Palestinian leaders were buried in a special plot at the northern entrance to the Temple Mount, next to the grave of Anwar Nusseibeh, a former Jordanian defense minister.