

VOL. 71 - 76th YEAR

FRIDAY, MARCH 5, 1993

NO. 43

**SUSPECT IN TRADE CENTER BOMBING
IS LINKED TO FUNDAMENTALIST GROUP****By Deborah Kalb**
States News Service

WASHINGTON, March 4 (JTA) -- The arrest of a Moslem fundamentalist on suspicion of involvement in the bombing of New York's World Trade Center last Friday could lead to a crack-down in this country on supporters of the Hamas movement and other groups like it.

As authorities closed in on the suspect in New Jersey, two lawmakers on Capitol Hill announced they were introducing legislation to bar members of Hamas from entering the United States.

The suspect, identified as Mohammed Salameh, 26, was arrested Thursday morning in Jersey City, N.J., after he tried to reclaim a deposit on a rented van that is believed to have been used in the bombing of the 110-story office complex.

The man allegedly presented rental papers that were covered with nitrates, a substance used in explosives that was found in the wreckage at the New York landmark.

Salameh was arraigned Thursday evening in U.S. District Court in New York on charges that he "did aid and abet the damage of the World Trade Center complex by use of an explosive device, causing the death of at least five individuals."

FBI and New York City police officials refused to provide further details of the suspect's identity. But he was believed to be a Palestinian with an Egyptian passport who worshipped at the same Jersey City mosque as El Sayyid Nosair, the man charged and later acquitted of the November 1990 assassination of Rabbi Meir Kahane.

In New York, Rabbi Alexander Schindler, president of the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations, hailed the arrest, saying it appeared to be "further confirmation that Israel's repeated warnings of the mounting threat to world order posed by Islamic fundamentalism can no longer be ignored."

'We Must Shut Them Down'

U.S. officials have grown increasingly concerned about the activities of Moslem fundamentalist groups in this country, particularly after Israel's deportation in December of 415 Moslem fundamentalists, many of whom were members of the Hamas organization.

In January, Israel arrested two Palestinian Americans from the Chicago area, whom it accused of attempting to funnel money to Hamas activists in the administered territories.

Israeli officials have charged that Hamas activists in the territories are being directed by leaders in the United States. While the FBI has questioned that conclusion, it has stepped up its surveillance of Moslem fundamentalist groups operating in this country.

The legislation introduced in Congress on Thursday would amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to classify Hamas activists outside the United States as part of a group that engages in terrorism and therefore ineligible for U.S. entry visas.

The sponsors of the legislation, Sen. Alfonse

D'Amato (R-N.Y.) and Rep. Peter Deutsch (D-Fla.), expressed their concern that the United States not serve as a center for Hamas fund-raising activities.

"We cannot allow the United States to serve as a base for members of this murderous terrorist organization," D'Amato said at a news conference Thursday introducing the legislation.

"We know Hamas is operating in the United States," said Deutsch. "Whether Hamas is responsible for the World Trade Center bomb or not, we must shut them down."

Same As Restrictions On PLO

A spokesman for Deutsch said Thursday that Hamas activists already present in this country would also be affected by the proposed legislation. He explained that if Hamas were recognized as a terrorist group, its members would no longer be able to raise funds legally and their offices would be closed.

Hamas would be subject, under the legislation, to the same restrictions currently placed on members of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Also present at the news conference introducing the legislation was a group of Israelis who have been visiting Washington under the name Victims of Arab Terror. They represent Israelis who have survived terrorist attacks.

Among the Israelis were the mother of Israeli border policeman Nissim Toledano, whose murder late last year was a precipitating factor in the deportations, and Dov Kalmonovitch, an accountant who was severely burned in the early days of the intifada.

Hamas is firmly opposed to the Middle East peace talks, and its members have claimed responsibility for a number of recent deadly attacks on Israeli soldiers in the territories.

The State Department said recently that Hamas would be included for the first time in the department's annual report on global terrorism, to be released next month.

Earlier this week, the department acknowledged that American diplomats had been meeting with Hamas members, but it said it was calling a halt to such contacts.

**SYRIA ACCEPTS PHASED WITHDRAWAL,
BUT IS IT REALLY A BREAKTHROUGH?****By Gil Sedan**

JERUSALEM, March 4 (JTA) -- Syria's position that it is willing to accept a phased Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights, rather than an immediate and total pullout, is not a new breakthrough, according to the man who headed the Israeli delegation to the peace talks with Syria until last fall.

The Syrian position was described as a breakthrough in a New York Times article on Thursday. But Yossi Ben-Aharon, former director-general of the Prime Minister's Office, said a similar position was presented to the Israelis at the early stages of the peace talks, shortly after the October 1991 peace conference in Madrid.

Speaking on Israel Radio, Ben-Aharon recalled Thursday that Syria had demanded an Israeli commitment for a total withdrawal and had said that once such a commitment were given,

Syria would be willing to negotiate about implementing the withdrawal in stages.

Ben-Aharon was dropped from his position with the peace talks after Yitzhak Rabin's government came into office last summer.

There was no official reaction from the current government about the Times report.

The article, an op-ed column by Leslie Gelb, said the Syrian position was presented to U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher during his recent visit to Damascus.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher had little to say Thursday when asked whether Syrian President Hafez Assad had suggested to Christopher that there might be a change in Syrian policy.

"We're not going to be able to comment one way or the other on some of the substantive issues that were discussed with any of the parties," Boucher said.

Palestinians Stand Firm

Meanwhile, Edward Djerejian, the assistant secretary of state for Near East and South Asian affairs, met Thursday afternoon with 14 Arab ambassadors to brief them on Christopher's Middle East trip.

Prior to the meeting, Djerejian met with the ambassadors of Egypt and the three Arab countries participating in the bilateral peace talks with Israel: Lebanon, Syria and Jordan.

The United States has been trying to get the stalled bilateral talks restarted, but the stumbling block has been the unresolved fate of some 400 Palestinians whom Israel deported to Lebanon in December.

In Israel, Palestinian leaders reiterated Thursday that they will not return to the peace talks until the deportees are allowed to return to the administered territories.

Dr. Saeb Erekat, a member of the Palestinian negotiating delegation, said at a meeting in eastern Jerusalem that the Palestinians are caught in a situation in which they are unable to return to the talks because Rabin will not hand them the ladder to climb down off the tree.

Erekat said they are caught in a no-win situation. If the Palestinian leadership stays out of the peace process, they will miss out, but if they return under the present circumstances, they will be subject to widespread attacks by their own people.

ARMY SEALS HOME OF ARAB ACCUSED OF JEW'S LYNCHING By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, March 4 (JTA) -- The army has sealed shut the home of two brothers accused of orchestrating the lynching of an Israeli when he entered a Gaza Strip refugee camp by mistake.

Yehoshua Weissbrod, 44, a gas company worker, was stoned and then shot to death in the Rafah refugee camp while on his way to a gas terminal on the border with Egypt.

More than 100 residents of the refugee camp were believed to have taken part in the stoning, believed to have inflicted fatal injuries on Weissbrod even before he was shot at close range by armed militants.

The army believes the shots were fired by Yasir Abu Samadana, leader of a local Hawks gang, affiliated with the Palestine Liberation Organization's mainstream Fatah section.

The curfew on Rafah continued Thursday, as

well as a general closure of the entire Gaza Strip preventing workers from entering Israel proper.

The strip was sealed off Monday, following the murder in Tel Aviv of two Israelis by a Gaza resident whose permit to remain in Israel had expired.

Military sources said the army would reopen the strip on Sunday.

COURT REFUSES TO RECONSIDER EXTRADITION OF ROBERT MANNING By Hugh Ortel

TEL AVIV, March 4 (JTA) -- Robert Manning, accused together with his wife of a fatal 1980 mail-bombing in California, was turned down by Israel's High Court of Justice in a bid to have his extradition from Israel reconsidered.

His wife Rochelle, however, has obtained a last-minute stay of her extradition from Israel after the court agreed to set another hearing on the legality of the U.S. request.

The American Jewish couple, who moved to the West Bank, are charged with mailing the parcel bomb that killed secretary Patricia Wilkerson. The parcel was addressed to the wife of the secretary's employer and the Mannings' fingerprints were later found on parts of the wrappings.

The couple are also wanted for questioning in the case of Alex Odeh, an Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee official killed in 1985 in Santa Ana, California.

The Mannings were active in the Jewish Defense League in the United States. Soon afterward, they immigrated to Israel.

The High Court president, Justice Meir Shamgar, ordered a second hearing before an expanded five-justice bench to focus on Rochelle Manning's argument that she should not be extradited because she has already stood trial in the United States on charges of having killed the secretary.

The previous trial resulted in a hung jury, but U.S. officials want to retry the case.

Rochelle Manning claims the request should be canceled on the grounds of double jeopardy, but U.S. law does not prohibit filing an additional indictment on the same charges in the case of a hung jury. Israeli law differs.

Shamgar said the issue deserved a second, deeper examination of the issue.

Shamgar's decision is described here as unprecedented, since it is the first time in Israel's history that a second hearing has been ordered following a previous High Court decision to uphold a district court's extradition decision.

The prior hearing was before a smaller, three-justice panel.

Rochelle Manning's lawyer, Yair Golan, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that Shamgar had agreed with him that "this is a precedent-setting question" that merits closer legal scrutiny.

But Shamgar rejected a request by Robert Manning, who has never stood trial for the bombing, to permit new evidence to be presented against his extradition.

The Jerusalem District Court had ruled the couple extraditable, despite a protest from a wide section of the Orthodox public in Israel.

Supporters of the Mannings have argued emotionally that the Orthodox couple should not be extradited since "the state should not hand over Jews for trial by non-Jews abroad."

(Contributing to this report was JTA correspondent Cynthia Mann in Jerusalem.)

BEHIND THE HEADLINES:**REAL CHALLENGE FOR JEWISH AGENCY IS MEETING NEEDS WITH TIGHT BUDGET**

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, March 4 (JTA) -- Leaders of the Jewish Agency Board of Governors are concerned that a series of highly publicized reports about political infighting and financial irregularities at the agency are deflecting attention away from its primary task: helping bring immigrants to Israel and settling them once they are here.

They say that internal disputes over such issues as depoliticizing control of the agency's various departments are unfortunate distractions from the more fundamental challenge of meeting stepped-up demands posed by the arrival of waves of immigrants with a budget that is increasingly strapped.

"The biggest tension-producer is the shortage of funds," one Board of Governors member said last week during a tour of Jewish Agency projects near the Dead Sea.

"For the first time, people are saying there is just not enough to do what we need to do. And that creates the potential for internal tensions."

The Jewish Agency spent \$614 million in 1992 while taking in only \$560 million. And this year's income is projected to decline to \$500 million or less, according to Howard Weisband, secretary-general of the Jewish Agency.

At the same time, the Jewish Agency expects an increase this year in aliyah, particularly from the unstable republics of the former Soviet Union. Jewish Agency Chairman Simcha Dinitz is predicting the arrival of 100,000 immigrants, compared to just over 75,000 last year.

Members of the Board of Governors also said all the publicity about internal problems had obscured the real progress being made to render the Jewish Agency more effective by streamlining its structure and fine-tuning priorities.

Weisband pointed out that by the end of the Board of Governors' quarterly meeting last week, the Jewish Agency was able to trim its projected deficit from \$87 million to \$26 million through a combination of currency exchange savings and the deferral of payment into a reserve fund for a loan program for immigrants.

'Problems That Have To Be Addressed'

Another important accomplishment many pointed to was the merger of two large departments into one dealing with rural and urban development. The move is expected to result in significant administrative cost savings.

In the end, the internal disputes did not dim "the very sober recognition that we have concerns and problems that have to be addressed, and solutions which simply must be found because of the importance of nation-building and improving the quality of life here," said Alan Shulman, chairman of the Assets and Liabilities Committee of the Board of Governors.

"We should always focus on the things that bind us," he continued. "All of our goals are common, and we should try to be sensitive to each other's experiences (in determining) how to reach those goals."

"These are critical times, and we have to work together," said Deborah Kaplan, president of Hadassah. "There is more that ties us together than divides us."

Norman Lipoff, chairman of the United Israel

Appeal, the bridge between the United Jewish Appeal and the Jewish Agency, has been on the front line in the fight to depoliticize the agency's operations.

"We feel a sense of responsibility to all those providing resources for continuing to improve the structure and operation of the Jewish Agency, and there are some serious disagreements," he said.

"But they need to be put into perspective," he added. "Over the last four or five years, there have been tremendous changes, and while there was not a lot of agreement in the beginning, we worked our way through them."

An Effort To Define Priorities

Shoshana Cardin, chairman of the Jewish Agency's Goals and Priorities Committee, said she thinks the agency is "moving in the right direction."

The Board of Governors members have "made an effort to (define) priorities to the point where they determine the budget instead of the reverse, and there has been a streamlining of operations."

The Dead Sea trip was an effort to familiarize the Board of Governors members with Jewish Agency programs in the Negev, "to give them a sense of how policy-making relates to what's happening in the field," said Weisband.

Fourteen to 17 percent of all immigrants from the former Soviet Union are settling in Beersheba, the capital of the Negev, and further south, according to Dinitz.

The trip featured a lecture by Avishai Braverman, president of Ben-Gurion University, who told the participants that "Zionism will fail if we don't develop the Negev."

The board broke up into smaller groups for separate tours of Jewish Agency projects, including an absorption center, where immigrants told the stories of their aliyah; a senior citizens complex, where residents gave a choral performance; a youth aliyah day center for area children from disadvantaged homes; and an idea "incubator," which develops scientific and technological projects with market potential.

"We spend a lot of time in meetings talking about our purpose, priorities and structure, attempting to be efficient," said Lipoff, after lunch with students at the day center. But "it's a wonderful feeling to see firsthand what the decisions we're making are doing in the day-to-day life of the people."

"It's exhilarating and it's reassuring," he said.

AMICHAH NOW AVAILABLE IN CHINESE

TEL AVIV, March 4 (JTA) -- Renowned Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai celebrated in Beijing this week the publication of his work in Chinese.

"I am happy to know that there are now one and a quarter billion more people who can read my poems," Amichai said.

He was speaking in Beijing at a reception attended by a gathering of writers, scholars, diplomats and Chinese students of Hebrew.

"Songs of Jerusalem: Selected Poems of Yehuda Amichai" is a collection of more than 180 works, translated by Chinese scholar Fu Hao.

The Chinese academic chanced upon an English edition of Amichai's book "Amen" published in 1977 and decided to translate Amichai into Mandarin Chinese.

PURIM IN ISRAEL IS MAJOR HOLIDAY FOR RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR ALIKE

By Michele Chabin

JERUSALEM (JTA) -- While many secular Israelis rush to the beach on Rosh Hashanah, and many fervently Orthodox Jews ignore the wail of memorial sirens on Martyrs Remembrance Day, everyone, it seems, loves Purim.

Due to begin in most places on Saturday night, and in walled cities such as Jerusalem on Sunday evening, Purim can be called Israel's "universal" holiday.

Religious or secular, Israelis will be celebrating Purim with a vengeance.

Purim is party time, even in Orthodox circles. Indeed, it is the one day of the year when it is halachically permissible to get a bit tipsy.

"Of course we'll have a party," yeshiva student Basya Schur of Milwaukee said when asked how she and her friends would celebrate the holiday. "We'll all be in costumes and it will be great.

"Still," she added, "Purim is also a religious holiday, and there are mitzvahs to observe. Before the party, we'll go to shul and listen to Megillat Esther. And this week, everyone in the yeshiva will give money to charity and prepare food packages for the poor."

For weeks now, schoolchildren from every shade of the religious spectrum have been collecting food to distribute to the poor and elderly. On Purim, many of the kids -- who have the day off from school -- will personally hand out the food to needy neighbors or visit a local nursing home.

Holiday food-giving is not limited to the needy, however. A gift basket of chocolates and liquor is de rigueur when visiting family or friends on the holiday.

Stocking Up On Costumes

As such, sweet shops are doing a booming business.

The Elite Chocolate shops, with hundreds of branches all over the country, offer a gift basket filled with any combination of sweets and liquors. Many customers have spent \$50 and up on a basket.

For those who cannot afford store-bought prices, another alternative is to buy wicker baskets, available in religious and secular neighborhoods alike, and fill them with home-made hamantashen.

As for costumes, stores have been stocking them for weeks. Parents wishing to create their own costumes scouted out shops on Ben Yehuda Street, where magic wands, cowboy hats and toy M-16s are selling for two shekels apiece.

In Gula, one of the capital's most religious neighborhoods, most shops feature a surprising range of costumes and masks, from such traditional favorites as Queen Esther and King Ashveroosh to Charlie Chaplin and the Ninja Turtles.

The one notable exception is the absence of Israeli soldier uniforms as costumes, which are so popular elsewhere.

To initiate new immigrants into the fun, various organizations and government bodies have prepared Purim-related materials for the olim.

Both the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish Agency for Israel have distributed thousands of copies of the Scroll of Esther in Russian and Amharic, and are holding

seminars to teach the immigrants about the holiday.

Preparing for her family's first Purim in Israel, Debbie, a new immigrant from New York, said, "I'm thrilled to see Purim merchandise in all the stores. It sure beats buying Purim costumes on Halloween."

WOMEN'S PRAYER GROUP DAVENS IN LONDON AMID STRONG EMOTIONS

London Jewish Chronicle

LONDON, March 4 (JTA) -- Only the sound of emotional tears disturbed the reverent hush of prayer last weekend as more than 60 women gathered for the first women-only Shabbat service to be sanctioned by Britain's chief rabbi.

The historic gathering, at a private house in northwest London, was greeted with delight and not a little relief by the members of the Stanmore Women's Tefillah Group, whose desire for their own service had sparked months of debate within the Orthodox Jewish community here.

One participant, visiting from America, where such groups flourish, said she was struck by the confidence the women displayed in conducting the two-hour service.

Confident they may have seemed, but before they began their prayers, they were still discussing how they should proceed, there being no precedent in this country to give them guidance.

"We will have to be creative," concluded one participant, although the main concern for these Orthodox women was to remain strictly within the bounds of the halachah, or Jewish law.

Leaving husbands and sons to attend the normal Shabbat service at Stanmore Synagogue a few yards away, the women embarked on reading the weekly Torah portion from the Chumash, rather than the Torah scroll -- one of the conditions sought by the chief rabbi, Jonathan Sacks.

They went on to recite the traditional prayers for the royal family and the State of Israel as well as a special blessing for women, and a prayer for agunot -- women who are unable to acquire a get, or religious divorce, from their husbands.

Doreen Fine, a member of the chief rabbi's panel that reviewed the role of women, led the service, but all were encouraged to participate.

Several women were moved to tears. "It's the most amazing thing to hear a woman leyning (reading from the Torah) if you've never heard it before," said Fine.

She added: "Within the conditions, we made the absolute best of what we could.

"There was nothing the most religious person could have objected to halachically, politically or socially. It's the first step toward establishing ourselves as a serious group of Orthodox women."

Celia Levy, whose home provided the venue for the service and whose husband, Elkan, is an honorary officer of the United Synagogue -- the central Orthodox body for British Jewry -- said: "For the first time as a woman, I felt important spiritually. It was a lovely atmosphere, and such a positive experience."

She added that the group intended to meet soon to discuss plans for future services.

In the meantime, the women were content to have taken this first step. After Fine recited Kiddush, the husbands and sons, back from the synagogue service, were invited in to be reunited with the wives and mothers who had made history.