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ISRAEL AND PALESTINIANS WRANGLE OVER RETURN OF PRE-1987 DEPORTEES

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, April 26 (JTA) -- Israel and the Palestinians are again at odds over deportees, but this time the dispute concerns Palestinians expelled from the administered territories between 1967 and 1987.

The Palestinians have come up with a list of 50 people whom they want returned to the West Bank and Gaza Strip as an Israeli gesture coinciding with the resumption this week of the Middle East peace talks in Washington.

But Israel apparently is only ready to return some 30 Palestinians who were deported before the intifada began in December 1987, sources said over the weekend.

That reported offer is separate from Israel's public proposal, which the Palestinians have so far rejected, to take back immediately 100 of the 415 Moslem extremists deported last December to Lebanon.

The Palestinians initially demanded that Israel allow the return of 400 of the so-called "past" deportees to balance out last December's deportations.

The Palestinians later reduced their demand to 100 and then, late last week, submitted a list of 50 past deportees to Molly Williamson, the American consul general in Jerusalem, who acts as a de facto ambassador to the Palestinians.

Israel deported at least 1,200 Palestinians between 1967 and 1987. Israel's willingness to allow a few dozen of them back is a mere drop in the ocean, as far as the Palestinian political community is concerned.

Among the list of 50 who the Palestinians have asked to be returned are such prominent figures as Akram Haniyeh, former editor of the eastern Jerusalem daily A-Sha'ab and a key activist in the territories, who was deported in 1986; Hanna Nasser, president of Bir Zeit University, who was deported in 1974; and Mohammed Milhelm, former mayor of Halhoul and key Palestine Liberation Organization figure, who was deported in 1980 following the murder of six settlers in Hebron.

Meanwhile, the Israeli right is still against Israel's early return of any of the Palestinians deported last December.

This past weekend, Knesset member Moshe Peled of the Tsomet party appealed to the High Court of Justice to block any early return of those deportees.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES:

FORMER PALESTINIAN OUTLAW EMERGES AS BONA FIDE NEGOTIATOR AND LEADER

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, April 26 (JTA) -- For a moment, Faisal Husseini's usual poker face broke into a smile.

"The only difference between now and the past is that when I now enter the negotiations hall, the Israelis will not walk out," the Palestinian leader said.

Husseini was referring to Israel's quiet agreement to accept him as a participating mem-

ber of the Palestinian delegation to the Middle East peace talks, despite the fact that he is a resident of eastern Jerusalem.

The previous Likud-led government would not talk to any residents of Jerusalem -- at least not officially -- for fear that it might be seen as a sign that Israeli sovereignty over all of Jerusalem was negotiable.

But Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin says accepting Husseini as a negotiator does not mean Israel's position has changed in the least.

And Husseini explained that although he will now be directly involved in the face-to-face negotiations with Israel, Haidar Abdel-Shafi will remain the titular head of the negotiating team.

"There is no real change," he told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency in an interview. "I am still the head of the Palestinian delegation, and Dr. Haidar Abdel-Shafi is the head of the negotiating team."

Israel and the United States had previously referred to Husseini as "chief adviser" to the Palestinian delegation, although within the Palestinian camp, it was apparent that his position was in fact more important. Now Husseini's status is official.

Asked if the Israeli turnabout has any significance, Husseini replied, "That, of course, you will have to ask the Israelis."

At one point, Israeli officials hinted that Husseini would have to register as a resident of the West Bank instead of Jerusalem. But Husseini pointed out that he has "quite a number of addresses in the West Bank, as well as Jerusalem."

Scion Of Old Jerusalem Family

Husseini, 53, the scion of an old and venerable Jerusalem family, has emerged as a key Palestinian leader on the eve of the ninth round of talks, which were to open Tuesday in Washington.

Husseini has strengthened his position with the Israelis, the Americans and, although he will not admit it openly, with Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasir Arafat, whom he refers to as "president of Palestine."

Asked about Arafat's role in the peace process, Husseini responded, "We have a pyramid-shaped structure. Everyone knows who heads it."

In the past few years, Husseini has emerged from being a soldier in the political battlefield to commander of the front. Now, even Arafat must take into account the local leadership, headed by Husseini, when he decides on his political moves.

Husseini's headquarters are located in Orient House, a stylish mansion in eastern Jerusalem owned in the past by the Husseini family and now run as a well-guarded diplomatic mission.

A huge electric iron gate separates the compound from the street, and guards carrying security badges and walkie-talkies patrol the entrance and roofs of the smaller buildings surrounding Orient House.

Visitors must identify themselves and their bags must be searched before being let in. Israelis who come armed with a pistol -- a frequent sight nowadays -- must deposit the weapons in the hands of the Palestinian guard.

This past weekend, Orient House was humming with activity. Palestinian figures walked in

and out of the building for last-minute consultations with Hussein before he left for Washington.

The heavy iron gate opened every few minutes to allow in cars with diplomatic license plates, and officials from the U.S. Consulate here walked in and out of the building. The Americans were putting the final touches on their negotiations with the Palestinians to make sure that Hussein and his delegation were indeed coming to Washington.

Despite threats from the Palestinian delegation during the past few weeks that they would not return to the peace talks unless the Islamic fundamentalists deported by Israel last December were returned and the ongoing closure on the territories was lifted, Hussein wanted to go.

Perhaps more than anyone else around him in the Palestinian camp, Hussein is the realist. He knows that if there are no talks, Palestinians are bound to be stuck with Israeli administration of the territories for many years to come.

The Americans have appreciated Hussein's pragmatism for quite some time. They have tried to convince the Israelis that if they want an alternative to Arafat and the PLO, they must allow an alternative leadership in the territories to develop.

But instead, the previous Likud government placed Hussein under administrative arrest three times and restricted his freedom of movement for five years. These measures ironically helped him emerge from a gray minor political operator into a major political figure.

Eventually, Hussein was accepted worldwide as a true representative of the local Palestinian population.

This week, Hussein was the subject of speculation that he would become head of a local Palestinian police force that would operate even before the establishment of a Palestinian self-rule.

The idea for the police force was mentioned by Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, who said he would back Hussein to head such a force.

Hussein rejected the notion, saying he sees no room for a police force that would operate under the control of the Israeli army.

But the media reports nevertheless show that the talks have moved from the realm of petty bargaining into real business.

Knesset member Benjamin Netanyahu, leader of the opposition Likud party, and former Likud leader Yitzhak Shamir warned this week against a Palestinian police force.

Netanyahu said the proposal is a deviation from the Camp David accords, with the intention of preparing public opinion for "an armed Palestinian state in the heart of Eretz Yisrael."

But regardless of developments in the Washington talks and Hussein's possible role in a Palestinian police force, a major change has already occurred.

The man who under the previous government was thrown in jail as an outlaw is now considered by Israeli policy-makers to be qualified to take charge of law and order.

CHILLY WEATHER IS NO IMPEDIMENT TO INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, April 26 (JTA) -- Israelis celebrated Independence Day this week with the usual barbecues, hikes, political speeches, military ceremonies and air force sky shows.

President Chaim Herzog ushered in the

national holiday Sunday evening atop Mount Herzl, marking the transition from the solemn Yom Hazikaron, a Memorial Day in honor of the nation's fallen defenders, to the festive Yom Ha'atzmaut, or Independence Day, always held a day later.

Herzog said the nation is facing a "difficult security challenge" that endangers both personal safety and the peace process.

But, he added, "We must not stray from our faith in peace and the drive toward its attainment, despite all difficulties."

He said it is critical that democracy be preserved within the "national dispute over peace and security."

The mood was lighter Monday, as Israelis flocked to the beaches and mountains, or instead watched events on television during an unusually cool day in many parts of the country.

As always, most of the fervently Orthodox community shunned any celebration of the secular holiday.

The navy and air force put on a combined air and sea show off the coast of Tel Aviv, and along the shore from Ashkelon in the south to Nahariya in the north. Planes continued the show over Tiberias, Jerusalem and Beersheba.

Army and police force training bases and equipment centers were open to the public throughout the country during the day, while the Jewish National Fund and the Nature Preservation Association had prepared hundreds of picnic and barbecue areas to cope with the hundreds of thousands of vacationers expected.

Settlers Hike Through Gaza Strip

Right-wing politicians and members of the Gush Emunim settlers movement staged a mass hike through the Gush Katif region of the Gaza Strip during the day, to protest reported plans to grant autonomy to Palestinians there.

In Jerusalem, despite cool and sometimes drizzly weather, parks were filled with people enjoying what has become the holiday's national symbol: the barbecue.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, a former army chief of staff, and President-elect Ezer Weizman, a former air force commander, attended a military ceremony in the capital to decorate soldiers for distinguished service.

The Israel Defense Force chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Ehud Barak, said that the determination of Israel's enemies to increase their military strength has forced Israel to sharpen its qualitative edge.

But in the ultra-religious Jerusalem neighborhood of Mea Shearim, black flags were hung and wall posters warned local residents not to take part in the celebrations of the secular Jews.

The holiday is rejected by some haredi, or fervently Orthodox, factions that regard the establishment of the State of Israel as heresy. The newspaper of the Eda Haredit came out with a banner headline framed with black, reading: "Haredi Judaism Mourns 45 Years of Rebellion Against the Kingdom of Heaven."

Security around the country was high for the holiday. In the incident of Arab violence reported, a policeman in Acre was attacked by an Arab, believed to be a member of the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas group.

The policeman was not harmed, and the attacker was arrested.

(Contributing to this report were JTA correspondents Gil Sedan and Cynthia Mann in Jerusalem.)

NJCRC LAUNCHES NATIONAL DRIVE FOR TOUGHER U.S. ACTION ON BOSNIA

NEW YORK, April 26 (JTA) -- The National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council has launched a national campaign to urge the Clinton administration to act immediately to stem the "ethnic cleansing" being committed largely by Serbian forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The association of 13 national Jewish agencies and 117 Jewish community councils, called for the immediate lifting of the arms embargo imposed against Bosnia and for the "immediate and appropriate application of military force, including limited air strikes designed to stop the Serbian aggression."

The member agencies also called for an increase in humanitarian aid to civilian populations, the isolation of Serbia through severe economic and diplomatic sanctions and the creation of a war crimes task force to gather information and evidence to be used in subsequent war crimes proceedings.

"Clearly, the limited measures taken by the international community thus far, including the imposition of economic sanctions against Yugoslavia and the enforcement of the no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina, have not succeeded in protecting civilians or promoting an effective peace process," the umbrella group said in a statement issued Monday.

"As we commemorate the Holocaust this month by resolving that 'never again' will we stand by and allow genocide to go unopposed, the organized Jewish community calls upon the American public to join us in imploring our government to assume its rightful moral responsibility and global leadership by taking the following decisive measures to end this barbarity," the group said.

NJCRC is urging its member groups to begin a lobbying campaign involving, among other things, telephone calls and letters to the White House and Congress.

The umbrella group's statement came as President Clinton told reporters Monday that the United States and its allies must come up with a "stronger policy" on Bosnia and that he hoped to announce new U.S. proposals soon.

Earlier in the day, Clinton signed an executive order freezing Yugoslav assets in the United States and implementing tighter trade sanctions approved by the United Nations.

REFORM JEWISH ACTIVISTS URGED TO PROMOTE BLACK-JEWISH RELATIONS

By Deborah Kalb
States News Service

WASHINGTON, April 26 (JTA) -- Blacks and Jews must work together not only on the national level, but on the grass-roots level, as well, African American leader Eleanor Holmes Norton told a group of Jewish activists here this week.

Only in this way can racism and anti-Semitism be overcome and the civil rights coalition of the 1960s be restored, said Holmes, a Democrat who is the House of Representatives delegate for the District of Columbia.

Norton spoke after receiving an award for furthering black-Jewish relations at the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism's "Consultation on Conscience" conference, being held here this week.

While the civil rights coalition is "alive and well at the top," Norton said, African Americans

and Jews must work to "help rebuild" the coalition "from the bottom up."

Norton noted that Jews and blacks had worked together on civil rights legislation in 1991, but she warned that "anti-Semites have seized the initiative from us" on the grass-roots level, including on some college campuses.

She praised joint community efforts in Washington, citing the protests against gun violence organized outside the National Rifle Association headquarters by the American Jewish Committee and African American groups.

Norton, along with a Baltimore group called the "BLEWS," or the Black/Jewish Forum of Baltimore, received Kovler Awards from the Religious Action Center's Marjorie Kovler Institute for Black-Jewish Relations.

The highlight of the ceremony was a performance by the black-Jewish rap group Dr. Laz and the CURE. The group hails from the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, the scene of racial tension in recent years.

With lyrics such as "Increase the peace," and "Working together is the way to be, that's how we survived through history," the group involved the crowd of several hundred in its energetic singing and dancing, and received a big round of applause.

The awards ceremony was part of a three-day conference sponsored by the Religious Action Center, the purpose of which was to create "an effective Jewish response to contemporary issues of social justice."

Conference Held Every Two Years

The center holds a conference every two years, just after a new Congress takes office.

Featured speakers at other conference events included the Dalai Lama of Tibet and Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the ousted president of Haiti, who were each expected to address the group Tuesday.

On Sunday night, former Rep. Stephen Solarz (D-N.Y.) and Rabbi Eric Yoffie, director of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations' commission on social action, discussed the possible shape of a new American foreign policy.

Another international topic of concern to the Jewish community, the crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina, was to be discussed Tuesday by Sen. Russell Feingold (D-Wis.), a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Many of the events focused on the domestic policy agenda, and administration officials and members of Congress discussed their positions on a variety of issues.

Deputy Secretary of Education Madeleine Kunin addressed the group Monday morning during a session titled "Education 2000," following which participants heard a panel discussion discuss gay and lesbian civil rights.

On Monday afternoon, Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D-W.Va.) was to discuss health care and Rep. Eric Fingerhut (D-Ohio) was to talk about the welfare system.

Another conference highlight was a chance for participants to tour the new U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, which opened to the public Monday.

Other issues on the agenda were the role of gays and lesbians in synagogues, the challenge of the religious right and women in the workplace.

The group commemorated Israel Independence Day, and many participated in the gay rights march here Sunday, the first day of the conference.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES: ADL INVESTIGATION RAISES QUESTIONS ABOUT TACTICS USED IN DATA GATHERING

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) -- The Anti-Defamation League's letterhead states its mission this way: "To stop the defamation of the Jewish people ... to secure justice and fair treatment to all citizens alike."

But an ongoing San Francisco police investigation has raised questions about whether ADL's tactics have compromised its own mandate.

Some analysts, primarily those from Jewish organizations, are also concerned that the highly publicized investigation of ADL will have a chilling effect on the ability of others to expose extremist groups.

The investigation may have already tainted the very notion of organizations collecting information and monitoring groups that are perceived as potential threats to the Jewish community, these observers said.

ADL is suspected of keeping tabs on more than 950 organizations and as many as 12,000 individuals, many of them involved in right-wing, white supremacist or Arab-American activities, according to a police affidavit released publicly.

In an April 8 raid on ADL's San Francisco office, the district attorney sought evidence that ADL has been using law enforcement information, supposedly obtained illegally, in its alleged intelligence network.

Few of the analysts from Jewish and non-Jewish organizations with whom the Jewish Telegraphic Agency spoke thought it likely that ADL would be convicted, if indicted, for violating the law.

Yet some observers involved in information gathering said the ADL may have gone "too far" in its zeal to gather information and ventured into areas which are unethical, if not illegal.

Either way, the police investigation of ADL's activities may have a chilling effect.

"A lot of entirely legitimate fact-finding may be compromised or otherwise tainted," said Jerome Chanes, co-director for domestic concerns at the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council.

'Will Cost The Jewish Community Dearly'

"It will now be extremely difficult to get any cooperation from police agencies. This scandal will have an incredible chilling effect," said Daniel Levitas, an expert on white supremacists and former director of the Atlanta-based Center for Democratic Renewal. "ADL's overzealousness will cost the Jewish community dearly."

But others, including Gary Rubin, director of national affairs at the American Jewish Committee, disagreed.

"I don't think it will have a major impact on anybody outside of ADL, and I sincerely hope it won't affect them," he said.

Other analysts were concerned that in the firestorm of press coverage surrounding the ADL imbroglio, even above-board, widely accepted methods of information-gathering would be called into question.

"There is a catchall attitude that having a file is by implication illegal and openly immoral," said Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

"The keeping of files on hate groups is not only not a crime, it's a mitzvah," he said. "I

have every confidence that all agencies in a democracy try their best to gather information in a way that doesn't violate American law. The whole notion of an open society goes both ways.

"The McCarthyite mentality that the whole notion that keeping files is wrong is not something anyone in the Jewish community should accept."

Abraham Foxman, ADL's national director, and Melvin Salberg, the group's national chairman, said in an April 16 statement, "ADL maintains files on a wide variety of organizations, as would any other responsible business, journalist, or civil rights organization.

"To imply that simply maintaining a file containing documents mentioning an individual or an organization is tantamount to 'spying' on that individual or organization is preposterous."

David Elcott, an ethicist at CLAL -- National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership, found no fault with ADL's actions.

"The ADL, using what it can to get what (information) it can, is not as invasive as it sounds at first blush," Elcott said.

"Banks sell data on me and you on a zillion topics, and this doesn't strike me as an issue of moral concern," he said.

But Levitas, the expert on white supremacists, maintained that ADL was monitoring groups which it had no business following, including Arab American groups like the American-Arab Anti-Defamation Committee.

Too Close To Law Enforcement?

Levitas believes that the criterion for monitoring a group or individual should be "whether they're a threat in violent terms, not just whether you have a political disagreement with someone," he said.

Other analysts said that there was nothing unethical about the methods that ADL used to gather facts, but raised questions about the close relationship ADL has cultivated with law-enforcement agencies.

The ADL has "lately served as an arm, an adjunct of law enforcement," charged Chip Berlet, an analyst at Political Research Associates, a liberal think tank in Cambridge, Mass. that tracks authoritarian groups on the extreme right and extreme left.

"As ADL has been drawn into this network with law enforcement it has lost its ability to speak out on issues of protecting civil liberties, which include government abuse," he said.

That charge was denied Barbara Wahl, a lawyer who is working as counsel to ADL.

"ADL's mission is completely unrelated to the missions or objectives of law enforcement. We have communication with them, but most of it is not intelligence gathering. Most is security issues, community awareness issues," she said.

But she acknowledged that "in the event that information in ADL's possession would be useful in connection with other, independent investigations that law enforcement is undertaking, then there is collaboration."

Elcott of CLAL said that "to ask ADL not to maximize its relationships with law-enforcement agencies and those who have political clout is naive.

"The goal of ADL is not everyone's human rights, but to build a less bigoted community. One way to do that is to have relationships with sources of power that can protect human rights," he said.