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**ISRAEL MAKES GESTURE TO PALESTINIANS
BY AGREEING TO TAKE BACK 30 DEPORTEES**

By Deborah Kalb

States News Service

WASHINGTON, April 28 (JTA) -- Israel appeared to be making good this week on its promise to grant far-reaching concessions to the Palestinians once the ninth round of Middle East peace talks began.

In Jerusalem, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin announced Wednesday that Israel would take back 30 Palestinians deported from the administered territories before the start of the intifada in December 1987.

An Israeli statement said the 30 deportees "were chosen in consultation with the Israeli security authorities, after a review determined that they were neither involved in terrorist attacks in the past, nor were they active in hostile terrorist activity during the course of their deportation."

Here in Washington, Palestinian spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi said the 30 were picked from a longer list of recommended names given to the Israelis by Palestinian representatives.

She said the Palestinians would continue to seek the return of additional deportees and that she and her colleagues were "still working on the speeded-up return" of the 400 Palestinians deported by Israel last December.

Ashrawi said the return of the 30 Palestinians, who represent a range of professions and occupations, "will make a difference to the community" in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Israeli officials had been saying for weeks that they would offer substantial proposals and gestures to the Palestinians, once the Palestinians returned to the negotiating table.

The Israeli and Palestinian negotiating teams met Tuesday afternoon for the first time in over four months, and the Palestinians seemed to be waiting for additional sessions before pronouncing judgment.

'It Was A Fruitful Day'

Ashrawi told reporters Wednesday that it was "too early to give a value judgment as to whether the (first) session has provided results."

She said that the Israelis had presented "what they considered as a package," consisting of discussions of "substance, the situation on the ground and early empowerment."

"We talked on each subject in a general way, but with the understanding that more may be coming," Israeli negotiator Elyakim Rubinstein told reporters Tuesday evening after the session.

"On some matters we were more specific," he added, saying, "I feel it should remain in the negotiating room."

"I think it was a fruitful day, to a reasonable extent," he added.

Ashrawi characterized this round of talks as "one of the most critical and most difficult."

Negotiations continued Wednesday between Israel and its four negotiating partners: the Palestinians, Syrians, Jordanians and Lebanese.

The Israeli-Syrian negotiations are considered by some experts to be the most promising track. But on Tuesday, the Israelis expressed

concern that, although the Syrians were using the phrase "full peace for full withdrawal," the definition of "full peace" remained unclear.

The Israelis have indicated that, in return for a full peace, including exchanges of ambassadors and trade relations, they would withdraw from the Golan Heights.

On Wednesday, the two sides agreed to renegotiate their joint statement of principles, Israeli spokesman Uri Palti reported. "This is sort of good news," he said.

Itamar Rabinovich, the Israeli ambassador in Washington who also serves as head of the team negotiating with the Syrians, told reporters after Wednesday's session that the two sides agreed that "the best thing is to go back to the working document that we have spent quite a bit of time trying to draft together in the previous rounds."

This decision came after a discussion of the "full peace for full withdrawal" concept, in which the Israeli side attempted to explain to the Syrians why "we do not wish to reduce a complex reality or a complex approach into a condensed formula," Rabinovich said.

'Very Constructive' Atmosphere

The various participants in the Israeli-Jordanian and Israeli-Lebanese negotiations all seemed pleased with Wednesday's sessions.

Jordanian chief negotiator Abdel Salam al-Majali told reporters Wednesday that he and his Israeli counterparts had "a very businesslike discussion."

"Certainly, the news on what has taken place on the other Palestinian track was very encouraging" and makes the "atmosphere of the negotiation more hopeful that this round will come to better progress than the previous ones," he added.

Rubinstein, who is also the chief Israeli negotiator with the Jordanians, told reporters after the session Wednesday that "it has been a positive day."

And Lebanese chief negotiator Souheil Chammas, too, emerged from meetings with his Israeli counterparts Wednesday with a positive message.

"Today we have started what I call discussions of substance," Chammas told reporters. "We're addressing the problems. We have made our views clear. The Israelis have done the same."

His Israeli counterpart, Uri Lubrani, remarked that Wednesday's meeting was "the first session in which substance has been touched, and we have begun to grapple with the problems at hand."

"The atmosphere was very constructive, very businesslike," Lubrani told reporters.

American officials, as well as Middle East negotiators, have been stressing the importance of this round of talks.

Speaking to a group of Orthodox Jewish leaders here Wednesday morning, State Department adviser Dennis Ross said the Clinton administration hopes to promote progress as quickly as it can in its role as "full partner" in the negotiations.

Ross, a former Bush administration official who is now special adviser to Secretary of State Warren Christopher, addressed some 400 members

of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, whose Institute for Public Affairs was holding a national leadership conference here.

Ross told the group that in the four-month hiatus in the peace talks, opponents of the process have taken on greater importance in the region.

He pointed to groups such as the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas movement and the Islamic Jihad, which, he said, "are determined to destroy any possibility of peace." Their targets, he said, "are as much Palestinian as Israeli."

It is important, Ross said, that the "peace-makers dominate the environment."

'Can't Build A Bridge To Nowhere'

Discussing the U.S. role as "full partner" in the negotiations, Ross said the administration would work with the various parties to clarify matters or offer suggestions on formulating proposals.

He said that whether or not the United States gets involved in making "bridging proposals" to close gaps between the parties' respective positions depends on what the parties do.

"We can't build a bridge to nowhere," he said. "We can't play our part if they're not doing theirs."

Another U.S. official involved in the peace process, Assistant Secretary of State Edward Djerejian, offered similar comments about the U.S. role Wednesday.

"When the time is appropriate, and that is based on the parties narrowing their differences, whereby bridging proposals can then be introduced, we would be prepared to entertain our ideas on what proposals could bridge the gaps between the parties," Djerejian told members of Congress.

In testimony before the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East, Djerejian reiterated the administration's commitment to maintain aid to Israel and Egypt at its current level for fiscal year 1994, in part because of the importance of the peace process.

RABIN'S CONCESSIONS TO PALESTINIANS ARE ASSAILED BY LIKUD IN THE KNESSET By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, April 28 (JTA) -- With the peace talks under way again in Washington, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is coming under sharp attack from the opposition Likud party for making too many concessions to the Palestinians in return for nothing.

Rabin is defending his policies but vowing at the same time that the government will not compromise on issues of security.

The clash between the two views came to a head during a special session of the Knesset on Wednesday, when Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu led an assault against the government.

"We're calling for a change of policy," Netanyahu said. "We think the government's concept of negotiation is like the joke about collective bargaining: We bargain and the Arabs collect."

Members of the hawkish opposition are against the government's plan to let some 300 Palestinians deported between 1967 and 1987 return to the territories.

The opposition also objects to the idea of granting broad powers to the Palestinian administrative council proposed for the territories during

the envisioned interim phase of Palestinian autonomy.

"If they begin the negotiations this way, offering just about everything, we know that very rapidly we'll reach a point where Israel will return to the '67 boundaries" that existed before Israel captured the territories in the Six-Day War, Netanyahu said.

"We'll have a Palestinian-Hamas-Arafat state at the outskirts of Tel Aviv, and we'll have the Syrian army peering down at us from the Golan. This is not a prescription for peace," he said, referring to the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas movement and Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasir Arafat.

It is time, the opposition leader said, to "either change the policy" or "change the government."

Focus On Cure, Not Symptoms

But Rabin argued this week that too much focus is being placed on confidence-building concessions to the Palestinians, such as allowing some of those deported prior to the start of the intifada to return to the territories.

"This is not the issue," the prime minister told reporters covering a United Jewish Appeal function Tuesday. The issue, he said, is how to "move by two phases to a permanent solution" with the Palestinians.

But Rabin made clear that while Israel is "ready to make compromises on a mutual basis," it will not compromise on the issue of security. "We want peace in its real meaning and security in its real meaning," he said.

Rabin said the coming year is a "crossroads" that will "decide in what direction the Middle East turns, toward peace or toward stalemate."

At the core of the autonomy plan Israel is offering to the Palestinians, he said, is the willingness to "transfer almost all the duties of the civil administration which are related to the life of the Palestinians."

Rabin said the autonomy plan would aim to abolish the so-called civil administration, which is the military-run system of government in the territories.

The prime minister emphasized that Israel will remain responsible for overall security in the territories during the interim autonomy period and will continue to be responsible for the lives of the Israeli settlers in the settlements there.

Rabin urged the Palestinians to shift their focus from the "symptoms of the disease," such as the deportation of extremists, to curing the "disease" and working toward a political settlement.

But in the Knesset on Wednesday, Netanyahu argued that the Palestinians have not demonstrated their sincerity about reaching a peace settlement with Israel.

The Likud leader said he is not opposed in principle to Israeli confidence-building measures, but he said they should not be one-sided.

"How about confidence-building measures on the part of the Palestinians toward Israel, for example, stopping the terror?" he said. "How about confidence-building measures on the part of the Syrians toward Israel, such as stopping the tremendous wave of killing from Hezbollah, which is Syrian-controlled?"

Netanyahu said Israel should begin to demand and not only to offer. And it should "make it clear that a return to the '67 boundaries or anything like it is out of the question."

BEHIND THE HEADLINES: PROPOSED CHANGES IN TERRITORIES CAUSING DEEP CONCERN FOR SETTLERS

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, April 28 (JTA) -- Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are worried -- now more than ever before. Hardly a day passes without bad news, as far as they are concerned.

Last week, they read reports of a proposal to set up a Palestinian police force in the territories, even prior to the implementation of an autonomy agreement.

Then early this week, they heard of the government's plans to allow the return of some 30 Palestinians who were expelled from the territories between 1967 and 1987.

Later in the week, the settlers faced reports that the government intends to offer the Palestinians expanded authority over land in the territories.

The settlers are particularly concerned about control over land, especially as it relates to land available for expanding their settlements or adding new ones.

Fourteen years ago, Israel's High Court of Justice banned the government from establishing settlements on private property that had been confiscated from Arabs "for security reasons."

The Likud government found a way to circumvent the ban, by declaring tens of thousands of acres "state land." This label applied to lands that had no clear private ownership.

It became up to Arab claimants to try to prove in court that the land in question was theirs. Since very few went to court, and even fewer were able to prove ownership, the state ended up with plenty of land to offer the settlers.

Enraged About Police Force Proposal

Some 90 percent of the settlements in the territories were erected on such "state land," and the rest were established on land that was either owned by Jews prior to the 1948 War of Independence or purchased by Jews after the Six-Day War of 1967.

Of the approximate 2 million acres of land in the West Bank, a third is believed to fall under the category of "state land."

The settlers are concerned that giving the Palestinians authority over land would put an end to further development of Jewish settlements in the territories.

Settlers are also enraged with the reported proposal to set up a Palestinian police force. Afraid that Palestinian police belonging to such a force might acquire jurisdictional authority over Jews as well, the settlers say they will shoot at any armed Palestinians, regardless if they are in uniform or not.

The subject came up during a Cabinet meeting this week, with ministers warning settlers that they will be met with force from the government if they act against institutions set up in an agreed-upon Palestinian autonomy framework.

Environmental Protection Minister Yossi Sarid of the left-wing Meretz bloc demanded that the government make it clear to the settlers that it will not tolerate any civil disobedience.

"If the settlers fire at armed Palestinian policemen," he said, "the government will act against them, and any show of disobedience will be suppressed immediately."

ISRAEL MAY INVITE FOREIGN WORKERS TO REPLACE THE ABSENT PALESTINIANS

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, April 28 (JTA) -- Bowing to pressure from building contractors, the government is now ready to allow foreign construction workers into Israel to replace Palestinian laborers who have been banned during the ongoing closure of the administered territories.

Labor and Welfare Minister Ora Namir, who previously said she adamantly opposed the idea, has now agreed to the measure, but still wants a much smaller number of workers than requested by the contractors.

The contractors, who met with a ministerial committee Wednesday, said they expected a decision to be issued Friday allowing some 10,000 foreign workers to be brought in.

This week, more than 4,000 Palestinian laborers from the territories were given permits to work in construction.

But not all of them showed up for work, apparently because other Palestinians have pressured them not to work in Israel proper until the closure is lifted entirely.

Representatives of the construction industry told the Knesset Finance Committee this week that they were incurring tremendous losses as a result of the cutoff of Palestinian workers and warned of a consequent rise in housing costs.

SHIN BET ENACTS STRICTER RULES ON FORCE USED IN INTERROGATIONS

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, April 28 (JTA) -- The country's domestic intelligence agency, the Shin Bet, will be instituting stricter guidelines on the use of physical and psychological pressure during the interrogation of Arab suspects.

The Shin Bet acknowledged the new guidelines in response to a court case filed with the High Court of Justice by a public human rights committee aiming to prevent torture.

A general description of the new guidelines was presented to the court in a public document, while the full and detailed directives were given in a separate, classified affidavit.

The new guidelines are more specific than in the past. They no longer give interrogators license to use severe measures on all suspects.

The new guidelines state explicitly that the measures that can be used by an interrogator will be determined in each case individually, according to the background of the specific suspect and the value of the information that can be obtained from him.

Applying limited physical or psychological pressure is only allowed with inmates suspected of "serious" violations of the law.

Those measures which are not mentioned specifically as being allowed are prohibited.

Thus measures such as denying the suspect food and drink, denying him the use of a toilet, or exposing him to extreme cold or heat are banned.

According to the Shin Bet head, whose identity is kept secret, the changes in the guidelines came about after recommendations made by a ministerial committee comprising Justice Minister David Libai and Police Minister Moshe Shahal.

The changes were approved last week by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who is responsible for the agency.

ROMANIAN LEADER REACHES OUT TO JEWS AMID SPATE OF ANTI-SEMITISM IN PRESS

By Odette Cauffman-Blumenfeld

IASI, Romania (JTA) -- Setting a contrast to the current streak of anti-Semitism in this country's press, Ion Iliescu last week became the first Romanian president to participate in the Jewish community's annual Holocaust commemoration.

Attending ceremonies at Bucharest's Choral Temple, Iliescu also became the first Romanian head of state to enter a Romanian synagogue in an official capacity.

Nor was his attendance at the Holocaust memorial service the only gesture Iliescu has made to the Jewish community recently.

On Passover he gave a special address to Romanian Jews.

And late last week he was in Washington to attend the opening of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

When he attended the commemoration in Bucharest, Iliescu also brought with him several high-level government officials, including the ministers of health and finance, the newly appointed attorney general and members of Parliament.

At the ceremony, the Romanian president spoke of his own recollections, when "as a young man, I was an eyewitness to the tragedy undergone by the Jewish people during World War II."

He acknowledged that this occupied a "special place" within "the inconceivable sufferings and atrocities inflicted by blind hatred."

The president said Romania's new constitution "guarantees the equality of all citizens, regardless of race, nationality, religion, ethnicity, language, sex, opinions, wealth, social origin."

And he ended with a promise: "We assure the Jewish population that we shall energetically oppose the manifestations of xenophobia and anti-Semitism... defending, with the means of the democratic state, the honor of all citizens regardless of their religion or ethnicity."

"Let us hope that this will not remain only a promise made but will also become a promise kept," he said.

Ironically, Iliescu's welcome gestures have come amid a continuing current of anti-Semitic articles in the press.

Slurs Against The Chief Rabbi

In fact, the president's participation in the commemoration has come under criticism.

Right-wing nationalists called the gesture "a betrayal of the religion of his forefathers," a "recognition of the culpability of the Romanian people" in crimes against the Jews and "the price Romania has to pay for getting most-favored-nation status" with the United States.

This was a reference to Romania's request that the United States lift trade restrictions imposed on the country during the hard-line regime of Nicolae Ceausescu.

The weekly publication *Politica* warned the president that "his desire of pleasing a few thousand Jews might dangerously estrange him from the Romanian people" and reminded him that he won the elections with the support of certain nationalist circles.

Moses Rosen, Romania's chief rabbi, welcomed Iliescu to last week's ceremony, but noted in his address the recent appearance of anti-Semitism.

"The fascist persecutions, too, started with

books and magazines that people apparently did not pay much attention to," Rosen warned.

Rosen has personally come under attack in the local press.

An editorial in the weekly *Europa* warned that Iliescu's visit to Washington during the Romanian Orthodox observance of Easter, "when all kinds of dissidents might be in the country, must have been plotted by Moses Rosen to make easier a coup d'etat."

Another article in the same right-wing publication was titled "The Rabbi Suffers From Hemorrhoids." It denigrated Rosen as "the devil in mauve" (he wears purple religious vestments), "the old goat" and "inventor of the pogroms and Holocausts carried out by the Romanians."

But the article's author, Ilie Neascu, who is the editor of the newspaper, went beyond the traditional content of a lampoon.

He not only ridiculed the character or personal appearance of a person, but slandered Jews throughout the world:

"The Western press is almost entirely in the hands of the Jews, as is the Council of Europe, led by their (Free)masonry and the United Nations Organization at the mercy of the World Jewish Congress," Neascu wrote.

He added the oft-heard calumny that "communism was founded by the Jews."

President's Sincerity Questioned

Iliescu's sincerity about combatting this type of anti-Semitism has been questioned by many here, including Rabbi Rosen, despite the president's recent gestures.

Some leaders of liberal opposition parties said they declined invitations to attend the Holocaust memorial precisely because they objected to Iliescu's presence.

One telegram to Rosen read that the opposition could not take part in a ceremony commemorating the victims of fascism next to "somebody who, for inexcusable reasons, accepts political support from, and returns support to, the very forces whose program means nothing but a permanent incitement to hatred."

And a representative of the Liberal Party said the participation of the opposition beside the president "would have meant implicit approval of his moral and political duplicity."

"For, although openly supporting the extremist, xenophobic and anti-Semitic parties, he tries, through such maneuvers as this ceremony, to elude reality and portray abroad the false image of a democratic president."

Jewish figures also questioned Iliescu.

Radu Alexandru, writer and vice president of the Romania-Israel Association, sent an open letter to the president in which he wrote:

"I am obliged to tell you with the most sincere regrets that, as long as you, for political reasons, continue to accept this disqualifying complicity, I do not acknowledge your moral right to walk into the Choral Temple on Holocaust Day."

Rosen charged that Iliescu "has done nothing to stop" anti-Semites. "He has not asked for concrete steps in this respect."

Despite all the criticism, it is also understood here that Iliescu is constrained by having to rely on several of the nationalist factions in Parliament.

Jewish leaders here say it remains to be seen how the president will follow up on the unusual gestures he has made in the past month.