

VOL. 71 - 76th YEAR

FRIDAY, APRIL 30, 1993

NO. 80

**FIRST WEEK OF NEW PEACE TALKS ENDS
WITH ISRAEL AND SYRIA AT LOGGERHEADS**

By Deborah Kalb

States News Service

WASHINGTON, April 29 (JTA) -- Negotiations between Israel and Syria, viewed as having the potential for an early breakthrough, remained bogged down as the first week of this ninth round of Middle East peace talks ended Thursday.

Syrian negotiator Mouaffak al-Allaf reportedly warned that his delegation would quit the talks by the end of next week if progress was not made.

Itamar Rabinovich, the Israeli ambassador here who also serves as chief negotiator with the Syrians, emerged from the lengthy morning round of talks with a more positive attitude.

"There is a genuine engagement in the Syrian-Israeli negotiations and a positive willingness to move forward that must not be taken lightly," Rabinovich told reporters.

The negotiations have gotten mired in conflicting definitions of terms.

The Israelis say they would be willing to withdraw from the Golan Heights in return for a full peace with Syria, including the exchange of ambassadors and trade relations.

The Syrians began the current round of talks Tuesday using the term "full peace for full withdrawal."

But the Israelis were concerned that the Syrian definition of "full peace" was too vague.

The Syrians, for their part, reportedly complained that the Israelis are not defining the terms of their withdrawal.

Neither side appeared willing to take the first step.

Meanwhile, on the Israeli-Lebanese track, the negotiating teams discussed the issue of prisoners held by each side.

But there was no indication that they had reached any agreement about how to resolve the situation.

**TALKS ON MIDEAST WATER RESOURCES
MEET IN GENEVA AND END IN DISCORD**

By Tamar Levy

GENEVA, April 29 (JTA) -- An international conference on Middle East water resources convened here this week and ended in discord, with the Palestinians saying they would not participate in additional sessions for the next five months.

The Palestinians were apparently upset that Israel had rejected their request that a special commission be set up to investigate disputed water rights in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"The Israelis refused all compromise," Palestinian spokesman Abu Ala was quoted as saying at a news conference here.

"As long as we Palestinians are not treated as a full partner, the talks cannot succeed," said Riad al-Khourday, the head of the Palestinian delegation.

The conference that met here this week is one of five multilateral working groups set up during the October 1991 Middle East peace conference in Madrid to deal with various regional issues.

This week's talks were attended by numerous countries from both the region and beyond.

Delegations from the region included Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, the Arab Emirates and Yemen. But Syria and Lebanon again boycotted the talks.

An additional 29 nations and international organizations participated in the talks.

Gen. Freddy Zach, a member of the Israeli delegation, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that for the first time a delegation of the United Nations and the World Bank proposed a project involving water wells in Jordan.

The European Community discussed another water project for the Gaza Strip. The World Bank submitted a project for rain-collection, and the Canadian delegation presented projects affecting the whole region.

In a statement given to reporters, the Palestinians proposed a national water carrier linking the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"We require Palestinian national institutional building, especially a central Palestinian water resources authority that would enable us to fully manage our national water resources," the Palestinian paper said.

"We want Israel to give us the right to dig and develop wells and share the Jordan basin and establish a national water carrier linking the West Bank and Gaza."

**ISRAEL MADE PALESTINIANS NO PROMISES
ABOUT FURTHER CONCESSIONS, RABIN SAYS**

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, April 29 (JTA) -- Israel has no commitment to make further gestures toward the Palestinians beyond its decision this week to take back 30 Palestinians it deported before the intifada began in 1987, officials said here.

However, speaking Thursday during a visit to the Gaza Strip, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin did not rule out the possibility that more deportees would be allowed to return through the normal process of appealing the orders to military advisory boards.

Israel's announcement Wednesday that it would take back the 30 deportees was presumably part of a previously agreed-upon set of gestures to lure the Palestinians back to the Middle East peace talks, which resumed this week in Washington.

But Rabin's remarks Thursday seemed to suggest that the Palestinians should not expect further gestures.

The first five of the 30 deportees were expected to return to the territories from Jordan via the Allenby Bridge on Friday morning. Arabs sources said that festivities to welcome the group were being organized in the West Bank town of Ramallah.

The 30 approved names were part of a larger list submitted to Israel by Palestinian negotiators.

A statement issued by Rabin's media adviser stressed that all those allowed to return had not been involved in terrorist attacks -- and had not been involved in hostile terror activity during their period of exile.

Israel refused to take back known "trouble-

makers," such as Akram Haniyeh, former editor of the Jerusalem daily A-Sha'ab, who is now a close adviser to Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasir Arafat.

Israel also refused Mohammad Milhelm, the former mayor of Halhoul, who was deported in 1980 following the murder of six settlers near the Hadassah House in Hebron.

Israel rejected outright 50 names originally suggested by the Palestinians, fearing it would lead to the rebuilding of PLO forces in the administered territories.

Palestinian Reaction Is Mixed

Twenty-seven of the 30 deportees who are returning are above the age of 55 and are presumably too old to cause serious agitation in the territories.

The key figures allowed to return include:

- * Ruhi al-Khatib, 70, the former mayor of East Jerusalem, deported in 1967, shortly after the Six-Day War. He still officially holds his mayoral title.

- * Abdul Jawad Saleh, 66, the former mayor of El-Birch and a member of the Palestine National Council. He was deported in 1973.

- * Hanna Nasser, 57, president of Bir Zeit University and a member of the PNC. He was deported in 1974.

- * Azmi Shuweibi, 46, a dentist and member of the PNC. He was deported in 1986.

- * Fayek Warrad, 74, former head of the Palestinian Communist Party, who was deported in 1967 to Jordan, where he led the Jordanian Communist Party. He also has close contacts with the PLO leadership in Tunis.

Reactions among Palestinians in the territories to the decision to allow the 30 to return were mixed.

On the one hand, there was satisfaction that Israel was allowing back known Palestinian activists, among them some who will go down in Palestinian history books.

On the other hand, PLO supporters expressed disappointment with the fact that there were few hard-core organizational leaders who might have been able to bolster the dwindling ranks in the face of the growing opposition of the Moslem fundamentalists.

Those who were disappointed were encouraged with the declaration of Palestinian spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi, who said this was but "the first installment" of returnees.

Nasser of Bir Zeit wrote Thursday in the Jerusalem daily A-Nahar that he had been dreaming of this moment for the past 18 years.

But he added that even if all the deportees were to be returned, it would still not solve the Palestinian problem.

The political right in Israel reacted with anger and disappointment to the government decision.

Thousands protested against the government's "gestures and withdrawal policy" at a demonstration Wednesday evening in downtown Jerusalem.

The demonstration was attended by 15 Knesset members, among them the leaders of the major opposition parties: Benjamin Netanyahu of Likud, Rafael Eitan of Tsomet, Ze'evulun Hammer of the National Religious Party and Rehavam Ze'evi of Moledet.

Opposition forces also planned to hold a special Knesset session next week to discuss the "Return to Zion of the Palestinians."

GADHAFI MAKING OVERTURES TO JEWS, ACCORDING TO LIBYAN JEWISH LEADER By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, April 29 (JTA) -- Will Moammar Gadhafi's Libya host a historical reconciliation between Moslems, Jews and Christians?

This unlikely idea is being promoted by Raffaello Fellah, president of the World Association of Jews from Libya and an Italian citizen.

In February, Fellah traveled to Libya at Gadhafi's invitation. The Libyan ruler told Fellah of his intention to take a number of steps that would constitute a reconciliation with the 100,000 Jews whose families left Libya, as well as de facto, limited recognition of Israel.

These measures would include compensation for the property of former Libyan Jews, and full permission for them to visit Libya.

Fellah said that Gadhafi also promised that Israelis could attend a proposed interfaith conference, and that 200 Libyans would in turn be permitted to make a pilgrimage to the Moslem holy sites in Israel.

This apparent softening of Gadhafi's position toward Jews comes as the former firebrand is still subject to United Nations sanctions for his refusal to turn over to either the United States or Britain two Libyan citizens suspected of international terrorism.

The two Libyans are suspected of bombing Pan Am Flight 103, which exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988, killing 270 people.

Under the sanctions, Libya's foreign air links have been cut, a fact that would make it difficult for those who plan on attending the interfaith conference, which Fellah hopes to hold in July.

Time To Put Him To A 'Real Test'

Fellah is secretary-general of Trialogue, the International Association for Friendship and Coexistence Among the Peoples of the Mediterranean Area, which would sponsor the conference.

By then, the United States, which first instituted its own economic sanctions against Libya as far back as 1978, hopes to be able to tighten the U.N. sanctions.

Fellah said he was told by Gadhafi that Libya would allow the accused bombers to be tried in Canada, where the International Air Transport Association has its headquarters, or another "neutral" country.

Fellah said it was important to put Gadhafi "to a real test," to see if his new attitude to Israel and the West is in fact real.

"There's no reason to reject an opportunity," he said. "Dialogue means talking with somebody with whom we have some differences."

He criticized the approach taken by the United Nations and, by implication, the United States. "I believe the United Nations does not want to decide on dialogue, but just to make sanctions," he said.

He said that Gadhafi wanted to end the conflict with the United States that has lasted for more than a decade. It is a conflict that has centered in large measure on Libyan support for terrorism.

Now, said Fellah, Gadhafi shares the concern of Egypt and other moderate Arab states that fundamentalist Islam poses the greatest threat to the region.

"Without saying that Jews are no more the enemy, he said specifically that fundamentalism is the enemy of Islam," recounted Fellah.

JEWISH GROUPS SAY IT'S NOT YET TIME TO EXEMPT RUSSIA FROM JACKSON-VANIK

By Deborah Kalb
States News Service

WASHINGTON, April 29 (JTA) -- Soviet Jewry advocacy groups are trying to convince the Clinton administration and Congress that now is not the time to exempt Russia from provisions of the 1974 Jackson-Vanik Amendment.

The administration is currently conducting an interagency policy review of the Cold War-era statute, which links most-favored-nation trade benefits for Russia and other countries to their emigration policies.

The review was ordered after Russian President Boris Yeltsin asked President Clinton at their summit meeting in Vancouver earlier this month to remove Jackson-Vanik restrictions against his country permanently.

After the summit ended, a jubilant Yeltsin told reporters that the two leaders had "decided to do away with the Jackson-Vanik Amendment."

But Clinton made clear at the same news conference that his administration would first have to verify that there were no longer any restrictions on emigration from Russia.

Groups championing the rights of Jews in the former Soviet Union say conditions in Russia are still problematic for some Jews seeking to emigrate and that there are still "refuseniks" forbidden to leave for various reasons.

These groups are also concerned about the continuing economic and political instability in Russia. They point out that Yeltsin's standing is threatened by a coalition of nationalists and former Communists, many of whom are anti-Semitic.

These groups do acknowledge, however, that there have been enormous changes in Russia's emigration policy since Jackson-Vanik was enacted in 1974.

In that year, just over 20,000 Jews were allowed to leave what was then the Soviet Union. In recent years, though, emigration has skyrocketed, reaching close to 200,000 in 1990 and 1991.

Solve Refusenik Problem First

In recognition of that progress, the United States has granted the Russians one-year waivers of the Jackson-Vanik restrictions for the past few years, with the backing of most American Jewish organizations.

What Yeltsin wants now, though, is for Russia to be removed permanently from the list of countries to which the amendment applies. That would require an act of Congress, and most Jewish groups believe that now is not the time to take such a step.

The National Conference on Soviet Jewry, a coalition representing the Jewish organizational establishment, backs the administration's overall review of Cold War policies but opposes taking Russia out of the Jackson-Vanik review process.

"The potential for collapse of political institutions in Russia, accompanied by violent ethnic conflict, requires a commitment by the United States to support democratic institutions, to promote economic development and to foster the recognition of human rights," the group said in a statement last month.

"The Jackson-Vanik Amendment remains an essential component of this commitment," it said.

Likewise, the Union of Councils for Soviet

Jews, a coalition of grass-roots human rights groups, argued in a statement issued this week that "although emigration is a de facto reality, Russia is not in compliance" with Jackson-Vanik.

Pamela Cohen, the group's national president, said Thursday that the United States should not change Russia's Jackson-Vanik status until the Russians "get rid of the concept of refuseniks" and other legacies of the Cold War.

AJCongress Backs Exemption

But one Jewish group, the American Jewish Congress, has come out in support of exempting the Russians from Jackson-Vanik.

AJCCongress President Robert Lifton and Henry Siegman, the group's executive director, wrote to President Clinton prior to the Vancouver summit urging him to lift the Jackson-Vanik restrictions against Russia.

AJCCongress argues that such an exemption would strengthen the Russian democratic forces, and that in turn would help Russian Jews.

"Today the most important protection that can be accorded Russian Jews -- along with all minorities in that country -- is to promote the stability of the Russian government and the preservation of democratic institutions and practices," the group said in a statement last month.

Phil Baum, the group's associate executive director, added Thursday that lifting the amendment would be a way of helping Russia "without costing the American taxpayer."

But Mark Levin, executive director of the National Conference, said Thursday that most other Jewish groups are opposed to exempting the Russians at this time.

He made clear, however, that the National Conference continues to support the granting of the trade sanction waivers on a yearly basis.

FALASH MORA, ETHIOPIAN CONVERTS, COMING TO ISRAEL ON LIMITED BASIS

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, April 29 (JTA) -- The first Falash Mora, Ethiopians whose ancestors converted from Judaism to Christianity, are due to arrive in Israel in the coming weeks, Absorption Minister Yair Tsaban announced this week.

At a special session Wednesday of the Knesset, Tsaban disclosed that Israel has been negotiating with Ethiopian officials to secure the emigration of the Falash Mora.

"We are in the process of implementing the decision of the government" taken earlier this year to approve the immigration, on a limited basis, of the Falash Mora, said Tsaban.

Most of the Falash Mora are being admitted to Israel on the basis of unification with family members or relatives who are already in Israel.

Tsaban said he hoped that in the first half of May a senior Interior Ministry team would go to Ethiopia and start to process the most pressing "humanitarian cases."

The numbers will begin small and increase, said Tsaban. "We shall start with tens, and then there will be hundreds and then thousands. It depends on understandings we shall reach with the Ethiopian government."

Meanwhile, Ethiopians demonstrated this week outside the Prime Minister's Office to demand recognition of their spiritual leaders, kessim, as their official religious leaders.

Tsaban told them the government is committed to the official recognition of 46 kessim.

ANC LEADER TO ADDRESS GATHERING OF SOUTH AFRICAN JEWS THIS SUMMER

By Suzanne Belling

JOHANNESBURG, April 28 (JTA) -- In another sign of the changing times here, African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela has agreed to be the keynote speaker at the South African Jewish Board of Deputies' national congress in August.

Officials of the ANC, once regarded with deep suspicion by the Jewish community, also attended Israel Independence Day receptions here and in Cape Town this week.

"I am pleased the ANC decided to send a senior representative," Israel's ambassador to South Africa, Alon Liel, said at a luncheon here this week.

"We see the ANC as a constructive organization in South Africa, and we are trying to build friendly relations," he said.

But Liel also stressed the need to strike a balance with the National Party, the Democratic Party and the Labor Party, who were represented at the Cape Town reception.

Cabinet ministers and other members of Parliament attended, including the first Jewish Cabinet minister in 50 years: Louis Shill, who is minister of housing and public works.

The ANC's closer ties with the Jewish community were also evidenced by Mandela's agreement to speak at the Board of Deputies congress. The board's national director, Seymour Kopelowitz, said it would be the first opportunity for the Jewish community at large to hear the ANC president.

The Jewish community here is also pleased by the International Council of Jewish Women's decision to hold its triennial convention in Johannesburg this month.

It will be the first international Jewish gathering to be held in South Africa since the country's white minority government scrapped a number of apartheid laws.

FBI INVESTIGATING POSSIBLE JDO BEATING

By Deborah Kalb
States News Service

WASHINGTON, April 29 (JTA) -- The Federal Bureau of Investigation is looking into the case of a man who was beaten up after protesting at the dedication of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum last week.

The Jewish Defense Organization, a self-proclaimed "self-defense" group that says it fights Nazis and anti-Semites, reportedly claimed responsibility for the attack.

The man, David Willcox, was reportedly waving a Palestinian flag outside the dedication ceremony for the Holocaust museum, which took place April 22.

"We are proceeding with a preliminary investigation to see if any federal laws might be involved here," Frank Scafidi, a spokesman for the FBI's Washington field office, said this week.

Scafidi said that if members of the Jewish group, which is based in New York, were in fact "ordered to Washington to engage in this," the case could be investigated as domestic terrorism.

But he said he was not sure yet whether the members had been ordered to travel to here.

The case could also be classified as either a hate crime or battery, depending on what facts are uncovered, Scafidi said.

FORMER HEAD OF ARROW PROGRAM GETS TWO YEARS FOR TAKING BRIBES

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, April 29 (JTA) -- Dov Raviv, former head of Israel's Arrow anti-missile missile program, has been sentenced to two years in jail and a \$21,000 fine for taking a \$75,000 bribe from a Canadian parts supplier.

Raviv, 56, was given another two years suspended sentence by the Tel Aviv District Court on Thursday.

Raviv, who headed the Arrow program at Israel Aviation Industries, the major contractor for the project, pleaded innocent to the charges against him but was found guilty last week by Judge Amnon Strasnov.

Raviv claimed that any sums he had received were not a bribe but legitimate payment for professional advice and services rendered.

He said he would appeal the verdict and sentence to the Supreme Court.

Strasnov said he was handing down a comparatively light sentence in view of Raviv's poor state of health.

Raviv is reportedly suffering from a brain illness.

Following the sentencing, Raviv told an Israel Television interviewer that the main reason he had accepted payment was his need to pay for urgent brain surgery.

But Strasnov said that even had Raviv needed the money for medical expenses, he had still erred and committed an offense by accepting a bribe.

CLINTON MEETS WITH LUBAVITCHERS AS THEIR REBBE SUFFERS A RELAPSE

By Deborah Kalb
States News Service

WASHINGTON, April 29 (JTA) -- A delegation of eight Lubavitcher rabbis met and exchanged gifts with President Clinton at the White House on Thursday, and the group's leader said the president was "all attentive and very gracious."

The meeting Thursday was in conjunction with "Education and Sharing Day USA," a government commemoration of the birthday of the Lubavitcher rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, which was April 2.

Clinton gave the delegation a presidential proclamation and a congressional resolution in honor of Education Day.

The rabbis, in turn, presented Clinton with a tzedakah box, a dollar bill and a yarmulka with his name on it in English and Hebrew.

The rebbe -- who is now in poor health, having suffered an apparent relapse this week -- has a tradition of handing out dollar bills to his followers.

Rabbi Abraham Shemtov, the delegation's leader, said that the symbols on the dollar bill, including the motto "In God We Trust," the pyramid, and the eagle holding arrows and an olive branch, stood for peace through strength, and progress.

Shemtov said Clinton put on the yarmulka and put the dollar bill in the tzedakah box. Then the president said, "Both of these will stay with me forever."

The meeting lasted 17 minutes, Shemtov said. "I was very impressed with the way he received the gift," the rabbi said of the president.