

**ISRAEL HOPES RELEASE OF 280 PRISONERS  
WILL IMPROVE THE MOOD AT PEACE TALKS**  
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 27 (JTA) -- Israel is hoping its decision to release 280 Palestinians from prison early will be seen as a sign of good will in advance of the resumption next month in Washington of peace talks with the Palestinians.

Officially, the move, which was announced by the Defense Ministry on Wednesday, is a gesture timed to coincide with the Moslem Id al-Adha festival taking place next week.

But observers say the government also hopes the step will improve the atmosphere between Israeli and Palestinian negotiators in Washington.

The list of the released prisoners was approved in a meeting attended by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Police Minister Moshe Shahal, Israel Defense Force Deputy Chief of Staff Amnon Shahak, the head of the Shin Bet security agency and the IDF coordinator for activities in the administered territories, Maj. Gen. Danny Rothschild.

None of the Palestinians being released over the next few days participated in any violent activities leading to injuries or deaths, and the majority have already completed most of their prison terms. Some on the list are detainees who had not yet been tried.

This gesture, as well as the decision last week to allow residents of the territories to enter Jerusalem for prayers on the Temple Mount, came amid growing optimism here that the Palestinians will return to the talks despite their stated ambivalence about doing so.

It is also expected that the Americans will try to bridge the gap between the Palestinians and the Israelis before the talks begin.

**Moved Beyond 'Soul-searching'**

But the Palestinian delegation to the peace talks has yet to respond to an American invitation to come to Washington for "consultations" aimed at hammering out a joint Israeli-Palestinian statement of principles that would help guide the next round of talks.

Dr. Haidar Abdel-Shafi, head of the Palestinian delegation, said that in his view, there is no reason for any crisis in the talks. He said there could be no excuse for not achieving progress in the talks, because peace is just as important for the Israelis as for the Palestinians.

Eitan Bentzur, deputy head of the Israeli delegation to the talks with the Palestinians, expressed satisfaction with Abdel-Shafi's statement, saying it is an indication that the Palestinians have moved beyond the stage of "soul-searching" they announced at the end of the ninth round of talks. Bentzur said the comment showed that the Palestinians are interested in continuing the talks.

Differences remain, however, within the Palestinian camp. Representatives of the Palestinian leftist groups met this week in Jerusalem and called for "a dialogue of all Palestinian trends" to work out a joint document that would guide, and limit, the Palestinian delegation.

Speakers at the conference called for the Palestinians to suspend the peace talks until such a national agreement is worked out.

**MERETZ AND SHAS ARE CLOSE TO A DEAL  
THAT WOULD RESOLVE COALITION CRISIS**  
By David Landau

JERUSALEM, May 27 (JTA) -- The crisis threatening the stability of Israel's government appears to be close to resolution, with the ruling Labor Party's two feuding coalition partners, Meretz and Shas, trimming their conflicting demands and inching toward a compromise.

The evolving deal, according to political insiders, will see Meretz leader Shulamit Aloni take over the Communications and Science ministries, and hold responsibility, too, for major areas of Israel's cultural life.

These insiders say the accord would have been wrapped up before the Shavuot holiday had it not been for the tragic killing of four paratroopers by friendly fire in Lebanon on Monday. Political activity virtually stopped as the country mourned these four young men.

Under the proposed accord, Aloni's role as culture czar would give her responsibility for just one of the two state-run broadcasting authorities. The other would remain under the supervision of her presumed successor at the Ministry of Education and Culture, Amnon Rubinstein of Meretz.

In this way, the original demand by the Orthodox Shas party that the avowedly secularist Aloni be removed from the Education Ministry would be fulfilled.

Aloni would retain control over most areas of culture, along with her new posts at Communications and Science. But she would not have complete control over broadcasting, nor would she run areas of culture that could bring her into renewed dispute with the fervently Orthodox community.

**Exact Title Not Yet Clear**

Still to be resolved is the issue of Aloni's new title in the proposed Cabinet reshuffle.

Shas objects to her being called "minister of culture," or, more accurately, "minister of communications, science and culture."

The chairman of the Meretz Knesset faction, Ran Cohen, said that for his party the question is "not one of title or kavod (honor) -- but of principle." Labor, Shas and Meretz politicians were to conduct discreet consultations before the week's end to settle this problem.

Shas' concession came earlier in the drawn-out crisis: its consent to Rubinstein, another Meretz minister, as Aloni's replacement at Education and Culture. At first, Shas insisted that this sensitive post be held by the Labor Party, not by the left-wing Meretz.

But Shas now says Rubinstein is more "traditional" in his lifestyle than Aloni and much less acerbic in his rhetorical style.

Aloni has infuriated the Shas party in recent months with a series of controversial statements seen by the Orthodox Sephardic party as anti-religious.

The festering tension between the ideologically opposed parties culminated in Aloni's public criticism of Rabin for having recited the Shema Yisrael prayer at the end of his speech last month at ceremonies commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES:**

**PROPOSED CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM IS UNLIKELY TO DIMINISH JEWISH CLOUT**

By Deborah Kalb  
States News Service

WASHINGTON (JTA) -- Campaign finance reform legislation now being considered in Congress is unlikely to seriously impede Jewish contributors' ability to support pro-Israel candidates for office and consequently is not expected to diminish Jewish clout in Washington.

The proposed reforms would change the system whereby political candidates receive money, placing limits on contributions from political action committees, including the several dozen pro-Israel PACs.

The legislation also would seek to eliminate "soft money" contributions, by which well-to-do donors evade spending restrictions by contributing large amounts of money to candidates through the political parties.

The Jewish community has long been known for donating money to political candidates and causes in amounts far outweighing the percentage of Jews in the American electorate.

Much of this money has been funneled through dozens of pro-Israel PACs to sympathetic candidates, making the pro-Israel lobby a formidable force in Washington.

Under reforms proposed by President Clinton earlier this month, the maximum PAC contribution to a Senate candidate would be cut from \$5,000 to \$2,500. And only 20 percent of a Senate candidate's contributions could come from PACs.

Candidates for the House of Representatives could receive one-third of their donations from PACs.

In addition, candidates would be asked to adopt voluntary spending limits. Those adhering to the limits would receive vouchers to pay for such expenses as television commercials and postage.

Campaign finance reform became a hot issue in last year's election campaign, with presidential candidate Ross Perot regularly decrying the influence of lobbyists and the special privileges enjoyed by incumbents in Congress.

**May Never Pass Congress**

But Jewish supporters of campaign finance reform say the Clinton plan is quite moderate and would change little about the way Jewish PACs and individual contributors operate.

They point out that the Clinton plan and alternative plans floating around Capitol Hill do not bar PACs entirely.

They also say that Jewish clout in Washington has as much to do with effective grass-roots lobbying as it does with raising money. Jewish groups regularly encourage their members to lobby their senators and representatives on issues of Jewish concern.

Not everyone in Washington is supportive of Clinton's plan, which is currently being debated on the Hill.

In Congress, campaign finance reform is a "contentious, difficult issue," said Stuart Eizenstat, a Washington attorney who served in the Carter administration and is active in Jewish causes.

Members of Congress "can't be too dissatisfied with a system that got them there," Eizenstat said.

There is talk of a Republican filibuster to block reform legislation in the Senate. The Re-

publicans are also expected to produce their own version of a campaign finance reform bill.

Eizenstat believes a campaign finance bill will ultimately be passed this year, but that some of Clinton's provisions may be watered down as the bill makes its way through Congress.

Last year, a campaign finance bill passed, but was vetoed by then-President Bush.

But some skeptics fear Clinton's finance reform plan will meet the same inglorious fate as his economic stimulus package, which basically died in Congress.

"You can call me a cynic," said one Capitol Hill aide who has been closely following the issue, "but most of these efforts at campaign finance reform" will probably result in "less than is talked about right now."

Campaign finance reform has not been an issue on which many Jewish groups have taken a vocal position.

One exception, however, is the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, which has taken a prominent role in pushing for reform.

"The Jewish community has an important stake in clean, effective government," said Rabbi David Saperstein, the center's director.

Saperstein, who supports Clinton's proposals, played down any concerns about the reforms hurting the candidates and issues supported by many Jewish voters.

"Jews give money disproportionately to political causes," Saperstein said, "and will continue to do so, no matter what the system is. I am confident that the Jewish community will continue to make its opinions felt."

**'Only Beneficial Results' For Jews**

Saperstein acknowledged that the reforms "will have some impact" on the way Jews give money, but he said that would simply mean that the Jewish community would have to "work harder to accomplish what was relatively easy under the old system."

David Cohen, co-director of an organization called the Advocacy Institute that teaches public interest groups about the U.S. political system, sees "only beneficial results for the American Jewish community" from the proposed reforms.

Cohen, a strong supporter of campaign finance reform, said Clinton's proposal "legitimizes a place for organized group giving," balancing it with other forms of campaign donations.

Overall, many in the Jewish community are taking a wait-and-see approach, as they continue to study the Clinton plan in the coming weeks.

The National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council is "generally supportive" of most of the provisions in Clinton's plan, said Jerome Chanes, co-director for domestic concerns.

In general, the proposed reforms "won't have that much of an effect" on the Jewish community, he said.

Some say that unless the country moves toward complete public financing of campaigns, there is no way to stop individuals from contributing, and therefore Jews can continue to give money to their favorite candidates.

"I can't believe there will be a system that will not have contributions by individuals," said Morris Amitay, treasurer of the Washington PAC. "The Jewish community will continue to do well."

Washington insiders are confident that contributions will always be a part of American politics. As one Capitol Hill aide put it: "Money is like water: It will find a way to get there."

**U.S. AND RUSSIA BOTH DENOUNCE  
ANTI-SEMITIC ARTICLE IN PRAVDA**

By Deborah Kalb  
States News Service

WASHINGTON, May 27 (JTA) -- The United States and Russia have both denounced an anti-Semitic article that appeared in the Russian newspaper Pravda earlier this month.

The May 5 article included allegations that Jews engage in ritual murders, a trumped-up charge that led to pogroms in czarist Russia.

The article also linked the murders of three Russian Orthodox priests to the longstanding efforts by American members of the Chabad Lubavitch movement to gain the release of their religious texts held at the Lenin Library in Moscow.

State Department spokesman Richard Boucher, briefing reporters last week, called the article "virulently anti-Semitic."

He said the United States had spoken to the Russians about the article on May 6 and 7, and that the United States "firmly supported the efforts of the Lubavitch community to regain custody of those books."

Boucher pointed out that while Pravda is no longer an official government publication, it has wide circulation, and "we are therefore concerned that articles such as this threaten the spirit of religious tolerance in Russia."

Both the U.S. government and the National Conference on Soviet Jewry were encouraged that the Russian Foreign Ministry spoke out May 14 against the Pravda article.

Boucher quoted the Russian statement as saying the article was "destructive in its manner, and facilitates the inflammation of nationalist and religious dissension."

The statement also said the Russian government "takes all the necessary measures for the effective guarantee of the rights of Russian citizens, regardless of their nationality or religion."

Mark Levin, executive director of the National Conference, said Tuesday that the statement was a "positive step" on the part of the Russian government.

"This is a good example of how far they've come," Levin said.

He said the Pravda article represented the problems associated with the combination of anti-government nationalists and Communists in Russia.

"We keep talking about the former Communists and nationalists coming together," Levin said. "This is one blatant example."

**BLATANT POLISH ANTI-SEMITISM  
GREETES CAST OF SPIELBERG FILM**

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES, May 27 (JTA) -- The cast and crew of "Schindler's List," the Steven Spielberg film about the German businessman who saved more than a thousand Jews in Poland during the Holocaust, have been shocked by the overt anti-Semitism they have encountered while on location in Krakow.

In an article in the Los Angeles Times, David Gritten reports that one of the cast's Israeli actors was approached at a hotel bar by an elderly Polish man and asked if he was Jewish.

When answered yes, the old man insultingly drew his finger across his throat, then pulled his fist up behind his neck to indicate a noose.

British actor Ben Kingsley, who stood nearby, leaped at the man, and a scuffle ensued.

"We've seen anti-Semitism at first hand, and it fills me with despair," said Kingsley afterward.

In another incident, actor Ralph Fiennes, dressed for his role in an SS uniform, was approached by a woman.

"She told me in Polish that the Germans were wonderful people and that they didn't kill anyone who didn't deserve it," he said.

The crew was also shaken by a woman who started walking across the set during shooting and was gently stopped by crew members.

"Who cares about the (expletive) Jews?" she shouted.

Some Poles connected with the film have been deeply disturbed by the incidents. Cinematographer Janusz Kaminski, who immigrated to the United States in 1980, said flatly that he now dislikes his native country, which he thinks "has an inferiority complex."

"The fact is, some Poles were traitors and sent Jews to their deaths," he said, adding that "Poland is still an anti-Semitic place."

Franciszek Palowski, a Polish broadcaster who serves as film consultant, noted that the book "Schindler's List" has never been published in Poland. "The book destroys the cliché that existed in Poland that there were no good Germans," he said.

"There is also jealousy here, I think. Poles take the view that no one ever wrote a book about Poles who saved Jews," he said.

**JEWISH STANCE ON CONFLICT IN BOSNIA  
DISCUSSED WITH MOROCCAN AMBASSADOR**  
By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, May 25 (JTA) -- Morocco's ambassador to the United Nations met with a Jewish delegation here this week to hear the organized Jewish community's position on the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The meeting was held at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations. Present was American Ambassador Madeleine Albright, who organized the session at the request of her Moroccan counterpart, Ahmed Snuissi.

The Jewish delegation presented the policy statement adopted in February by the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, which called for lifting the U.N. arms embargo against Moslem forces in Bosnia and appropriate military intervention to stop killings and other atrocities perpetrated against Bosnian Moslems.

The group also shared illustrations of Jewish communal activism on the issue.

The Moroccan ambassador described his distress and that of other Moslem countries about the situation in Bosnia, where Serbian forces have gained control over most of the country.

"I have a sense that they were pleased to learn about the organized Jewish communal involvement on this issue," said Lawrence Rubin, NJCRAC's executive vice chair.

NJCRAC Chair Maynard Wishner and Abraham Bayer, the group's director for international concerns, were also present at the meeting, as were Harris Schoenberg, B'nai B'rith's director of U.N. affairs, and Geraldine Soba, U.N. representative of the National Council of Jewish Women.

The JTA Daily News Bulletin will not be published Monday, May 31, on account of the Memorial Day holiday in the United States.

**CJF MOVES TO CENTRALIZE ALLOCATIONS  
BY ESTABLISHING JOINT FUNDING BODIES  
By Larry Yudelson**

NEW YORK, May 25 (JTA) -- For the Jewish community's national agencies, many of which have been suffering from budget cutbacks these past few years, a moment of truth is at hand.

Two committees that may wield the power of life and death over them are rolling into action.

Jointly known as the National Funding Councils of the Council of Jewish Federations, the committees will allow some 40 participating federations to decide jointly on the money they give to perhaps as many as nine national agencies.

Because the participating federations include the nation's largest, the groups would provide 90 percent of the dollars the national agencies receive from federations.

By centralizing the allocation process, the NFC will exert far more influence over the national agencies it funds than could any individual federation.

Those agencies not directly funded by the NFC are likely to see further reductions in federation support, as the federations concentrate their attentions and resources on agencies which they deem part of the CJF family.

Under the system the NFC replaces, 18 national agencies had their budgets examined by the federation system.

The NFC, which met for the first time in April, is composed of two parallel committees. They are the Joint Budgeting Council and the Combined Budgeting Council. Participating federations are grouped in the councils by size, with the larger federations in the JBC and the smaller federations in the CBC.

Each participating federation pays dues to the respective council, in proportion to the size of its campaign and Jewish community. The councils then vote on how to allocate the pool of money at its disposal to the national agencies that the NFC decides merit allocations.

Federations will have a vote on the committees weighted in accordance with the amount of money they put into the pool.

**Allocations Dropping Steadily**

The separate CBC structure enables smaller federations to deliberate on allocations without their votes and their contributions being overwhelmed by those of the larger federations.

The JBC was actually created four years ago, as a pilot program involving 11 of the largest federations. Additional larger federations are joining it, among them that of New York City.

Until now, the JBC has allocated to four agencies. The NFC plans to add as many as five agencies to that number.

The NFC replaces a CJF committee known as the Large Cities Budgeting Conference. That committee had for over four decades examined the budgets of 18 national agencies, among them the Anti-Defamation League, the North American Jewish Students Appeal and the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, to name a few.

The conference would then approve an appropriate amount for each agency to solicit from federations.

In recent years, the amounts actually allocated by the federations have fallen way below the amount authorized by the conference.

At a recent meeting of the CJF Board of Delegates, CJF Executive Vice President Martin

Kraar warned, "In the end of the day, I'm not sure the agencies can survive at the rate at which the communities are reducing their allocations to them."

Historically, national agencies received 2 percent of all the money raised by federations. But in recent years, that percentage has dropped to 1.5 percent.

Already with the JBC, "we have brought a lot of communities to a better level of giving to national agencies," said Barbara Rosenthal, a vice chair of the NFC.

Communities participating in the JBC and CBC will pay a certain amount of money up front, based on factors such as the size of the community and its federation campaign. The JBC and CBC will then decide how to divide that pool of money among the participating agencies.

Because that money will be committed in advance, those agencies can be sure they will receive their allocation.

Those national agencies which are not admitted to the NFC will continue to have their budgets evaluated by a CJF committee. But they face the likelihood that when local federations decide to reduce allocations to national agencies, they will keep their payments to the NFC constant and disproportionately cut allocations to the other national agencies.

**More Involvement In Planning**

The criteria for agencies joining the NFC include receiving significant funding from federations, providing services to federations and a willingness to allow the NFC to participate in planning.

Those that have been beneficiaries of the JBC from its inception are the Jewish Education Service of North America, the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, the National Foundation for Jewish Culture and the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council.

The NFC hopes to vote on the new beneficiaries by the end of June.

Among those least likely to be included are such organizations as the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League, which currently receive only a tenth of their budgets from federations.

"They would like to have a good relationship with the federations," explained Jerry Rosen, director of national agency relations at CJF. "But if they're involved in the JBC process, they lose some autonomy."

The next stage of the process will be national planning.

"With shrinking resources, allocations have to become a little less routine and more thoughtful," said NFC Vice Chair Rosenthal. "Jewish continuity is the No. 1 issue. That ought to mean dollars being shifted."

The JBC has already begun discussing national planning issues beyond its direct province. One issue that has been discussed would be the establishment of a national system for funding schools of Jewish communal service, which currently serve the entire federation system but are largely funded by their local communities.

Another issue requiring national planning, which has been raised before the JBC by the National Foundation for Jewish Culture, concerns preserving the books and documents in the collections of three archival organizations funded by the foundation. A JBC subcommittee has been set up to study the issue.