

**8 MOSLEM FUNDAMENTALISTS ARRESTED
IN N.Y. IN BOMBING AND MURDER PLOT**

By Tova Mirvis

NEW YORK, June 24 (JTA) -- Eight men linked to an Islamic fundamentalist group were arrested Thursday for plotting to blow up the U.N. headquarters, FBI headquarters in Manhattan, and the Lincoln and Holland tunnels, which connect Manhattan with New Jersey.

The group also had a death list that included U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.) and New York State Assemblyman Dov Hikind.

D'Amato, a staunch supporter of Israel, has called for the death penalty for terrorism cases and has repeatedly said Sheik Omar Abdel-Rahman, with whom the suspects are linked, should be jailed while he appeals a deportation order.

Hikind, who represents largely Orthodox strongholds in Brooklyn, was a major supporter of Rabbi Meir Kahane, a right-wing militant activist who was assassinated here in 1990.

The man charged in Kahane's murder, El Sayyid Nosair, has also been linked to Abdel-Rahman and to the suspects arrested in connection with the bombing last February of New York's World Trade Center.

Nosair was acquitted of Kahane's murder and is currently serving time in prison on lesser charges stemming from the shooting.

The alleged ringleader of the group arrested Thursday, Siddig Ibrahim Siddig Ali, also has close ties to the radical Sheik Abdel-Rahman.

Five suspects were mixing the chemicals for their bombs in Queens when they were arrested. The other three were arrested later in Brooklyn; Jersey City, N.J.; and Yonkers, N.Y.

The arrests follow a four-month undercover investigation conducted by the Joint Terrorist Task Force, made up of members of the FBI and New York City police. Officials have called the investigation one of the most significant ever undertaken in the United States.

'We Can Get You Anytime'

The group intended to carry out their plans before the September trials scheduled for the defendants in the World Trade Center bombing, according to James Fox, the FBI's New York director.

"As we entered the bomb factory, the suspects were literally mixing the 'witches' brew,'" Fox told reporters.

The suspects' message was, "We can get you anytime," according to Mary Jo White, U.S. attorney for Brooklyn.

"They were looking for something spectacular to blow up, something that would make the World Trade Center look like a minor incident," Hikind told reporters separately.

In reaction to the arrests on Thursday, the New York Jewish Community Relations Council called for all the suspects to be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

"Only through the prosecution of every one of those named," in this and the World Trade Center incidents, "will the clear, unequivocal message be sent that terrorism will not be toler-

ated in this country," JCRC Executive Director Michael Miller said in a statement.

The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations said that these latest arrests underline the notion that Arab terrorism is no longer an issue just for Israel.

"Arab terrorism -- long a problem to the people of Israel -- became an American issue when the World Trade Center was bombed in February," said a statement by the conference. "The latest arrests confirm that these groups represent a major threat to public safety and public order."

**PEACE TALKS PROCEEDING SLOWLY,
WITH FOCUS ON PROCEDURAL ISSUES**
By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, June 24 (JTA) -- Officials involved in the Middle East peace talks are offering contrasting assessments of the potential for progress in this round of negotiations.

Most observers agree that this round has moved at a slow pace and that the United States will have to provide the momentum to push the negotiators toward some sort of agreement.

Secretary of State Warren Christopher said Wednesday that he expects "good progress" in this 10th round of bilateral talks that Israel is holding with Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and the Palestinians.

"I think we'll make progress in this round before the round is done," the secretary said. "I think I'd guide you to watch these matters develop over the next several days."

King Hussein of Jordan, on a visit to Washington, also expressed some optimism Wednesday concerning the overall situation in the Middle East's search for peace.

Addressing a gathering at the Brookings Institution, Hussein said that "we have moved, maybe slowly, but I believe we have covered a lot of ground so far."

On the subject of the talks itself, though, both Israelis and Palestinians involved in the talks offered downbeat assessments.

At a news conference Wednesday, Hanan Ashrawi, the spokeswoman for the Palestinian delegation, said a breakthrough "doesn't look very likely."

And Itamar Rabinovich, who serves as ambassador here and as chief Israeli negotiator with the Syrians, said Thursday that there had been "no headline-making news" so far in the talks.

"If you're looking for breakthroughs, they have not happened in the past two weeks," Rabinovich told a group of Jewish journalists.

Time To Change 'Madrid Rules'?

Substantive discussions have been eclipsed by more procedural discussions concerning three issues: the extent of American involvement in the talks, the legitimate topics of discussion at this point in the talks and whether or not the rules governing the talks should be changed.

Rabinovich has said in recent days that if there is no progress in the talks soon, the Madrid rules governing the peace process may need to be changed.

"The Madrid formula is something that

should not be easily tampered with. It took a long time and a major effort to put it together, and I will not be the one to advocate that we abandon it or that we introduce radical changes in it," he said Thursday outside the State Department.

"But if for several rounds the format as such has not yielded results, then we might entertain the notion of some changes. And a couple of these changes have already occurred, particularly with regard to the pattern of American involvement," he added.

Later Thursday, however, the ambassador said that changing the Madrid format "is a matter for future speculation not for our current effort."

As has been the case throughout this round, the focus this week was on the American role in the talks.

Since the last round, the Americans have been attempting to push the Israelis and Palestinians toward agreement on a joint statement.

But movement has been hampered by the issue of Jerusalem, and both Ashrawi and Rabinovich, without closing the door on the possibility, expressed a degree of doubt that any agreement on a statement could be reached this round.

The Palestinians, concerned that the Israelis are creating "facts on the ground" that would permanently separate eastern Jerusalem from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, have raised the Jerusalem issue in this round.

The Israelis, for their part, say Jerusalem is not an issue to be discussed in this stage of the negotiations.

U.S. 'Committed' To Assurances

Ashrawi, in her briefing Wednesday, said the Palestinians were concerned that the Americans were not being forceful enough in backing up their letter of assurances given to all the parties before the peace opened with a conference in Madrid in October 1991.

The U.S. letter of assurances to the Palestinians states, among other points, that the United States is "opposed to the Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem" and encourages "all sides to avoid unilateral acts that would exacerbate local tensions or make negotiations more difficult or pre-empt their final outcome."

Christopher said Thursday that the United States remains "committed" to the assurances.

But Ashrawi said that the letters should be backed up by an "enforcement mechanism."

King Hussein, who met Thursday with Secretary of State Christopher, said in his Brookings remarks that progress would be more likely if the Palestinians were given more of a sense of what the final outcome of the talks would be.

He said there is a "need maybe to clarify for the Palestinian people more what the end result might look like of all these very worthy efforts that are ongoing."

"If that were to happen, and I hope and pray it will, then I'm sure that progress will be rapid on transitional arrangements and on all others," the king said.

Currently, the rules governing the talks divide the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations into interim and final-status phases. The talks are currently in the interim stage.

Progress has also been slow on the other negotiating tracks.

Rabinovich said that until progress is reached on the Palestinian and Syrian tracks, there will be no breakthrough with Jordan or Lebanon.

SHAS LEADER FORBIDS MINISTER FROM QUITTING CABINET FOR NOW

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, June 24 (JTA) -- The spiritual mentor of the Shas party has forbidden Interior Minister Aryeh Deri from quitting the Cabinet at this time, despite the attorney general's intention of pressing fraud and bribery charges against him.

Deri said last year he would resign his post if he was indicted on corruption charges in the three-year police investigation into a variety of alleged financial wrongdoings.

Attorney General Yosef Harish announced this week that he intended to present charges to a court shortly, and even showed Deri and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin a draft copy of a charge sheet drawn up against the Shas party leader.

The Deri affair is being watched closely here, since it threatens the stability of the governing coalition, led by the Labor Party, with Shas and the Meretz bloc as junior partners.

Reacting to the news earlier this week, Deri said he was considering whether or not to step down immediately and also spoke about waiving his parliamentary immunity in order to expedite the legal process and avoid a nasty debate in the Knesset.

But for the time being, Yosef has told Deri to hold onto his post. The Shas leadership met at Deri's home Wednesday evening, with the venerable Jerusalem kabbalist Rabbi Yitzhak Kadouri also in attendance.

In a show of solidarity with the 34-year-old minister, Yosef told reporters he was confident that Deri would emerge from the affair triumphant and that his "enemies will fall before him." Deri "is guarded by angels," Yosef said.

Rabin Supporting Deri

Deri and his attorney, Dan Avi-Yitzhak, have demanded -- as the price for the interior minister's resignation -- that the state prosecution "lay everything on the table," rather than hold back with further, unspecified charges that could be made at a later date.

Regarding this issue, the prime minister appears to be supporting Deri. Rabin said Deri deserved to be shown all the charges against him before he and his lawyers meet with the attorney general in a final bid to persuade him not to press charges.

Rabin said Deri is an "excellent minister" and deserves the same treatment as anyone else in his situation.

But the state prosecution has let it be known that further charges against Deri are indeed in the pipeline.

This has only added to the perception that Deri is being treated harshly, according to top Tel Aviv attorney Ram Caspi, who was interviewed Thursday.

"If they are working up more charges -- why couldn't they bring them all together?" Caspi asked.

Deri's supporters contend that the investigation against him, which has kept 50 police detectives busy, was launched by the then-Likud government, which was angered that Shas had siphoned away votes from Likud and had attempted to put together a government with Labor.

They claim the case became "an obsession" with the state's top legal officers and certain senior policemen -- with the result that Deri is being victimized.

**ALLUSIONS TO BLOOD LIBEL MADE
BY PROMINENT ITALIAN NEWSPAPER**

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) -- A newspaper article that appeared to link the unsolved murder of an Italian child last year with ancient blood libel slander against the Jews has prompted concern among Italian Jewish leaders.

The article, which appeared May 30 in a provincial edition of the Rome daily *Il Messaggero*, drew parallels between the murder of 4-year-old Simone Allegritti, near the central Italian town of Foligno, and two ritual murder cases in 15th-century Italy.

The article theorized that Simone's murderer was a mentally unbalanced person who, knowing the ritual murder stories, may have committed a sort of copycat crime.

But, as Tullia Zevi, the president of the Italian Union of Jewish Communities, pointed out in a June 8 letter to the editor of *Il Messaggero*, the article's conclusions were so ambiguous that they could be "potentially dangerous."

The *Messaggero* article was headlined: "From History, Chilling Similarities with the Murder of Simone." A subhead read: "Monster of Foligno, the Hypothesis of Ritual Murder."

The article mentioned the 15th-century cases of Simon of Trent, in northern Italy, and Antonuccio of Bevagna, a town near Foligno, in Umbria.

"The first (victim), later beatified, was kidnapped the evening of Good Friday and died drained of blood during a macabre rite," the article declared.

"The other, instead, is said to have been seized and wounded," the newspaper said.

The blood libel, or accusation that Jews murdered Christian children and drained their blood for use in ritual, particularly in making matzot for Passover, dates back to medieval times and has been one of the most persistent and irrational anti-Semitic superstitions over the centuries.

Modern Analogy Made To Simon Of Trent

The accusations have sparked mass persecutions, anti-Semitic hysteria and other horrors, down into this century. Perhaps for this reason, the Jewish community here has been quick to respond to any apparent attempt to revive or lend credence to this superstition.

The *Messaggero* article, by Gilberto Scalabrini, described in detail the story of Simon of Trent, a 2-year-old who was found horribly murdered on Easter Sunday 1475.

"How was Simon of Trent killed? To reread this story gives one goose pimples, because the details have a terrible resemblance to the fate of the little boy from (Foligno)," he wrote.

He quotes a Jewish historian recounting the case of Antonuccio of Bevagna, in 1485, in which a child accused a family of local Jewish bankers of kidnapping him and trying to drain his blood.

That story, however, appeared to have been linked to attempts at the time to close down the Jewish bank. The case was dismissed.

"Surely they do not have any precise analogy to the murder of Simone Allegritti," Scalabrini wrote. "But 'a sick mind' could have read them" in order to commit a ritual murder, he wrote.

"The blood of Simone, in fact, was never found, even though he lost about 3 liters," the reporter wrote.

**GREEK HIGH COURT REDUCES PRISON TIME
OF ARAB WHO PLACED FATAL PLANE BOMB**

By Jean Cohen

ATHENS, June 24 (JTA) -- Greece's High Court of Appeals has reduced by three years the prison sentence of Mohammed Rashid, the Palestinian terrorist convicted of bombing a Pan American airliner in August 1982 over Honolulu in which a 15-year-old Japanese boy was killed.

Rashid was convicted during his first trial and sentenced to 18 years' imprisonment for placing a bomb aboard the plane, which was flying from Tokyo to Honolulu.

The bomb tore a hole in part of the plane but was able to land.

The court reduced the sentence by three years, citing Rashid's good behavior in prison, and also ruled that he be expelled for life from Greece after he serves his sentence.

Apparently displeased by the court decision, Rashid swore at the court and the Greek justice system in general.

Rashid was arrested on May 30, 1988 by Greek authorities after being fingered by the FBI on charges of trying to enter Greece on a false passport.

Although the United States requested his extradition, Greece tried him instead, invoking the 1972 Montreal Convention that allows a terrorist to be tried in the country of his arrest and not necessarily in the country where the crime was committed.

Greece took that course after being warned by Palestinian groups that they would hit Greek targets should Rashid be extradited to the United States.

Ever since his arrest and throughout both his trials, Rashid said his real identity was Mohamed Hamdan and, like all Palestinian terrorists caught in Greece during the last 12 years, said he was being "framed by the CIA and the Mossad for being a Palestinian freedom-fighter."

**LAWMAKERS FIGHT POSSIBLE VISIT
TO ISRAEL BY PINOCHET OF CHILE**

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, June 24 (JTA) -- A group of 28 Knesset members have signed a petition to bar Augusto Pinochet, the former military strongman of Chile, from visiting Israel.

Pinochet, who remains Chile's military chief of staff after being ousted from the presidency in 1990, is rumored to be planning a visit to Israel that would involve an arms deal worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

Some high-level officials in the Defense Ministry and arms industries are reportedly pressing for the visit. Chile in the past has bought many Israeli weapons.

The protesting Knesset members say they fear a visit by Pinochet, declared an undesirable visitor by most countries except for China, would hurt Israel's international image.

The former president is still viewed as a threat to Chile's democratic government, said one Knesset member.

The Israeli government, meanwhile, said there are no official plans for a visit.

A spokesperson for the Foreign Ministry said Thursday, "The government of Chile has not approached the government of Israel for an invitation to Pinochet. Therefore, the government has not even dealt" with the matter.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES: A VISIT TO THE GOLAN BRINGS HOME THE PRICE OF GIVING UP TERRITORY

By Cynthia Mann

KFAR BLUM, Israel, June 22 (JTA) -- A trip through the Golan Heights provoked mixed feelings among American Zionists who gathered here this week for the annual meeting of the Zionist General Council.

Many said they were deeply impressed by the development they saw and the evident attachment of residents to their homes.

At the same time, they acknowledged the harsh fact that the area may be part of the price exacted by any land-for-peace deal that Israel and Syria eventually reach in the peace talks.

Most of the visiting Zionists said they welcomed the peace process and would support any decision reached by the Israeli government and the Israeli people.

Others said they had deep misgivings.

All appeared to agree that it is highly unlikely Israel will give up the entire Golan Heights, despite Syria's insistence that anything less will not suffice.

Speaking to the visitors after their tour, Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin said Israel would have to pay a "very heavy price" for a peace agreement.

He also said he personally believes the government is duty-bound to go to the people for a mandate to execute such a sweeping agreement, either in a referendum or with new elections. It is a formulation he had never before declared publicly.

Beilin's candid remarks drew widespread applause, as well as some heckling, and high praise from many Americans, who said he helped balance the picture they saw earlier in the day.

Council delegates traveled the length and breadth of the region, whose prospective return to Syria in exchange for a peace agreement is becoming one of the most divisive issues in the country.

Twelve thousand Jewish Israelis live in 31 rural villages and one town in the Golan, captured from Syria in the 1967 war. Since then, industry, agriculture and tourism have assiduously been cultivated with the generous help and support of both Labor and Likud governments.

Peace 'Only With Sacrifice'

The World Zionist Organization has also contributed significantly to development in the region through its Settlement Department. The department head vowed this week to continue funding investment at current levels despite the area's uncertain future.

The Zionist visitors passed hills of neatly planted orchards of apple trees, cherry trees and vineyards, visited a winery, a kibbutz and a technological hothouse. They also listened to military briefings underscoring the Golan's strategic importance.

"We feel what we're doing here is an advantage for the whole country," said Michael Landsberg, an official with the United Kibbutz Movement.

Landsberg, who is a resident of Kibbutz Ortal, said he supports the peace process. "The question is what is the right way and what is the price, if there should be a price."

Landsberg said he and the majority of Golan residents are prepared to accept the government's

final decision. "But until then, it is our right and duty to struggle for the right solution."

He suggested that before any treaty is signed, there be a lengthy period of confidence-building between Israel and Syria, including joint economic ventures that ensure "no one will start the next war."

"I've been to the Golan before, but I had never before seen the industry and other enterprises," said Ruth Hurwitz, a Hadassah leader from Baltimore.

"I guess I'm by nature a peacenik, but (after the visit, the Golan) became problematic for me," she said. "I kept waiting to hear the other side."

Hurwitz said Beilin later provided that other side, making her feel better able to accept the fact that "for peace, you do painful things."

For Roy Clements, president of Mercatz USA, the Zionist arm of Conservative Jewry, the visit also was jarring.

"When one approaches this (with the feeling) there should be land for peace," said Clements, "one still looks at the borders and sees what's been developed, and (one) could become hawkish."

"But the reality remains that peace will come only with sacrifice," he said.

The central issue is "Israel's secure borders," said Carmela Kalmanson, immediate past president of Hadassah and current chairman of its medical organization.

"But ultimately if Israel is to be a light unto the nations, it has to be able to find a way to live in the world and find a path to peace."

'There's A Price To Pay'

"The people here want peace, and there's a price to pay," she said.

"I was at Yamit," Kalmanson added, referring to the city in the Sinai returned to the Egyptians as part of the peace agreement. "I remember the pain," she said.

"Normally, I don't think Americans or anyone else should tell the Israelis what to do, because their kids are on the Golan Heights, and mine are not," said Rabbi Ephraim Sturm, a delegate from the World Conference of Orthodox Synagogues.

"However, I am very worried about their reliance on the security of anyone besides themselves," Sturm said, in apparent reference to reports of proposed U.S. security arrangements. Such anxiety from American Jews may make Israelis sit up and beware, he said.

"It's nice to sit on Miami Beach on my beach blanket and tell Israel what it should and shouldn't do, and what's important to its security," said Judy Kreutzer, a delegate from Florida.

"But I don't live here, and I don't have a right to make those decisions, and I think that goes for all Americans," she said.

Samuel Schachter, a builder and developer who lives in Florida and Jerusalem, and pays taxes in both countries, was less sanguine.

Yitzhak Rabin ran for prime minister "on the promise he would never ever surrender the security of Israel and that we cannot believe the Syrians, and based on that, people voted for the Labor Party," he said.

"Any return of the Golan is a betrayal of the security of Israel, and if Rabin is honest, he should go to the people before any agreement and ask for new elections," he added.

"This is a step to push the Jews to the sea," said Schachter, who is chairman of American Friends of Likud.