

VOL. 71 - 76th YEAR

TUESDAY, JULY 20, 1993

NO. 134

**CONFEDERATION WITH JORDAN IDEA
IS REVIVED THEN REBURIED FOR NOW**
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, July 19 (JTA) -- The concept of a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation in the administered territories, an idea that was revived last week by some Israeli and Palestinian leaders, has started to fade as a proposed way of advancing the Middle East peace talks at this time.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres had publicly floated the idea, suggesting that discussion of the final status of the territories now could break the deadlock over the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, which are focused on setting up a transitional period of Palestinian self-rule in the territories.

Some key members of the Palestinian delegation, such as Saeb Erekat, appeared to embrace the idea initially. But now it has become apparent that officials in the political arena do not believe the time is ripe to study new proposals.

The notion of a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation is not new at all. The proposal has emerged periodically, typically when other channels of negotiation seem exhausted.

In 1985, Jordan's King Hussein and Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasir Arafat signed an agreement related to the confederation idea.

Article 2 of the agreement stated that any possible confederation between Jordan and the Palestinians would take place only after the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

Yasir Abed Rabbo, head of the PLO information department and a member of its executive committee, also made some favorable comments this week regarding the confederation option.

He said the Palestinians were willing "to consider the option" although he said there had been no discussions with Jordan on the subject. The statement came on the eve of a meeting of PLO leaders in Tunis to re-evaluate the state of the Middle East peace talks.

Rabin Is Against The Idea

But the other parties to the deal have raised objections. Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said he does not like the idea, and his Jordanian counterpart, Abdul Salam al-Majali, emphasized last weekend that confederation would be discussed only after a peace pact is reached first.

There were news reports last week that PLO and Jordanian officials had formed a joint political committee to discuss confederation, but the significance of the committee was played down and the contacts described as just "coordination."

Ironically, the Palestinians and Jordanians have largely reversed their positions on the issue.

When the matter was discussed in 1985, the PLO insisted that a confederation take place only after an independent Palestinian state is established. The PLO feared at the time that King Hussein would take advantage of the confederation to retake control of the West Bank, which was under Jordanian rule from 1948 to 1967.

Now the Jordanians are hesitant about the confederation taking place so quickly, for the opposite fear: that the Palestinians would take over Jordan by means of their demographic majority. Some 300,000 Palestinians immigrated to Jordan after the Persian Gulf War.

**MULTILATERAL TALKS MAKING PROGRESS,
WITH NEXT ROUND SET FOR THIS AUTUMN**
By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON (JTA) -- Though they are overshadowed by the more high-profile bilateral peace negotiations in Washington, the multilateral talks between Israel and a variety of Arab and other nations have been making notable progress.

The next round of talks, scheduled for October and November, will take place in various venues including, for the first time, two Arab countries: Tunisia and Egypt.

They will mark the first time since the peace process began in October 1991 that Israel has taken part in negotiations in an Arab country.

While Israel has diplomatic relations with Egypt, it does not with Tunisia, where the Palestine Liberation Organization is based.

Other locations for multilateral meetings this fall are Moscow, Copenhagen and Beijing. Israel established relations with China only last year.

The locations were announced two weeks ago at a steering group meeting in Moscow designed to coordinate the future path of the multilateral talks. The July 7 meeting was co-chaired by Edward Djerejian, the U.S. assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, and his Russian counterpart, Victor Pasuvaluk.

The multilaterals, involving over two dozen countries, involve meetings of working groups set up to deal with five key regional issues: arms control, economic development, refugee issues, water resources and environmental concerns.

They are designed to complement the bilateral talks Israel has been conducting separately with Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and the Palestinians.

U.S., Israel Pleased With Progress

Syria and Lebanon have refrained from taking part in the multilaterals, but the Palestinians are now involved in all five working groups.

In the last round, held this past spring, all five groups moved forward. Both American and Israeli officials said they were pleased with the overall results.

In the economic development group, the parties, in conjunction with the World Bank, started identifying priority infrastructure projects in the region, including in the territories.

After the July 7 meeting, Djerejian said in a statement that the steering committee hoped that "additional funds will be made available to the Palestinians" to meet their needs as they moved toward interim self-government.

In the water resources group, negotiators have instituted workshops on water conservation, desalination and other issues.

The refugee group is focusing on the sensitive topic of family reunification, as well as the issues of public health and child welfare.

In the arms control group, negotiators have agreed to hold military base visits and workshops before the talks resume in the fall.

And in the environmental group, maritime pollution and desert reclamation projects are being implemented.

The parties have also organized activities between sessions to augment the contacts made during the rounds themselves.

ISRAEL NOW FREER TO RESPOND TO ARAB VIOLENCE, SAYS RABIN

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, July 19 (JTA) -- Because it is no longer isolated internationally, Israel is able to respond to violence and terrorism from a position of greater "strength and confidence," Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin told a visiting Jewish delegation here this week.

His remarks, delivered to a State of Israel Bonds group, appeared to be an effort to explain the government's response to the recent escalation of attacks in the border security zone in southern Lebanon.

The government has been reluctant to respond to every attack for fear of jeopardizing the peace process.

On Sunday, however, Rabin said Israel would no longer hesitate to retaliate and added that reinforcements had been deployed to defend the security zone and settlements in northern Israel.

"I believe we are capable to cope with (the situation) wisely, from a standpoint of strength and confidence," he said.

In the latest incidents along the border, three Katyusha rockets landed in the Israeli-controlled security zone Monday, but no casualties or damages resulted.

Despite Rabin's tough words the day before, there appeared to be no Israeli military response to the latest provocation.

In his address to the Bonds group, Rabin also outlined the type of peace he envisions with Syria: one with open borders and other aspects of normalization between the two peoples.

"For this kind of peace, I am ready to make painful compromises because I believe in (its) value and importance," he said. "I believe the time has arrived to take calculated risks for peace and we will do it."

Israel's negotiations with Syria have been stalled over ambiguous definitions of peace and withdrawal.

A recent report in an official Syrian newspaper said that upgrading the bilateral peace talks to direct discussions on a ministerial level would be meaningless without an Israeli commitment to full withdrawal from formerly Arab territories.

E.C. BODY SENDING FOOD AID TO GAZA

By Joseph Kopel

BRUSSELS, July 19 (JTA) -- The European Commission, the executive body of the European Community, has decided to provide some \$3 million of emergency food aid to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

The commission announced that 6,000 tons of flour, 600 tons of rice and 600 tons of sugar will be provided for the 120,000 Palestinian families living in the territory. The food will be delivered via the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees.

The aid is aimed at helping the local population, which is suffering from a deteriorating economic situation brought on by Israel's decision in late March to seal off the administered territories from Israel proper.

As a result of the closure, many Palestinians who formerly held jobs in Israel proper are now unemployed.

The E.C. body said that the food situation in the region has become alarming because of restrictions on free movement in the Gaza Strip.

U.S., ISRAEL AGREE ON NEW PROCEDURE TO SOFTEN BLOCKADE'S IMPACT ON EILAT

UNITED NATIONS, July 19 (JTA) -- The United States and Israel have agreed upon a new procedure to resolve the problem of Israeli ships headed to Eilat being stopped in the Straits of Tiran by the U.S.-led United Nations naval force blockading Iraq.

Under a new plan presented by the Americans this week to Gad Yaacobi, Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, Israel would give U.N. forces five days' notice for cargo ships weighing over 8,000 tons, and the vessels would then be permitted free passage to Eilat.

Smaller ships would still have to be checked.

The new procedure should be implemented within a matter of days, after the agreement is circulated by the Americans to other members of the multinational force, Avner Tabori, spokesman for the Israeli Mission to the United Nations, said Monday.

The naval blockade, under the auspices of the U.N. Security Council, was put into effect to prevent the supply of war materiel and commercial goods to Iraq via the Jordanian port of Aqaba, located a dozen miles from Eilat.

But officials in Jerusalem say it is absurd to presume that Israel, a longtime foe of Iraq and a victim of its Scud missiles during the Persian Gulf War, would be shipping military equipment or goods of any kind to Baghdad.

Israelis have also complained that ships of other nations have been permitted to go through to Aqaba with no problem.

Ships bound for Israel have been rerouted around the Sinai, through the Suez Canal and to Israel's Mediterranean ports of Ashdod and Haifa. As a result, Eilat's port has been nearly closed down.

ABORTED TEST OF ARROW MISSILE NOT SEEN BY PENTAGON AS FAILURE

WASHINGTON, July 19 (JTA) -- American military officials say they do not consider last week's aborted testing of the Israeli-designed Arrow anti-missile missile to be a failure.

The sixth Arrow test flight was aborted after a target missile veered off course and engineers canceled the launching of an Arrow meant to intercept the first one in midair.

American support and funding for the project were feared to have been threatened by the technical mishap, but American military officials were quoted as saying they considered the aborted testing to be a "no test" rather than a "failure."

"The test required a target presented under conditions. The conditions were not met. The test was stopped and the Arrow was not fired. We consider this a 'no test' and will reschedule," the U.S. Army said in a public affairs statement.

It is unlikely that Israel would be able to continue the missile development project if U.S. aid were withdrawn.

Security sources in Israel said they hoped the next Arrow test would be carried out within two or three months.

Last week's aborted trial was the latest in a planned series of 11 tests to be carried out by the end of 1995, when developmental research is projected to be completed and production started.

Two previous test flights of the Arrow missile were regarded as successful, but came after several unsuccessful trials.

CLINTON PLAN ON GAYS IN MILITARY GETS MIXED REVIEWS FROM U.S. JEWRY **By Deborah Kalb**

WASHINGTON, July 19 (JTA) -- The Jewish community, like much of America, is split over President Clinton's compromise proposal on gays in the military.

While some Jewish organizational officials sharply criticized the plan for not going far enough in ending discrimination against gay men and lesbians in the armed forces, the Jewish War Veterans of the USA, which had wanted the ban to stay in place, gave the plan lukewarm praise.

Many Jewish organizations chose not to take an official position on the controversial issue, which has been a political minefield for the president since he pledged during the campaign to lift the ban on homosexuals serving in the U.S. military.

Clinton's plan, which he announced Monday afternoon, has been dubbed "don't ask, don't tell, don't pursue." It orders the military to stop asking recruits whether they are homosexual, but, on the other hand, does not allow gay men or lesbians serving in the military to engage in homosexual acts or even discuss their sexual orientation publicly.

The plan represents months of compromise brokered by the administration between gay rights groups and their supporters, who argued in favor of a complete lifting of the ban, and the military bureaucracy and its supporters in Congress, including powerful Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), who would have preferred to keep the ban in place.

Clinton himself admitted that the compromise plan was not going to please everyone. "It is not a perfect solution. It is not identical with some of my own goals," the president said.

'Compromise Is Name Of The Game'

But he added that it was an "honorable compromise" on "an issue that has divided our military and our nation, and diverted our attention from other matters for too long."

Among the groups expressing disappointment with the plan were the American Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League, the National Council of Jewish Women and the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

"The president's original plan to lift the military ban on gays and lesbians stood as a pillar of hope for all those committed to the values of equality, justice and civil rights in America. Today, six months later, a once-glistening promise shows the wear of a bigoted American political battlefield," said Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center.

Another group urging Clinton to move eventually toward a complete lifting of the ban was the National Jewish Democratic Council. Lewis Roth, the group's spokesman, called the plan "a small step in the right direction."

On the other hand, the Jewish War Veterans, who originally wanted the ban to stay in place, said the plan, while not something they would wholeheartedly embrace, is tolerable.

"Compromise is the name of the game," said Warren Dolny, JWV national commander. "If I don't know that you're homosexual, then you're not homosexual."

Howard Metzger, the group's assistant communications director, said that the situation is one he believed the membership of the JWV would

"vote to live with," but not "wholeheartedly support." The group is scheduled to meet and formulate a position on the policy next month.

In February, the JWV cast a veto at the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council's annual plenum that effectively blocked the umbrella group from approving a resolution supporting the rights of gay men and lesbians to serve in the U.S. armed forces.

The majority of NJCRAC's member agencies support lifting the ban on gays in the military. But at least one of them, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, has decided not to take a stand on the issue.

JEWISH GROUPS COME OUT IN SUPPORT OF CLINTON PICK FOR SURGEON GENERAL **By Deborah Kalb**

WASHINGTON, July 19 (JTA) -- Jewish groups are actively supporting Joycelyn Elders, President Clinton's nominee for surgeon general, in contrast to the ambivalence they displayed about Lani Guinier, his choice to head the Justice Department's civil rights division.

Both Elders and Guinier are African-American women who have spoken out on controversial topics, leading some here to compare the two.

After the fiasco over Guinier, whose nomination was withdrawn when she ran into problems over her writings on voting rights and other issues, the administration is under pressure to stand by Elders.

Elders, who stepped down this past weekend as director of public health in Arkansas, has garnered support from a number of Jewish groups, including the American Jewish Congress, the National Council of Jewish Women and the National Jewish Democratic Council.

Known as an outspoken advocate of abortion rights and frank education about sex and contraception, Elders has met opposition from the religious right.

The Jewish groups have written to key members of Congress, and some Jewish organizational officials have attended meetings with the administration as part of a pro-Elders coalition.

Mark Pelavin, Washington representative for AJCongress, one of the groups that had initial concerns about the Guinier nomination, said the current situation is entirely different.

AJCongress, he said, is "excited" about the Elders nomination, whereas it was concerned about Guinier.

COURT VOIDS KNESSET IMMUNITY VOTE

JERUSALEM, July 18 (JTA) -- Israel's High Court of Justice has overturned a decision by the Knesset to strip member Rafael Pinhasi of his parliamentary immunity so he could face charges of misappropriating funds from the Shas party.

The court ruled Sunday that Knesset members had not been given enough time to study the charges against Pinhasi, who is the fervently Orthodox party's treasurer.

Pinhasi's lawyer has charged that the Knesset vote, which took place in March, was a product of anti-Shas sentiment and a media campaign against Pinhasi.

Another Knesset vote regarding Pinhasi's immunity is expected within a week.

The charges against Pinhasi relate to activities during the 1988 parliamentary campaign and afterward.

AIPAC RECEIVES BOOSTS OF SUPPORT FROM RABIN AND ISRAELI AMBASSADOR

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, July 19 (JTA) -- The American Israel Public Affairs Committee, beleaguered in recent weeks by the forced resignations of its executive director and one of its vice presidents, has received important endorsements from Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Israel's ambassador to Washington, Itamar Rabinovich.

Both Israeli officials, in letters to AIPAC President Steve Grossman, offered supportive words and thanks to the embattled lobbying organization.

"I consider AIPAC to be an important friend of Israel, and I am a friend of AIPAC," Rabin said in his letter to Grossman, dated Monday. The letter praised AIPAC's work with members of Congress on behalf of Israel.

Last summer, Rabin had harsh words for AIPAC, accusing it of not playing a constructive role in U.S.-Israeli relations. But at AIPAC's annual policy conference in March, the prime minister told AIPAC members that he valued their work.

In recent weeks, AIPAC's image has been damaged by the successive resignations of Thomas Dine, its respected executive director, and Harvey Friedman, a vice president responsible for major fund-raising.

Dine resigned after he made published comments seen as reflecting anti-Orthodox sentiments, while Friedman resigned after calling Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin a "little slimeball."

Rabinovich wrote to Grossman on July 12, praising the lobby for fostering improved relations between the United States and Israel.

Ties 'Now Better Than Ever'

"We know that without AIPAC's relentless efforts and devotion, the important relationship between Israel and the United States, which is now better than ever, wouldn't have fared as well," the ambassador wrote.

Rabin's letter included mention of a recent letter to President Clinton signed by 78 U.S. senators, commending the president and Secretary of State Warren Christopher for their work on the Middle East peace process and their support for maintaining Israel's aid levels.

The prime minister pointed to the letter and the support in the House of Representatives for the recently adopted foreign aid bill as examples of what he called AIPAC's "effective" work.

AIPAC has continued working closely with members of Congress in the wake of the Dine and Friedman resignations. Last week, AIPAC called a meeting with a group of Jewish senators and representatives.

The five senators and about 22 representatives met with Grossman and AIPAC's acting executive director, Howard Kohr, on July 13 to discuss working together to foster U.S.-Israel relations, AIPAC said.

A Capitol Hill source familiar with the meeting said its main purpose was to give members a chance to ask questions about recent events affecting AIPAC and give AIPAC officials a chance to reassure them about AIPAC's future.

The source also said that during the meeting, many members urged the AIPAC officials to fill the executive director's position with someone familiar with Capitol Hill.

ISRAEL'S SUPREME COURT TO ANNOUNCE RULING ON DEMJANJUK APPEAL JULY 29

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, July 19 (JTA) -- Five years after a three-judge panel sentenced John Demjanjuk to death for war crimes committed at the Treblinka death camp, Israel's highest court is finally ready to issue a ruling on his appeal.

The court's opinion, consisting of hundreds of pages of legal reasoning, will be announced at 9 a.m. on Thursday, July 29.

The decision, which was the product of extensive consultations among the five justices who heard the case, will be broadcast live on radio and television here.

The long-awaited ruling was originally expected to be announced this week. But according to the Israeli daily Hadashot, a strike by government workers delayed the printing of the book-length legal opinion.

Demjanjuk was condemned to death by a three-judge panel of the Jerusalem District Court in April 1988, after being extradited from the United States.

He was found guilty of direct involvement in the deaths of some 800,000 inmates at Treblinka.

Several inmates who survived identified him as "Ivan the Terrible," but his defense, both in the trial and on appeal, is that he is the victim of mistaken identity.

JEWISH GRAVES VANDALIZED IN FINNISH TOWN OF TURKU

NEW YORK, July 19 (JTA) -- In an anti-Semitic attack unusual for Finland, vandals have overturned and smashed gravestones in a Jewish cemetery in the western town of Turku, the World Jewish Congress reported this week.

About 125 headstones were toppled and some broken, according to a report from the Finnish news agency.

Only the left side of the cemetery was hit, said a Jewish source from Turku who asked not to be identified.

"It was preplanned; they had all the equipment they needed," he said.

Finnish authorities said they had no leads to identify those responsible for the attack on the cemetery.

But the source from Turku said there has been a small group of neo-Nazis active in Finland since the 1970s.

So although there is "no evidence, there are ideas" who did it.

The source added that there has been recent telephone harassment of Jews, and recalled threatening letters received by Jews in Turku in the 1970s.

Those letters, described as "very childishly written," were turned over to the security police.

One letter read, "The slaughter of the Jewish pigs begins all around Finland, and you will not be helped, not by God and not even by your friend, the CIA," the Turku source recalled.

About 1,200 Jews live in Finland, with some 165 in Turku, out of a total population in that city of more than 160,000.

The population of Finland is under 5 million.

Several windows in a Turku synagogue were smashed last October, and another Finnish Jewish leader said the two attacks could be related.

The perpetrators of that attack were reportedly caught.