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**U.S. SAYS IT'S 'DEEPLY DISTURBED'  
ABOUT SITUATION IN SOUTH LEBANON**

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, July 28 (JTA) -- In its first critical words directed at Israel since the start of Israel's bombing campaign in southern Lebanon, the United States said Wednesday that it was "deeply disturbed" about the situation in Lebanon and the refugee problem resulting from it.

Both Israel and Hezbollah fighters should "take all necessary steps to end the fighting," State Department spokesman Mike McCurry told reporters Wednesday.

The United States called on Israel to end its air and artillery bombardments, and on Hezbollah and other "terrorist groups" to end their attacks. McCurry said "military activities directed against all civilians should also stop."

Earlier in the week, the administration had seemed to put much of the blame for the violence on the fundamentalist Hezbollah, which had been responsible for killing seven Israeli soldiers in the last few weeks.

The change in the administration's tone Wednesday drew expressions of concern from Jewish groups.

"We are concerned by administration statements implying equal responsibility by Israel and the Hezbollah terrorists for the current conflict in Lebanon," the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations said in a statement issued late Wednesday.

Pointing out that Israel "has no designs on Lebanon," the umbrella group said that it is "important that the U.S. make clear that it understands Israel's actions in confronting the Islamic terrorist groups, in order to defend its borders and its people."

"At the same time," the group continued, "Syria must be held accountable as the controlling force in the area where Hezbollah operates."

**Troubled By Statements On Syria**

Jewish groups said they were troubled that President Clinton had praised Syria on Tuesday for exercising restraint in the current crisis.

"We are mystified and concerned that President Clinton, instead of condemning Syria for permitting the terrorists to attack Israel, actually praised Syria for showing 'commendable restraint' in the current situation," the American Zionist Movement said in a statement Tuesday.

On Wednesday, Clinton appeared to change his position somewhat by saying he thought Syria "could do more" to contribute to an end to the violence in Lebanon.

"I think that Syria should go from showing restraint to being an active participant to try to stop the fighting," the president said.

The United States is clearly eager to work to contain the current outbreak of violence in southern Lebanon so that it does not further harm the deadlocked Middle East peace process.

Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who cut short a trip to Asia to discuss the crises in the Middle East and in Bosnia-Herzegovina with Clinton, has been talking to Israeli, Lebanese and Syrian leaders, in an attempt to end the fighting.

McCurry said there were no changes in the

secretary's planned trip to the region, which had been scheduled for July 31 through Aug. 4.

The trip was planned in order to push Israel and its negotiating partners -- Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and the Palestinians -- toward progress in the peace talks.

But the fighting in Lebanon and the refugee exodus stemming from it are threatening to overshadow any progress Christopher could achieve during his mission.

The Conference of Presidents has been in telephone contact with Clinton administration officials to discuss the situation in Lebanon, Malcolm Hoelenin, its executive vice chairman, said Wednesday.

A group of Arab American leaders met Wednesday with Martin Indyk, the National Security Council's top Middle East specialist.

In addition, Arab American groups have held rallies outside the Israeli Embassy this week, protesting Israel's actions in Lebanon.

**RABIN SAYS IT'S UP TO LEBANON  
TO CURB ATTACKS BY HEZBOLLAH**

By Gil Sedan and Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, July 28 (JTA) -- Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin expressed regret Wednesday that Israel's bombardment of southern Lebanon had forced thousands of civilians to flee their villages.

But he said the Lebanese government could alleviate the problem by exerting control on guerrillas attacking Israel from its territory.

The air strikes and shelling continued Wednesday for the fourth day running, with Israel pounding targets in southern Lebanon and prompting tens of thousands of Lebanese villagers to flee their homes for the safety of the north.

An estimated 150,000 to 200,000 Lebanese civilians are reported to have fled the region this week.

Three Israelis have been killed and 31 injured since the operation began on Sunday, while reports from Lebanon said an estimated 80 Lebanese have been killed and 31 injured.

Rabin, addressing the Knesset, said the Lebanese and Syrian governments must put an end to rocket attacks on Israel carried out by the pro-Iranian Hezbollah militia from bases in southern Lebanon.

"Only if this happens," Rabin said, in comments directed to the Lebanese refugees, "will you be able to return to your homes in the south."

"Lebanon is in the midst of a process of reconstruction," Rabin noted. "If it does not want to reverse the tide," it "must do everything against the Hezbollah."

Despite the direct challenge to Lebanon, Israeli policy-makers are well aware of the fact that Lebanon would not move a finger against Hezbollah without Syrian approval. Syria stations 35,000 troops in Lebanon, virtually controlling the country down to the Israeli-controlled security zone in the south.

Referring to Syria, Rabin said that it was trying to pressure Israel by talking peace in Washington and waging war through its Hezbollah proxy in Lebanon.

"We will not be pressured," the prime

minister said, vowing to continue the operation "until there is peace in the north."

But Rabin hinted for the first time at a possible deal with Syria and Lebanon on southern Lebanon. "The struggle against terrorism can open the door for deals with the government of Lebanon on securing peace in the north," he said.

Rabin's speech was frequently interrupted by Knesset member Tamar Gozansky of the Hadash Communist party and Abdel Wahab Darawshe of the Arab Democratic Party.

Darawshe accused Israel of carrying out a transfer of the Lebanese population in its bombardment of civilian settlements that he said was along the lines of far-right Moledet party's call for a transfer of the Arab population from the Land of Israel.

#### Likud Backs The Government

The head of Moledet, Rehavam Ze'evi, listened to Darawshe and nodded in agreement -- a rare concurrence between the two political foes.

As Darawshe continued shouting, Knesset Speaker Shevah Weiss ordered him out of the plenum.

Rabin said he welcomed the forthcoming mission of U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, stressing Israel's wish that peace negotiations continue and that Hezbollah's aim to disrupt the negotiations fails.

He expressed confidence that the peace process would not be affected by the operation, ignoring a statement by Syria's foreign minister Wednesday in a newspaper interview that Damascus could not negotiate peace "under the threat of guns."

Rabin concluded his address telling the Israeli residents of the north, who have been forced to stay in bomb shelters or specially reinforced rooms: "I am no longer a soldier, and you are civilians, but I salute you on behalf of everybody."

Speaking on behalf of the opposition, Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu declared support for the government and the military operation. He said the target of the operation should not be a temporary cease-fire, but rather the permanent removal of the threat of Katyusha rockets.

To achieve that goal, Netanyahu said Israel needed to use a combination of military action against Hezbollah and political action with Syria.

Netanyahu said he doubted that pressure by the displaced Lebanese civilian population would be effective, suggesting instead that the United States needs to exert pressure on Syria.

The Cabinet met briefly Wednesday for a briefing on developments in the battle zone. Ministers were not asked to approve further action, which meant that Israel, for the time being, would not step up its assault to include ground troops.

Israelis residents in the north continued to take refuge in secure rooms and shelters, or leave the area to stay with friends and relatives in the south.

The Jewish Agency for Israel has established an emergency headquarters in the north to give new immigrants information on the conflict in Russian and Amharic, the language spoken by Ethiopians.

The Jewish Agency also sent representatives to aid those confined to bomb shelters.

One Israeli woman was slightly injured Wednesday evening when a Katyusha rocket fell in western Galilee.

#### **U.N. IS SO FAR CONSPICUOUSLY SILENT ON ISRAELI BOMBARDMENT OF LEBANON**

By Larry Yudelson

UNITED NATIONS, July 28 (JTA) -- The U.N. Security Council has so far remained conspicuously silent on the Israeli attacks against Lebanon.

Instead, U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has criticized Israel in a statement that bears only rhetorical weight.

The silence on the current events was almost audible when the council met briefly on Wednesday to renew the mandate of the 5,250-member U.N. peacekeeping force in Lebanon, as it has every six months for years.

Following the renewal, which was approved without discussion, the president of the council read a statement regarding Lebanon that was not very different from previous statements.

It reaffirmed commitment to Lebanon's sovereignty and national unity, expressed concern over continuing violence and urged all parties to exercise restraint.

But it made no specific reference to the Israeli air and artillery attacks, which began Sunday and are the heaviest since the 1982 Lebanon War.

Boutros-Ghali, in his statement, directed his criticism toward Israel's announced policy of displacing civilians in southern Lebanon.

"It is deplorable that any government would consciously adopt policies that would lead to the creation of new flows of refugees and displaced persons," Boutros-Ghali said.

Israeli diplomats say a full-blown Security Council debate remains a possibility. Lebanon, which earlier this week postponed efforts to convene a council session, is liable to resume those efforts.

#### **CLINTON GIVES SENATORS HIS ASSURANCE OF CONTINUED CONCERN FOR SYRIAN JEWS**

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, July 28 (JTA) -- President Clinton has given concerned senators his assurance in writing that his administration will not let the plight of Syrian Jews "slip from our attention."

In May, a group of 73 lawmakers led by Sens. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) wrote to the president, urging him to press Syria to allow Syrian Jews to travel freely.

Despite Syria's assertion last month that its Jewish population no longer wishes to leave the country, Jewish groups here have charged that Syria has reneged on its earlier pledge to allow Jews unrestricted travel.

In a July 15 letter to the senators, Clinton said that his administration is continuing to discuss the plight of the Syrian Jews "with the highest levels of the Syrian government."

"We want Syria to resume issuance of exit permits in the full spirit of President (Hafez) Assad's April 1992 decision permitting freedom of travel for Syrian Jews," he wrote.

Alice Harary, president of the Council for the Rescue of Syrian Jews, welcomed Clinton's remarks, saying his letter "represents an unmistakable commitment on the part of the administration to finding a way for all the Jews remaining in Syria to be granted the fundamental human right to travel."

## SWITZERLAND SEEN AS MAJOR SUPPLIER OF WEAPONS EQUIPMENT TO IRAN, IRAQ

By Tamar Levy

GENEVA, July 28 (JTA) -- In the last year, at least 10 Swiss companies have exported, directly or indirectly, equipment to Iran for producing atomic, chemical and biological arms and long-range rockets, according to a recent report here.

The article, based on a report which first appeared in the Israeli newspaper Ma'ariv, also asserts that dozens of Swiss companies were heavily involved in assisting Iraq's nuclear development program prior to the Persian Gulf War.

One reported example is of a small Swiss high-tech company that produces safety valves made of pressure-resistant iron that can be used in equipment for enriching uranium for bomb use. The article mentioned a signed letter from the head of the Swiss company to the directors of the Iranian nuclear program.

Also described is how some of the Swiss companies have been the victims of professional acts of sabotage, allegedly carried out by the Israeli Mossad, according to the companies targeted.

According to the article, which appeared in the Swiss daily Le Courrier, the heads of the American and Israeli secret services name Switzerland as the prime supplier of nuclear equipment to Iran.

The article said Swiss exports to Iran amounted to \$325 million, mostly comprising chemical and specialized mechanical equipment.

Regarding Swiss connections to Iraq, 134 of 602 products registered by United Nations experts as having been used in that country's nuclear program were delivered by Switzerland, the report said.

### Law Is Open To Subversion

At least 48 Swiss companies were in close contact with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and furnished a quarter of the key components necessary to the Iraqi nuclear program.

The article criticized Swiss laws regulating the export of sensitive materials because they apply only to the immediate buyer and not the ultimate consumer. The law opens itself up to subversion by hundreds of intermediaries and shadow companies set up to conceal the route from sale to end user.

One recently formed group of concerned activists, known as "Ramoneurs," or chimney sweeps, has published embarrassing documents surreptitiously obtained.

According to the article, the American and Israeli secret services have worked together to discourage sales to Iran and Iraq.

Since the appearance of the Ma'ariv article, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres has said he will intervene with the Swiss authorities.

But so far, the disclosures have had little effect on Switzerland, according to Jurg Schneeberger of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The article also quotes an official of the Foreign Affairs Department as saying the government disagrees with the contention that Switzerland has served as a center of sales of non-conventional military equipment to Iran.

The official asserted that Switzerland adheres to international agreements aimed at preventing the proliferation of mass-destruction weapons.

## 2 AMERICAN CHURCH GROUPS CONDEMN ISRAELI POLICY TOWARD TERRITORIES

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, July 28 (JTA) -- Two American Christian organizations recently called on Israel to reopen Jerusalem to the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Israel sealed the territories and barred entry to Palestinians living there on March 30 in response to a spate of attacks on Israeli civilians and soldiers.

Churches for Middle East Peace, a consortium of 14 Protestant and Catholic agencies, and the General Synod of the United Church of Christ, have now issued separate calls protesting the policy and asking the Clinton administration to condemn it.

Churches for Middle East Peace issued a statement July 16 "protesting the inclusion of East Jerusalem in the closed area."

"This action of the Israeli government is widely perceived as a unilateral pre-determination of the status of Jerusalem in defiance of United Nations Security Council resolutions and stated U.S. policy," the church group said.

The organization's member groups include: American Baptist Churches; American Friends Service Committee; Episcopal Church; Mennonite Central Committee; National Council of Churches; Roman Catholic Conference of Major Superiors of Men; United Church of Christ and United Methodist Church.

In addition, the General Synod of the United Church of Christ, the denomination's leadership, passed a resolution while meeting in St. Louis earlier this month, asking the administration to request that Israel reopen the city to all Palestinians.

### Catholic Bishops Protest Too

"Just as Jerusalem is of central importance to the Jewish people, so is East Jerusalem the cultural, economic and religious center of the people of Palestine, both Christian and Muslim," the resolution said.

The United Church of Christ has 1.6 million members in 6,300 congregations.

The resolution stated that the travel ban is causing the Palestinians an economic loss of \$3 million a day.

The two groups join the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in condemning Israel's policy. That group's president, Archbishop William Keeler, has written to Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres asking him to lift the restriction.

Avi Granot, counselor for church affairs at the Israeli Embassy, said, "We realize the closure has created some difficulties for the residents of the West Bank and we have tried to alleviate whatever difficulty they had so they could participate and worship at all the holy sites of Jerusalem."

"We have provided passes and transportation to make it easier for Palestinians to enter Jerusalem and go and pray."

"The fact that so many Muslims have participated in Friday prayers shows this has made an impact," he said.

Granot also said that the territories were closed off not to punish the Palestinians, but to try to end the wave of violence preceding it.

"The tremendous rise in violence has all but ended since the closure, so it has proven to be very effective," he said.

## JEWISH GROUPS WEIGH IN ON PROPOSALS FOR NATIONAL HEALTH CARE REFORM

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) -- As the nation waits for President Clinton to present his proposal on national health care reform, Jewish groups are staking out their positions on what promises to be one of the coming year's most consuming domestic concerns.

Jewish groups' proposals span a wide range of concerns, from halachic to social, from prenatal and pediatric care to care for the elderly.

Nobody knows how many Jews are included in the more than 37 million Americans who are uninsured or underinsured. But according to one official at a Jewish organization, anecdotal evidence suggests that "it is a problem that appears to be present and growing" within the Jewish community.

So Jewish organizations, like countless other religious, ethnic, business and special-interest groups, are weighing in with their proposals and suggestions for what would be this country's best method of health care delivery.

"On this issue the Jewish community is responding as individual Jews and is not monolithic," said Rabbi Lynne Landsberg, associate director of the Reform movement's Religious Action Center.

There are some hard-and-fast demographic facts about the Jewish community that have led organizations to emphasize the needs of the elderly, pregnant women and young children.

The Jewish community is among the oldest ethnic groups in the country, with a mean age of 44 compared to the average American's mean age of 33, and with nearly one-third more elderly members than the general population.

Nursing home care is not an affordable option for 80 percent of elderly Americans, according to a position paper published by the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, the movement's congregational arm.

Another demographic fact of Jewish life is that religious Jews are among the most prolific of Americans, with a high birthrate being the rule rather than the exception. For them, prenatal and pediatric care are major concerns.

The fervently Orthodox community may also have the largest proportion of lower-middle-class and blue-collar Jews -- those who are least able to afford the health care they need, according to David Zwiebel, legal counsel and director of government affairs for Agudath Israel of America, which represents that community.

### NJCRC Puts Forward Comprehensive Plan

Of the several Jewish groups that have weighed in with proposals for health care reform, only the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council has put forward a comprehensive plan.

It has endorsed a "single payer" system, which is supported largely by liberal groups.

A single payer, or publicly financed system, would allow consumers to choose their health care providers. Payment would be administered by the government, which would collect all the money being spent on health care and distribute it to the providers.

This system would provide universal coverage and would, say proponents, reduce the percentage of the gross national product now devoted to health care.

This fall, President Clinton is expected to propose what is seen as a more centrist plan, known as "managed competition."

With this approach, new government structures would be formed to buy insurance through approved health plans which would agree to provide all mandated care. Consumers would choose among health plans.

Conservative suggestions have been along the lines of insurance company reform and government-provided tax credits to encourage uninsured people to buy from private insurance companies.

The central elements of NJCRAC's sweeping proposal include: universal access, comprehensive care and a choice of health care providers.

NJCRC's members would like to see a national health care plan serving everyone in the country, for it not to be tied to employment and for it not to exclude prior medical conditions.

They want it to include comprehensive benefits including pre- and post-natal care, immunizations and epidemiological services, dental, eye, hearing and mental health care.

Their proposed national health plan would also provide reproductive health services for men and women, and long-term care and rehabilitation in home settings, hospitals, clinics, specialized nursing homes, group homes and hospices.

### Conservative Ethicist On Clinton Panel

Other groups, like the Conservative movement's United Synagogue, have not taken a position on a specific plan but rather have outlined basic principles which they feel should be included in the plan ultimately adopted.

The Conservative movement's most prominent medical ethicist, Rabbi Elliot Dorff, provost of the University of Judaism in Los Angeles, wrote a paper on the distribution of scarce medical resources for the movement's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards.

Dorff was also a member of Hillary Rodham Clinton's Task Force on National Health Care Reform, which met earlier this year.

In his paper, Dorff advocated making more services available to more people by not extending aggressive, expensive treatments to the terminally ill.

Dorff urged "a recognition of the reality that allocation of resources for expensive and often futile treatment for the terminally ill in preference to providing basic health care, food, clothing and shelter for the viable is a direct threat to the latter's lives."

The halachic implications, or implications under Jewish law, of this same issue -- what to sacrifice in order to broaden the health care system so more people are covered -- have also been considered by Agudath Israel.

In contradistinction to Dorff's position, Agudah is opposed to what it describes as the "rationing" of treatment. This system would deem certain treatments outside the list of those which are insured, because they are too expensive and affect a tiny portion of the population.

"In an era of scarce medical resources we'll be faced with a lot of religious problems where a rabbi says halachah demands you do certain things, and the insurance company and government say that's a course of treatment that will not be covered in any way and if you want it you have to pay for it yourself," said Zwiebel.

"These questions will come crashing down on our community with crushing force in coming years," he said.