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**FUNDAMENTALISTS KILL 3 SOLDIERS,
SIGNALING A NEW WAVE OF VIOLENCE**

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Aug. 8 (JTA) -- Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has voiced concern about a new wave of Arab violence in the wake of the killing of three soldiers by Muslim fundamentalists in the administered territories.

Rabin said at the weekly session of the Cabinet on Sunday that the murderous attacks would not affect the ongoing Middle East peace process.

But he did warn that the attacks should be viewed as a new wave of terrorism.

The Cabinet heard briefings Sunday on the attacks at the end of last week against Israel Defense Force targets in the West Bank. They were also briefed on an incident earlier last week in which a Palestinian deliberately rammed into two Israeli vehicles in Gaza, taking the life of an officer with the Israeli Civil Administration in the territories.

In the most recent violence, Sgt. Tomer David, 22, of Kibbutz Manara and Sgt. Lev Pishov, 20, a new immigrant from Russia, were shot to death last Friday in an army outpost near the West Bank village of Deir Balut.

In a separate incident, Cpl. Yaron Chen, 20, was kidnapped last Thursday from a hitchhike station on the Ramallah-Jerusalem road and shot to death. His body was then set afire inside the car, which is believed to have been stolen.

Palestinian sources said the assault on the army outpost was a reprisal for Israel's weeklong shelling of southern Lebanon that ended July 31.

It was also described as a show of force in the wake of the tough measures taken in the past year against Muslim fundamentalist elements in the territories.

An Act Of Revenge

The killing and burning of the third soldier was described as an act of revenge for the killing of Maher Abu-Srur, the terrorist who late last year murdered Haim Nahmani, an agent with the Shin Bet domestic security force. Abu-Srur was killed in a clash with the security forces in Jerusalem six weeks ago.

The terrorists who murdered Chen reportedly offered him a ride to Jerusalem last Thursday evening. Eyewitnesses said they saw the soldier enter the car -- which carried Israeli license plates -- and then saw three young men in the car struggling with the soldier and forcing him to the floor.

An Israeli driver who was giving a ride to a soldier began chasing the kidnappers' car. The soldier fired shots at the car, but missed.

The car was found a few hours later in the village of Beitouniya, near Ramallah, with Chen's burned body inside.

A day later, an Arab vehicle arrived at an army checkpoint near Deir Balut. The terrorists got out of the car and shot to death the two soldiers manning the post.

A third soldier began firing at the attackers from a nearby outpost, killing one of them and wounding another. Another terrorist managed to escape.

**3 MEMBERS OF PALESTINIAN TEAM
GO TO TUNIS, RESIGNATIONS IN HAND**

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Aug. 8 (JTA) -- The apparent decision by three senior members of the Palestinian delegation to the peace talks to resign is being seen here as a reflection of deep divisions between the Palestinian leadership in the administered territories and Palestine Liberation Organization officials in Tunis.

At the same time, the crisis is also being viewed by some as a tactical maneuver designed to pressure Israel into negotiating directly with the PLO.

Palestinian officials here and in Amman said Sunday that Faisal Husseini, Hanan Ashrawi and Saeb Erekat had resigned and were on their way to Tunis for direct talks with PLO leader Yasir Arafat.

Passing through Jordan on their way to PLO headquarters, the three would not comment directly on the reasons behind their resignations.

Instead, Ashrawi would only say, "There are serious internal Palestinian issues that have to be addressed, and they will be addressed in a responsible and discreet manner. It's time to discuss these issues very frankly internally."

Among the first Israeli officials to react to the announcement was Environment Minister Yossi Sarid, who expressed the hope Sunday that they would not resign after all.

Sarid warned that the continuous weakening of the PLO and its representatives in the administered territories would jeopardize the peace process and would create a political vacuum that would be filled by Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement in the territories.

Sarid said the crisis reinforced his view that Israel should deal directly with the PLO.

But in various interviews Sunday he refused to confirm reports that he had met last month with Nabil Sha'ath, a close adviser to Arafat. The report was confirmed Sunday by Mahmoud Abbas, a senior PLO official.

Ahmed Tibi, an Israeli Arab who is known to have contacts with the PLO leadership, blamed Israel for the crisis within the Palestinian delegation, charging that Israel has not been forthcoming in its negotiations with the Palestinians.

Time For 'Breaking Of Taboos'?

The official reason for the impending resignations of the three negotiators was to protest their "becoming messengers without giving consideration to their own views."

According to some reports, Palestinian sources say the dispute concerns the Palestinians' written reply to the U.S. draft of a declaration of principles designed to provide guidelines for the peace negotiations.

Arafat is said to have been ready to show flexibility on the broad outlines of the declaration, but was reluctant to accept the Israeli proposal for an early granting of autonomy in the territories.

The local leaders, led by Faisal Husseini, on the other hand, wanted to go ahead with a gradual Palestinian takeover of responsibilities in the territories, while continuing the negotiations with

Israel over major issues such as Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the territories.

Hussein's views have become more and more unpopular, especially since the official head of the delegation, Haidar Abdel-Shafi, has become more hard-line and practically pulled himself out of the talks.

Along with Abdel-Shafi, representatives of the People's (Communist) Party and the Democratic Front have boycotted the talks, leaving the more moderate Al Fatah faction of the PLO alone on the negotiating scene.

These growing internal difficulties are seen by some as the main cause of the resignations.

But some observers here expressed the view that the three would not resign at all, and that the crisis was created in order to force Arafat into straightening out the differences within the local leadership.

The crisis was also seen as a way of exerting pressure on Israel to start negotiating directly with the PLO.

Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin said Sunday that although he supported in principle the current framework for the peace talks, if it turns out "that we have no partners among the residents of the territories, there will be no choice but to reconsider the situation and the breaking of taboos."

His comment was understood to point to the possible need to negotiate directly with the PLO.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, on the other hand, said at Sunday's weekly Cabinet session that movement could be achieved in the negotiations with the Palestinians, but he placed the responsibility for achieving progress on the Palestinians themselves.

"Palestinians in the territories who seek peace should understand that in the absence of progress, they will lose the support of the people," the prime minister said.

ISRAELI THINK TANK URGES CHANGES IN PEACE PROCESS, TALKS WITH PLO By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Aug. 8 (JTA) -- A major Israeli think tank is recommending several changes in the Arab-Israeli peace process, including direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The recommendation was among the findings made by military and political analysts at Tel Aviv University's highly respected Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies.

Among other views, the analysts concluded that the risk of a military confrontation in the Middle East is very low for the foreseeable future and that Israel no longer has a strategic need for the border security zone it maintains in southern Lebanon.

Presenting the Jaffee Center's latest annual report, "The Military Balance 1992-1993," were the center's founder and head, Reserve Maj. Gen. Aharon Yariv; the recently appointed director, Joseph Alpher; and senior researcher Shlomo Gazit.

They stressed that there is still a "window of opportunity" for peace -- a description used by former U.S. President George Bush to describe attempts to establish a new order in the Middle East in the aftermath of the Persian Gulf War.

But the researchers urged that progress be made immediately if anything is to be achieved. Within the Middle East context, they argued, it is

impossible to stand still. Marking time without forward progress actually means falling back.

In presenting their findings, the Jaffee Center analysts made some provocative judgments that were certain to raise the ire of opposition and government politicians alike.

For one, the analysts said that Israel's recent weeklong shelling of southern Lebanon had been excessive and may have caused unnecessary hardship to the local population.

The reason for such force, they argued, was not so much to combat the Hezbollah guerrillas who had been responsible for a series of recent attacks on Israeli soldiers as to show the Israeli public that the Rabin-led Labor coalition was capable of taking firm action.

Security Zone Unnecessary?

Another provocative moment came when, asked if the security zone in southern Lebanon was still essential for Israel's security, Yariv gave a short and sharp reply: "Probably not."

He pointed out that the purpose of the security zone had never been to prevent the firing of Katyusha rockets at Israeli towns and villages.

It was always known, he said, that Katyusha rockets, which have a range of some 12 miles, could be fired from north of the zone and land in Kiryat Shmona and other Israeli population centers.

The real purpose of the security zone, established when the Israel Defense Force withdrew from southern Lebanon after the Lebanon War of 1982, has been to prevent the infiltration of terrorist groups into Israel.

And since that time, no serious acts of infiltration have been carried out.

But Yariv suggested that suitable arrangements could now be made in the ongoing peace talks with the Syrians and Lebanese to ensure that the Lebanese army would halt terrorist infiltration, as is done along the Egyptian and Jordanian borders.

By withdrawing from the security zone, he said, Israel would remove the chief rationale Hezbollah and other groups give for their activities against the IDF in the zone and for their Katyusha rocket attacks against Israel -- namely, that they are fighting a foreign power occupying Lebanese territory.

In one of the center's most provocative observations, Alpher said Israel should open negotiations with the PLO.

"We don't have an unlimited amount of time for the peace process, and if there is no progress, there is no doubt there will be a deterioration," he said.

"Therefore, we recommend a series of changes" in the rules governing the peace talks, "including the opening of negotiations with the PLO and the beginning of discreet discussions about the nature of the final arrangements in the territories," to be implemented at the end of an interim period of Palestinian autonomy.

Alpher said that it was clear that a real advance in the peace process cannot be obtained without massive American involvement.

He observed that since President Clinton assumed office, the Americans have been good at "putting out fires" -- such as the crisis over Israel's deportation of 415 Palestinians to Lebanon or the recent shelling of Lebanon -- but have shown little ability to move the peace process forward.

SAUDI BID TO JOIN GATT FACING OPPOSITION OVER BOYCOTT STANCE

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, Aug. 8 (JTA) -- Pro-Israel forces and their supporters in Congress are seeking to block a bid by Saudi Arabia to join the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade until it abandons the Arab boycott of companies doing business with Israel.

Rep. Sam Gejdenson (D-Conn.) introduced a resolution in the House of Representatives last Friday opposing the Saudi bid to join the international trade regime until the Arab country "formally and publicly renounces its participation in the secondary and tertiary Arab boycott."

Gejdenson, who chairs the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on economic policy, trade and environment, introduced the resolution at the request of the World Jewish Congress.

The secondary and tertiary aspects of the boycott refer to an Arab blacklist of companies or countries doing business with Israel, and of third parties doing business with those companies or countries.

Saudi Arabia applied to join GATT on July 21, and a group of GATT members, including the United States, is currently considering the Saudi application. GATT is a multilateral treaty with 111 current signatories that is aimed at liberalizing world trade.

Also opposing the Saudi bid to join GATT is the International Steering Committee on Freedom of Trade with Israel, an umbrella group coordinating Jewish organizations' anti-boycott activities, which raised the subject last week in a letter to top Clinton administration officials.

"It is our strong belief that Saudi Arabia should not be granted membership in GATT without first committing, concretely and publicly, to a dismantling of its boycott of foreign firms with commercial ties to Israel," Walter Stern, the steering committee's chairman, wrote Aug. 2.

The letter was sent to Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Commerce Secretary Ron Brown and U.S. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor.

GATT members are required to trade with one another "on the basis of non-discrimination," Stern pointed out.

"Israel has been a member of GATT since 1962. But there has been no indication that, if admitted to GATT, Saudi Arabia would cease its boycott of Israel," he wrote.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS WILL REVISE ITS CONTROVERSIAL STUDY ON HAMAS

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, Aug. 8 (JTA) -- The Library of Congress will rename and revise a controversial report formerly titled "Hamas: Freedom Fighters or Terrorists?" that raised concerns among some members of the pro-Israel community here.

Joseph Ross, director of the library's Congressional Research Service, which issued the May 14 report on the Islamic extremist movement, said that "an update and revision of the report on Hamas is currently nearing completion."

In an Aug. 4 letter to Rep. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.), Ross said that "developments have occurred since the report was issued and new facts have come to our attention. The title has been changed.

"Your comments will be carefully reviewed

and taken into consideration with respect to the updated presentation," Ross wrote.

Schumer and the Anti-Defamation League had written to Library of Congress officials recently, charging that the report did not fully describe Hamas' terrorist activities and that it used terminology such as "occupied Palestine" not generally found in government reports.

Hamas was listed as a terrorist group in the State Department's annual global terrorism report.

An aide to the congressman quoted him as saying that he was "pleased that the Congressional Research Service intends to recognize the reality of Hamas terror."

MASSIVE NEW GROUP OF ETHIOPIANS CLAIMING TO BE OF JEWISH DESCENT

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Aug. 8 (JTA) -- A petition from a large group of Ethiopians claiming Jewish status and descent is causing sharp concerns here that the group's activities may strain relations between Israel and Ethiopia.

The group, known as the Semite Nation of the Gihon, comprises some 4 million Ethiopians.

For now, the group is not proposing aliyah. But it wants to set up a headquarters in Israel.

The Israeli ambassador to Ethiopia, Haim Divon, voiced fears in a cable to Jerusalem that this episode could seriously damage relations between the two countries.

The Semite Nation of the Gihon is a separate entity from the Falash Mora, Ethiopians whose ancestors converted to Christianity from Judaism and who wish to go to Israel, many of them to reunite with kin.

Israel's policy is to allow a small number of Falash Mora to enter the country, as immigrants or under family reunification schemes, after undergoing "back to Judaism" courses while still in Ethiopia.

The first such group of Falash Mora was due to arrive here Monday.

Israel is not anxious to encourage the wholesale aliyah of groups whose ties to authentic Jewishness are remote at best, artificial at worst.

Leaders of the Semite Nation of the Gihon sent letters to both the Israeli and Ethiopian governments explaining their requests.

The letter to the president of Ethiopia was signed by Mussa Tagani, an anthropologist and sociologist who claims to head the organization, which is centered north of the capital, Addis Ababa.

In a separate letter to the Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem, Tagani requested the Israeli government's consent for the group to set up an office in Israel.

In an interview with the Ha'aretz newspaper published Sunday, Ambassador Divon noted that because economic opportunities for Ethiopian olim in Israel are so much better than those for ordinary working people in Ethiopia, emigration to Israel has become an attractive proposition.

The envoy stressed the Ethiopian government's sensitivity to moves that can upset the delicate ethnic and religious balances there.

Government officials here are wary that activists in the United States and Israel are hoping to populate the West Bank with immigrants from Ethiopia and elsewhere who have recently put forward claims of Jewishness. The aim is to change the demographic balance between Arabs and Jews in the territories.

MAJOR CHANGES PROPOSED IN WAY NON-ORTHODOX MOVEMENTS TREATED

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Aug. 8 (JTA) -- A committee appointed by the Israeli government to review the function and performance of local religious councils has recommended sweeping changes that could give new legitimacy -- and funding -- to the Reform and Conservative movements here.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has asked Deputy Religious Affairs Minister Raphael Pinhasi to review the findings and recommend within 60 days which should be implemented.

Though not all are expected to be accepted, some of the changes could depoliticize and otherwise radically alter the publicly supported, Orthodox-controlled religious establishment.

The councils oversee the gamut of religious services, from marriage to burial, from mikvehs to synagogue maintenance, from kashrut to the supply of prayerbooks and prayer shawls.

Among the most far-reaching suggestions is for Reform and Conservative institutions to receive funding from the local religious councils for their religious operations on the same basis as Orthodox and haredi (fervently Orthodox) institutions. Currently, while they are eligible to apply, they receive little such funding, if any.

The committee also has recommended allowing for Reform and Conservative representation on local councils, where it is currently barred.

"We did not make a decision as to the status of the Reform and Conservative movements or call for their official recognition," said Isaac Herzog, a member of the review committee.

"But we enabled them in a technical sense to enjoy equality," he said. "This is a government body, and all citizens are equal. This removes the monopoly of one stream (Orthodoxy) over religious services."

'Neglected For Years'

"We have been neglected for years" by the religious councils, explained Pnina Libni, spokeswoman for the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism's Religious Action Committee. In their eyes, she said, "we have not existed."

"I think the government will accept some of the recommendations, and that will make a difference," said Libni.

Other proposals include streamlining the system by eliminating many local councils and consolidating them into regional councils, reducing the number of members on the councils who are volunteers and radically cutting the number of publicly paid council directors.

The committee, which was headed by former Justice and Religious Affairs Minister Haim Zadok, also called for the reorganization of the kosher certification system in the wake of widespread abuse and corruption.

The reorganization would entail issuing new, standard criteria for the kosher certification of establishments and the formation of a public corporation to pay Israel's 12,000 kashrut supervisors. Currently these supervisors are paid by the very establishments they oversee.

Also key is a proposal to reform and standardize burial rules and practices, which have long been a target of complaints.

"The current system is wasteful and not well-managed," said Herzog. "There is no accountability, and no one has ever defined the services people are entitled to."

U.S. URGED TO HELP TRACK DOWN JEWISH BOOKS STOLEN IN RUSSIA

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, Aug. 8 (JTA) -- A New York congresswoman has written to Secretary of State Warren Christopher urging the United States to aid Russia in recovering several dozen medieval Jewish manuscripts stolen from the Russian National Library.

The manuscripts, reportedly stolen over a period of years, include Torah scrolls, Talmudic commentaries and prayerbooks from as early as the 13th century.

Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-N.Y.), motivated by a press report about the thefts, wrote to Christopher last Thursday.

Maloney wrote that given the shaky economic and political situation in Russia, the United States should offer the assistance of the FBI and other law-enforcement agencies in tracking down the manuscripts.

The Associated Press reported last week that officials of the Russian National Library's collection of medieval Jewish manuscripts say that many manuscripts have been stolen, most probably over a period of years.

The A.P. article said the documents, which are 250 to 700 years old, are showing up for sale in New York and Jerusalem, at asking prices of millions of dollars. They are being sold at "unofficial auctions," it was reported.

According to the article, the librarians know that a former employee of the National Library -- formerly called the Saltykov-Schedrin Library, and located in St. Petersburg -- is the culprit and that the employee lives abroad and has not been charged by the Russian police.

Scholars believe the missing books are part of the Cairo Genizah, a treasure of handwritten manuscripts collected by Cairo's Jewish community and brought to Russia about 150 years ago by a collector, Abraham Firkovitch.

The article said that last year the Israel Museum in Jerusalem bought an 18th-century ketubah, or marriage contract, without realizing it was stolen.

Lubavitch Hasidim are familiar with book theft in Russia. They have been trying for decades, most intently for the past two years, to retrieve some 12,000 Lubavitch books that have been kept at the Lenin Library in Moscow.

Two years ago, some Lubavitch books were found in the office of a man who had been removed from his government position. And several Hebrew books from a valuable 400-year-old collection were found by a librarian near a rubbish bin, ostensibly to be spirited away, said Lubavitch spokesman Rabbi Yehuda Krinsky.

WEIZMAN ATTENDS BELGIAN KING'S FUNERAL

BRUSSELS, Aug. 8 (JTA) -- Israeli President Ezer Weizman was among the world leaders attending the funeral here Saturday for the late King Baudouin of Belgium.

The king died the previous Saturday of a heart attack while vacationing in southern Spain.

The Belgian Jewish community expressed its sadness at the death of King Baudouin in a number of public statements. "We will always remain grateful to him for the solicitude he had for the Jewish community," George Schneke, president of the Jewish Consistory of Belgium, said in a condolence message to the royal family.