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**OFFICIAL DENIALS NOTWITHSTANDING,  
RABIN APPARENTLY MET WITH HUSSEIN**  
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Sept. 28 (JTA) -- Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin denied it, Jordan's King Hussein denied it -- but despite all their denials, all the major dailies here are reporting that the two leaders did indeed meet for a few hours late Sunday on board a ship in the Gulf of Eilat.

The respected daily Ha'aretz reported Tuesday that "political sources in Jerusalem" had unofficially confirmed the report.

Ha'aretz also provided the names of two other Israeli officials attending the meeting: Maj. Gen. Danny Yatom, Rabin's military secretary, and Oded Ben-Ami, the prime minister's press adviser.

According to reports from Jordan, Hussein, along with Crown Prince Hassan and Prime Minister Abdul Salam al-Majali, were "vacationing" Sunday in the port of Aqaba, which lies just east of Eilat. Jordanian officials were publicly denying that the meeting with the Israelis occurred.

Ever since the signing of the Palestinian self-rule agreement in Washington on Sept. 13, Hussein has shown clear signs of nervousness about his place in the new regional power balance that is gradually taking shape.

The Jordanian monarch is said to be deeply worried that his kingdom is in real danger of being overthrown by Palestinians, who constitute a majority in his country, numbering 2.5 million out of a total population of 3.7 million.

As a result of these fears, Hussein had been expected to postpone the general parliamentary elections, which were originally scheduled for November.

He said earlier in the week that he did not want the elections to degenerate into a referendum on the accord signed in Washington between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

An election, he also feared, might lead to an explosion of violence among Palestinian factions within his country.

**Elections Still On For November**

But despite these fears, Jordanian officials announced Tuesday that the elections would indeed be held Nov. 8. They will be the first multiparty elections in Jordan since 1956, when Hussein banned all political parties.

In addition to the sensitive issue of the elections, Hussein also has been concerned that when the Palestinians assume control of the West Bank town of Jericho, they may also seek to take possession of the strategically important Allenby Bridge crossing into Jordan.

Israeli officials have given the king assurances that they will maintain control of all border crossings into Jordan.

Hussein is also concerned that as a result of the accord with the Palestinians, Jordan may lose its special strategic value in the eyes of Israel.

Assuming that the meeting with Rabin did take place Sunday, these were undoubtedly some of the issues discussed between the two leaders.

Rabin was believed to have assured the king that Israel has a strong interest in keeping Jordan as a major player in all present and future arrangements with the Palestinians.

Moreover, the Israelis reportedly are interested in signing an early peace agreement with Jordan, even before the implementation of the autonomy agreement with the Palestinians begins picking up momentum.

On Sept. 14, a day after the signing of the landmark Israeli-PLO self-rule agreement, Israeli and Jordanian officials signed an accord in Washington laying out the elements of a peace agreement between the two countries.

**PERES DWELLS ON REGIONAL PEACE  
IN ADDRESS TO MORE FRIENDLY U.N.**

By Larry Yudelson

UNITED NATIONS, Sept. 28 (JTA) -- By the time Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres took to the General Assembly podium Tuesday, the historic accord between Israel and the Palestinians had already served several of the morning's speakers as an example of what is right with the world.

It was quite a change from the days when the "Palestine problem" dominated the proceedings of the world body.

For his part, Peres made a plea for regional cooperation and economic development in a speech to the General Assembly that dwelled on tourism but did not once use the word "terrorism."

He referred only indirectly to some of the issues at the foreground of his private discussions with world leaders this week, including ending the Arab economic boycott of Israel and financing Palestinian development.

Instead, he addressed himself to his Middle East neighbors and tried to draw a picture of the prosperous, peaceful region that they could build together.

As was the case last year -- and in contrast to previous years -- there was no demonstrative walk-out when Peres began to speak. Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Morocco, as well as observers from the Palestine Liberation Organization, were all present.

Peres stated Israel's desire to complete the peace outlined with Jordan, and to continue negotiating with Lebanon.

Peres challenged Syria, as he has been doing in recent days, to show its desire for peace.

"We ask the Syrian leadership -- if it has chosen peace, why does it refuse to meet openly? If Syria is aiming at the Egyptian fruit of peace it must follow the process that led to it," he said.

**Age Of Domination 'Is Dead'**

Looking to construct a "modern Middle East," Peres listed as prerequisites both wisdom and market economies.

"If the thumping of hammers will replace the thunder of the guns, many of the nations will be more than willing to extend a helping hand," he said.

He said that Israeli calls to establish a Middle East common market should not be perceived "as an attempt to win preference or to establish domination."

"May I say sincerely and loudly that we did not give up territorial control to engage ourselves in economic superiority. The age of domination,

political or economic, is dead. The time of cooperation is open."

Describing tourism as "the most promising opportunity" for the region, the Israeli foreign minister drew a smile from a listening Jordanian delegate when he included Jordan's "red palaces of Petra" in a list of regional attractions.

The list began with "the eternity of Jerusalem," included the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, and concluded with the beaches of Gaza and the perfume of Jericho's fruits.

Toward the beginning of his remarks, two Jewish demonstrators began chanting "Peres is a traitor" before being removed from the gallery.

On Monday, Peres met with African National Congress President Nelson Mandela, the first time the South African leader met with a senior Israeli official.

Mandela accepted an invitation from Peres to visit Israel and expressed his gratitude to the South African Jews who supported his movement and participated in the struggle for freedom.

Peres also met Monday with Egyptian Foreign Minister Amre Moussa, and with the "troika" of foreign ministers who represent the European Community: Michael Papaconstantinou of Greece, Niels Helveg Petersen of Denmark and Willy Claes of Belgium.

Peres asked for European investments in infrastructure and tourism projects in the Middle East.

The Europeans indicated their desire that an updated agreement between the European Community and Israel, which is now being negotiated, be signed by the end of 1993. And they promised to increase their financial support to the territories.

On Sunday, Japanese Foreign Minister Tsutomu Hata promised Peres that his country would use its influence to end the Arab boycott of Israel.

## **SURVEY FINDS AMERICAN JEWS STRONGLY SUPPORT PEACE PACT**

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, Sept. 28 (JTA) -- American Jews strongly support recent Israeli moves toward peace, according to a survey sponsored by the American Jewish Committee.

By more than 5-to-1 margins, a sample of American Jews supported the mutual recognition pact signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the accord that will grant Palestinian self-rule in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho.

But questioned on further Israeli compromises -- both those mandated by the signed accord and those likely to follow in the negotiations with Syria -- those polled were much less supportive.

The poll was conducted Sept. 20-26 by Market Facts, a public-opinion research organization. The sample size was 1,009, and had a margin of error of 3 percentage points.

Supporters of the way the Israeli government has handled the peace negotiations outnumbered opponents, by roughly 84 percent to 9 percent, with 8 percent unsure.

Ninety percent considered the Israel-PLO recognition agreement a positive development for Israel.

The autonomy plan was supported by 74 percent of respondents, with 13 percent opposing and 13 percent unsure.

In a surprising finding, 57 percent favored the establishment of a Palestinian state, with 30 percent opposed. And yet only 43 percent supported extending autonomy to all of the West Bank, while 34 percent were opposed.

"What you see here is ambiguity," said David Singer, director of research for the AJCommittee.

"People have been asked to absorb a new reality that's absolutely mind-boggling.

"There's a sense that if the Israelis have done this, who am I to think this isn't a positive thing, while at the same time, many of the old fears remain," he said.

## **Most Oppose Compromise On Jerusalem**

The results of this poll in fact mirror those found within Israel by an AJCommittee poll conducted there earlier in September.

Singer noted that despite the overwhelming support for the PLO accord, the American survey found that, by a margin of 42 percent to 34 percent, the PLO was not trusted to honor its agreements and refrain from terrorism.

And 42 percent said they believed the goal of the Arabs is the destruction of Israel. But only 34 percent said that the PLO was determined to destroy Israel.

Regarding Syria, Jewish opinion was split almost evenly between returning none of the Golan Heights, only a small part of it, and some to most of it.

And on the question of Jerusalem, 62 percent of respondents were opposed to any compromise on its status, while 30 percent favored such a move.

## **HAMAS SUPPORTER FROM GAZA HELD FOR BLACKSMITH'S MURDER** By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Sept. 28 (JTA) -- Israeli security forces have reportedly captured one of the men responsible for the murder of Yigal Vaknin, the blacksmith who was killed last week in an orchard near the Tel Aviv suburb of Ra'anana.

Vaknin, 22, was stabbed to death on the eve of Yom Kippur. His body was found in an orchard near Moshav Batzra, in the Sharon Valley.

The suspect was captured within days of the stabbing. He was identified as Yussuf Awad Massalha, 27, of Deir el-Balah in the Gaza Strip. A magistrate's court in Kfar Sava issued an order Monday to hold Massalha for 15 days, pending arraignment.

A second suspect escaped.

Massalha was reported to have made a confession, which included reconstructing the crime for police cameras. He was said to have explained that he murdered Vaknin as an "entrance test" to the military branch of the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas movement.

Attached to Vaknin's body had been a note saying that the murder was in revenge for the killing of activists of Hamas, which has opposed the Palestine Liberation Organization's recent accord with Israel.

Earlier in the week, security officials informed the Cabinet that they believed Hamas was behind the killing. But Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin struck a more optimistic note, saying that since the signing of the Palestinian self-rule agreement in Washington on Sept. 13, Hamas had shown fewer signs of belligerence in the territories.

## JEWISH LEADERS AROUND GLOBE HOLDING MEETINGS WITH THE PLO

London Jewish Chronicle

LONDON, Sept. 28 (JTA) -- The first-ever public meeting between the lay leader of the Anglo-Jewish community and the Palestine Liberation Organization representative to the United Kingdom took place in London this week, with both men giving a ringing endorsement of the self-rule accord recently signed in Washington by Israel and the PLO.

In an echo of the historic moment between Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO leader Yasser Arafat at the White House on Sept. 13, the president of the Jewish Board of Deputies here, Judge Israel Feinstein, and PLO diplomat Afif Safieh sealed their meeting with a handshake.

Their meeting, under the auspices of an interfaith group, was one of several first-ever encounters between Jewish leaders and PLO officials that have been held in various countries since relations between Israel and the PLO began to thaw.

Foreign Minister Douglas Hogg was expected to invite Arafat to visit London, the London Jewish Chronicle has learned. Hogg and Arafat were expected to meet later this week in Tunis.

A visit to London would boost Arafat's standing in the administered territories, where his supporters face opposition from militants.

In London, Safieh told the audience of Jewish leaders and Arab diplomats that recent polls indicate there is overwhelming support for the self-rule accord among Palestinians.

A survey taken in Gaza, he said, revealed that more than 70 percent are in favor of the accord, while 11 percent oppose it.

"History is in the making," Safieh declared.

### Meetings In Sydney, Brussels

In Sydney, Australia, the elected head of the Australian Jewish community and the representative of the Palestine Liberation Organization in Australia took part for the first time in a direct, person-to-person exchange.

The meeting last week between Isi Leibler, president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, and PLO representative Ali Kazak focused on the need to encourage dialogue between Australian Jews and Muslims and on ways in which Australians and the Australian government could support projects that would provide economic assistance to the Middle East.

In Belgium, PLO representative Chawki Armali met with the Jewish community and, for more than an hour, took part in a radio show organized by the Belgian Jewish radio station, Radio Judaica.

The Jewish audience, which did not conceal its concern and distrust, listened carefully to Armali's declarations.

"My presence here among you proves the reality of the psychological shock caused by the Israel-PLO agreement," he said.

He explained that the PLO wants to build a society that is pluralist, democratic and respectful of human rights.

Armali also stressed the need to continue to explain the self-rule agreement to the Palestinians "in order to stop violence and to counter the extremists such as Hamas."

(Contributing to this report were JTA correspondents Jeremy Jones in Sydney, Australia, and Joseph Kopel in Brussels.)

## FOREIGN AID BILL CLEARS HOUSE-SENATE CONFERENCE

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, Sept. 28 (JTA) -- Israel's annual package of \$3 billion in U.S. aid moved one step closer to congressional passage, as a House-Senate conference committee voted Tuesday to retain the provision in the 1994 foreign aid bill.

Both chambers of Congress were expected to pass the final version of the bill by Thursday.

Pro-Israel forces are relieved that in a time of economic shortages, Congress has supported maintaining the level of aid Israel has received since the mid-1980s. Israel remains the largest recipient of U.S. foreign aid.

The conference committee, which met Monday night into early Tuesday morning, agreed to earmark \$3 billion in aid for Israel and an additional \$80 million in aid to Israel for absorption of refugees from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia.

In addition, the House-Senate bill includes provisions making Israel's aid available no later than Oct. 31 and barring U.S. funds to international financial organizations that support terrorist groups.

The bill also includes language stating that the United States will consider a country's participation in the Arab boycott against Israel before selling the country arms, and that the United States should urge Syria to allow its Jewish community to emigrate freely.

"This conference was a significant victory," Rep. Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.), a pro-Israel member of the House Appropriations subcommittee on foreign operations, said in a statement Tuesday.

"U.S. aid for Israel has never been more important," Lowey added, citing the ongoing Middle East peace process.

### Bill Would Ease PLO Restrictions

Meanwhile, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved legislation Tuesday that would waive certain prohibitions on U.S. dealings with the Palestine Liberation Organization for a three-month period.

Since Israel signed its historic agreement with the PLO on Sept. 13, the Clinton administration has been urging Congress to modify certain laws that the administration thinks could hamper implementation of the accord.

Because of the PLO's longtime ties to terrorism, Congress has enacted a series of laws over the years barring various activities related to the PLO.

The Senate legislation would waive some restrictions on U.S. funding for international organizations that assist the PLO and would also waive a provision barring the PLO from establishing an office here.

These waivers would remain in effect only until Jan. 1, at which point they could be renewed, provided that the PLO abides by its commitments to recognize Israel and renounce violence, and that the president consults with Congress and certifies that the laws are in the national interest.

Similar legislation dealing with funding for international organizations was passed in the House-Senate conference bill, but this Senate Foreign Relations bill is a separate piece of legislation. The House would have to pass a similar measure for the provisions to take effect.

# ISRAELI WOMEN'S GROUPS MEET WITH RABBIS TO DISCUSS AGUNOT

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Sept. 28 (JTA) -- Israel's two chief rabbis have held a rare meeting with a women's rights delegation pressing for solutions to the problem of agunot -- women who cannot get a divorce because their husbands refuse to grant one or because the husbands cannot be located.

After talking with the two rabbis on Monday, members of the women's delegation said they were heartened by the meeting but that it represented only the beginning of the work it will take to solve the agunah problem.

More than 10,000 women are in legal limbo in Israel, where there are no civil divorces and where the dissolution of a marriage must adhere to strict interpretations of Jewish law.

According to these laws, a Jewish woman cannot obtain a divorce, or get, without the permission of her husband.

"There are greedy, vindictive men who have decided that they can withhold their consent and blackmail their wives," said Sharon Shenhav, legal adviser to Na'amat, one of the women's groups represented at the meeting with the chief rabbis.

The group is part of a recently formed International Coalition for Agunah Rights.

The coalition has declared the Jewish year 5754 as the International Year of the Agunah, reflecting an intensive effort to reform what are perceived as unjust and discriminatory divorce proceedings in rabbinical courts worldwide.

According to a publication by the Israel Women's Network, another coalition member, "thousands of Jewish women are suffering as a result of heartless insistence on outmoded interpretations of halacha (Jewish law), long drawn-out court deliberations, the refusal of husbands to grant the get even when the court has decreed it, and the courts' failure to utilize halachically permitted coercion on such 'recalcitrant' husbands."

## Delegation 'Very Pleased'

The members of the Israeli coalition won an audience with the chief rabbis following a small demonstration last week in front of Hechal Shlomo, the Jerusalem headquarters of the Chief Rabbinate.

They had sought the meeting since the top rabbinic officials -- Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau and Sephardic Chief Rabbi Eliahu Bakshi-Doron -- were elected to 10-year terms last February.

Alice Shalvi, head of the Women's Network, was guardedly optimistic about the meeting with the rabbis.

She told Israel Television the women's delegation was "very pleased" about the "collaboration between the two sides -- the victims, on the one hand, and those who can provide the solution, on the other.

"But obviously a great deal of work remains to be done and we can't just go home and sit quietly," she said.

For his part, Lau said he was sympathetic to the plight of the agunot and hopeful that problems could be solved following the establishment of a committee to review the situation.

The two chief rabbis asked the women to refrain from holding public demonstrations while the issue is being studied.

# JEWS IN KIEV COMMEMORATE BRUTAL MASSACRE AT BABI YAR

By Jed Sunden

KIEV, Ukraine, Sept. 28 (JTA) -- Several hundred Jews gathered here last weekend to commemorate the 52nd anniversary of the mass execution of the Jews of Kiev at Babi Yar by the Nazis during World War II.

Speaking to the audience Sunday, Rabbi Yaakov Dov Bleich, chief rabbi of Ukraine, said, "The scene at Babi Yar showed the barbarity of the fascist regime, which had intentions to kill every Jew that they found.

"Though they shot tens of thousands of Jews in Kiev, the Jewish community in Kiev still lives and has survived and stands as a living confirmation of the words 'Am Yisrael Chai' (the people of Israel live)," said Bleich.

Almost immediately after the German occupation of Kiev in 1941, a general announcement was made for the Jews of the city to gather on Sept. 29 at the Jewish cemetery near Babi Yar, a ravine on the outskirts of the city.

During the next two days, the Germans shot and killed 33,771 Jewish men, women and children.

Recalling the scene, Maria Greenberg, a survivor of Babi Yar who spoke at the commemoration, said, "They told everyone to come to this place, and when we arrived they made us stand in line while they started shooting those in the front and pushing the bodies into the ravine.

"The only reason I survived was that a Russian girl grabbed me and took me to the side with her. When the Germans asked who I was, she said I was her sister. Even though I did not look anything like her, they let me go, not recognizing that I was a Jew," she said.

## First Monument Built In '76

During the next two years of the German occupation, several thousand other people -- including Red Army soldiers, Communists and Ukrainian nationalists -- were shot at the site and their bodies thrown into the mass grave.

Shortly before the Soviet army reconquered Kiev at the end of 1943, the Germans tried to cover the traces of the mass grave. In the last several weeks before the liberation, nearly all the bodies were removed from the ravine and burned, with the remaining bones ground into dust.

Despite the German efforts to cover up the atrocities at Babi Yar, their actions were well documented. As a result, the German commander who authorized the executions was sentenced to death at the Nuremberg trials in 1946 for crimes against humanity.

After the war, the Soviet government attempted to cover the site by pumping silt into the ravine from the Dnieper River. In 1961, a mud slide poured from the ravine, killing several hundred people and flooding the residential neighborhood surrounding the area.

That same year, Soviet poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko published "Babi Yar." The poem, which began with the line "At Babi Yar there is no monument," focused wide attention, both in the Soviet Union and abroad, on the atrocities.

It was not until 1976 that the first monument to the victims of Babi Yar was built, although not on the actual site of the executions. The monument also ignored the fact that the most of the people shot at Babi Yar were Jews; the inscription referred to the victims only as Soviet citizens. A new memorial was erected in 1991.