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**RABIN AND ARAFAT DO BUSINESS
AT THEIR FIRST PRIVATE MEETING**

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Oct. 6 (JTA) -- Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's meeting in Cairo on Wednesday with Yasser Arafat reflects a new realization on Israel's part: If it wants to achieve real progress with the Palestinians, it must deal directly with the Palestine Liberation Organization chairman himself.

In contrast to the Cairo meeting, Israeli negotiators have found that all other venues in their talks with the Palestinians were much too complicated, much too slow -- and often fruitless.

But on Wednesday, Arafat proved, contrary to certain fears in Israel, that he could get down to business.

He agreed to almost all of the suggestions presented by Rabin, particularly the timetable and the locations for the talks scheduled to begin next week on implementing the Palestinian self-rule accord signed in Washington last month.

In Washington, meanwhile, Secretary of State Warren Christopher met Wednesday with Farouk Kaddoumi, a member of the PLO executive committee.

Kaddoumi, a top political adviser to Arafat who at one point had opposed the Israeli-PLO accord, expressed support for it during Wednesday's meeting, the State Department said.

Department spokesman Mike McCurry said Christopher "found encouraging Mr. Kaddoumi's reaffirmation of the importance of implementing the declaration and Mr. Kaddoumi's support for the declaration itself."

It was believed to be the first meeting between U.S. officials and the PLO since Christopher met last month with Arafat following the Sept. 13 signing ceremony on the White House lawn.

'It's Not Enough To Sign'

Wednesday's meeting in Cairo was initiated by Rabin, as sources at PLO headquarters in Tunis had maintained earlier this week.

The Israeli prime minister is no fan of Arafat's. That was evident by the uneasy expression on Rabin's face as he sat on a couch at the Ittihadiyya Castle in Cairo, with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak seated between him and the PLO leader.

But despite this personal distaste for a man whose very name was long synonymous with terrorism, Rabin knew all too well that there was no choice but to talk directly to Arafat.

Rabin later described the meeting as a positive one that had begun the process of implementing the self-rule accord. He spoke at one news conference while Arafat held a separate meeting with reporters.

"We are committed to whatever we sign," said Rabin. "But it's not enough to sign -- you have to translate it through negotiations into reality."

Rabin said he had indicated to Arafat that everything could be negotiated, as long as it remained within the framework of the self-rule accord.

The most important outcome of the meeting

was the decision to begin negotiations to implement the accord next Wednesday.

A special liaison committee will meet in Cairo, while a committee discussing the implementation of the transfer of power in the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho will meet in the Sinai border town of Tabá.

After delays by the PLO in appointing those who would negotiate at the implementation talks, some names have finally been put forward.

Security Issues Discussed

The PLO's delegate to the liaison committee was expected to be Mahmoud Abbas, better known as Abu Mazen, the man who played a key behind-the-scenes role in the secret negotiations held earlier this year in Norway that led to the self-rule agreement.

Abu Alaa, the head of the PLO's economic department, who actually conducted the secret negotiations, was slated to head a committee dealing with economic issues.

A committee dealing with military issues will be headed by Lt. Nasser Yussuf, a senior officer of Arafat's Al Fatah wing of the PLO.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres is likely to head the Israeli delegation to the liaison body.

During the Cairo meeting, Rabin and Arafat also discussed security issues, including Israel's continued policy of hunting wanted terrorists in the administered territories.

At his own news conference, Arafat described the meeting as having taken place in a positive atmosphere.

He announced that he would be going to Gaza and Jericho at the beginning of the year.

Both Rabin and Arafat stressed their determination to maintain the momentum of the peace process.

Arafat, for example, avoided any reference to the Israeli policy of pursuing wanted terrorists -- the subject of two letters of protest he dispatched to the Israeli government over the past week.

But the PLO leader did touch on one controversial issue when he said he had named Faisal Hussein, the senior Palestinian negotiator in the talks with Israel in Washington, as chairman of a committee that would deal with Jerusalem.

In reaction, Health Minister Haim Ramon of the Labor Party reiterated Wednesday that Jerusalem is not on the agenda of the current discussions.

(Contributing to this report was JTA correspondent Deborah Kalb in Washington.)

NEWS ANALYSIS:**SYRIA SENDING CONFLICTING SIGNALS
ABOUT COMMITMENT TO PEACE PROCESS**

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, Oct. 6 (JTA) -- Syrian President Hafez Assad, his views and his opinions, have been among the major question marks hanging over the future of the Middle East peace process.

Now that Israel has signed accords with both the Palestine Liberation Organization and Jordan, the pressure for progress has shifted to the Israeli-Syrian negotiating track, which has been

stalemated for months over definitions of peace and withdrawal.

Assad this past week has embarked on his version of an American media blitz, offering a rare interview to public television's "MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour" and allowing his foreign minister to travel to Washington for a rare consultation at the State Department with Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

But despite the relative access in recent days to Assad's thought processes, it still remains unclear exactly what he plans to do.

The Syrians, blindsided by the secret Israeli-PLO deal, are concerned they are being left behind in the talks, in which Israel is also negotiating with the Palestinians, Jordan and Lebanon.

Because of the strong Syrian influence over the Lebanese government, it is assumed that Lebanon will follow Syria's lead, and that once Assad decides to move, progress will occur on both the Syrian and Lebanese tracks.

Syria is continuing to stress the "comprehensive" nature of the talks, and is arguing that Israel and the Palestinians jumped ahead of the game.

"Nobody expects us to raise banners of happiness and pleasure with such a clandestine agreement held behind our backs," Assad said on the MacNeil/Lehrer program last Friday night.

First Such Meeting Since 1974

In addition, Assad and Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa have criticized Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin for remarks suggesting that Israel may focus on the Palestinians for a few months before making major progress with Damascus.

"There is no basis for what the Israelis are talking about -- today is specialized for such and such a country, and tomorrow is for such and such a country," Assad said in the interview.

The United States, desperately seeking to keep the momentum going in the talks, has been taking a middle course in its dealings with Syria.

On the one hand, President Clinton has made an effort in recent weeks to keep in touch with Assad. And Christopher held a meeting here with Sharaa on Tuesday. It was the first time a Syrian foreign minister had visited the State Department since 1974.

But at the same time, the State Department is keeping Syria on its list of state sponsors of terrorism, where Syria is in the dubious company of such countries as Libya, Iran and Iraq -- nations whose foreign ministers are certainly not welcome in Washington.

Assad has been saying that he will not act to block the Israeli-PLO deal, but adds at the same time that he will not rein in Damascus-based Palestinian groups that reject the accord.

There is concern among supporters of the accord that radical Palestinian rejectionists will use violence to stop the accord from being implemented, and some feel that Assad could be helpful in curbing those rejectionists.

U.S. Backs 'Comprehensive' Deal

The Syrian leader's response to such suggestions is to say that Rabin does not attempt to silence his Knesset opponents, who also reject the accord, so why should he, Assad, try to silence the Palestinians?

The United States, along with Egypt, has been trying to suggest ways for Assad and the Israelis to get over their negotiating impasse so

that the Syrian track -- once viewed as the most promising -- can move forward along with the Palestinians and Jordanians.

For months now, Israel and Syria have been locked into a stalemate as they meet for their negotiating rounds at the State Department.

Israel has been waiting for Syria to define what it means by "full peace," which Syria has promised in exchange for "full withdrawal" by Israel from the Golan Heights. Syria, in turn, has been waiting for Israel to spell out its plans for such a withdrawal.

At a photo opportunity for reporters before Tuesday's meeting with Sharaa, Christopher was clearly trying to soothe the Syrian foreign minister's concerns.

The secretary of state said that one of the purposes of the meeting was to assure Sharaa that the United States is committed to a "comprehensive" peace in the Middle East. Sharaa, in turn, told reporters that Syria, too, is committed to a comprehensive peace.

The meeting between Christopher and Sharaa lasted about 90 minutes and focused on the peace process, as well as bilateral issues concerning the United States and Syria.

But State Department spokesman Mike McCurry had no immediate information as to whether the issue of Syrian Jews had come up at the meeting. The United States has been pushing Assad to honor his pledge to allow free travel for Syrian Jews.

ISRAELI-PLO PEACE BREAKTHROUGH CAUSING NO SEA CHANGE AT PAPERS By Steven Weiss

WASHINGTON (JTA) -- Major American newspapers and news agencies will continue referring to the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho as Israeli-occupied territories, despite Israel's agreement to pull troops out of these areas and grant Palestinians self-rule there.

But once Palestinian autonomy takes effect, under the agreement signed Sept. 13 in Washington, those practices could change.

The New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, The Boston Globe, and The Washington Times, as well as the Associated Press and United Press International, say their policy on datelines on articles reported from those areas will remain unchanged for now.

Most American newspapers and news agencies currently refer to the "Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip," "Israeli-occupied West Bank" and "Israeli-occupied territories."

Like the world at large, the journalistic community says that it is uncertain about the future of the peace agreement, and therefore is hesitant to drop the "occupied" label and refer to the areas simply as the Gaza Strip or the West Bank.

Officials at the Los Angeles Times told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that the "Israeli-occupied" label would remain at least until Israeli troops pull out of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho, an action anticipated in January.

The Washington Times said it would probably require more than Israeli troop withdrawal, such as evidence of Palestinian control of policing and other municipal services, and Israeli and American recognition of Palestinian rule in the areas.

But all the news organizations contacted said no definite policy changes had yet been decided.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES:**ISRAELI TOURISM INDUSTRY BUOYED BY PROSPECTIVE BENEFITS OF PEACE**

By Michele Chabin

JERUSALEM (JTA) -- Advances in the peace process are having a profound effect on Israel's tourism industry.

Less than a month after the historic signing of the Israeli-Palestinian accord, local tourism officials are anticipating a flood of tourists and joint cooperation between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

While industry officials concede that regional cooperation will not be achieved overnight, some projects are in the pipeline.

Arkia Airlines, a local carrier serving routes within Israel and to Egypt, recently announced that it will begin flights to and from Amman, Jordan, as soon as political circumstances permit.

"We've already had a number of requests from American Jewish tourists who want to combine their trip to Israel with a visit to Jordan," said Mark Feldman, owner of the Ziontours travel agency in Jerusalem. "We're keeping our fingers crossed."

To encourage tourism, Tel Aviv-based Ziara Tours, owned by businessman Ya'acov Nimrodi, has begun to advertise pilgrimages to Jerusalem and Hebron in a popular Kuwaiti newspaper.

There also has been conjecture that El Al will gain permission to fly over certain Arab countries, perhaps as early as this winter, when the airline launches its new service to Bangkok, Thailand.

Many Israelis seem startled by the new developments. A month ago, visiting Jordan seemed as likely a possibility as flying to Mars. Tourism officials, however, have been planning for the benefits of peace for several years.

The government began to seriously consider the potential benefits four years ago and asked every ministry to draft a proposal for future cooperation between Israel and the Arab countries, said Mordechai Benari, director of public relations at the Ministry of Tourism.

"We imagined what would happen if peace were to come to the region, and came up with a number of suggestions," said Benari.

"We realized that Israelis would want to visit neighboring Arab countries, and that Muslims and Christians living in those countries would want to visit their holy sites in Israel. We discussed tourism promotion, physical planning, and international cooperation between hoteliers, tour operators and airlines," Benari said.

"At the time it was just a dream, but things are starting to move, at least in the area of international cooperation," he added.

'Things Are Starting To Move'

Two examples: In November, the tourism ministers from Israel, Greece, Turkey and Egypt will meet in London to formally dedicate the Eastern Mediterranean Tourism Association. Its goal will be to promote and coordinate "package" deals that will encourage tourists to combine a visit to two or more countries in the eastern Mediterranean.

A more-ambitious meeting is set for January, when representatives from Israel, Jordan, Syria and the Palestinian areas are expected to attend a tourism workshop in Cairo within the framework of the multilateral peace negotiations.

"Given the new climate of cooperation and

the potential for peace, we anticipate a rapid growth in tourism to the entire region," said Benari. "In 1992, incoming tourism reached 1.8 million, and this year's total could top the elusive 2 million mark. If the region stabilizes, the possibilities for tourism are limitless."

Brimming with optimism, the Tourism Ministry recently sponsored a symposium titled "Israeli Tourism in the Era of Peace."

Dozens of industry professionals who attended the conference, from travel agents and tour guides to hotel managers and airline operators, praised the government's recent moves toward peace and underscored how instability in the region has traditionally hurt the Israeli economy as a whole, and the tourism industry in particular.

Own Interest To Cooperate With Arabs

"Tourism is an important part of the country's economy, and it has been severely hampered by the image of the Middle East as an unsafe place," said a Jerusalem tour guide. "It's in our own best interest to cooperate with our Arab neighbors."

People in the industry are banking on future breakthroughs on the political front. Even if a full peace remains elusive, they say, Israel's dialogue with the PLO and the compromise on territory is sending a positive signal to the rest of the world.

"There are millions of people, especially Muslims, who have yearned to visit their holy sites here, but were unwilling to do so because of the 'Palestinian Problem,'" said Benari. "We can attract pilgrims from Morocco and Tunisia, for example, if we do our homework."

In addition to an upsurge in pilgrimages, industry insiders hope to attract business people to the country.

Toward that end, the Isrotel hotel chain is building a five-star hotel in Eilat that will feature a convention and business center, as well as leisure facilities.

"Business conferences are an underutilized market for us in Israel," said Daniel Roger, Isrotel's marketing manager. "Most hotels cater to vacationers here for a good time, not those who want to combine work with pleasure. Peace will enable us to attract international business people who want a good working environment plus leisure activities, and we planning accordingly."

While tourism professionals are obviously most concerned with the immediate impact the peace process is having on local tourism, some are looking down the road a ways.

People here fantasize about attracting 5 million tourists a year, about open borders, about arranging a tour that includes Jerusalem and Mecca, the Muslim holy city in Saudi Arabia.

"Who knows?" said a Tourism Ministry official. "Within the not-too-distant future, there could be a train with the itinerary Damascus-Tel Aviv-Cairo. Passengers would buy a Midpass, a Middle Eastern version of the Eurail Pass, and travel freely through the region."

"Peace," he said, "is full of possibilities."

REMINDER: Because of the Jewish holiday of Simchat Torah and the American holiday of Columbus Day, the JTA Daily News Bulletin will not be published Friday, Oct. 8, or Monday, Oct. 11.

BLACK CAUCUS TIES WITH FARRAKHAN COULD HARM COOPERATION WITH JEWS

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, Oct. 6 (JTA) -- New ties between the Congressional Black Caucus and the controversial Black Muslim leader Louis Farrakhan have cast a shadow on the future of black-Jewish cooperation on legislative issues of mutual concern.

For the moment, at least, the future of such coalition work remains ambiguous, as the Jewish community sorts out the implications and the extent of the warming relationship between the caucus and Farrakhan, who is viewed as anti-Semitic by many in the Jewish community.

Jewish groups and legislators have long worked closely with the caucus on such issues as civil rights, aid to cities, public education and the fight against poverty. And the caucus, which currently comprises 39 members of the House of Representatives and one senator, has a long history of solid support for Israel.

But that relationship has been strained since mid-September, when the Black Caucus invited Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam, to participate in a panel discussion as part of its annual Legislative Weekend.

During a panel discussion on "Race in America," the caucus chairman, Rep. Kweisi Mfume (D-Md.), said the group would "enter a sacred covenant" with the Nation of Islam, among other groups, on legislative concerns.

In a statement issued after meeting subsequently with Jewish groups, Mfume reiterated the caucus's intention of forging ahead with a relationship with Farrakhan and any others who "we feel are as committed as we are to real and meaningful social change for our people."

Their new cooperation is the latest evidence of a growing acceptance Farrakhan seems to be enjoying in the mainstream black community. His cadre of Muslim guards, known as the Fruit of Islam, has won wide acclaim among African Americans for ridding low-income housing projects of drug dealers.

Still, Farrakhan is considered by Jews across the political spectrum to be anti-Semitic and one of the most divisive forces in race relations in America. All representatives of mainstream Jewish organizations refuse to be part of any coalition that includes him.

'Serious Rift' Possible

The caucus's embrace of Farrakhan "signals the declining importance of the Jewish community to black community interests," said one Jewish organizational official who met with Mfume.

"The implications of this could be a serious rift with the Jewish community. If it does mean that, then we have to seriously assess what we will do," he said.

Jewish groups and legislators, concerned at the direction the Congressional Black Caucus was taking after its gathering last month, quickly sought private meetings with black members of Congress and, soon afterward, with Mfume.

Two such meetings were held in Washington last week: one with representatives of the Anti-Defamation League and another with representatives of other national agencies.

Several participants in the broader group meeting, held Sept. 28, left feeling reassured.

The caucus chairman told them that he had been quoted out of context and that he had

spoken of a covenant with Farrakhan, as well as with churches, mosques and synagogues.

During the meeting, Mfume "clarified what had actually happened. The caucus did not embrace Farrakhan," said Arthur Abramson, executive director of the Baltimore Jewish Council, who orchestrated the session.

"There was a ground for meeting with Minister Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam about the drug problem because their activities in that regard have been effective," he said.

"We explained to the congressman that the Jewish community at this point cannot work in coalition with Farrakhan. Mfume understood it."

"That was the whole point: to reconfirm where we are and to sensitize each other. There has been a broadening of perspective," he said.

Another participant in the Sept. 28 meeting described Mfume as "sympathetic," but he said it "remains to be seen what effect this has on black-Jewish relations."

"If other black groups don't pick it up and invite Farrakhan to participate in other multi-racial coalitions, it won't be that big a flap."

Respecting Each Other's Sensitivities

Yet that seems unlikely, as Farrakhan's Nation of Islam is brought in to work with other elements of black leadership.

In his Sept. 29 statement, Mfume affirmed the caucus' intention of developing a relationship with Farrakhan and seemed to issue a gentle rebuke to Jewish groups and, possibly, the Nation of Islam.

"We both realize and support the ongoing need for coalitions between African Americans and Jewish Americans," he said. "Although we may differ on some issues, we must nevertheless continue to work together toward the betterment of relations between and among our people."

"The Congressional Black Caucus will also continue to seek a dialogue and to work where possible with those who we feel are as committed as we are to real and meaningful social change for our people, including the Nation of Islam," Mfume said.

"Particularly as it relates to the cessation of violence and killings and drugs in our communities, we will support the efforts of anyone committed to the restoration of hope through self-help and self-empowerment, while at the same time reserving the right to disagree on other matters of policy and principle," he said.

"We must at least try to find new solutions to old problems," Mfume added. "We can only do that by reducing the rhetoric and reaching out and mutually respecting others' religions, cultures and sensitivities."

A source close to the congressman said he was attempting to build a bridge between the Nation of Islam and the Jewish community.

Meanwhile, the American Jewish Congress has criticized other Jewish groups for pressing Mfume on the Farrakhan issue.

"It is up to (the caucus) to decide who they wish to associate with, and if they want Minister Farrakhan around their table, that is their decision," Henry Siegman, the group's executive director, said in a Sept. 28 statement.

"They understand us well enough to know that we will not sit down at a table with Mr. Farrakhan, who believes that Judaism is a 'gutter religion,'" said Siegman. "If our inability to come to a table at which Mr. Farrakhan is sitting is not a problem for the Black Caucus, so be it."