

**ISRAEL, PLO REACH DEAL  
ON RELEASE OF PRISONERS**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Oct. 21 (JTA) -- Israeli and Palestinian negotiators have reached an understanding on an initial release of Palestinian prisoners.

After a day of talks in the Egyptian border town of Taba, the two sides reportedly agreed on the release of sick, aged and young prisoners.

The release of prisoners, expected to begin next week, was intended to demonstrate to the Palestinian people some immediate results from the self-rule accord signed last month in Washington by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Though the number of prisoners to be released was not disclosed, sources among the Taba delegates said the first release would total about 1,000 Palestinians.

There had been reports that Israel was planning a massive prisoner release, and the Palestinians originally had demanded the release of 12,000 it said were being held in Israeli prisons for security reasons.

But both sides have agreed that the release will come in stages throughout the five-year interim autonomy period.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, speaking to reporters during a visit to the Gaza Strip town of Khan Yunis, said prisoner releases would proceed in accordance with progress in the negotiations.

Israel and the PLO, Rabin said, are committed to negotiating the implementation of the self-rule accord within two months -- the timetable mandated by the declaration of principles that forms the backbone of the accord.

Rabin warned that there would be ups and downs in the talks, but he seemed confident the parties could meet the deadline.

**Rabin Says Numbers Were Exaggerated**

One snag was encountered Thursday on the issue of security in the territories. According to the agreement, Israeli forces must withdraw from Gaza and the West Bank town of Jericho by mid-April.

Senior Palestinian delegate Nabil Sha'ath told reporters that Israeli proposals on security in the two regions meant the perpetuation, in effect, of the current Israeli Defense Force "occupation."

The head of the Israeli delegation, Gen. Amnon Shahak, sought to cool the atmosphere by telling reporters that differences were to be expected. He urged members of the media covering the negotiations not to "take the temperature" of the talks every half-hour.

"You will all be invited to the signing ceremony," the IDF deputy chief of staff said.

Later Thursday, the atmosphere at the talks reportedly improved, with word leaking out of an imminent first release of Palestinian prisoners.

Rabin said Israel holds 9,500 prisoners and security detainees. He said other published figures were wrong, misleading and harmful to the negotiations.

Some reports have put the total at as high as 14,000 prisoners.

Rabin enjoyed the rare experience -- un-

precedented during the past five years of the intifada -- of being cheered by Khan Yunis' Palestinian populace, who came out onto the streets to welcome him.

But a day before he arrived there, the streets of Gaza were the site of another murder.

On Wednesday, a noted Al Fatah activist in Gaza City, Assad al-Saftawi, was shot dead by unknown assailants. He was the third member of the PLO's mainstream Fatah movement to meet this fate since the self-rule agreement was signed.

Rabin said he was not ruling out internecine strife within Fatah as the reason for the murder.

**U.S. AND ISRAEL DIFFER PUBLICLY  
ON NEED FOR PROGRESS WITH SYRIA**

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, Oct. 21 (JTA) -- Israeli officials are sounding far less enthusiastic than their American counterparts about the need for a quick breakthrough with the Syrians in the Middle East peace process.

At a conference at the Israeli Embassy here this week, Edward Djerejian, the assistant secretary of state for Near East affairs, presented the American position: that an Israeli-Syrian accord is essential for the Israeli-Palestinian peace accord, or any future Middle East peace accords, to survive.

"In our analysis, the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict has been the Palestinian question, the political heart. But the geopolitical and strategic heart of that equation is the relationship between Israel and Syria," Djerejian said.

"What we should all be focused on," he added later, "is to not lose the historic opportunity we have now to engage Syria and Israel in a comprehensive effort to make peace."

But Israel's deputy chief of mission here, Michael Shiloh, did not seem to share Djerejian's sense of urgency about the Syrians.

Echoing other top Israeli officials, Shiloh said Israel has enough to do right now implementing the Palestinian accord.

"We may overload the wagon. We have to patiently and thoroughly sort out our difficulties with the Palestinians," he said.

"If the president of Syria says, 'I'm now resting with my personal feelings of offense and frustration at being left out of the loop by the Palestinians and not being at center stage and thus, I wish to rest for three or four months,' I don't think that it is in the interest of Israel to disturb his rest," Shiloh added acerbically.

Israel will not ignore Syria, but will continue preparing for progress on the Syrian track, which could come "perhaps this winter or early next year," Shiloh said.

Despite the appearance of a split between the Americans and the Israelis over the immediate importance of the Syrian negotiating track, analysts here say the differences are not as great as they seem.

"The difference is not the long-term goals, but the timing," said Daniel Pipes of the Foreign Policy Research Institute in Philadelphia.

The Americans see a sense of immediate opportunity that should not be squandered, while the Israelis are concerned about overloading their

political and psychological systems, Pipes said in an interview.

In the wake of the agreement with the Palestinians, Israelis have expressed concern about their ability to handle the security issues involved in land-for-peace deals with both the Palestinians and Syria at the same time.

#### **Boycott Meeting Canceled?**

"Everyone agrees the Syrian track is important," said Richard Haass, a former Bush administration Middle East specialist who is now a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment.

But, Haass continued, "there's only so much traffic (Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak) Rabin can put on his political bridges at this point."

Another analyst said Israel's "public posture of hesitancy" in dealing with Syria is not a "stumbling block" to progress.

"I don't think there's much daylight between" the U.S. and Israeli positions, Robert Satloff of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy said in an interview.

If Syrian President Hafez Assad were to make the "right offer" tomorrow, the Israelis would find a way to accept it, he said.

In addition to Israel's political considerations, the Americans just have a different way of looking at Syria than do the Israelis, Pipes said.

The United States has been actively involved in trying to work with Syria, although it remains on the State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism.

By contrast, said Pipes, the other three "rogue states" in the Middle East -- Iran, Iraq and Libya -- are not treated as kindly by the Americans.

But to the Israelis, such countries are "all trouble," Pipes explained. "The Israelis have less confidence and hope in Assad than the United States does."

The Clinton administration is certainly not losing any time in trying to capitalize on last month's historic Israeli-Palestinian accord.

U.S. envoy Dennis Ross, the special coordinator for the peace talks, was shuttling from one Middle East capital to another this week trying to stimulate Israel and Syria into some sort of movement toward peace.

Negotiations on the Israeli-Syrian track have been stalemated for months over definitions of peace and withdrawal.

The Israelis have been waiting for the Syrians to define what they mean by "full peace," while the Syrians have been waiting for the Israelis to specify their plans for withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

Meanwhile, in a possible indication of Assad's frame of mind, an Arab League meeting scheduled to take place in Damascus this coming Sunday reportedly has been postponed indefinitely.

The meeting was to include discussion about adding names to the Arab boycott list of companies doing business with Israel.

American officials have been regularly denouncing the longtime economic boycott as an anachronism, now that Jordan and the Palestinians are engaged in economic relationships with Israel.

But most Arab countries have resisted any moves toward lifting the boycott.

At a hearing Thursday morning on Capitol Hill, Djerejian said the Arab League meeting was in question. The Arabs are "hearing our message," he told the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East.

#### **EITAN TO RUN FOR PRIME MINISTER IN ISRAEL'S FIRST DIRECT ELECTION**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Oct. 21 (JTA) -- Rafael Eitan, the charismatic leader of the right-wing Tsomet Party, plans to run for prime minister, a move that could skew the race in Israel's first direct election for the post.

With Eitan's announcement, the campaign for prime minister has generated new excitement.

The time-honored tradition of electing a government according to a system of proportional party strength was changed after years of criticism that such a system did not truly represent the popular choice.

In the next election, Israelis will vote directly for an individual, rather than a party slate, for the nation's top post.

The new system could lead to a situation in which the prime minister represents one party, while a different party holds a majority in the Knesset.

Eitan, popularly known as "Rafu," is expected to present a serious challenge to Benjamin Netanyahu, the recently elected Likud leader, as the front-running rightist candidate for the premiership.

Tsomet also has resolved to establish its own youth movement, which, it says, will seek to inculcate the party's values and the love of the biblical Land of Israel in its young members.

These two developments, taken together, have created interest and speculation in the Israeli political community.

Many observers see Eitan's move as a reflection of widespread dissatisfaction on the right with Netanyahu's leadership in the wake of the accord between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The next election, to be held by 1996 at the latest, will take place under a newly legislated procedure involving two separate ballots: one for parties and one for prime ministerial candidates.

Eitan, a former chief of staff of the Israel Defense Force, entered politics in the mid-1980s through the nationalist Tehiya Party. He soon quarreled with Tehiya's most prominent politician, Geula Cohen, and eventually seceded from the party.

His newly formed Tsomet party was the surprise of the 1992 election, winning eight seats and becoming the third-largest party in the Knesset.

#### **BEN-GURION SHUT DOWN BY STRIKERS**

TEL AVIV, Oct. 21 (JTA) -- Air traffic into and out of Israel came to an abrupt halt Thursday when workers staged a one-day strike at Ben-Gurion Airport.

Angered by cost-cutting proposals made by the Israeli government, workers from Israel Aircraft Industries shut down the airport as well as major roads throughout the country.

Thousands of IAI workers streamed out of the company's headquarters and main industrial plant at the airport Thursday morning and occupied the airport runways.

The workers prevented a dozen international flights from taking off and succeeded in diverting three incoming flights to other airfields.

The only aircraft allowed to take off during the demonstration belonged to visiting U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross.

## SKINHEAD LEADER WHO PLANNED RACE WAR TO GET WIESENTHAL CENTER COUNSELING

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES, Oct. 21 (JTA) -- In an unusual plea bargain with federal prosecutors, a skinhead leader who planned to launch a race war through deadly attacks on black and Jewish targets has agreed to a counseling program at the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

Christopher Fisher, 20, leader of a group calling itself the Fourth Reich Skinheads, pleaded guilty in federal court to charges that could land him in prison for 10 years.

Fisher and two juveniles were arrested three months ago by the FBI, which had infiltrated the group, in a widely publicized sweep of white supremacists in Southern California.

The raids also netted six other people, identified as members of the White Aryan Resistance and the Church of the Creator, both virulent white supremacist groups.

At the time of the arrests, investigators charged that Fisher's plans for a race war included murdering Rodney King, blowing up a leading African American church and machine-gunning its congregation, and sending letter bombs to prominent Jews in Orange County, south of Los Angeles.

Fisher has admitted vandalizing Temple Beth David, also in Orange County, last January.

The novel idea of including the Wiesenthal Center educational component as part of the plea agreement came from federal prosecutor Marc Greenberg.

"If we don't do something to address (Fisher's violent racism), 10 years from now he will emerge (from prison) with the same view, maybe even more hardened," said Greenberg. "Hopefully, this will give him a dose of reality," the prosecutor said.

Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean of the Wiesenthal Center, welcomed Greenberg's suggestion and said his staff would work out a program for Fisher to include a visit to the center's new Museum of Tolerance and face-to-face discussions with Holocaust survivors.

"Through such a program, we can confront him with the consequences of hatred," said Hier.

### Other Jewish Groups Offer Advice

Hier, as well as spokespersons for other local Jewish defense organizations, said he could not recall any instance in which such a re-education effort was made part of the official court proceedings.

David Lehrer, regional director of the Anti-Defamation League, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that his organization has worked with worried parents whose sons had joined hate groups, and that ADL's "World of Difference" program had been adopted by many schools to defuse ethnic tensions and teach respect for differences.

Barbara Creme of the American Jewish Committee, in a conversation with JTA, questioned whether the proposed Wiesenthal Center program could effect basic changes in Fisher's attitude.

She cited AJCommittee's own "Hands Across the Campus" program as one that taught youngsters the underlying reasons for cultural and individual differences.

In his court appearance, Fisher pleaded guilty to charges of conspiracy and exploding a pipe bomb at a private home. Prosecution and

defense attorneys agreed that a 10-year sentence in federal prison would be "appropriate," but U.S. District Judge William Byrne Jr. may decide on a different punishment.

Under questioning by Byrne, Fisher said that he and his confederates had discussed "problems with race relations." Asked to explain the problems, Fisher responded: "Sometimes whites were picked on because of the color of their skin."

## CONSERVATIVE WOMEN'S GROUP PETITIONS WHITE HOUSE ON BREAST CANCER RESEARCH

By Steven Weiss

WASHINGTON, Oct. 21 (JTA) -- In a powerful show of concern for women's health issues, the Women's League for Conservative Judaism submitted a petition to President Clinton this week calling for an increase in breast cancer research.

The petition was delivered Monday during a White House visit that came as part of the League's biennial World Affairs Conference, held in Washington from Oct. 15-19.

"We need a nationally focused comprehensive strategy to combat breast cancer," the petition reads.

"Only a consistent, high level of funding for breast cancer will help make the necessary difference in this disease," it says.

Nearly 2.6 million women in the United States have breast cancer, a disease that killed more than 450,000 women in the 1980s, according to the petition.

The league urged Clinton to "bring together selected leaders from the executive branch, the Congress, the scientific community, private industry and women with breast cancer" to "design and implement a comprehensive plan to end the breast cancer epidemic."

The petition was signed by 225 delegates of the conference, which brought women from more than 20 states and Canada together for meetings at the White House and with members of Congress on topics ranging from health care to the Middle East peace process, according to Rhonda Kahn, the league's public relations director.

The focal point of the meetings was women's health care issues, Kahn said.

At the White House, delegates were addressed by several low-level administration officials, including a member of Clinton's Health Care Task Force, Kahn said.

The group also met on Tuesday with congressional members, including Sens. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.), and Charles Robb (D-Va.), and Reps. Eric Fingerhut (D-Ohio), and Marjorie Margolies-Mezvinsky (D-Pa.).

The congressional members all said breast cancer research was high on their personal lists of important issues, Kahn said.

"Our feeling was that they are moving in the right direction" on women's health care issues, she said.

All of the group's activities were geared toward the conference theme "Hear Our Voice," which was intended to promote Jewish participation in important political and social issues, said Bernice Balter, executive director of the league.

"As issues are raised, we are here to respond," she said.

The conference also included a tour of the U.S. Holocaust Museum and visits to area synagogues.

# **BEHIND THE HEADLINES:**

## **ISRAELIS ARE GOING FOR FAST FOOD AS LIFESTYLES CHANGE AND MAMA WORKS** By Michele Chabin

JERUSALEM (JTA) -- American-style fast-food chains are sweeping the country, in response to changes in the Israeli lifestyle.

A decade ago, mama's home cooking was to Israel what apple pie was to America in the days before you could buy one in the supermarket's frozen-food section.

Not anymore. These days, Israeli mothers are more likely to be found in the workplace than in the kitchen, and the fast-food joints are soaking up the profits.

Though there are no hard-and-fast statistics regarding the proliferation of fast-food chains here, industry insiders put the number anywhere from 130 to 200 outlets nationwide.

Of the 10,000 or so eateries in Israel, an estimated 5 to 8 percent belong to chains (compared to 30 percent in the United States).

Actually, fast food is not all that new to Israel.

Wimpy's set up shop here in the 1960s but went out of business a few years later.

A chain called Mr. Tops also set down roots but met with the same fate.

It was not until 1972 that Burger Ranch, now the country's largest chain, broke into the market and stayed there. Today the company has 54 outlets throughout the country.

Other chains, such as MacDonald's (established in the mid-'80s), Pizza Hut and Domino's Pizza (both introduced within the past three years) are also raking in customers.

McDonald's, which last week opened a huge outlet in a popular shopping mall outside Tel Aviv, will soon be joined by Burger King and Kentucky Fried Chicken, which have announced their intention to expand their chains to Israel.

All this competition will improve the quality of fast food in Israel, according to food critic Daniel Rogoff, who grudgingly visited the new McDonald's the day after it opened.

Israelis are becoming more sophisticated as consumers, says Rogoff, "and they expect American-style fast-food chains to deliver the same high level of service, food quality and cleanliness that customers abroad have come to expect."

### **Going At Each Other In The Ads**

"Wendy's was here a few years ago, but it went out of business because people expected better quality and service" than it gave, Rogoff said. "The shawarma and falafel shops can get away with lower standards, but chains can't."

The recent surge in the number of outlets in general, and the introduction of Israel's first McDonald's in particular, has put some fast-food chains, as well as regular restaurants, on the defensive.

Burger Ranch this week introduced an advertising campaign aimed at steering customers away from McDonald's.

One of its flyers reads, "At McDonald's you pay more for the name and the image," and proceeded to compare the price and weight of various types of its hamburgers with the Big Mac, McDonald's signature burger.

The country's other chains will be hard-pressed to outdo McDonald's, says critic Rogoff.

"The service is impeccable. When a person comes into McDonald's, he receives his order

within a minute of putting in his request. The same order takes at least five minutes at Burger Ranch, for example," Rogoff said.

Ron Lapid, president of Burger Ranch, does not view this as a criticism.

"Our motto is, 'Let the customer wait for the hamburger, not the hamburger wait for the customer.'"

"The longer preparation time means that the product is fresh and allows us to custom-make an order when requested," Lapid said.

As the president of the oldest fast-food chain in Israel, Lapid says he is both gratified and a bit surprised at the way fast food has caught on in Israel.

"Eating habits among Israelis have definitely changed over the past decade or so," he said, "mostly due to a higher standard of living and the fact that there are more women out in the work force."

"After a day's work, going to Burger Ranch is quick and less expensive than dining in a regular restaurant."

"It's also a good place to bring the kids," Lapid said.

"But if you'd told me 15 years ago that one day we would have 54 chains around the country, I'd have said you were crazy."

## **B'NAI B'RITH CELEBRATES 150TH WITH RUSSIANS AND IN CONGRESS** By Steven Weiss

WASHINGTON, Oct. 21 (JTA) -- B'nai B'rith International celebrated its 150th anniversary this week in some unusual places.

The Russian Embassy hosted a panel discussion and luncheon in honor of the event Thursday, and House Speaker Thomas Foley (D-Wash.) was scheduled later in the day to recognize the occasion on behalf of Congress in his office at the House of Representatives.

B'nai B'rith set aside the whole week for activities to celebrate its 150 years of service to the international Jewish community.

Culminating the festivities was to be an address by President Clinton at a havdalah service at the Jefferson Memorial on Saturday night.

The embassy luncheon was the first B'nai B'rith event of its kind at the Russian compound, said Art Shulman, director of communications for B'nai B'rith.

Over 60 B'nai B'rith members and guests were invited to the heavily guarded embassy, previously the embassy of the Soviet Union and once the site of numerous anti-Soviet demonstrations by Jewish groups.

There they heard Russian and American diplomats talk about prospects for democracy in Russia.

Deputy Ambassador Andrei Kolosovsky spoke about President Boris Yeltsin's recent dissolving of the Russian Parliament and the renewed drive toward a democratic government there.

Yeltsin does not "want to abandon the democratic track, the democratic process," said Kolosovsky.

Kolosovsky was followed by William Danvers of the State Department, who spoke of Clinton's support for Yeltsin.

Danvers said the administration's plans for its relations with the former Soviet republics are to support democratic reform, help build market economies, aid in the control of nuclear proliferation and help to ensure stability in the region.