

**ISRAELI PLAN TO FREE PALESTINIANS
IS APPROVED AMID CONTINUING TERROR**
By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Oct. 24 (JTA) -- Israeli officials are saying that their decision to release 760 Palestinians from jail and ease travel restrictions on residents of the administered territories will not threaten Israel's security.

But security concerns were heightened by reports late Sunday that two Israeli soldiers had been abducted and killed by Muslim extremists in the Gaza Strip.

Few details about the attack were immediately available. But reports from Gaza said members of a terrorist unit of the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas movement, dressed up as Orthodox Jews and driving a vehicle with Israeli license plates, drove up to the Jewish settlement of Ganei Tal and managed to lure two soldiers aboard.

The terrorists then killed the soldiers, seized their M-16 rifles and dumped their bodies near the Rafah refugee camp.

The incident, which outraged settlers, came against the backdrop of continuing violence among competing Palestinian factions, which has been on the rise in the aftermath of the assassination last week of a leading member of the Palestine Liberation Organization's Al Fatah faction.

Israel's release of the Palestinian prisoners, the subject of negotiations last week at the Egyptian border town of Taba, was scheduled to begin Monday.

At the Taba talks, Israeli and PLO negotiators agreed that Palestinian prisoners will be released in stages throughout the five-year autonomy period called for in the self-rule accord both sides signed Sept. 13 in Washington.

The first prisoners to be released will be those who are sick, under the age of 18 or older than 50.

Police Minister Moshe Shahal told Israel Radio on Sunday that there was no need for public alarm, despite the counter-claims of government critics.

'We Certainly Have Limits'

Shahal made his comments after attending an extensive briefing at Sunday's weekly Cabinet session on the plan to release Palestinian prisoners.

"We certainly have limits on those who are going to be released," he said. "If there is any danger of continuing terror acts, this is going to be one of the considerations whether to release them or not."

"We have an agreement with the Palestinians that they are renouncing terror and acts of violence," he continued. "We are talking about a peace process, and every person who's being released is being verified (as to) what he's going to do in the future" and "the seriousness of the acts he has done in the past which brought him to prison."

According to Deputy Defense Minister Mordechai Gur, no prisoner convicted of murder would be released.

The government has also decided to ease travel restrictions imposed on Palestinians following the closure of the territories last March.

Restrictions will be lifted entirely for women

and for those with jobs in Jerusalem, while men over 45 will be issued permits to enter on an individual basis.

The new rules regarding Palestinian movement within Israel were announced by Shahal last week.

Along with the prisoner release, the relaxation of travel restrictions is designed to provide the Palestinians with a sense that they are receiving tangible benefits from the self-rule accord.

'Secret Service Apparatus' Formed

The decision earlier this year to close off the territories had been very popular among Israelis, since the number of murders committed by Palestinians had dropped almost to zero after the restrictions went into effect.

But some 100,000 Palestinians were deprived of their jobs in Israel as a result of the travel restrictions. The result was severe economic dislocation.

On Sunday, Palestinian factions divided over the peace process clashed violently at the Rafah refugee camp in Gaza.

The fighting resulted in the shooting death of one woman and the injury of 15 people, according to Palestinian reports.

It was the second such clash in as many days.

The ongoing violence reportedly has led the PLO to deploy in Gaza what is being called a "secret service apparatus" to protect Palestinians in the wake of a series of assassinations of Fatah activists.

In Gaza, roughly 3,000 volunteers reportedly are being readied to serve the Fatah faction of the PLO in a "general mobilization to deal with the extreme emergency" following the Oct. 21 murder of Fatah activist Assad Saftawi.

Saftawi, a powerful grass-roots leader and a friend of PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, was shot by two masked gunmen as he was picking his son up from school.

The volunteers would help protect Palestinians against the "enemies" of the peace process who seek to abort it, according to a Fatah memorandum distributed over the weekend.

Last Friday, thousands of mourners accompanied Saftawi's coffin through the streets of Gaza, some shouting for vengeance. He was buried near two other recently slain Fatah activists and peace process supporters: Mohammed Abu Sha'aban and his aide, Maher Kehail.

**ISRAELIS CHARGE ARAB AMERICAN
WITH BEING COMMANDER OF HAMAS**
By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Oct. 24 (JTA) -- An Arab American citizen arrested here last January has been named in an indictment as the world commander of the military arm of the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas movement.

Mohammed Salah had been detained briefly by Israeli authorities in January on charges of distributing money to Hamas activists in the territories.

According to the charges, the money was to go to the purchase of weapons and the strength-

ening of the terrorist organization in the wake of the deportation to southern Lebanon last December of 415 of its leaders.

But, according to reports here, a recently revised indictment submitted to the military court in Ramallah now names Salah as Hamas' military commander.

Salah allegedly organized training sessions in the United States for young Hamas activists. The sessions included classes on Israeli intelligence, the fundamentals of Islam and the art of making explosives.

Salah, who goes by the name of Abu Ahmed, is charged with establishing the military infrastructure of Hamas during his first visit here in 1987.

The indictment also claims that Salah was responsible for helping plan an assassination plot against Sari Nusseibeh, a Palestinian philosopher and key supporter of the peace process.

The plot was never carried out.

The new charges in the indictment against Salah came as a result of interviews with Hamas activists who were recently arrested.

IDF SOLDIERS HURT IN LEBANON CLASH

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Oct. 24 (JTA) -- Two Israeli soldiers were wounded, one seriously, in a clash with gunmen Sunday morning in the southern Lebanon security zone.

The two gunmen who fired on the Israeli troops were killed in the exchange.

The incident, which occurred in the eastern sector of the zone, followed another Friday in which two gunmen were also killed. Those men were identified as members of the Abu Nidal organization.

The identity and political affiliation of the two heavily armed gunmen killed Sunday were not immediately known, but in Beirut, the Iranian-supported Hezbollah organization announced that two of its men had attacked an Israeli patrol.

After Sunday's clash, the attackers directed heavy mortar fire at posts of the Israel Defense Force and its affiliated South Lebanon Army in the central sector of the zone. The exchange lasted some four hours.

Sunday's exchange brought to 13 the number of terrorists killed in eight separate clashes with IDF and SLA forces in the zone in the past month.

BOMB EXPLODES ON TEL AVIV BEACH

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Oct. 24 (JTA) -- A small explosive device exploded harmlessly Sunday afternoon on the Tel Aviv seashore.

Although there were no injuries, some sunbathers, most of them German tourists, were treated for shock.

The small charge was hidden in a metal pipe buried little more than a foot beneath the sand at the end of Frishman Street, opposite the French Embassy.

The area is crowded on Saturdays but was sparsely filled Sunday.

Israel Television reported that a telephone caller claimed responsibility in the name of the extremist Kahane Chai movement, to protest the French government's reception of Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat in Paris last week.

U.S. CONTINUING TO PRESS SYRIA TO ALLOW JEWS TO TRAVEL FREELY By Steven Weiss

WASHINGTON, Oct. 24 (JTA) -- The Clinton administration is "consistently, persistently" pressing the Syrian government to allow more Jews to leave the country, a senior State Department official told Congress last week.

"We will continue to raise the issue until we're satisfied that all Syrian Jews who wish to travel can do so," Edward Djerejian, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs, said during an Oct. 21 appearance on Capitol Hill.

Djerejian testified before the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East. He addressed the subject of Syrian Jewry in response to questions from Reps. Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.) and Peter Deutsch (D-Fla.).

The number of Jews leaving Syria has fallen dramatically since last October, raising doubts about whether President Hafez Assad is still committed to his April 1992 announcement that travel restrictions against Jews had been lifted.

Since Assad's decision granting freedom of travel to Syrian Jews, "approximately 80 percent of the 3,600 to 4,000 members of the Syrian Jewish community have received exit permits," Djerejian said.

Between 1,100 and 1,200 Jews remain in Syria, he said, most of whom are presumably unable to leave.

"Syria promised to allow freedom of exit for Syrian Jewry," said Djerejian. But levels of Jewish emigration from Syria have been at a "mere trickle" in recent months, he said.

The Jewish community reacted positively to Djerejian's comments.

Alice Harary, president of the Council for the Rescue of Syrian Jews, said in a statement that Djerejian affirmed "once again the strength with which the Clinton administration appears to be pursuing the issue of Syrian Jewry."

Harary added that she remains "very concerned at the cavalier manner" in which Syria has "brushed aside" the Jewish cause there.

"We applaud the administration's continuous efforts to raise the issue at every opportunity," said Stacy Burdett, assistant director of the Anti-Defamation League's Washington office.

The small numbers of Jews shown to be leaving Syria "belie any statements of President Assad" that the lifting of travel restrictions is still in effect, she said.

ONTARIO JEWS AND ARABS APPLAUD SIGNING OF ISRAELI-PLO AGREEMENT By Gil Kezwer

TORONTO (JTA) -- More than 500 members of Ontario's Jewish and Arab communities got together recently to celebrate the signing of the historic accord between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization last month in Washington.

The Oct. 14 reception was co-sponsored by the Canadian Jewish Congress, Canadian Arab Federation, Palestine House and Ontario's prime minister, Bob Rae.

"I didn't honestly believe that I would see this day," a beaming Rae told the assemblage.

"There are people in this room who have lived side by side in this province for a generation but have not been able to speak to each other," he said.

COURT RULES TOUVIER MUST STAND TRIAL IN FRANCE FOR CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, Oct. 24 (JTA) -- A French court has ruled that Paul Touvier, the 78-year-old former French Nazi collaborator, must stand trial for crimes against humanity.

The decision was rendered last week by the Versailles Court of Appeal, putting an end to a 20-year legal battle.

No date has yet been set for the trial, but Touvier would become the first Frenchman ever to stand trial on such charges.

Another Frenchman who was ordered to stand trial, Vichy Police Chief Rene Bousquet, was murdered earlier this year by a non-Jewish man.

Touvier, who was head of intelligence of the Vichy militia in the southeastern French city of Lyon, was tried in absentia for murder and condemned to death in 1945 and 1947.

But he vanished mysteriously and did not surface until he was found in 1989 hiding in a Catholic monastery.

He had been hidden since the end of World War II in various Catholic convents, with the approval of some of the highest members of the Catholic Church in France. This was shown by an investigation ordered two years ago by Cardinal Albert Decourtray, the archbishop of Lyon.

In the early 1970s, then-President Georges Pompidou pardoned Touvier, enabling him to come out of hiding and regain possession of his belongings, which included a home.

When members of the Resistance heard this, they lodged a lawsuit against Touvier for crimes against humanity, which is not covered by the statute of limitations on war crimes. Touvier again went into hiding in monasteries.

Claims Killings of Seven Saved Hundreds

On May 24, 1989, French gendarmes arrested Touvier in a convent near Nice.

Jailed for two years, he was released in 1991 by a court order that cited his age and poor health. He suffers from bladder cancer.

A first appeal by Touvier's lawyers led to a surprising decision by a Paris court to throw the case out of court.

The ensuing uproar led the French Justice Department to appeal the decision.

In the long course of legal events, most of the charges against Touvier were dropped for technical reasons.

The only one remaining is the role of Touvier in the execution of seven Jewish hostages on June 29, 1944, in Rillieux-la-Pape, a suburb of Lyon, in retaliation for the assassination of Vichy's minister of propaganda, Philippe Henriot.

Touvier has always acknowledged that it was he who picked the seven to be executed.

But he has maintained that by doing so he saved the lives of hundreds of Jews who would have been murdered.

A few months ago, French Nazi-hunter Serge Klarsfeld, who has kept the focus on French wartime collaborators, said in an interview that he was convinced that "unless Touvier leaves France or is killed by a lunatic or dies of old age, the trial will take place."

But he also said that French judicial authorities are doing their best to delay the case of Maurice Papon, a Vichy official in Bordeaux who signed orders to deport hundreds of Jews, including children.

CLINTON SPEAKS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AT CEREMONY FOR B'NAI B'RITH'S 150TH

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, Oct. 24 (JTA) -- At a Havdalah service held Saturday night at the floodlit Jefferson Memorial here, President Clinton spoke to members of B'nai B'rith about the importance of religious freedom in America.

The event, billed as the first religious ceremony to take place at the memorial, was part of B'nai B'rith's weeklong 150th anniversary commemoration.

In the United States, "more people put religion at the center of their lives" than in "any other advanced society on Earth," Clinton said.

Just as Jews separate Shabbat from the rest of the week, so should all Americans separate and "keep our faiths free from government coercion," the president told the approximately 650 participants at the service.

Under clear, chilly skies, Clinton and other speakers paid tribute to Thomas Jefferson, whom Clinton called "the father of religious freedom in America."

Clinton spoke from a podium directly in front of the Jefferson statue, which stands in the middle of the monument's marble pillars, creating a dramatic effect for the onlookers.

He paid tribute to B'nai B'rith, speaking of the group's long "struggle against bigotry and injustice."

He noted that B'nai B'rith had opened a hospital decades ago in his hometown of Hot Springs, Ark., that "still serves hundreds" without regard to their ability to pay.

And he praised the group for its work in helping victims of floods and earthquakes, both in the United States and abroad.

Clinton also spoke of his administration's commitment to a comprehensive peace settlement in the Middle East, one in which "Israel achieves lasting peace" with all its neighbors.

And on the domestic front, the president said he was "very proud of the cooperation I have seen in the United States" between Jewish and Arab Americans trying to "make peace work."

Jewish writer Leon Uris, author of the novel "Exodus," also addressed the crowd, and a local Jewish day school choir performed a selection of songs.

Also on the podium was First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, who had addressed another Jewish organization, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the day before.

JDC SENDS FOOD, MEDICINE TO SARAJEVO

NEW YORK, Oct. 24 (JTA) -- A 300-ton relief supply of food and medicine arrived over the weekend in Sarajevo, the besieged capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina, according to the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, which organized the shipment.

The shipment included antibiotics and other medical supplies, as well as non-perishable foods such as sugar, flour, rice and baby food, which can be stored throughout the winter.

The shipment is the fifth and largest delivery of supplies organized by the JDC.

The shipment was enabled by the British-based World Jewish Relief organization and the Jewish communities of Sarajevo and Zagreb.

ADL CALLS LAWSUIT BY ARAB AMERICANS WITHOUT MERIT, POLITICALLY MOTIVATED

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES, Oct. 24 (JTA) -- The Anti-Defamation League is saying that a lawsuit filed against it last week by Arab American and other organizations is "without merit."

The civil suit was filed in federal court here Oct. 21 by 12 Arab American and other groups. It charges that the veteran Jewish defense agency conducted "secret spying activities" against their members.

The suit evolved from a San Francisco police probe of allegations that ADL used confidential law enforcement information for a private national intelligence operation that kept tabs on thousands of American organizations and individuals.

No formal charges have been filed against ADL, but The Washington Post reported last week that evidence in the case might be submitted to a San Francisco grand jury on Nov. 3.

ADL officials have consistently rejected the allegations.

In a statement issued last week, ADL said that "the conspiracy theories outlined in the complaint are completely false and serve only to highlight the plaintiffs' political agenda."

The statement also noted that "ADL conducts its fact-finding seriously, professionally and lawfully."

"Despite the transparent objectives of those bringing this suit, ADL will not be deterred from its mandate to counter extremism in defense of American democracy."

"We will continue to champion the civil rights of all Americans, even those who have brought this suit," the statement said.

The lead plaintiff in the suit is the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, which held simultaneous news conferences last week in Los Angeles, San Francisco and Washington to outline its case and to introduce individuals and representatives of organizations that have joined in the suit.

Charge ADL Engaged In 'Massive Theft'

At the Los Angeles news conference, lead attorney Peter Schey of the Center for Human Rights and Constitutional Law said that the suit seeks a court finding that ADL has violated the plaintiffs' rights of free expression and association.

Schey also said the plaintiffs are seeking an injunction against such alleged violations in the future as well as an award of monetary damages.

Among the eight speakers at the news conference was Abdeen Jabara, national vice chairman of the Anti-Discrimination Committee, who described the charges in the suit as "just the tip of the iceberg" and predicted that "ADL will fight every discovery attempt tooth and nail."

Jabara claimed that ADL operatives had engaged in "massive theft" of documents from the Arab group's headquarters in Washington. Asked whether he had filed a criminal complaint against ADL for the alleged theft, Jabara said that such a complaint was under consideration.

Other plaintiffs speaking at the news conference included Russell Means, head of the American Indian Movement in Colorado, and two African American politicians from Los Angeles, former Rep. Mervyn Dymally and former City Councilman Robert Ferrell.

Additional plaintiffs in the suit are the National Lawyers Guild, National Conference of Black Lawyers, Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador, Palestine Solidarity Committee and International Jewish Peace Union.

Also charged in the suit are Irwin Suall, head of ADL's fact-finding division; former San Francisco police officer Tom Gerard; Roy Bullock, a private investigator retained by ADL; and law-enforcement agencies in Los Angeles, San Francisco and San Diego counties.

During the news conference, Dymally, Schey and Jabara assured reporters that the suit was not meant as a reflection on the American Jewish community, or on most ADL contributors and employees.

Schey maintained that if ADL had apologized for its alleged misdeeds and had promised to mend its ways, the suit would not have been filed.

He added that of the nine lawyers for the various plaintiffs, most were working for free and most were Jewish.

FIRST LADY PITCHES HEALTH CARE REFORM PLAN TO UAHC GATHERING

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

SAN FRANCISCO, Oct. 24 (JTA) -- Hillary Rodham Clinton pitched her health care reform plan to a large gathering of Reform Jews here and told them she identifies strongly with their commitment to social justice.

The first lady, who has been touring the country to promote the health care reform package, received a warm reception from more than 4,000 Reform Jews who welcomed her here last Friday to the 62nd biennial convention of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

In a speech sprinkled with references to Judaism, Clinton announced a change in the reform plan that would require health maintenance organizations to allow patients to get partial coverage when they seek treatment from a specialist or hospital not connected to the HMO.

This new policy, known as "point of service," would mean that HMO members would not have to foot the entire bill themselves when seeking treatment outside their health plan, as they do now.

Point of service policies, while still rare, are reportedly becoming increasingly popular.

The health care reform package is scheduled to be introduced to Congress this week.

Clinton lauded the Reform Jews, who enthusiastically applauded her health care proposals.

"You know that 'reform' is not just a verb, but a moral imperative we all need to heed," she said.

"The president and I draw strength from your commitment, and the meaning we derived from Shabbat and Passover seders with friends, and the constant pricking of conscience that so many of you are better at than anyone else," she said.

Clinton compared the effort to provide universal health care coverage with the message embodied in the Torah portion that Jews would be reading the next morning during Shabbat services.

"Abraham receives a command to leave his father's house and meet new challenges God has put before him," she said. She also cited the 12th-century scholar and physician Maimonides as someone who stressed the importance of preventive health care, as she listed procedures the president wants included in the reform package.