

**680 PALESTINIAN PRISONERS ARE FREED  
AS ISRAEL MOURNS 2 SLAIN RESERVISTS**  
By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Oct. 25 (JTA) -- Israel has released 680 Palestinian prisoners on schedule, despite the brutal murder the day before of two Israeli soldiers by Islamic fundamentalists in the Gaza Strip.

The prisoner release, which reportedly included 400 residents of the West Bank and 280 residents of the Gaza Strip, took place Monday in accordance with the agreement reached last week between delegations of Israeli and Palestine Liberation Organization officials in the Sinai border town of Tabá.

The release occurred the same day that the two Israel Defense Force reservists, who were killed on Sunday, were buried in their hometowns.

Sgt. Maj. Ehud Roth, 35, was buried in the graveyard of Kibbutz Hatzetim in the Negev. Cpl. Ilan Levy, 23, was buried in Dimona.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, visiting Washington on Monday for a meeting with President Clinton, praised Israel for allowing the prisoners to be released despite the provocative acts of Arab rejectionists.

"I think it's a very good act," he said. "It's a very good step forward."

Bitterness and anger were expressed by right-wing nationalists at the coincidence of the burial of the reservists and the freeing of the Palestinian prisoners, which Israel performed as a goodwill gesture following the Sept. 13 signing of the Israel-PLO agreement in Washington.

The two reservists had come off weekend duty in the Gush Katif settlement area at the southern end of the Gaza Strip early Sunday.

According to a witness who saw them hitchhiking, the soldiers flagged down a yellow Subaru station wagon with Israeli license plates. The car was driven by what appeared to be two kippah-wearing religious Jews.

But the two men in the front seat turned out to be Hamas gunmen waiting to entrap soldiers.

**A 'Gift' From Hamas**

According to the area army commander, the vehicle drove some miles before turning toward the Gaza Strip town of Khan Yunis. The gunmen turned around, pulled out pistols and shot Roth and Levy in their heads at point-blank range.

Their bodies were dumped at the side of the road after the soldiers' boots and shirts were removed. The soldiers' M-16 rifles were stolen.

The car was driven on a few hundred yards before being abandoned.

A handwritten note in Arabic, signed by the Hamas organization, taunted Rabin and Gaza area Brig. Gen. Yomtov Samiah, claiming that the double murder was Hamas' "gift to the peace process."

The note added that the soldiers had been killed in response to a recent IDF killing of four Hamas members.

The Subaru used in the kidnap-murder was found to have been stolen a month earlier from its Jewish owner in the town of Gan Yavne, which is north of Gaza, near Ashdod.

The prisoner release also took place the same day a car-bomb attack was foiled in Gaza.

A member of the Hamas movement rammed a Peugeot loaded with explosives into the cars of Israeli civil administration employees, lightly injuring two.

The terrorist was shot as he tried to flee. He was arrested, and the bombs were safely defused.

Rabin responded to the attacks by saying the stepped-up campaign of terror by rejectionist Arab groups was to be expected and must be fought for the sake of peace.

**Lack Of PLO Response Protested**

Rabin defended the PLO's failure to condemn the killings, saying the group has abided by its commitment to renounce terrorism.

But the PLO's lack of a response to the attacks has elicited strong criticism in some quarters here.

"What message do the perpetrators of the hideous murders (of) two Israeli soldiers receive when they see the Israeli government releasing people who perpetrated similar crimes?" asked Benjamin Netanyahu, leader of the opposition Likud party. "They know that it's OK."

Not all the criticism came from the opposition, however.

Communications Minister Shulamit Aloni -- a member of the Meretz bloc, which is part of the governing coalition -- said she believes Israel is in a position to demand PLO condemnation.

According to Israel Radio, Aloni said an entity aspiring to have its own state must denounce terror as well as renounce it.

Four petitions, meanwhile, have been filed with the High Court of Justice charging that the prisoner release is illegal, motivated by political pressure and that it threatens the security of Israelis.

The right-wing Tsomet party has called for the publication of the charge sheet of each of the prisoners, claiming that the public has a right to know why they were detained and on what basis they were released.

The prisoners were released Monday from about a dozen different detention centers in Israel and the territories. They were either women, in poor health, under the age of 18, or older than 50.

All had been serving relatively short sentences, and none had been jailed for violent crimes in which Israelis or Palestinians were killed or seriously injured.

Members of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad who were scheduled to be released were detained in prison following the murders Sunday. Palestinians in the West Bank held a general strike Monday calling for the release of all prisoners.

Israeli leaders have pledged that no one with blood on his hands would be freed, at least "not in the near future," Rabin said.

Some 500 to 600 prisoners reportedly fit into this category.

Palestinian delegates to the autonomy talks were expected to raise the issue at the resumption of the talks in Tabá this week.

(Contributing to this report was JTA correspondent Hugh Orgel in Tel Aviv.)

## CLINTON MEETS WITH MUBARAK, PRAISES CONTRIBUTION TO PEACE

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, Oct. 25 (JTA) -- Amid extra-tight security, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak met with President Clinton at the White House on Monday, and afterward the two leaders praised each other for their respective contributions to the Middle East peace process.

Egypt, the first Arab country to make peace with Israel, has been serving as an intermediary between Israel and the Arab parties in the peace process.

In their meetings Monday, which included a lunch at the White House, the two leaders discussed the implementation of the Israeli-Palestinian agreement, as well as how best to push forward on other negotiating tracks.

It was the second meeting between Clinton and Mubarak this year. The Egyptian president visited Washington this past spring.

Outside the White House, two blocks of Pennsylvania Avenue were blocked to traffic by large concrete barriers, in what was said to be an unprecedented security effort.

Large numbers of secret service agents and police officers were on guard against possible terrorist attacks directed at the Egyptian president, who has been cracking down on Islamic extremists in his country.

At a news conference in the White House's East Room following their first session Monday morning, Clinton thanked Mubarak for his country's work on behalf of the peace process.

Turning to the Egyptian leader, Clinton said he was convinced that the Israeli-Palestinian agreement "would never have come about had it not been for your continuing encouragement."

### Must Be 'Some Peace With Syria'

Mubarak returned the compliment, saying that the agreement "would have been impossible" without the active role played by Washington.

Both leaders spoke of the importance of quick progress on other tracks of the peace process, especially on the important Syrian negotiating track, which is currently stalled.

In keeping with U.S. policy, Clinton spoke repeatedly of the importance of securing a "comprehensive" peace in the region.

The United States has appeared more eager lately than either the Israelis or the Syrians for immediate progress in their talks.

But when asked by reporters whether the Israeli political system could withstand simultaneous land-for-peace deals with both the Palestinians and Syria, Clinton hesitated.

"I don't know what the answer to that is," the president said.

"Everybody in Israel has got to know in the end that there can't be a total peace in the Middle East unless there is some peace with Syria, but the timing is very important, and progress on the things that are now at hand is very important," he said.

On another issue, U.S. aid to Egypt, Clinton also seemed to avoid giving a firm answer. Egypt is currently one of the top recipients of U.S. aid, receiving \$2.1 billion annually.

When asked if U.S. aid to Egypt would decrease because of the Israeli-Palestinian accord, Clinton said he "wouldn't put it that way."

He said he would continue to support "strong American aid to Egypt."

## ARAFAT MEETS TOP FRENCH OFFICIALS, BUT MEETING WITH JEWS DOESN'T HAPPEN

By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, Oct. 25 (JTA) -- Flush from his recent success signing a mutual recognition accord with Israel, Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat met with leading French officials last week during an official visit here.

But a meeting with French Jewish leaders failed to materialize.

During his two-day visit, which began last Friday, Arafat met with French President Francois Mitterrand, Prime Minister Edouard Balladur and leading political figures.

He also met with Simone Veil, a very popular senior minister in the French Cabinet in charge of health who is proudly Jewish. Veil is a former president of the European Parliament and a survivor of the Auschwitz death camp.

After their meeting, Veil said that France would look into the best and most efficient way to help the Palestinians establish a public health service.

Last week, France earmarked an emergency aid package of about \$1 million to help the Palestinian educational and health systems in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as well as schools in eastern Jerusalem.

But Arafat did not meet with the leaders of the Jewish community in France, despite a request by PLO representatives to the Jewish umbrella organization CRIF.

After heated discussions, the executive committee of CRIF had given the green light to its president, Jean Kahn, to meet with the PLO chairman.

But CRIF insisted on three prerequisites for the meeting: that the PLO would state publicly that it was the Palestinians who had requested the meeting; that the encounter would take place on neutral ground; and that Arafat would distance himself from former declarations doubting the full reality of the Holocaust.

### Seeking More Meetings With Jews

Arafat allegedly has stated that the total number of Jewish victims of the Nazis was exaggerated.

Arafat apparently found CRIF's demands unacceptable, and the meeting did not take place.

But the Palestinian leader did meet with various Jewish and Israeli journalists during his visit here.

Meanwhile, the PLO leader's meetings with French government officials bore fruit.

Most prominent among the offers of aid was a pledge to help the Palestinians set up their first television station. An agreement was signed between Yasser Abed Rabbo, head of the PLO's information department, and Herve Bourges, head of France's public television channel.

According to the agreement, France will provide "the necessary help to set up the administrative, legal and production structures" that will form the basis of an eventual Palestinian radio and television station.

And a French-Palestinian commission will meet in Paris next week to discuss further aid.

Arafat's attempts to meet with Jewish leaders are not over.

According to reliable sources, Arafat will try to meet with representatives of the Jewish community in each of the European states he is scheduled to visit in the coming months.

## REFORM MOVEMENT TARGETS NON-JEWS IN CONTROVERSIAL 'MISSIONARY PATH'

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

SAN FRANCISCO, Oct. 25 (JTA) -- The president of the Reform movement, Rabbi Alexander Schindler, has proposed a controversial plan to spend \$5 million to attract non-Jews to the movement.

The proposal was made during Schindler's keynote address to more than 4,000 Jews gathered at the 62nd biennial of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations held here Oct. 21-25.

Schindler's call raised eyebrows among delegates at the convention and leaders of Judaism's other denominations, whose discomfort reflects Judaism's long-standing tradition of not evangelizing among other faiths.

We "should pave a missionary path to the heartland of this continent if not the world!" Schindler proclaimed in his sermon at Saturday morning's Sabbath services.

"Judaism has an enormous amount of wisdom and experience to offer to our troubled world, and we Jews ought to be proud to proclaim it with fervor and pride," Schindler said.

I "call to reach out to those of our neighbors who belong to no church or other religious institutions," he said.

Schindler urged the movement "unabashedly and urgently to resume our vocation as missionaries, as champions of Judaism."

The Reform rabbi's proposal to missionize was provocative.

"Wouldn't something like this dilute Jewish values?" asked convention delegate Maryann Fenster, a member of University Synagogue in Los Angeles and president of the western region of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods. "This is not something we should be focusing on."

Sheldon Rudoff, president of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, said proselytizing has "historically never been something we've done."

"It is another aberrational activity (of the Reform movement) that we have difficulty understanding," said Rudoff.

"It is another step by Reform which widens the gap between us," he said. "The concentration should be on making Jews committed" to Judaism.

### Another Public Relations Game?

Rabbi Moshe Sherer, president of Agudath Israel of America, said Schindler's proposal "is a further step to undermine the identity and continuity of the Jewish people."

"It would seem that this group has launched another public relations numbers game to increase its constituency. Unable to accomplish this goal within the Jewish community, the Reform leaders are once again reaching out to the non-Jewish world to bolster their ranks," he said.

Sherer was referring to the Reform movement's 1983 decision to adopt the principle of "patrilineal descent" and thereby accept the children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers as Jews.

That decision broke with the tradition of defining Jewish lineage through the mother. No other Jewish movement defines Jews by the father's religion.

"Our job today is to reach out to Jews to be Jews, instead of to non-Jews to be pseudo Jews," said Sherer.

Schindler, in an interview after his speech, said that, in fact, Jews historically did missionize to others, but that their efforts ended when the societies in which they lived began prosecuting them for their efforts.

"Conversionary zeal has been praised throughout Judaism," he said.

The prophet "Isaiah said 'My house shall be a house of prayer for all peoples,'" said Schindler. "That's Jewish tradition (which is) 2,500 years old. There were schools of missionaries in the Maccabean period," in the first and second centuries before the common era, he said.

"The prototype of the proselytizing Jew was Abraham, whose tent was continually open on all four sides for fear that he would miss a wandering nomad and fail to bid him enter," said Schindler. "We must reclaim that which we let go."

He first called for such efforts when he instituted outreach to the unaffiliated 15 years ago.

But the movement's Outreach Commission has focused instead on involving and integrating into Jewish life the non-Jewish partners in intermarried families that belong to the Reform denomination's 850 congregations.

The founding chairman of the Outreach Commission, David Belin, will lead the effort to raise \$5 million.

Schindler suggested that money he wants to raise to further the Reform movement's missionary program might be spent on advertising synagogue programs that teach non-Jewish spouses about Judaism.

Renni Altman, director of programs for the unaffiliated at the UAHF, said in an interview that the money would have to be spent through "the individual synagogues which could reach the unchurched population."

"It means creating more welcoming congregations which potential converts see as exciting and spiritual places, not that we're going to stand on street corners" preaching, she said.

## REPRESENTATIVES OF BELARUS AND JEWS MARK DESTRUCTION OF MINSK GHETTO

NEW YORK, Oct. 25 (JTA) -- Representatives of Jewish organizations and officials of the government of Belarus met last week to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Nazi liquidation of the Jewish ghetto of Minsk.

Pyotr Kravchanka, the foreign minister of Belarus, formerly known as Byelorussia, served as host for a series of government-sponsored ceremonies that included the unveiling of a memorial to the Jewish victims of the Nazis at the site of the Minsk ghetto.

Commemorative events also included a Jewish book fair and film festival, as well as an exhibition dedicated to Jewish victims of the Nazis at the Minsk Museum of History.

Rabbi Arthur Schneier of Park East Synagogue in Manhattan, a Holocaust survivor who is president of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, flew to Belarus last week at Kravchanka's invitation to speak at official ceremonies commemorating the mass killings at the Minsk ghetto.

Government and Jewish officials attended.

All the participants wore the same yellow badges the Jews had to wear during the Nazi persecutions.

The ceremonies were led by former partisans who fought the Nazis.

## LABOR GOVERNMENT TO PUSH FOR BILL BARRING IMPORT OF NON-KOSHER MEAT

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Oct. 25 (JTA) -- Amid a welter of press criticism, the Labor-led government of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has decided to introduce legislation that would bar the import of non-kosher meat.

Rabin apparently made the decision to secure the support of the fervently religious Shas party in a vote this week on the state budget.

The budget vote is considered crucial since it is viewed as tantamount to a vote of confidence in the government.

Rabin has been trying to lure the Shas party back into the governing coalition, which it left recently after Israel's High Court of Justice ordered two senior members of the party to step down from their posts to face charges of financial misconduct.

The party's departure left the government with only 56 seats in the 120-member Knesset, forcing it to rely on the tacit support of the Arab parties to maintain a parliamentary majority.

The prime minister plainly wants Shas to return to the coalition in order to have a "Jewish majority" that does not depend on the Arab votes. But there is no indication yet whether Shas will do so.

The head of Shas' Knesset delegation, Shlomo Benizri, declared over the weekend that a law barring the import of non-kosher meat was a "condition" for Shas' re-entry into the coalition.

Rabin's decision to enact the legislation came after the High Court ruled last Friday that there was no legal justification for administrative regulations the government had instituted to bar the import of non-kosher meat.

The High Court decision, written by Justice Theodor Orr and adopted unanimously by a panel of three justices, held that the government's desire to assuage Shas' religious concerns about the import of non-kosher meat was not relevant to the legality of the administrative ban.

### A Way To Circumvent Court Decision

The new legislation that the government intends to introduce is a way of circumventing the court decision.

The issue arose because the government is privatizing the meat import business, which it until now has controlled and kept entirely kosher. The changeover to privatization opens the possibility that non-kosher meat could be imported.

Because a sizable percentage of the Israeli public has no interest in restricting the import of non-kosher meat, the Israeli press is referring to the government's decision to act on Shas' request for legislation as "blackmail" and "bribery."

The respected daily Ma'ariv headlined an editorial on the subject of the meat imports "Blackmailers' Field Day."

The leading liberal daily Ha'aretz, in its editorial Monday, urged the government not to proceed with the planned legislation.

While technically valid, the paper said, such legislation would violate the spirit of the court judgment, which was grounded in the principles of individual freedoms.

But political commentators said that should the legislation come up for a vote in the Knesset, neither of the major parties would risk the lasting hostility of the pivotal religious parties by voting against it.

## U.S. COURT SIDES WITH CHABAD IN RULING ON MENORAH DISPLAYS

By Steven Weiss

WASHINGTON, Oct. 25 (JTA) -- Jewish organizations are divided over a federal appeals court ruling that allows religious groups to maintain religious displays on government property without violating the Constitution.

Chabad-Lubavitch of Georgia may erect and maintain a 15-foot menorah in front of the state Capitol Building in Atlanta during the eight nights of Chanukah, the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled last week.

The case centered on the rights of religious groups to display religious symbols on government property.

Chabad and some other Jewish groups have long sought to accompany Christian symbols placed in the public's view with Jewish symbols.

"We're delighted," said Rabbi Yehuda Krinsky, spokesman for the fervently Orthodox Lubavitch movement, which brought the case against the Georgia state government. "We hope that opposition to these menorahs will stop."

The decision drew criticism, however, from members of the mainstream Jewish community.

"We very much regret (the) decision," said Marc Stern, a lawyer for the American Jewish Congress, who said the group believes religious symbols do not belong on government property.

"There is no need to hijack government property" to display religious symbols.

Rulings by other federal courts are at odds with this decision, said Stern, making this case one that the Supreme Court would be likely to hear if Georgia chose to appeal.

According to Krinsky, the Chabad-Lubavitch movement has won recent court cases involving the public display of menorahs in Grand Rapids, Mich., and Cincinnati. A similar case in White Plains, N.Y., is pending.

Chabad had sought permission from the Georgia Governor's Office to erect a candelabrum in front of a state building during Chanukah, Judaism's festival of lights.

Georgia had denied the request.

Chabad argued that a prohibition of its annual candle-lighting ritual violated its right of free speech.

Georgia was concerned that allowing a Jewish religious symbol on government property would unfairly imply that the government had violated the Constitution by formally endorsing the establishment of Judaism as the state religion.

In its opinion, the court cited a limerick related by Chabad's counsel during oral argument: "It seems to a young rabbi of Chabad; That the Constitution is exceedingly odd; To protect all speech in a public place; On AIDS, abortion, or race; But to prohibit any person's mention of God."

## YIDDISH FILM WINS SWISS FESTIVAL AWARD

GENEVA (JTA) -- An Israeli film made in Yiddish has won the Silver Medal at a documentary film festival held last week in Nyon, Switzerland.

The Israeli entry, "Choice and Destiny," made by Tsipi Reibenbach of Tel Aviv, focuses on the lives of a couple who are Polish-born Holocaust survivors.

The film follows the daily lives of the filmmaker's elderly parents.