

# ISRAEL SAYS UPCOMING DEADLINE ON TROOP PULLOUT NOT SACROSANCT

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Nov. 28 (JTA) -- Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has angered Palestinian negotiators by saying that the Dec. 13 deadline for reaching an agreement on Israeli troop withdrawals from the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho is not "engraved in stone."

But Israeli officials said Sunday that they expect an agreement with the Palestine Liberation Organization will be reached more or less on schedule.

The officials spoke after Sunday's weekly Cabinet meeting, at which Rabin and senior defense officials briefed the ministers on the current state of the negotiations for implementing the Palestinian self-rule accord that was signed in Washington in September.

Their appraisal of the negotiations, which are being held in Cairo, followed PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat's negative assessment over the weekend regarding the state of the negotiations.

A visibly irritated Arafat described the negotiations as "deadlocked" during a visit to Sweden.

During a news conference there, he described a progress report on the negotiations from chief Palestinian negotiator Nabil Sha'ath as "completely negative."

But Arafat said that the eighth round of negotiations on implementation of the accord would nonetheless resume this week in Cairo.

Arafat said the main problem was that Israel sought to "redeploy" its forces in Gaza, rather than "withdraw" them as stipulated in the self-rule accord.

But in fact, both the terms "withdraw" and "redeploy" are used in the declaration of principles signed in Washington.

Article 13 stipulates that "a redeployment of Israeli military forces in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip will take place, in addition to the withdrawal of Israeli forces" from Gaza and Jericho.

This clearly indicates that Israeli forces are to remain in sections of Gaza after the "withdrawal."

## Missed Deadline Would Be 'Bad Sign'

Indeed, the declaration of principles was signed with the clear proviso that "settlements (and) Israelis" are to be outside the purview of the Palestinian self-government and police force soon to be established in Gaza and Jericho.

Countering Arafat's charges, Rabin said that the Dec. 13 deadline for the start of Israeli troop withdrawals from Gaza and Jericho is not sacrosanct and that a delay would not be disastrous.

But both sides are plainly anxious to conclude the implementation talks successfully and within the allotted time frame -- if only to demonstrate to their respective constituencies that the agreement between them is proceeding according to plan.

Palestinian leader Faisal Husseini said Sunday in Amman that while the deadline was indeed "not sacred," it would be a "bad sign" if the two sides failed to meet it.

Husseini added that the Israeli side was "dragging its feet" in the negotiations.

Ziad Abu-Ziad, a Jerusalem lawyer who is an adviser to the Palestinian delegation to the peace talks, announced Sunday that he was suspending his own participation in the negotiations in protest over what he said was a lack of progress in the matter of Palestinian prisoner releases.

Ziad has served as head of the Palestinian delegation to the working group dealing with creating confidence-building measures between Israel and the Palestinians.

Commenting on the issue of prisoner releases, Ziad told reporters in eastern Jerusalem, "The Israelis do not realize how sensitive this matter is."

He said that no Palestinian leader would sign a final agreement on Gaza and Jericho without a firm Israeli commitment on prisoner releases.

## Assad Torpedoing Progress

On Oct. 25, Israel released more than 600 Palestinian prisoners in an effort to build Arab support for the accord. But the Palestinians are insisting on much larger prisoner releases.

Ziad told Israel Television that another sticking point in the Cairo talks is the lack of agreement on the size of the Jericho area to fall under Palestinian control.

He cited the presence of Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip as the chief cause of the difficulties in the negotiations.

Police Minister Moshe Shahal has meanwhile accused Syrian President Hafez Assad of actively undermining every effort by Israel to advance the peace process with other Arab countries.

Whenever progress is achieved with any Arab country, Shahal said, Assad telephones the leaders of that country and demands that they rescind whatever agreement or understanding they have reached with Israel.

Shahal painted this bleak picture during a lecture over the weekend to a public relations and media forum in Tel Aviv.

"If there is no agreement with Syria," he said, "Assad will do all he can to torpedo any evolving agreements with anyone else."

## **HAMAS AND PLO JOIN IN SOLIDARITY OVER KILLINGS OF 2 HAMAS LEADERS**

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Nov. 28 (JTA) -- In a situation that appeared to be rapidly heating up, the Islamic fundamentalist movement Hamas vowed revenge for the killing of two of its leaders last week by Israeli security forces.

And the mainstream Al Fatah faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization joined Hamas in calling for a strike to demonstrate Palestinian unity in face of the killings.

The solidarity between the two groups is an unusual one, in that the PLO has signed a self-rule accord with Israel and the pro-Iranian Hamas has condemned the accord.

Since that call for solidarity was made, one member of the Fatah Hawks, Ahmed Abu al-Reesh, 23, was shot and killed by Israeli troops in Khan Yunis in the Gaza Strip.

Reesh reportedly was killed Sunday by an

undercover Israeli unit as he stood with other members of the Hawks group, which does not concur with the PLO's autonomy accord with Israel.

In a separate incident the same day, an Israeli soldier was slightly wounded by shots directed at an Israel Defense Force post in Gaza.

As the threats and unrest mounted, Israeli sources disclosed Sunday that a four-man Hamas cell had been captured earlier in November before it could carry out plans to kidnap and kill either an Israeli soldier or settler in Jerusalem.

Khaled Yazir, the senior leader of the Izz a-Din al-Kassam military faction of Hamas in the West Bank, was killed by Israeli security forces last Friday.

Yazir's death came two days after Israeli soldiers killed Imad Akkel, another commander and founder of the al-Kassam unit.

#### Involved In Attacks On Soldiers

Akkel's killing, in the Gaza Strip, touched off the worst Palestinian violence in Gaza since the Sept. 13 signing of the self-rule accord by Israel and the PLO in Washington.

In street battles in Gaza that lasted until nightfall Nov. 25, Palestinians barricaded roads, burned tires and threw stones at Israeli soldiers.

Dozens of Palestinians were wounded by Israeli army gunfire during efforts to disperse the crowds of protesters.

Akkel of Hamas reportedly was at the top of Israel's list of wanted terrorists. He had evaded capture for two years.

He was reported killed after being tracked down by Israeli undercover soldiers.

Akkel was believed responsible for attacks on 11 soldiers, a settler and four Palestinians, many of which he executed while dressed as a religious settler and driving a car with Israeli license plates.

Lt. Gen. Ehud Barak, the IDF chief of staff, called the killing of the Hamas leader an important step in the fight against terrorism.

And Israeli Housing Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer said the killing of a Hamas commander sends a message to the Palestinians that "Israel's security forces will be responsible for the settlers' security" even after the Palestinian police force is operating in the territories.

A Palestinian police force is scheduled to be in place by Dec. 13.

"We will continue to hit at terrorists who act against us wherever they are, at any time, and with our full force," said Ben-Eliezer.

#### A Warning From Hamas

Hamas, in turn, sent a statement to the Reuter news agency saying that "the situation is becoming intolerable."

The statement accused Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of exceeding "all limits" and warned of escalating attacks on Israelis.

"We shall speak to him in the language he understands so well: the buzzing of bullets, explosions and booby-trapped cars," Hamas warned.

The statement also hinted of new methods of revenge that could not be disclosed but would be apparent at the "appropriate time."

Izz a-Din al-Kassam fighters would "burn the ground under the feet of Israeli troops and Israeli people wherever they are" in the war to "defeat the occupation and uproot the Zionist entity from Palestine," the statement warned.

Yazir of Hamas reportedly was shot by

security forces in an olive grove after he was chased out of his hideout in eastern Jerusalem.

He was a suspect in the killing of several Israeli soldiers and settlers as well as of Palestinians suspected of collaborating with the Israelis.

Yazir was also suspected of planning a suicide attack in downtown Jerusalem.

Fatah's call for unity with Hamas follows on the heels of an upset it suffered Nov. 24 in elections at the politically active Bir Zeit University in the West Bank.

The election was only for the nine-member student council, but it was considered an important Palestinian referendum on the peace process, the first since the signing of the self-rule accord.

Fatah lost by 120 votes to an unusual alliance of three Arab rejectionist factions.

#### **HEAD OF E.C. EXECUTIVE COMMISSION PROPOSES MIDEAST ECONOMIC CONFERENCE** **By Joseph Kopol**

BRUSSELS, Nov. 28 (JTA) -- The president of the European Community's Executive Commission has proposed convening a conference on economic cooperation in the Middle East as a first step toward what he described as the establishment of a "common market" for Israel and its Arab neighbors.

Jacques Delors made the comment at a Euro-Israel dinner held here on Nov. 25.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and his Belgian counterpart, Willy Claes, were among those attending the dinner, whose purpose was to demonstrate the support of European Jewry for closer economic, scientific and cultural links between Israel and the E.C.

"I have proposed the convening of a conference to which concerned political leaders, businessmen and intellectuals would be invited in order to look into the possibilities of Mideast cooperation in a spirit of goodwill," said Delors.

Delors, a former French Cabinet minister and a potential candidate in France's next presidential election, said he had already discussed the proposal for a Middle East economic conference with Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat and with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

Arafat visited Brussels earlier this month.

Delors is likely to have a chance to discuss the proposal with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who is scheduled to visit Brussels next week at the invitation of the European Parliament, the E.C.'s legislative body.

"This conference should be the first step to creating a sort of Mideast common market for water resources, energy and infrastructures," Delors said.

Peres made a similar suggestion when he traveled to Holland the following day.

After his visit to Brussels, Peres attended a global forum conference attended by political leaders and economists. The conference was held last Friday in the southeastern Dutch city of Maastricht.

In an interview on Dutch television, Peres said that Israel wants to achieve full economic cooperation with its Arab neighbors, establishing an economic triangle of interdependence similar to that currently in place among the Benelux nations: Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg.

(Contributing to this report was JTA correspondent Henriette Boas in Amsterdam.)

# MOSCOW JUDGE RULES 'PROTOCOLS' FORGERY, CALLS PAMYAT ANTI-SEMITIC

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES, Nov. 28 (JTA) -- Jewish groups are applauding a landmark ruling by a Moscow judge that "The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion" is a forgery.

The ruling, which was announced Friday by Moscow District Court Judge Lyudmila Belikova, was the first such decision in the country where the notorious anti-Semitic tract originated.

In addition to labeling the tract a forgery, Belikova declared that publication of the "Protocols" by the Russian ultranationalist Pamyat organization constituted an anti-Semitic act.

The historic ruling concluded a trial that lasted, on and off, for 11 months.

The trial started when Pamyat filed a \$19,000 lawsuit against a Moscow Jewish newspaper, Gazette, which had described the serialization of the "Protocols" in a Pamyat publication as an anti-Semitic act.

It is punishable under Russian law to incite ethnic conflict.

Belikova held that Pamyat was not entitled to any monetary compensation. She also fined the organization 200,000 rubles, or some \$190, to cover court costs.

The "Protocols" was written at the turn of the century by czarist secret police agents, who in turn plagiarized most of the text from an anti-Semitic tract published in France.

In New York, the chairman of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, Richard Wexler, applauded the Moscow judge's decision.

He called the ruling "a milestone in combating anti-Semitism in the former Soviet Union, and it is hoped that it will serve as an example to other judicial bodies in the region when faced with similar cases."

"It is hoped that the court's action will also send a strong message to anti-Semitic, anti-democratic elements in Russia that their views are unacceptable, and that czarist-era excesses will not be condoned" in modern Russia, he said.

## 'A Victory For Historic Truth'

The Los-Angeles based Wiesenthal Center had provided technical and financial assistance to the defendant in the case, Tankred Golenpolsky, the editor of the Jewish Gazette, which is Russia's largest Jewish newspaper.

Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Wiesenthal Center, who traveled to Moscow to assist the defense, hailed the verdict.

The "decision is first and foremost a victory for historic truth and for the rule of law in Russia," he said. Cooper also praised Golenpolsky for "having the fortitude to stand up to threats on his life and fighting the battle for truth."

Commenting on the verdict, Golenpolsky said, "Anti-Semitism will appear every time prices on potatoes and bread go up.

"What is important is that law and government will take a stand," he said.

The Los Angeles Times reported from Moscow that the judge based her ruling partially on testimony from a panel of three Russian academic experts who had examined the document.

The plaintiffs and defendant had both agreed to the panel, although Golenpolsky had stipulated that none of the experts be Jewish.

One of the experts, Lionel Dadiani of Moscow's Institute of Sociology, wrote a 67-page

opinion in which he concluded that the "Protocols" was a "prima facie apocryphal and anti-Semitic document."

Throughout this century, the tract has been used as a pretext for pogroms in Eastern Europe. It was extensively cited by Adolf Hitler in his book "Mein Kampf."

In 1927, an American judge ordered automaker Henry Ford to destroy a large printing of the "Protocols," which Ford personally financed.

## GERMAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE PULLS OUT IN WAKE OF CONTROVERSY

By Miriam Widman

BERLIN, Nov. 28 (JTA) -- Chancellor Helmut Kohl's personal choice to replace Richard von Weizsacker as president of Germany has withdrawn his candidacy following months of controversy over his remarks.

Steffen Heitmann, who resigned as the Christian Democratic presidential candidate Nov. 25, had managed to offend many Germans with his comments about the Holocaust, the status of women and his feelings about foreigners.

The Jewish furor over Heitmann began in mid-September, when he told the *Suddeutsche Zeitung* newspaper that it was time to put the Holocaust in its "proper place" in history.

"The German special role in the postwar period was, to a certain extent, a continuation of the Nazi times," he was quoted as saying. "That is over."

His comments were sharply criticized by the World Jewish Congress and by Jewish organizational leaders here.

Heitmann has also stated his belief that women should not work outside the home, and his views on foreigners were considered similarly backward by liberals here.

Days before Heitmann's resignation, Ignatz Bubis, the head of Germany's Jewish community, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that any of the other candidates for president would be acceptable to him.

"I don't know who I want, but I know who I don't want," Bubis said.

Bubis had supported Jens Reich, a scientist from eastern Germany, because he felt that a non-political person would be a good choice for the office.

"But the political parties didn't accept him," Bubis said. "That was a disappointment."

The remaining candidates include the Social Democratic Party candidate, Johannes Rau, and Hildegard Hamm-Bruecher of the Free Democratic Party.

But this past weekend there were signs that Hamm-Bruecher was losing support from the FDP and that the coalition parties -- the FDP and Kohl's supporters among the Christian Democrats and Christian Socialists -- would support a common candidate.

That candidate is likely to be Roman Herzog, according to several reports here. Herzog is head of the Constitutional Court and a respected figure here.

A new weekly newspaper, *Die Woche*, suggested in its first issue that Bubis run for president, but the Jewish community leader said he never took the idea seriously.

"Germany isn't ready for that," Bubis said. He said he received a lot of anti-Semitic mail following the publication of the suggestion, "but I get that with or without" such articles, he said.

## GIANT 'POSTCARD' PUTS FOCUS ON MUSLIMS' PLIGHT IN BOSNIA

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON (JTA) -- Lafayette Park, across Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House, has for a long time been the site of various signs and placards calling attention to problems around the world.

On Nov. 22, the park became the temporary home of the "World's Largest Postcard," unveiled by a coalition of Jewish and other groups concerned with the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The 800-pound postcard, measuring 10 by 14 feet, is addressed to President Clinton and urges him to take stronger action to help the civilian population of the beleaguered former Yugoslav republic.

On the back are signatures and messages from hundreds of people.

The postcard was initiated by Temple Emanu-El of Dallas.

For months, Jewish groups have been involved in a coalition with Arab-American, Muslim and other groups concerned about Bosnia.

The groups' main focus has been the suffering inflicted on Bosnia's Muslims by Serbian forces, who have called for "ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia.

The coalition has pushed for increasing humanitarian aid to civilians in Bosnia and for imposing severe diplomatic and economic sanctions, among other measures.

But they have been frustrated by what they see as inaction by the Clinton administration.

"My concern is that if we are a laughing-stock and our word means nothing" in the Serbian capital of Belgrade, leaders in dangerous countries like North Korea and Iran will not take U.S. declarations seriously, George Spectre, associate director for international, governmental and Israel affairs at B'nai B'rith, said in an interview before the news conference.

"There is no card large enough, no message eloquent enough, indeed, there are not enough words in the English language, in any of the world's languages, to describe the murders, the rapes, the torture, the atrocities inflicted daily upon innocent civilians in this war-shattered land," said Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

Other Jewish groups participating in the coalition include the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League.

Organizers are hoping that the giant postcard will remain in place across the street from the White House for the time being.

## OLIM ARRIVE FROM WAR-TORN ARMENIA AFTER A 30-HOUR BUREAUCRATIC ORDEAL

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) -- A group of 119 olim from strife-ridden Armenia landed in Israel recently after a 30-hour ordeal born of bureaucracy and fuel shortages.

Many of the immigrants had been living in battle zones, and their mini-exodus represented a humanitarian success for the Jewish Agency.

Fighting erupted between Armenia and neighboring Azerbaijan in 1992, following the breakup of the former Soviet Union. Each country claimed possession of Nagorno-Karabakh, an enclave in Azerbaijan that has a majority popula-

tion of ethnic Armenians. Twenty-three Jews from Georgia, which has been in a state of civil war since 1991, joined the flight when the plane made a stopover in Tbilisi, Georgia's capital.

The same day, another 73 Georgian immigrants arrived on a separate flight from Tbilisi.

The arduous flight, marked by long delays and an unexpected detour, resulted in large part from fuel shortages in Armenia and Georgia.

Jewish Agency officials accompanying the olim literally had to scavenge for fuel among the planes parked on the tarmac at Tbilisi.

## 'BATTERED BRIDE' CONFRONTS SHOPPERS IN JERUSALEM WITH WOMEN ABUSE ISSUE

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Nov. 28 (JTA) -- Shoppers in the downtown Jerusalem department store, Hamashbir, were treated to an unusual spectacle last week, part of a campaign to end violence against women.

In the ground floor section where discounted men's shirts are usually displayed, a woman with a black eye and her arm in a sling was dressed in full bridal regalia.

The "battered bride" was telling bemused onlookers that despite the "injuries" she had sustained at the hands of her fiancé, she loved him and believed marriage would solve everything.

"And love is the most important thing, isn't it?" she repeatedly cajoled the curious spectators.

They shook their heads, sadly, in disagreement.

The "bride" was an actress from a group called Kafka's Orphans. She performed the dramatic skit throughout the afternoon Nov. 25, as part of a day marked internationally to protest violence against women.

The scene, sponsored in part by the city's welfare department, also marked the kickoff of 16 days of activities to highlight the problem of battered women.

The campaign includes a protest to be held this week against what is perceived as lenient treatment meted out by courts to men convicted of violence against women.

According to campaign organizers from the Israel Women's Network, there are an estimated 200,000 battered women in Israel, and segments of the public are surprisingly tolerant toward this.

A survey by Geocartographia has found that about 14 percent of Israeli men believe there are situations in which it is appropriate for men to beat women.

The survey showed 7 percent of women also believe this.

This could be illustrated by the response of a saleswoman at the department store who was asked how she felt about the battered bride spectacle.

She first replied that although the show disrupted the store's activities, she felt it was important to bring the problem out into the open.

But she also said it is the responsibility of women to behave in such a way so as not to provoke violence from men.

The Women's Network sponsors said the drama was held at the department store to illustrate the importance of not "buying into" violence by a boyfriend and the promise of marriage.

The show was also meant to dramatize the importance of dispelling the myth that rape is the fault of women and not buying into offensive advertising, they said.