

**CLINTON ADMINISTRATION SCRAMBLES  
TO SALVAGE MIDEAST PEACE PROCESS**

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, Feb. 28 (JTA) -- The Clinton administration has spent the days following last Friday's killing spree in Hebron trying to ensure that the murder of dozens of Palestinian worshippers by a Jewish settler will not derail the Middle East peace process.

In a series of phone calls and meetings, the administration has sought to bring the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel back to the negotiating table to conclude the talks on Palestinian self-rule that had shown such promise in recent weeks.

After months of staying at arm's length from the talks, President Clinton moved swiftly last Friday to condemn the attack and announce that he had invited the Israeli and Palestinian negotiators, who had been meeting in Paris and Egypt, to meet here.

The president also announced that Israel and the Palestinians had accepted his invitation.

The Israelis, for their part, have said they are ready to meet in Washington this week to continue negotiating the implementation of the declaration of principles signed by the two sides last September.

But since Friday, the Palestinians have been debating when and under what circumstances they would send their negotiating team to Washington -- a debate that involves the role of the U.S. government in the talks.

At a news conference Monday, a group of top Arab American leaders called for more active U.S. involvement in the peace talks.

"Left to their own devices," Israelis and Palestinians will "not reach agreement," said Khalil Jahshan of the National Association of Arab Americans.

The United States "must restore integrity" to the peace process, said James Zogby, head of the Arab American Institute.

Zogby warned that if the United States does not work to shore up the Palestinians involved in the peace process, the role of these Palestinians will be jeopardized.

**PLO Losing 'Moral Authority'**

The PLO is losing its "moral authority" in the territories, Zogby said.

The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations has also expressed its support for American efforts to keep the peace process "on track" by inviting the parties to Washington, according to Malcolm Hoenlein, the group's executive vice president.

Hoenlein said his group, which is currently in Israel for its annual mission, had been in touch with Secretary of State Warren Christopher and other U.S. officials since the incident last Friday, when a Jewish settler killed at least 40 Muslim worshippers at a mosque in Hebron.

Hoenlein said his organization also backed the American attempt to "keep the United Nations from adopting harmful resolutions," includ-

ing a proposal to send U.N. observers to the administered territories.

The PLO announced Monday that it would dispatch a representative to Washington to meet with U.S. officials, but as of Monday afternoon the State Department had no word on who the envoy was or when the envoy would arrive here.

Since the killings, the administration has been in touch with Middle East leaders, including PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amre Moussa and top Israeli officials.

A group of Arab American leaders met Friday with top White House and State Department officials, and were scheduled to meet with Christopher on Tuesday.

Zogby said the administration was showing "greater responsiveness" than he had experienced in the past. But both he and Jahshan -- who spoke of the "genuine sadness" and sympathy expressed by U.S. officials over the killings-- said they were taking a wait-and-see approach to ascertain whether the administration's words would translate into actions.

At Monday's news conference, the Arab American officials discussed various points they want the administration to address.

The issues include the key topic of the Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Gaza. Among their recommendations, the Arab Americans said they want the settlers to be disarmed, and Israel to cease settlement activity in the territories.

**Calls For Talks On The Settlements**

In the Israeli-Palestinian declaration of principles signed at the White House last September, settlements were deemed a final-status issue, to be put off for discussion until later.

But the Arab American leaders -- like the Palestinian leaders in the Middle East -- are calling for the issue to be put on the table immediately.

Jahshan said that this position was "not necessarily reneging on the final status arrangements." He added that the declaration of principles called for such matters to be discussed "no later" than the third year of the process.

The State Department, for its part, was saying that the agenda for the resumption of talks had already been agreed to by the Israelis and the PLO.

"The agenda is the declaration of principles and how it can be implemented and the full range of issues associated with the declaration," State Department spokesman Michael McCurry said Monday.

"That has been the agenda and will likely remain the agenda and must remain the agenda for them to move ahead in the process," he added.

Just a few weeks ago, Israel and the PLO reached an agreement in Cairo that removed most of the security-related obstacles that have delayed carrying out the peace accord, that would grant Palestinians limited self-rule in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho.

Negotiators have been meeting in Paris to iron out the economic details of the agreement.

Meanwhile, in response to the Hebron massacre, Jordanian, Lebanese and Syrian delegations to a related set of Middle East peace talks left Washington on Sunday.

The talks, which involve these delegations and Israeli and Palestinian delegations, had been scheduled to conclude Wednesday.

The administration played down the early departure. McCurry said Monday that "all of the parties indicated a continuing commitment to negotiations."

Ruth Yaron, spokesperson for the Israeli Embassy, said in response to the Arabs' departure: "We have expressed, through the U.S. administration, our disappointment that our Arab interlocutors decided to end this round of peace talks earlier than scheduled."

On Sunday, McCurry, in a statement, called the Israeli Cabinet's actions to deal with the Hebron massacre -- including the creation of a board of inquiry to look into the matter -- "an important step toward assuring the security of Palestinians and in preventing the recurrence of such horrific acts of violence in the future."

#### ARAB RIOTS CONTINUE IN ISRAEL TO PROTEST MURDERS IN HEBRON

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Feb. 28 (JTA) -- The killing of at least 40 Palestinians by a Jewish settler on Friday has sparked continued unrest here and has left Israeli officials pessimistic about the future course of negotiations with their Arab neighbors.

On Monday, the fourth consecutive day of widespread unrest in the territories and throughout Israel following the killings in Hebron, two Palestinians were killed during violent confrontations with the Israel Defense Force.

On the diplomatic front, Israeli officials reacted glumly to the not-unexpected news that Syria, Lebanon and Jordan had decided to suspend the bilateral negotiations in Washington.

In Jerusalem, the Knesset united behind a resolution condemning Friday's murders. It marked the first time that all parties in the 13th Knesset, left- and right-wing parties alike, agreed on the text of a resolution.

Following the government's announcement that a special board of inquiry would be set up to investigate the massacre, the president of the Supreme Court, Justice Meir Shamgar, announced Monday that he would personally chair the commission.

Despite a curfew still in force over the city, rioting took place Monday in Hebron. One man was killed by the IDF near the Tomb of the Patriarchs, where Dr. Baruch Goldstein raked hundreds of Muslim worshippers with automatic rifle fire last Friday.

Palestinians vented their anger by defying curfews imposed in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. A second Palestinian was killed and 22 were wounded during confrontations with the IDF.

Including Monday's violence, a total of 21 Palestinians were killed in violent demonstrations since Friday.

There were also violent incidents, though without major injury, in the Bedouin township of Rahat in the Negev, where the victim of Sunday's clashes with police, a 23-year-old local man, was laid to rest. Israeli Arab leaders, some of them

visibly shaken by Friday's massacre, chanted slogans voicing their solidarity with the Hebron victims and their families.

Following the decision by Syria, Lebanon and Jordan to suspend the bilateral negotiations in Washington -- which in any case were scheduled to recess later this week -- Israeli officials are waiting to see if negotiators for the Palestine Liberation Organization will take up President Clinton's invitation to resume their talks with Israel in Washington.

PLO leader Yasser Arafat initially responded positively to the invitation, but he has grown increasingly hesitant about the idea, and some members of the PLO Executive Committee reportedly boycotted a meeting Sunday in Tunis at which the subject was to be put to a vote.

Arafat has termed inadequate a series of measures imposed Sunday by the Israeli government to crack down on Jewish extremists. He has also called for the complete removal of all settlements and for the presence of U.N. forces in the territories as prerequisites for the resumption of talks with Israel.

Last week, only two days before the mass murders in Hebron, optimistic announcements were issuing from Jerusalem and Cairo that the signing of a final agreement on establishing Palestinian self-rule in Gaza and Jericho would take place in a matter of weeks.

In Jerusalem, Shamgar announced that four others would sit alongside him on the commission of inquiry into Friday's killings. The commission's other members include another Supreme Court justice, an Arab district court judge from Nazareth, a former IDF chief of staff and an eminent academic.

The commission of inquiry will hold public hearings in the Supreme Court building in Jerusalem.

In the Knesset on Monday afternoon, Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu welcomed the establishment of the commission, but he demanded that it also investigate the wave of Arab terror killings of both Jews and Arabs since the self-rule accord was signed last September in Washington.

But the commission's specific mandate, drawn up by a three-person Cabinet committee under Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, keeps the commission's task narrowly focused on last Friday's events in Hebron.

#### Unequivocal Condemnations

The mass killings brought unequivocal condemnations from Israel's two chief rabbis on Monday.

"To say that I condemn the act is an understatement," said Chief Sephardi Rabbi Bakshi Doron. "I am simply ashamed that a Jew carried out such a villainous and irresponsible act, and I am distressed that it is viewed as the act of a religious person."

Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau said the act ran counter to the Jewish faith.

"I have said in the past to leaders of other faiths, including the pope, that just as to stab someone in the back while crying 'Allah hu-Akhbar' (or 'God is Great' in Arabic) is a desecration of God's name, neither is there any basis to claim that this murder was carried out in the name of the Jewish religion," said Lau.

**NEWS ANALYSIS:****RABIN DISSOCIATES ISRAEL FROM ATTACK, HOPING TO BRING PLO BACK TO THE TABLE**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Feb. 28 (JTA) -- "Congratulations, Baruch Goldstein, in whatever part of hell you are. You've achieved your purpose."

Thus, writing on the front page of Israel's largest circulation newspaper, did Yediot Aharonot columnist Nahum Barnea respond Monday to the bitter news that as a result of Friday's massacre at Hebron the delegations of Syria, Lebanon and Jordan had announced the suspension of the bilateral negotiations in Washington.

A similar sentiment was expressed later that same day, when Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, speaking from the Knesset podium, sought to dissociate not only himself and his government, but the entire Jewish people from the murderous act of the Kiryat Arba doctor.

Dr. Baruch Goldstein had wanted to kill not only defenseless, innocent Arabs at prayer, Rabin said, but also all chances for peace.

Rabin -- with one eye on the seething Arab protests sweeping the country, and the other on Israel's battered image in the court of world opinion -- declared that Goldstein and his ilk were "just a weed" in the furrow of the state and the nation.

He reiterated his and his government's commitment to the peace process and to what had already been agreed upon between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization during their negotiations.

Rabin urged the Arab side to respond to the terrible outrage by pressing forward with the work of peacemaking.

In briefings with reporters, however, the prime minister and his key aides were making it clear that they are not prepared to offer further concessions to the PLO -- beyond those announced by the Cabinet on Sunday -- in order to induce a resumption of the talks.

They maintained that if this meant a lengthy hiatus in the talks, then so be it.

They argued that the steps taken by the Cabinet were designed to show good will, and ought to be accepted by the PLO as such.

The Cabinet agreed on Sunday to launch an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the killings and to attempt to limit the activities of Jewish extremists in the territories.

Some officials in Jerusalem were looking to the Clinton administration to apply its own persuasive efforts to draw PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat back to the negotiating table.

**A Strong Display Of American Commitment**

Clinton's initial reaction to the massacre -- inviting Israel and the PLO to transfer their negotiations to Washington at once -- was greeted here as the strongest-yet show of American commitment to the self-rule accord.

But in subsequent days the American intervention appeared to lessen, and by midweek the talk was of a possible tour of the region by a U.S. State Department team sometime in late March, following Rabin's visit to Washington, scheduled for the middle of the month.

The peace talks themselves, according to this scenario, might get under way again in April.

The problem, of course, with this sort of time frame is that the long gaps virtually invite further deterioration -- both on the ground and on the diplomatic plane.

The Hebron killings are thought likely to draw in their wake a wave of Palestinian terror attempts, which in turn will worsen the atmosphere in Israel.

It is in part to fill in the gaps about what happened in Hebron on Friday that the Israeli Cabinet decided over the weekend to create a commission of inquiry.

The commission will begin its work soon -- perhaps next week -- and will be led by the president of the Supreme Court, Justice Meir Shamgar. It will investigate the circumstances that enabled the killer to enter the mosque and commit the mass murders.

In behind-the-scenes diplomacy that has gone on unremittingly since the attack, the PLO has formulated several demands, including:

- \* A curb on Kiryat Arba residents' entry rights to Hebron;

- \* An increase in the number of Palestinian policemen in Gaza and Jericho once the accord goes into effect;

- \* Immediate negotiations about Israeli settlements rather than a postponement of the issue for a later stage of the talks.

Observers say Arafat is under increasing pressure from his own supporters within the PLO to maintain a hard line, even at the risk of sacrificing all that has been achieved so far.

Among Israeli officials, the hope is that the PLO chairman can show -- yet again -- the kind of staying power that has enabled him to climb out of so many tight corners in the past.

Ultimately, many observers here are saying, the Hebron tragedy presents a critical test of the leadership abilities and commitment to peace of both Arafat and Rabin.

As several Israeli Cabinet ministers noted in the immediate aftermath of the killings, just about the only thing that can counterbalance its deleterious impact would be a speedy conclusion and implementation of the Gaza-Jericho accord.

Despite the present climate, that is still possible -- if Rabin and Arafat both will it.

**IDF SOLDIER GETS SECULAR BURIAL, MARKING A FIRST WITHOUT A RABBI**

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV (JTA) -- An Israeli soldier has been given a secular burial in the military section of a cemetery, marking the first time a military burial service has been performed without the presence of a representative of the rabbinate.

After Oded Rabinovitz, 21, died in a traffic accident Feb. 18, his parents told the military authorities that their son had previously expressed the wish to be buried in a purely secular fashion.

The chief chaplain for the Israel Defense Force, Maj. Gen. Gad Navon, later said he saw no reason to disregard the request. His ruling was upheld by the adjutant-general at General Headquarters and by the military's legal adviser.

After the funeral, which took place at Tel Aviv's Kiryat Shaul Cemetery last week, Navon said that if the family of a dead soldier expressed the wish for a purely secular funeral, "we will not force ourselves on them."

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES:****FATE OF PEOPLE OF SARAJEVO:****PRISONERS OR POTENTIAL REFUGEES**

By Gil Sedan

SARAJEVO (JTA) -- The Jews remaining in Sarajevo spend endless days in the Jewish community center, waiting for something to change.

The community center, adjacent to the old Ashkenazi synagogue of Sarajevo, has served as a home and shelter for Jews and non-Jews alike.

They receive warm meals there, the result of donations from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish La Benevolencia organization.

Despite the 20-month-long siege of Sarajevo, the 500 Jews who still live there suffer no hunger. They live on donated food.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees also provides food, but the quantities are negligible. The ration comes to a liter of oil, a package of sugar and three pounds of flour per person every three weeks. And every person is entitled to receive a third of a loaf of bread each day.

The donations given to the Jewish community center supplement the food rations of the UNHCR. Each recipient obtains an additional 26 pounds of food each month, and a warm meal every day.

Fruit, meat and vegetables are rare, available on the local black market for exorbitant prices. Two pounds of potatoes cost \$50; similar amounts of sugar and meat cost \$23 and \$40 respectively.

Where do these black-market products come from? From neighboring Serb villages, smuggled at great risk. Some say they come from U.N. soldiers, who make a quick profit on the side.

"But you don't need money around here," said Slobodan Kosonovic, 48, a computer expert who is now out of work. "You can simply live on humanitarian aid."

On one of the few remaining walls in the once-magnificent Old Town Hall there is a one-word declaration of nostalgia: "TITO." Whoever wrote it apparently longed for the days of the authoritarian marshal who would not let the people of Yugoslavia destroy themselves.

**Children's Shoes Burned For Heat**

But Iosip Tito is long gone, and the people of Yugoslavia are doing an excellent job of destroying themselves and their country.

The war has left 200,000 dead and 2 million refugees, right here in the middle of Europe.

Despite the quiet brought by the NATO ultimatum last week, Sarajevo is still one of the saddest places in the world. It is a huge prison where people are quietly walking the streets, barely saying a word, absorbed in their thoughts about their ever-growing share of agony.

Among the city's unhappy citizens is Alex Bojanic, a professor at the Sarajevo Academy of Sciences and Arts. He works in their publishing department. But there is no publishing, because there is hardly any paper.

Nonetheless, he is planning to publish 20 books -- after the war.

Bojanic and his wife, Nenad, have shoved old shoes into the kitchen oven in an attempt to create some heat. "These are the shoes of the children. The children are safe in Croatia and Holland, so we no longer need the shoes," they

said. At times they burn books to heat their home.

"Last night Ben-Gurion went up in flames," said Alex Bojanic, his eyes glowing with dark humor.

In better times, the Bojanices spent their summers on the beaches of Makarska, which is now in Croatian hands, or even on the French Riviera. In the old days they made full use of the good life Sarajevo had provided as the center of culture, business and arts of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Although those days are long gone, the Bojanices do not want to leave.

They hope for the good days to return. The shelling and shooting is over, but the siege goes on. And the people of Sarajevo are prisoners in their own city.

Among the prisoners is Igor, a tall, 20-year-old blond Serb. He is one of 5,000 Serbs still living in Sarajevo.

Even when they are not part of the fighting, the Serbs are at times regarded as the enemy because they are hardly enthusiastic partners to the Muslim war effort.

For months, Igor has lived in a hideout, sleeping in a cold office building with no light or heat, living on food that his mother brings him daily.

Even if there is peace for Sarajevo, Igor will not have peace and quiet. He will be a prisoner in his own city. At best he may flee -- and become a refugee elsewhere.

**CZECH REPUBLIC WILL RETURN PROPERTY, PRIME MINISTER PROMISES JEWISH LEADERS**

By Josef Klansky

PRAGUE, Feb. 28 (JTA) -- The Czech Republic will act soon to return Jewish property confiscated under the country's Nazi and Communist regimes, Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus has promised Jewish leaders here.

Klaus made the promise during a meeting last week with the chief rabbi of Prague, Karol Sidon, and other leaders of the Czech Jewish community.

The meeting took place four days after the Czech Parliament rejected a bill that would have forced the central government, but not local municipal authorities, to return Jewish properties under its control.

The atmosphere of the meeting with Klaus was described as friendly by Tomas Kraus, the secretary-general of the Federation of Jewish Communities of the Czech Republic. Klaus said he was aware of the urgency of finding a satisfactory solution to the problem.

The prime minister promised that Jewish property expropriated under the Nazis and Communists and held now by the Czech state -- including the collections of the Prague Jewish Museum -- will be returned to the Jewish community by government order or by some other act of the Czech authorities.

He also promised to join with the leaders of the three parties that form the country's governing coalition and call upon local municipalities to take similar measures to restore Jewish properties.

The meeting lasted more than two hours. Both sides agreed to meet again on March 29 to resolve any remaining problems not satisfactorily concluded by then.