

**ISRAEL AND PLO SET END OF APRIL AS TARGET FOR REACHING FINAL ACCORD**

By Dvora Getzler

JERUSALEM, April 11 (JTA) -- As Israeli and Palestinian negotiators met in Cairo this week to continue hammering out details for implementing the self-rule accord, both sides acknowledged that the end of April was a realistic target date for concluding the talks.

Under the terms of the accord signed on the White House lawn last fall, Israel was to complete its withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho by April 13.

Chief Palestine Liberation Organization negotiator Nabil Sha'ath has been critical of the Israelis in recent days, saying they were holding up the talks with various needless delays.

But Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin countered this week that it was the PLO, which immediately suspended the talks following the Feb. 25 massacre of Palestinians in Hebron, which was responsible for the delays.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, during a visit to Turkey on Monday, said the new target date for signing an agreement would be the end of April, after which, he said, "I think there won't be needed much time to implement the agreement."

Sha'ath said Monday the new date was acceptable to the PLO, although it was his feeling the talks could be concluded before then.

As of Monday, it seemed the teams were close to agreement on almost all major issues, including timetables for the release of Palestinians still held in Israeli jails for security offenses; for the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and Jericho; and for the handover of authority to the Palestinian police force.

On Monday, Israel agreed to release 2,500 Palestinian prisoners within two days of the signing of an agreement in Cairo.

One delegate to the Cairo talks has reportedly said that out of 24 articles covered in the agreement, only nine still remain to be worked out. These include the size of the Palestinian enclave in Jericho and arrangements for the establishment of a Palestinian coast guard.

**Progress Reported At Paris Talks**

In Paris, meanwhile, where talks are being held to finalize the economic policies that will govern the relationship between Israel and the nascent Palestinian authority in Gaza and Jericho, the leaders of the two teams were reporting progress in their negotiations.

Finance Minister Avraham Shohat, leader of the Israeli team, and Ahmed Karia, head of the PLO's economic division, said this week that although there are some significant differences still to be resolved, they believe that the next meeting, which will take place next week in Paris, will be the concluding round.

Among the issues dealt with in the current round of the economic talks in Paris were agriculture, banking, and general trade relations between Israel and the Palestinians.

**ADVANCE TEAM ARRIVES IN HEBRON TO PREPARE FOR INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE**

By Dvora Getzler

JERUSALEM, April 11 (JTA) -- A 17-member advance team of international observers arrived in the West Bank town of Hebron this week, insisting it was not in any sense a military force.

The full contingent of observers, known officially as the Temporary International Presence in Hebron, is scheduled to arrive soon under the terms of an arrangement worked out by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization in the wake of the Feb. 25 Hebron massacre.

The PLO had called for international observers in Hebron to provide a sense of security for the Palestinians living there.

The group will include some 160 Norwegians, Danes and Italians.

In a gesture to the members of the advance team, who arrived in Hebron on Monday, the Israel Defense Force partially lifted the curfew that had been imposed on the strife-torn town following the February killings by an Israeli settler of at least 29 Palestinians at a local mosque.

Under the new directives, Palestinians will not be allowed to drive into the center of Hebron, but will be able to go there on foot. After 2 p.m. each day, they will not be allowed on the streets at all.

On hand to greet the advance team of observers was Hebron Mayor Mustafa Natshe, who had been ousted from office by the Israeli administration in 1983 for allegedly inciting terrorist attacks on Jewish settlers. Natshe was returned to office following the massacre.

The first group of observers was given a friendly welcome in Hebron, and representatives of the foreign press toured with the group.

One remaining question is whether the full team of international observers will be armed. Although Israel and the PLO had agreed in late March that the observers would be lightly armed, Natshe told reporters Monday that the full contingent of observers will arrive in Hebron next week and that they will be unarmed.

But Knut Vollebaek, director-general of Norway's Foreign Ministry and a member of the advance team, said the arrival date of the observers, as well as the question of whether they will be armed, was still undecided.

Representatives of the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas movement, which is bitterly opposed to the Israeli-PLO peace initiatives, have recently issued threats against the international observers, saying that "the safety of this group is by no means assured."

**RAMON, LABOR MAVERICK, ANNOUNCES HIS CANDIDACY TO HEAD HISTADRUT**

By Dvora Getzler

JERUSALEM, April 11 (JTA) -- Former Health Minister Haim Ramon threw the Labor party into turmoil with his decision this week to run against his party's incumbent candidate for

the post of secretary-general of the Histadrut labor federation.

Ramon, 46, has been regarded by many as the Labor Party's best hope for the future as the generation of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin begins to step down.

But with this week's decision, Ramon appears to have put himself beyond the party pale by setting up a non-party list that is specifically intended to stop Haim Haberfeld, the incumbent Histadrut boss and the party's choice for another term when elections are held in mid-May.

The controversy that Ramon has stirred up is seen as being ill-timed, since Labor currently needs to present a united front against the onslaught mounted by right-wing opposition to the peace process.

Announcing that he would run on a separate, independent list in the upcoming Histadrut elections, Ramon said that he would be joined by two other young Labor politicians -- the popular Amir Peretz, who has a considerable following in the development towns where he makes his home, and Samuel Avital, who has a base in the moshav movement, a stronghold of Histadrut votes.

Ramon said that he, Peretz and Avital intend to remain Labor Party members.

Not included in Ramon's independent list are the five other members of what was regarded as an octet of young and able Labor leaders, including Knesset members Avraham Burg, Yael Dayan, Hagai Meirum, Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin and Arab Knesset Member Nawaf Massalha.

Meirum and Burg said that their only quarrel with Ramon is that "we feel we must accept the party's democratic decision, even if we feel pained by having to vote for Haberfeld."

#### 'A Political Dinosaur'

A poll conducted last week showed Ramon beating Haberfeld in the countrywide Histadrut elections.

Haberfeld is regarded by the younger generation of the Labor Party as a "political dinosaur," whose attitude to the Histadrut has, they believe, already brought the huge union into disrepute with employees and employers alike.

Announcing his decision to run on an independent list, Ramon said, "In the last two elections, Labor campaigners were instructed by (now Foreign Minister) Shimon Peres to hide the Histadrut far away from sight," lest the party be too identified with the "discredited" Histadrut.

This is not the first maverick move for Ramon. In February he resigned as health minister after the Labor Party and the Cabinet rejected a health care reform measure he had strongly backed.

Instead of the compromise measure eventually agreed to by the Cabinet, Ramon, with wide support across party lines, had proposed a national health bill that would make health insurance for all Israelis mandatory.

Ramon's proposed bill would have severed the connection between Histadrut and Kupat Holim Clalit, the country's largest health fund.

Some 70 percent of Israelis are insured under Kupat Holim. That insurance automatically makes them members of the Histadrut, and part of the insurance premiums they pay goes to the labor federation.

When Ramon's national health bill was

rejected by a national conference of the Labor Party in late January, he had argued that the Kupat Holim-Histadrut connection was the single most potent cause of Labor's unpopularity with the Israeli public and also that it was the major cause of Kupat Holim's inefficiency.

#### **U.S. SAYS IT WILL SELL 25 JETS TO ISRAEL FOR SOME \$2.4 BILLION** By Steven Weiss

WASHINGTON, April 11 (JTA) -- In a move expected to enhance Israel's defense capability, the Clinton administration announced this week that it hopes to sell up to 25 McDonnell Douglas F-15I fighter planes to Israel.

By presenting this plan, the administration has voiced its support for a plan announced last January by Israel. At that time, Israel said it would order approximately 20 of the F-15I aircraft at a cost of around \$2 billion.

The Defense Department announced Monday that it had notified Congress of the potential sale of the high technology aircraft for approximately \$2.4 billion.

Ruth Yaron, spokeswoman for the Israeli Embassy here, said the exact number of planes to be purchased had not yet been determined.

She said the Israeli government would buy between 20 and 25 aircraft at a price still being negotiated with U.S. officials.

In a statement released Monday, the Defense Department said the planes would enhance Israel's "air-to-air and air-to-ground self-defense capability."

The administration is required by federal statute to notify Congress of the proposed sale. Congress has 30 days to consider the proposal.

A State Department spokesperson said Monday that the administration did not expect any significant congressional opposition to the proposed sale. The plan also includes the sale of training equipment, personnel services and parts.

#### **OPPOSITION RALLIES IN JERUSALEM** By Dvorah Getzler

JERUSALEM, April 11 (JTA) -- Hundreds of right-wing, mostly Orthodox demonstrators gathered near the prime minister's residence here this week to protest what they called the "defeatist" government of Yitzhak Rabin.

"This is terror, not peace" proclaimed the banners criticizing the prime minister's peace initiatives with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The demonstration in Jerusalem was billed as the most visible of what Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu said were "50 similar" protests throughout the country.

The protests, following last week's terror attacks in Ashkelon and Ashdod in which eight Israelis were murdered and more than 40 wounded, were organized by several opposition parties -- the Likud, National Religious Party, Tsomet and Moledet.

Billboards throughout the country were plastered with placards denouncing the "government of surrender" and asserting, in one placard that merges an Israeli flag with the flag of the PLO, "They have besmirched our flag -- for Independence Day 1994."

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES:****AJCONGRESS GETS NEW LEADERSHIP,  
BUT WILL IT PURSUE NEW DIRECTION?**

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, April 11 (JTA) -- With the election of a new president and the retirement of its executive director, the American Jewish Congress entered a new era this week, leaving many to wonder whether the veteran Jewish "defense agency" would also now change direction.

The organization has long been perceived as falling on the liberal side of the political spectrum. It was an early advocate of Middle East peace efforts, has long battled the religious right, and has been active in numerous fights for human rights and civil liberties.

But judging from the plans unveiled at its biennial national convention here this week, it appears that, for the moment at least, AJCongress will stick to its traditional approach, while expanding some of its existing programs.

The organization's new president, Chicago attorney David Kahn, said in an interview this week that he was "not looking so much for change" as he took the reins at AJCongress, "as enhancement" of the agency's current work.

He said he had deliberately "not plotted a specific program" yet to allow the group a chance to organize its priorities.

But he cautioned convention participants that it is important to be careful in choosing issues on which to focus. "We can be truly effective only if we are selective," he said.

Kahn, who has served in a variety of positions at AJCongress, including senior vice president, replaces Robert Lifton, who stepped down as president this week after a six-year stint.

And Phil Baum, the group's associate executive director, is taking on the responsibilities of acting executive director while the organization searches for a replacement for its longtime executive director, Henry Siegman.

Siegman, who retired this month after 15 years, has been appointed visiting senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.

**Rethinking Regional Role**

Kahn, Baum and AJCongress Washington representative Mark Pelavin discussed the group's plans in an interview as the biennial convention was concluding Monday.

Baum said that the 76-year-old agency's traditional areas of interest -- which include the U.S.-Israel relationship as well as civil rights, religious liberties and other domestic issues -- would remain the same, with the possible addition of new areas.

Addressing the approximately 180 participants at a luncheon session Monday, Kahn said he hoped for a growth in AJCongress' programs on women's issues. Among the areas that could receive more scrutiny are discrimination against women and Jewish women's role in the business world, culture and society.

He and the other AJCongress leaders also spoke of trying to spread programs sponsored by individual AJCongress regional groups across the country. Among the programs he mentioned was the Chicago-based David V. Kahn Religious Liberty Resource Center, which he founded.

"This follows the new demographics in

Jewish life," said Baum, noting that Jews are "now a national community" rather than an East Coast urban-based group.

AJCongress is now rethinking the role of its regional chapters as they relate to the national organization. The national organization wants the regional groups to do more fund raising, while the regional groups want more autonomy.

In recent months, the regional leaders have organized themselves into a regional interest group.

"People far away from headquarters tend to feel lonely," Baum explained, a phenomenon that he said should be overcome to achieve "a sense of unity in the whole organization."

**Still 'In The Midst' Of Search**

No decision has yet been made on how this restructuring will be manifested, Kahn said.

In addition, no decision has been made on a replacement for Siegman, who indicated his desire to step down a year ago but was persuaded to stay on until now.

Kahn said the group was "in the midst" of its search and that he was not sure when a decision would be made on a new executive director.

Siegman has long been a strong voice against the so-called "religious right." More recently, he has been a forceful advocate on behalf of the Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Along with Lifton, Siegman became involved in the Middle East peace process early on and was among those exploring the idea of territorial compromise.

Lifton, for his part, became closely identified with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and has been a leading supporter of the policies of Rabin's Labor government.

Among the other new AJCongress officials assuming office are Danny Goldberg, president of Atlantic Records, who is the new chair of the group's executive committee; Robert Rosen, a New York-based businessman, who will chair the board of trustees; and Zoe Baird, who will chair the board of advisers.

Baird, who was President Clinton's first failed pick to be attorney general last year, is senior vice president and general counsel for Aetna Life and Casualty Co. in New Haven, Conn.

**REBBE'S CONDITION DETERIORATES**

NEW YORK, April 11 (JTA) -- The Lubavitcher rebbe's medical condition deteriorated Monday, with the 92-year-old leader requiring "a number of procedures and medications" to stabilize his cardiac and pulmonary functions, according to a hospital statement.

But the statement by Beth Israel Medical Center in Manhattan said the rebbe's condition stabilized after the procedures were administered.

Rabbi Menachem Schneerson has been in intensive care at Beth Israel since suffering a massive stroke on March 10. He remains unconscious and breathes with the help of a respirator.

While his overall condition has been described as "very critical" for some time, hospital spokeswoman Karen Ziperin admitted that things have gotten worse.

"If there was another word for it, we would be using it," Ziperin said.

**FOCUS ON ISSUES:****JEWISH AIDS EDUCATOR IN N.Y. BATTLES PRUDISHNESS AND DENIAL IN COMMUNITY**

By Pamela Druckerman

NEW YORK, April 11 (JTA) -- As a teen-age girl at the East Midwood Jewish Center rolls a condom down a cucumber, Bob Zielony looks on with approval.

After nearly six years as director of HIV/AIDS prevention and education for the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services, the burly man in jeans and a tattered baseball cap is hardly squeamish.

But Zielony, who holds a doctorate in health psychology, knows it takes a lot more than vegetables to convince pubescent teens, even the nice Jewish ones who gather for his programs, to act responsibly to protect themselves against AIDS.

He also knows he is competing for limited resources and attention spans in a struggle many in the Jewish community and elsewhere would rather not confront.

"Most people don't understand the commitment of financial resources and time it's going to take to save lives in the Jewish community," said Zielony, who is the only full-time educator employed by the New York Jewish community to address prevention of AIDS, or acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

But Zielony, 39, who first came in contact with AIDS while doing doctoral research at a South Bronx methadone clinic, remains convinced that it is possible to reach people and stop the flow of the AIDS epidemic.

He has decided to battle prudishness and denial to send out his warning.

As he travels to schools, offices, community centers and PTA meetings, talking to students, parents and educators, Zielony tries to teach people, and especially kids, how to teach each other about contraction of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

"We need to get to the point where it is 'cool' to engage in healthier behaviors," said Zielony, who has trained dozens of teen-agers as peer educators, who help organize and integrate AIDS awareness programs.

**Some 25,000 Jews Are Infected**

By having kids themselves participate, and by addressing groups as a Jew in a Jewish context, Zielony hopes to drive home the notion that people are at risk based on their behavior and not according to their membership in a particular group.

"We can no longer ask in any community, 'Is AIDS a problem?'" said Zielony.

According to a 1993 report by the UJA-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, an estimated 25,000 Jews in the United States are infected with HIV, while at least 4,000 are said to have AIDS.

Despite the statistics, there remains a perception that certain groups are not at risk.

To show kids that despite their upbringing or preconceptions, they are indeed at risk of being infected with HIV, Zielony brings an assistant to speak at his programs, a young Jewish man who grew up in an affluent suburban community and who is now HIV positive.

Scott, a Long Island native who was raised

in the Conservative movement, said that despite some outreach efforts he does not feel that he can turn to the organized Jewish community for support.

"When kids tell me that because they're Jewish and they come from an upper middle class home and they're the chosen people, and therefore they won't get infected, how is Judaism helping the community?" he asked.

Scott is Zielony's third assistant. The first two died of AIDS-related illnesses.

The problem of dealing with AIDS is exacerbated by the long incubation period of the HIV virus, which Zielony said allows people to remain in denial about the disease.

AIDS cases appearing today can be the result of activities from as long as a decade ago, and many people will not know the effects of their current behavior patterns until after the year 2000.

**Reluctance To Speak Openly About Sex**

There is also a stigma surrounding AIDS, especially in the Jewish community, because of its common association with homosexuality and illegal drug use.

Zielony said that even in the face of this life-threatening crisis, many people in the Jewish community are reluctant to speak openly about sex.

Some of the greatest resistance to AIDS education comes from Orthodox schools, where there is both a reluctance to discuss sexuality in general, and an assumption that students should not, and therefore will not, engage in premarital sex.

Zielony worries that the real problems are not being addressed.

"Some people are putting more effort into censorship than into making sure that people get the life-saving information they need," Zielony said.

When state funding for his programs was cut in 1992, Zielony was left to rely entirely on UJA-Federation allocations, making him the only full-time AIDS educator employed by the New York Jewish community.

This means that some people will get the message while others, particularly those in private schools -- which unlike public schools do not have mandatory AIDS education -- may not get it at all.

Simha Rosenberg, AIDS project coordinator for UJA-Federation in New York, said the problem is too many aspects of the AIDS crisis competing for limited funds.

"We're constantly juggling priorities between prevention and care," she said.

Rosenberg said it is difficult to drum up donations for AIDS-related services because, unlike Israel or Jewish continuity, AIDS is not viewed as a uniquely Jewish issue.

"We have a limited capacity to deal with something that's so unremitting," said Andy Rose, who runs an HIV/AIDS clinic in Los Angeles. "We like problems that have solutions," he said.

Rose has tried unsuccessfully to start a national Jewish AIDS project in Washington.

"It's not that people in the Jewish community don't care. But people after a while don't know what to do. They want to move on to the next issue," he said.