

**JEWISH LEADERS CONDEMN BOMBINGS
IN S. AFRICA ON EVE OF ELECTION**

By Suzanne Belling

JOHANNESBURG, April 27 (JTA) -- Jewish leaders have expressed outrage at the recent wave of bombings throughout South Africa that were launched in an effort to derail this week's non-racial democratic elections, the first in the country's history.

Democratic Party Parliament member Tony Leon appealed to his supporters not to be intimidated or deterred by the bombings from casting their votes.

"We are outraged by the murder and maiming of innocent civilians and express our deepest sympathies and condolences to the bereaved families," said Leon.

"The bombers -- and whichever vile and perverted viewpoint they represent -- must be told in no uncertain terms that the overwhelming majority of South Africans chose peace and democracy. The most effective method of demonstrating this truth is through the ballot box," he said.

Issy Pinshaw, one of two Jewish National Party parliamentarians in the present government, said he is "absolutely outraged" by the bombings.

"Nothing is going to be achieved by the killing and maiming of innocents. If it is the intention of the perpetrators to postpone the elections, they are going to be disappointed -- elections will proceed," he said.

"South Africa cannot afford such acts, and I have no doubt that everything possible will be done to prevent the violence from worsening or to become a way of life in this country," said Pinshaw, who is not running for re-election in this week's voting.

Jewish Community Takes Precautions

Seymour Kopelwitz, national director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and the only Jew serving on the President's National Inaugural Committee, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that the Jewish community has been taking special precautions following the recent bombings and in anticipation of further tensions following the elections.

"All the Jewish day schools are closed, so no children are put at risk," Kopelwitz said.

He added that "elements among the extreme right wing," who are thought responsible for the bombings, are demonstrating their disenchantment with the democratic transition in "a form of expression that must be treated with the contempt it deserves."

Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris told JTA that "the outrageous incidents (of violence) must be vehemently condemned. Hopefully, they will have the effect of ensuring a very good turnout at the elections."

In a separate development, talks between Israeli President Ezer Weizman and other Middle East leaders are expected to be held here early next month to coincide with the inauguration of South Africa's new president on May 10.

Israel's ambassador to South Africa, Alon Liel, said there is confidence in diplomatic circles that the visiting leaders will meet for talks about the Middle East peace process.

Liel said that Israel has established better relations with the African National Congress, which is expected to win the majority of seats in the election, since last September, when Israel signed the self-rule accord with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

"There is a lot less criticism now of Israel by the ANC since the agreement was signed. The ANC was concerned about the fate of the Palestinians, who it felt was fighting a similar cause for self-determination. But now (that) the Palestinians are on the verge of achieving rights, the ANC is ready to talk to and cooperate with us," Liel said.

The first election results were expected to be released on Saturday.

**MANDELA SEEKING JEWISH SUPPORT
IN BUILDING A NEW SOUTH AFRICA**

By Suzanne Belling

JOHANNESBURG (JTA) -- African National Congress President Nelson Mandela said his party will need the Jewish community's support to help create a better South Africa after the country's first democratic elections this week.

Mandela, who is expected to be sworn in May 10 as South Africa's first black president, said he will need the help of Jewish organizations in a program of reconstruction and development that will help create a better life for all South Africans.

The ANC leader took time off from his demanding election schedule to answer questions for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency as part of a pre-election message he wanted to send to the Jewish community.

"There are many influential Jewish business people who have an important contribution to make in the partnership between the private sector and the government, which we believe is so crucial for the economic well-being of our country," he said.

Mandela said he is not asking Jewish organizations to directly support the ANC, but he does expect support for the democratization process in South Africa.

South Africa, he said, is "coming out of a terrible period of apartheid, mismanagement and inequality. The ANC is obviously keen to get as much support from the Jewish community as possible.

"We believe that the Jewish community, who suffered so much under racism and who have a proud history of resistance and humanitarianism, will continue to provide their support to a non-racial and democratic dispensation in South Africa," he said.

Mandela observed that leading Jewish institutions had played a positive role in the country during the difficult years of the 1970s and 1980s, when the progressive movements were battling to survive one state of emergency after another.

"There can be some criticism that there was sometimes a lack of vigorous opposition to the draconian measures that were implemented against members of the democratic movement, but it is also true that organizations such as the Jewish Board of Deputies never condoned such oppressive measures," said Mandela.

He added that the ANC looks forward to new close cooperation with organizations such as the Jewish Board of Deputies.

Mandela said many fears among the upper and middle classes regarding an ANC-led government are not based on fact. "These fears are the result of years of deliberate disinformation and vicious propaganda against the ANC," he said.

"For years the ANC was demonized. While we were banned, it was impossible for us to respond and present the true picture. Such a long period of persistent propaganda is not easily erased and much of this propaganda is continuing," he said.

Mandela drew generally favorable comments from members of the Jewish community following his widely televised pre-election debate with incumbent President F.W. de Klerk.

A number of people questioned felt that de Klerk lost some support from the Jewish community by twice stressing the Christian values of his National Party.

DJEREJIAN TELLS AMERICAN JEWISH GROUP THAT U.S. REMAINS COMMITTED TO TALKS
By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, April 27 (JTA) -- The United States wants to see the agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization implemented quickly and remains committed to moving the peace process forward on the other tracks, U.S. Ambassador to Israel Edward Djerejian told a visiting group of American Jewish activists this week.

"There has to be peace on all fronts for it (the process) to be sustained," he told the 400 members of a United Jewish Appeal mission that had come here to show their solidarity with the victims of recent terrorist attacks.

But Djerejian declined to specify what the United States hopes to achieve during the visit to Syria this week by Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

After offering brief comments, Djerejian was peppered with questions from the UJA group. Though prefaced by praise for the U.S. commitment to Israel, the questions were often sharp-edged.

In response, Djerejian stuck largely to formulas. He said Jerusalem was "a final-status issue" for the parties to decide in direct negotiations.

He also denied that the United States was unfairly pressuring Israel to make concessions to a degree not expected from its Arab negotiating partners.

"As an active intermediary our whole purpose is to narrow the differences between the two parties," he said. "That means both sides have to move."

Djerejian also rejected the assertion that the United States was pressing Israel, particularly on the Syrian track, to move faster than is reasonable or comfortable for the Israeli public.

Noting that the peace process is two-and-a-half years old, he said, "I don't think the peace process is moving forward at a speed that is in any way alarming.

In response to a question about recent agreements between the PLO and the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas movement to work together on the eve of Palestinian autonomy, Djerejian said it is "obvious" that "the PLO is preparing the groundwork for entering Gaza and Jericho," the first enclaves of autonomy.

He said that he hoped the PLO would be able to control militant Palestinian groups and that all parties would opt for political rather than violent confrontations.

The ambassador also said the United States was continuing to put pressure on PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat to condemn explicitly terrorist acts "however and whenever they occur."

The United States, he noted, was also pursuing all possible avenues to find information on Israelis missing in action since the 1982 War in Lebanon.

GERMANY'S HIGHEST COURT RULES THAT HOLOCAUST DENIAL IS A PUNISHABLE CRIME
By David Kantor

BONN, April 27 (JTA) -- Overturning a previous decision by Germany's highest appeals court, the Federal Constitutional Court ruled this week that Holocaust denial is a punishable offense.

Last month, the Federal Court of Justice ruled that in order to be considered a prosecutable offense, Holocaust denial -- the so-called "Auschwitz lie" -- had to be uttered publicly by an individual who adheres to Nazi ideology.

Jewish leaders had attacked the appeals court decision, saying it effectively offered a means for people to publicize the Auschwitz lie without suffering any penalties.

But Tuesday's ruling by the constitutional court will make it possible for local and regional authorities to ban assemblies whose organizers clearly plan to use the occasion to engage in Holocaust denial.

The ruling will also enable the prosecution of individuals who espouse the Auschwitz lie in public.

In a related development this week, a former vice president of the constitutional court, Ernst Mahrenholz, has proposed the establishment of special prosecutorial offices to handle right-wing violence rapidly and effectively.

He said this measure would have the effect of deterring offenders and contribute to reducing the level of this form of politically motivated violence.

The leader of the extreme right-wing Republican Party, Franz Schönhuber, has meanwhile rejected charges that he learned back in December 1993 about the complicity of a party member in a firebomb attack on a hostel for asylum-seekers but failed to inform police.

Prosecutors in Cologne are said to be studying the possibility of revoking Schönhuber's rights of immunity and bring him to court.

Schönhuber, a former Waffen SS officer, derives his immunity by being a member of the European Parliament, which is based in Strasbourg, France.

ISRAELI, ARAB AND U.S. OFFICIALS MEET FOR FINAL PUSH ON AUTONOMY AGREEMENT
By Dvorah Getzler

JERUSALEM, April 27 (JTA) -- A high-level meeting between U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat was scheduled to take place in Cairo on Thursday.

The meeting is intended to clear up the remaining issues holding up the signing of a final agreement for the implementation of Palestinian self-rule in the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho.

Speculation has been running high that the signing will take place soon. Christopher's presence in Cairo this week -- coming as part of a new round of Middle East shuttle diplomacy -- is seen as a further hopeful sign that he will help the Israelis and PLO bridge the last gaps separating them.

Christopher was expected to leave Cairo for Israel on Thursday night.

Peres and Environment Minister Yossi Sarid are expected to remain in the Egyptian capital over the weekend to keep a close eye on the final stages of the autonomy talks.

Prior to their departure from Israel, Peres and Sarid were to confer with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who was due back Wednesday night from a trip to Russia.

In Cairo, it was announced that agreement had been reached on the release of some 3,500 Palestinian prisoners still remaining in Israeli hands.

But Sarid, restating a long-held Israeli position, emphasized Wednesday that Palestinians convicted of killing Israelis will not be among those released.

For the first time since the negotiations began in Cairo, the Israeli team will be spending the weekend in the Egyptian capital rather than returning home. The team usually returned to Israel for the Sabbath and then flew back to Cairo on Sunday.

They will be spending the coming weekend in the Egyptian capital in an effort to give negotiators additional time to move the talks to a conclusion.

Palestinian delegation head Nabil Sha'ath said Wednesday that the two sides had reached the stage of drafting a final agreement.

But he would not say when he thought the signing ceremony would take place.

EIGHTH VICTIM OF AFULA BOMB DIES; CONVERTED TO ISLAM BUT BURIED AS JEW
By Dvorah Getzler

JERUSALEM, April 27 (JTA) -- The eighth victim of the April 6 Afula suicide car-bombing died of her wounds this week.

The victim, Ahuva Cohen Onalla, was buried Tuesday in Ashkelon, her hometown, nearly three weeks after a member of the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas movement carried out the bombing, which killed seven other Israelis and wounded more than 50.

But her husband, Ad'il, who is an Arab, was not present at the funeral.

"I want her funeral to honor her. I am afraid that because of what my people did to my wife, some of her people will not tolerate my presence at the graveside and they will dishonor her memory," he said.

Ahuva had fought for her life since April 6, when she was badly burned in the car-bomb attack.

Ad'il, the father of her unborn child, had stolen into the hospital at odd hours to keep up a daily vigil by her side. He had used a back hospital entrance for fear of her family's reaction, he said, adding that they had refused to tolerate his presence in the hospital ward.

The two had met at the bank where they both worked in Nazareth.

At the time, Ahuva, the mother of three children, was divorced. Despite the violent opposition of her family, she had converted to Islam shortly before the Afula attack so that she and Ad'il could be married.

"We loved each other with a real, deep love," Ad'il said.

The family broke off all connection with her because of the marriage, but they did visit her at the hospital.

Her former husband and the children of that marriage never visited her bedside.

The Cohen family had been anxious that their daughter be buried as a Jew, and Ad'il agreed.

He did so, he said, "for her sake, even though she did become a Muslim." He also said he had agreed to stay away from the funeral on condition that the family raise no objections to his visiting his wife's grave in the future.

Talking to Israel Radio just hours before the funeral, Ad'il said: "The peace process must go on so that she may become the last victim of the conflict."

HAMAS ACTIVIST ARRESTED IN STABBING OF 2 SOLDIERS
By Dvorah Getzler

JERUSALEM, April 27 (JTA) -- A Hamas activist was arrested Wednesday after stabbing two Israeli soldiers in the back outside this city's largest shopping mall.

One soldier was described by hospital authorities as moderately injured. The other received light injuries.

Passers-by in the busy new shopping center of Malha chased after the attacker and caught him with the aid of police officers on duty at the scene.

The attacker was a resident of Jabel Mukaber, a village in eastern Jerusalem.

The knife used in the stabbing was found on his body when he was arrested.

Police said the attacker had been arrested in August for distributing leaflets issued by the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas movement and that he had been free on bail pending trial.

Hamas, which opposes the ongoing peace process between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, claimed responsibility for two suicide bombings earlier this month that killed 13 Israelis and wounded at least 70 more.

The group has vowed retribution for the massacre by a Jewish settler of at least 29 Arabs in a Hebron mosque in February.

AZM HOLDS FIRST-EVER MEETING WITH PLO OBSERVER AT UNITED NATIONS

By Larry Yudelson

UNITED NATIONS, April 27 (JTA) -- Leaders of the American Zionist Movement held their first meeting with an official of the Palestine Liberation Organization here this week.

The meeting was part of a conference entitled "From Conflict to Conflict Resolution."

It was an indication of just how much has changed for Israel and Zionism that the meetings were held in a conference room here, in the extraterritorial portion of Manhattan in which, for 16 years, Zionism was officially declared a form of racism.

But that old battle was not at the forefront of the discussions. Much higher on the agenda was the threat that Muslim fundamentalists pose to the Middle East and the peace process.

The point was taken up by both Ahmed Snoussi, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco to the United States, and Gad Yaacobi, Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations.

The issue was broadened by Dr. Nasser al-Kidwa, the permanent observer of Palestine to the United Nations and a prominent member of the PLO.

"I am sure whenever one says fundamentalism, what you at least have in mind is Islamic fundamentalism," said Kidwa.

"I do not disagree with that. But I would draw your attention to another kind of fundamentalism," he said, "which is Jewish fundamentalism.

"The future in my opinion will depend largely, not only on our fight as reasonable open-minded political forces, but also in the fight of Israeli open-minded progressives, the fight against Jewish fundamentalism. And frankly, the stake is very high."

Criticizing Jewish Settlers

In particular, he criticized the Jewish settlers in the territories as the fundamentalists he meant.

Taking a page from Marxist thought -- specifically, Groucho Marx's comment that he wouldn't want to be a member of any club that would have him -- Kidwa said that he did not object in principle to Jewish settlers staying in the territories -- only to the kind of settlers who would want to stay.

"The problem with the settlers is that those who are not ideologues will not be willing to stay. Personally, I don't have any problem with those staying. The problem is those who won't leave.

"The problem is those who are less open-minded, shall you say. The others, the open-minded, probably will be leaving without us asking them to do so. It probably will be their choice. Some have already expressed their wish to be compensated now," Kidwa said.

"I have a problem with those extremely religious guys, who happen to be also armed."

Kidwa was asked about a report in the Wall Street Journal about a survey of Arabs on the eve of the September signing of the declaration of principles by Israel and the PLO. The poll showed that support for the peace accord was based more on the idea of a limited truce than on a vision of a real peace.

Kidwa was not familiar with the survey, which was conducted by Hilal Khashan, associate professor of political science at the American University of Beirut.

He reiterated some earlier remarks that, with the implementation of the self-rule accord still being negotiated, "people do not believe that this is happening, that this is real."

Another important factor, he argued, was that Arabic statements, such as those made to a social scientist, need to be understood within their cultural context.

"We Arabs talk differently in Arabic. It does not necessarily reflect what the political scientists understand. Even me, I sometimes may express myself differently in Arabic than I do in English. This language, Arabic, is a language of exaggeration, of dreams, of past and future. It's not English, to put it mildly.

"So sometimes when you ask somebody in the street, 'Do you believe this peace process will lead to a change?' that person would answer in English, 'I would have hoped so but frankly it doesn't look that way, which would lead me to question the process.'

"In Arabic he would say, 'To hell with the whole thing!'"

'The Whole Picture Will Be Different'

Addressing the more general decline in support for the Israeli-PLO accord, Kidwa said that "it is simply that the people on both sides do not believe any more that this thing is for real. The Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank do not believe any more this thing will happen, that the Israeli army is really leaving, that the self-governing authority will be coming. It's very simple: They don't believe it.

"The moment this will happen on the ground, the whole picture will be different."

Kidwa, a member of the Palestine National Council and the central committee of the PLO, said the PLO was not hiding that its goal was "to have a Palestinian state, with special relations with neighboring countries, obviously Jordan. It obviously will have strong economic relations with Israel, as well.

"We believe that most Israeli leaders accept that, even if they don't say it. And more and more, the Israeli public is accepting this notion and becomes even more vocal in support of such a notion."

Kidwa predicted that "we find out later on that a lot of things we disagreed upon, vociferously, probably do not make contentious realities."

Kidwa was asked about the Palestinian position on Jerusalem. "Look, we have a big disagreement here. We shouldn't hide that. That's basically why we postponed negotiations on it to a later stage," he said.

"I'm almost certain new innovative ideas will arise that will satisfy everybody. It will not be easy, but it also reflects the importance of this issue and its complexity," he said.

For the AZM, this meeting was a necessary, if not necessarily easy, visit to the brave new world of the Middle East.

"We still may have difficulties swallowing what is coming about," said AZM President Seymour Reich, "but it is for the Israelis to make the decisions."