

**SYRIA STAYS ON U.S. TERRORISM LIST,
WHILE PLO INVOLVEMENT IS IN DISPUTE**
By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, May 10 (JTA) -- While the State Department is earning praise from the pro-Israel community for keeping Syria on its annual listing of countries supporting terrorism, it is being accused by one Jewish group of under-reporting the Palestine Liberation Organization's involvement in terrorist incidents.

The department's annual report on global terrorism, released Monday, says PLO factions loyal to Yasser Arafat were responsible for "one, possibly two" acts of terrorism last year following the signing of the Israeli-PLO autonomy framework in September.

But the Zionist Organization of America maintains that the number is much higher.

The State Department's figures are contained in "Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1993," its annual survey of terrorist groups and the incidents they perpetrated around the world.

The report, issued at a time when the United States is pushing hard for real progress in Israeli-Syrian peace talks, retains Syria on the list of state sponsors of terrorism, despite intense lobbying by Syrian President Hafez Assad.

Other countries listed as state sponsors of terrorism are Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea and Sudan.

The report says members of Arafat's Fatah faction were responsible for the murder of an Israeli settler Oct. 29, and that an "alleged" member of the Fatah Hawks claimed responsibility for the murder of two Israelis on Dec. 31.

"In both cases, the responsible individuals apparently acted independently," the report says.

But ZOA President Morton Klein insists that Fatah has perpetrated 28 acts of terrorism against Jews and Arabs since the signing of the September accord, 16 of which occurred in 1993. Klein said his group bases its information on news reports from the Associated Press and the Jerusalem Post.

A Defense Of PLO Lapses

"I don't understand how the State Department could not have had these terrorism reports if we had them," said Klein, who added, "We verify every terrorist attack."

The State Department had little to say Tuesday when asked about any possible discrepancies.

"A lot of hard work went into this report. We consulted as many sources as we could, and that's what we came up with," a department spokesman said.

But this is not the first time the department has been criticized for its reports on the PLO's link to terrorism.

In January, Sens. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) and Connie Mack (R-Fla.) wrote to Secretary of State Warren Christopher criticizing a progress report that had just been released on the PLO's compliance with a pledge to renounce terrorism.

The report "reads more like a defense of the PLO's lapses than a constructively critical guide to better behavior," the two senators wrote.

"We are concerned that the State Department report glosses over and excuses indications that the PLO may be unwilling or incapable of completing such a transformation" to live side by side with Israel.

The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations is studying the latest report and was planning to meet with State Department officials this week to discuss it, said Malcolm Hoenlein, the group's executive vice chairman.

The report says that overall, violence between Palestinians in the territories decreased in 1993, with 83 Palestinians killed by other Palestinians, compared to nearly 200 in 1992.

'A Tacit Cease-Fire'

It attributes the decline in part to "a tacit cease-fire" between Fatah, the PLO's largest faction, and the Islamic extremist Hamas movement.

The report says 65 Israeli soldiers and civilians were killed and 390 wounded by Palestinian attacks in 1993. It also says that "approximately 14" Palestinians were killed by Israeli civilians.

On the issue of Syria, the State Department concluded that, despite urgings from Damascus, the time had not yet come to remove Syria from the terrorism list.

"There is no evidence that Syrian officials have been directly involved in planning or executing terrorist attacks since 1986, but Syria continues to provide support to and safe haven for several groups that engage in international terrorism," the report says.

It points out that several terrorist groups have training camps or other facilities on Syrian territory, including Ahmed Jabril's rejectionist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command.

But the report has some words of encouragement for Syria, stating that the country has "taken steps to restrain the international activities of some of these groups."

In particular, the report cites Syria's role in "cooling hostilities" in southern Lebanon last summer by inducing the Islamic fundamentalist Hezbollah movement to halt its rocket attacks on northern Israel.

The report also says that since last September's signing of the Israeli-PLO accord, "Syria has counseled Palestinian rejectionists to refrain from violence outside the region, although it has not acted to stop rejectionist violence in southern Lebanon."

It also notes that Syria continues to allow Iran to resupply the Hezbollah movement via its territory.

Overall, the report shows an increase in global terrorist attacks, with 427 incidents in 1993, compared to 361 incidents in 1992.

The main reason for the increase was a jump

in terrorist activities by the Kurdistan Workers Party against Turkish interests, according to the report.

The only terrorist incident that took American lives in 1993 was the February 1993 bombing of New York's World Trade Center, the report says. The bombing, which killed six Americans, was also considered by the State Department to be the only "international terrorist 'spectacular' " of the year.

PALESTINIANS JOYFULLY WELCOME POLICE FORCE AS IT ARRIVES IN GAZA By Dvorah Getzler

JERUSALEM, May 10 (JTA) -- With cries of joy and Palestine Liberation Organization flags held aloft, tens of thousands of excited Palestinians swept into the streets of the Gaza Strip late Tuesday afternoon to welcome the first arrivals of the newly established Palestinian police force.

It had taken the initial contingent of police close to three days to get the go-ahead to cross the Rafa border separating Egypt from the newly autonomous region of Gaza.

"We have our own police, just like any other people," overjoyed Gazans said. "This is a historic moment!"

The first group of Palestinian police numbered only 30, but Israeli and Palestinian officials said another 150 would arrive before the end of the day. The groups arriving Tuesday had been trained in Egypt. Others were being trained throughout the Arab world.

They represent the first detachment of a 9,000-member police force to be deployed in Gaza and the West Bank town of Jericho under the terms of the self-rule accord signed May 4 in Cairo by Israel and the PLO.

In Jericho, three joint committees of Palestinians and Israelis met and toured various civilian installations, working out the details of how the transfer of power is to be effected smoothly.

The transfer from Israeli to Palestinian authority is expected to take place over the course of a week.

At a news conference, Palestinian businessman Jamil Tarifi, said to be a confidant of PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, announced that the Palestinians would not be taking over the town's administration until the Palestinian police were in place. Their arrival, Tarifi said, was being delayed for technical reasons that had nothing to do with Israel.

At the news conference, it was also announced that according to the autonomy agreements, Jews were to be allowed to worship at Jericho's ancient synagogue during major festivals.

RAMON LIKELY WINNER IN HISTADRUT VOTE; VICTORY SIGNALS SHAKE-UP OF STATUS QUO By Dvorah Getzler

JERUSALEM, May 10 (JTA) -- In an unprecedented defeat for the traditional Labor Party establishment, upstart Haim Ramon has succeeded in his quest to head the Histadrut labor federation.

Exit polls immediately following Tuesday's nationwide balloting showed Ramon, who quit the Labor Party last month to enter the Histadrut

race, receiving 49 percent of the vote for his New Life in the Histadrut party, against 32 percent for Labor, headed by incumbent Histadrut Secretary-General Haim Haberfeld.

Likud, always a minor force in the Labor-dominated Histadrut, received only 16 percent, a decline from its previous strength that reflected Ramon's inroads among Likud voters.

Joining Ramon and other breakaway Labor members in the New Life for the Histadrut slate were the left-wing Meretz bloc and the fervently Orthodox Sephardic Shas party.

Ramon campaigned on a platform of reform, although it remains to be seen how much he will be able to wrest control away from the deeply entrenched Histadrut bureaucracy.

But it is clear that he scored a victory in what is being seen as the first fight in the next era of Israeli politics.

It is an era in which issues of economics are expected to eclipse those of war and peace, and in which the prime minister will be elected on a personal basis, rather than on party lines.

Ramon Eyed For Prime Minister Nomination

His victory seems to indicate both that he has a very good chance of gaining the Labor nomination for prime minister, and that with him at the helm, Labor will prove the party most likely to win a decisive victory.

Even before Tuesday's vote, voices in the Labor Party were urging that he be invited to rejoin the party.

Ramon, 46, was one of Labor's most attractive young leaders and the minister of health, until he resigned from the government in February when Labor refused to back his proposed national health reform bill.

The bill would have severed the link between the Histadrut and its mammoth health fund, the Kupat Holim Klalit. The Histadrut pressured Labor to torpedo the bill, fearing a threat to its power.

Currently, according to Ramon and other Histadrut critics, many people join the union only because its dues are included in their health fund premiums.

Ramon charged that the linkage was only propping up what he called the dinosaurs of the party, and that it was ultimately against the party's, and the country's, interests.

But the Labor Party -- including Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin -- charged that Ramon was weakening the party just when it needed all its strength to push through the agreement on Palestinian autonomy with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Labor fought its ultimately losing battle against Ramon bitterly.

As the campaign entered its final days, the election proved as dirty as any for national or local office.

Most infamously, Shas heatedly protested as anti-Semitic and pornographic a Labor Party poster attacking the Ramon-Meretz-Shas alliance.

It depicted Meretz leader Shulamit Aloni dancing in her underwear with Shas leader Aryeh Deri, under the heading "Dirty Dancing II."

Because of Shavuot, the JTA Daily News Bulletin will not be published Tuesday, May 17.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES:**JERICHO RESIDENTS EXPRESS FRUSTRATION, SOME HOPE, ON LONG ROAD TO AUTONOMY**
By Cynthia Mann

JERICHO, West Bank, May 10 (JTA) -- Expectations were guarded in the West Bank town of Jericho one afternoon this week as eyes and ears strained eastward toward the Allenby Bridge.

The first contingent of the Palestinian police force was expected to cross the bridge from Jordan, but the crossing had repeatedly been delayed, causing frustration and disappointment.

Still, the town mustered a marching band of about two dozen boys who paraded around the central square to drums and a cymbal, shaking the somnolence of the afternoon and causing what amounts here to a traffic jam.

Here, in this sleepy West Bank town, is where the nascent Palestinian authority is supposed to set up a seat of power and begin an experiment in autonomy that will be watched around the world.

Conversations with residents here, less than a week after Israel officially handed over governance of this area and the Gaza Strip to the Palestine Liberation Organization, show a deep sense of frustration with the slow pace of events and an abiding distrust of Israel.

On Tuesday, the Israelis began to transfer civilian authority to the Palestinians here, but little change was expected immediately.

But earlier in the week, when residents were awaiting the arrival of the police, routine was further shattered by a sudden burst of hornblowing followed by a procession through the square of cars and vans adorned with PLO flags. The cars bore nine Palestinian deportees who were returning from Iraq, including the PLO's official representative in Baghdad, residents said.

The waiting resumed as the cars sped through to the nearby town of Jenin.

"Everything will continue as usual until the elections will tell us what the changes will be," said Jameil Khalaf, the mayor of Jericho, sitting in the office of the town's sleepy municipal building. The PLO talks of elections in October.

'People Feel No Change'

"We have to be patient," said Khalaf. "Politics is not easy and there are steps to be taken."

"Months ago, people were very optimistic" about the autonomy agreement for Gaza and Jericho, said Samir Hilo, a 43-year-old civil engineer.

"But, like fire reacts to water," he said, the mood has been dampened. "People feel no change. We won't believe anything will happen until the (Palestinian police arrive and the) Israeli police withdraw from Jericho."

He spoke a moment after a sharp crack of rifle shots came from Israeli soldiers atop the police station overlooking the central square. The soldiers were responding with rubber bullets to young children throwing stones at the station.

Hilo served three years in a prison in Nablus after he was captured fighting in Lebanon in 1982 with George Habash, the leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, he said.

Despite his past, Hilo has hope for the current autonomy agreement, but only as a first step. "We need a practical peace, an actual peace,

a comprehensive peace," he said, "beginning in Jericho and Gaza and going to Ramallah and the rest of the West Bank." Jerusalem, he said, should be an international city. "The first step," he said, "must be the release of all the prisoners."

"The Israelis want to make us sweat," said Isaac Shawwa, 31, about the delays in implementing the autonomy agreement. Shawwa is a chemical engineer who owns the nearby grocery store.

He said the Palestinians are frustrated and impatient for autonomy. "We are ready to suffer more and sacrifice more, but we need results."

When asked if he has faith and confidence in Yasser Arafat's ability to administer Jericho successfully, he said, "Not exactly. But I don't have a choice."

He said Israel will pay a higher price than the Palestinians if the agreement fails. "We'll start fighting with stronger weapons," he said.

"I am not afraid to die," said Shawwa. "Cowardice has disappeared from my heart. I have lost everything."

Shawwa said he has wasted all his years of schooling because Israel's administration of the territories prevented economic development and job opportunities for an engineer.

"See what happened to me," he said, after haggling with a woman over the cost of hand-sliced lunch meat. "I am a small grocery man selling cigarettes. I am fed up."

But Shawwa believes there is room for hope. "If the Palestinian police come now, 80 percent will support the agreement, forget the sadness of yesterday and start celebrating."

If the economy improves, terrorist actions will decline and "we will forget politics," he said.

'They Took Our Land And Our Rights'

His friend, Yusef Nufel, 35, agreed. "We have been very angry," he said, in the Hebrew he learned from working in construction inside Israel, where he has Jewish friends "who are like brothers."

"The Israeli people came to us and said, 'you don't have the right to live here,' and they took our land and our rights. They were thieves."

He said the Israelis told the international community that Palestinians were all terrorists as "an excuse to occupy our land."

But relations between the two peoples can be put right, he said. "If life is good and there are no soldiers coming into people's homes, no one will think of the politics of '48. They will just look forward."

But, "if I don't have work or a home, or any air, I'll make problems," he said.

Hussam al-Fityani, a 27-year-old builder, said he believes there will be chaos in the beginning of Arafat's administration. He said he anticipates problems between the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas organization and the PLO, and instability because the PLO is not "ready to fill the (official) jobs."

"It will take time to get ready, but after the elections, the situation will improve," he said.

Nufel is a bit optimistic about the future. "We will divide the land and life will be good," he said. But it will take five years, he believes, "to clean the heart" of the anger from the past.

Hilo, too, thinks there will be peace, but that it will take time. "We have blood and the intifada. We need time to clean this."

BEHIND THE HEADLINES:**GAZA JEWS ARE ANXIOUS ABOUT THE FUTURE BUT SHOW NO SIGNS OF LEAVING, FOR NOW**

By Michele Chabin

NEVEH DEKALIM, Gaza Strip, May 10 (JTA)

-- What will happen to the Jews of the Gaza Strip now that Palestinian self-rule has been implemented here and in the West Bank town of Jericho?

While Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat have agreed to postpone the "settler question" for two years, the settlers themselves are in a state of limbo.

Outwardly, they appear brash and defiant -- gun-toting cowboys who malign the government in demonstrations throughout the country.

Privately, sitting around their kitchen tables, they allow their brave front to disappear. Their words alternate between anger and fear as they grapple with a peace agreement that could lead to eviction from their homes within a few years.

The first Jewish settlement in Gaza was established in 1946 by a group of young Holocaust survivors. It lasted two years, until the Egyptian army attacked it repeatedly in 1948. It was re-established in 1970 by Nahal, a branch of the Israeli army that combines agricultural work with combat duty.

Today, between 5,000 and 6,000 Jews live in 17 settlements in the Strip, most of them in the southern area known as Gush Katif. About 70 percent of the settlers are religious.

All of the settlements in the region were established with the blessing -- and financial support -- of previous governments, both Labor and Likud. And, as the settlers are fond of pointing out, then-Prime Minister Rabin attended the 1976 groundbreaking ceremony of Netzar Hazani, an agricultural settlement in the Strip.

Rivka Saffer, a schoolteacher who has lived in the settlement of Neveh Dekalim for nearly 11 years, believes the peace accord will endanger not only her family but the entire country.

10-15-Minute Drive From Ashkelon

While handing out after-school snacks to her five children, Saffer, 29, asserted, "Some people in Israel don't realize where we live. They think Gaza is in the middle of nowhere. They don't realize that it's a 10-15-minute drive from Ashkelon," located in Israel proper.

"Obviously, we are afraid for our own future," she said unequivocally, "but we are also afraid for the State of Israel. Why are we in Gaza? Because Israel was attacked in 1967 and we won. I don't see any reason to trust (the Palestinians). I don't see any reason to give back the areas."

Saffer said, "People are living here because Rabin sent us. If you take families and put them somewhere, the least you can do is have the decency to take care of them. Rabin hasn't even come here to talk to us."

"We don't know what's going on. The government hasn't told us anything, about security on the roads or the future of the settlements," she added.

Although she concedes that the roads in Gaza have never been safe, especially since the start of the intifada six years ago, Saffer thinks

that the peace accord will make things even worse.

"My husband works outside Neveh Dekalim and drives to work," she said. "I'm very worried about his safety on the roads. If a terrorist commits an attack on the road and then flees into an Arab village, the army won't be allowed to run after him."

While she is equally concerned about security, Roberta Bienenfeld, another Neveh Dekalim resident, does not fault government intentions of trying to make peace with the Palestinians.

A resident of Gush Katif since 1981, Bienenfeld said, "I'm not happy with the accord, but I understand that Rabin and Peres really believe that they are doing what is right for the State of Israel."

But she believes that "their desire to rid themselves of Gaza has clouded their judgment. They don't see where the process is going. They don't seem to realize that they are laying the foundations of a Palestinian state. This will hurt the State of Israel."

Since the signing of the agreement in September, Bienenfeld said she has purchased and learned how to use a pistol. Several other residents have done the same.

Datya Herskovitz, the spokeswoman for the Gaza Coast Regional Council, said that there has been a significant increase in terror since the signing of the declaration of principles last fall.

"There have been a lot more shooting incidents, a lot more stonings. As the army moves from the center of Gaza, the problem of terror increases," she said.

15 Families Moved Here In Last Month

Asked what precautions the settlers are taking, now that the army is redeploying and the first Palestinian police have entered Gaza, Herskovitz said, "Nobody knows what precautions to take. We don't even know what to do if we meet (a Palestinian policeman) in the street. You could say there is a lot of confusion."

Still, no Jewish families have left Gaza. "People are under stress," said Herskovitz, "and it's only natural that they should think about the future, but no one has announced any intentions to leave. In fact, 15 French families moved here last month, and several more families are on their way."

Despite the uncertainty, life goes on in Gaza. Farmers continue to cultivate tomatoes and flowers, and the factories are still running. The children go to school and ride their bikes along the quiet, tree-lined streets of their settlements.

And tourists still flock to the Palm Beach Hotel, a 114-room hotel in Gush Katif. Though midweek tourism has declined substantially since the Hebron massacre in late February, when Arab worshipers were killed by a Jewish settler, the beach-front resort is always full on weekends.

Eitan Ben-David, the hotel's owner, said that his guests are indeed worried about terrorism. "Every Shabbat I lead a walking tour around parts of Gush Katif. Before starting, I tell the guests, 'I know you were concerned that coming here might be dangerous, and that your neighbors told you not to come,' " he said.

"By the end of the weekend they leave refreshed and assured that this isn't a dangerous place," he added.