

**ARAFAT RETURNS TO SET UP SHOP IN GAZA  
AS ISRAEL AND PLO MOVE TO SECOND STAGE**  
By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, July 12 (JTA) -- As Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat made what is being billed as an official return to Gaza this week, Israel and the PLO disagreed over how quickly to move to the next phase of Palestinian autonomy.

The differing timetables came to light as the two sides resumed negotiations on Palestinian self-rule this week in Cairo.

Arafat is calling for an accelerated pace in the expansion of self-rule beyond Gaza and Jericho. But Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is pointing to the complexity of the issues and is urging caution and a "step-by-step" approach.

The first phase of the declaration of principles, which is being deemed a success by both parties, provided for the withdrawal of Israeli military and civil authority from Gaza and the West Bank town of Jericho.

This phase, which went into effect in May, triggered a five-year interim period of Palestinian self-government in those two areas.

Negotiations in the second stage, begun this week, are to focus on the transfer of authority in certain spheres to Palestinians in the Palestinian population centers in the rest of the West Bank.

At a later point in this stage, negotiators also will address the redeployment of Israel Defense Force troops away from those centers and general elections for a Palestinian self-governing council. Israeli redeployment is supposed to occur, according to the agreement, prior to the elections.

Israeli officials had originally urged the Palestinians to proceed with plans for holding elections as soon as possible.

But Israel, aware of the security problems involved in a withdrawal of its troops from the West Bank -- which must take place on the eve of Palestinian elections -- has lately been urging a slower timetable.

**Israeli Officials Favor 'Self-Rule Pockets'**

A report in the Israeli newspaper Yediot Achronot this week indicated that Israeli officials are now favoring "self-rule pockets" of Palestinian authority in West Bank towns without a full-scale withdrawal of Israeli troops from the area.

Negotiators in Cairo will also try to resolve outstanding issues from the first stage, including the size of the autonomous Jericho area and the release of Palestinian prisoners.

Meanwhile, the agreement calls for talks on the permanent status of the territories to "commence as soon as possible," but no later than at the end of two years from the implementation of the declaration of principles signed last fall.

For their part, the Palestinians are keen to accelerate the timetable for the final-status discussions, which include the status of Jerusalem, the question of Jewish settlers and the matter of Palestinian refugees.

Only last week, Arafat called for a speeded-up negotiation of these thorny final-status issues.

He also called for an acceleration of the second stage of autonomy, charging that the process was advancing with "insufficient rhythm."

At this stage, the agreement calls for the negotiation of a transfer of authority in the West Bank in five specific areas: education and culture, health, social welfare, direct taxation and tourism.

The Israelis are referring to this specific autonomy package as "early empowerment."

Any other areas of control to be transferred must be consented to by both parties during the talks.

During the interim period, Israel is to retain responsibility for defending the territories against external threats as well as for the Jews and Jewish settlements. At the same time, the Palestinian authority is slated to establish a police force to assume responsibility for security in the main Palestinian centers.

At this juncture, the Palestinians appear to be seeking a more rapid implementation of a fuller autonomy than provided for in the "early empowerment" plan in key towns such as Nablus, Jenin and Tulkarm.

Some sources say Israel may be amenable to the idea. Lending credence to this are reports that there are already uniformed Palestinian police carrying out some civil functions in Nablus with the apparent consent of Israel.

**'We Have To Go Very Slowly'**

But Oded Ben-Ami, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's spokesman, said any reports of Palestinian police operating outside of Gaza and Jericho are entirely unfounded and that Israel would not approve.

Israel has no interest in rushing the process, he said, emphasizing that Israel intends to focus only on early empowerment in the initial stages of the new round of talks.

"We have to go very slowly, step by step," he said.

When Israeli and Palestinian negotiators met for two days in Cairo this week, they focused largely on procedural issues that will govern the future course of the talks. The talks are scheduled to continue next week in Cairo.

The two sides -- led by Maj. Gen. Danny Rothschild for the Israelis and by chief Palestinian negotiator Nabil Sha'ath -- have set out a two-pronged approach to their talks.

One committee will focus on issues left unresolved from the implementation of autonomy in Gaza and Jericho, such as the size of the Jericho district, the release of Palestinian prisoners still held by Israel and border crossings.

The second committee will tackle the issues of early empowerment.

A third group, to be joined by representatives from Jordan and Egypt, will discuss the issue of Palestinian refugees displaced by the 1967 Six-Day War.

Rabin and Arafat had agreed to the Cairo negotiating procedure when they met last week in Paris, where they, along with Foreign Minister

Shimon Peres, accepted a peace prize from UNESCO for the self-rule accord signed on the White House lawn last September.

While in Paris, Arafat renewed his vow to convene the 468-member Palestine National Council -- the PLO's parliament-in-exile -- to revoke those sections of the PLO charter calling for the destruction of Israel.

Arafat had issued a similar promise 10 months ago, when he and Rabin exchanged letters of mutual recognition that paved the way for the signing of the self-rule accord last September.

In the diplomatic jockeying that led up to the resumption of this week's talks in Cairo, Rabin responded to Arafat's calls for accelerated progress in implementing self-rule by calling for patience.

Rabin noted that the talks for expanding self-rule to the West Bank will take longer than expected because the transfer of authority in Gaza and Jericho is so complex.

Rabin said the cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian security forces in Gaza and Jericho has been surprisingly smooth. But he added that the transfer of authority in the civil sector has been problematic.

#### Arafat's Return A Low-Key Affair

Perhaps reflecting the enormous challenges facing him, Arafat's return to Gaza on Tuesday was a low-key affair.

In stark contrast to the greeting he received last week during his five-day visit to Gaza and Jericho, only three Palestinian officials were on hand to greet him at the Rafah crossing between Egypt and Gaza. And as his motorcade traveled to Gaza City, where he plans to take up residence, the crowds were far thinner than last week.

The Rabin government believes that given the squalid living conditions and widespread unemployment in Gaza, Arafat should first focus on shoring up civil affairs in the newly autonomous regions of Gaza and Jericho before extending autonomy to the rest of the West Bank.

Now that Arafat has returned to Gaza to live, said Ben-Ami, "we hope he'll stop shuttling around the world and start running civilian (affairs) there. We have to see the first phase is working well and overcome the difficulties" before moving ahead.

Rabin has also pointed to the high number of Jewish settlements and military installations in the West Bank, saying they complicate the security matters that need to be negotiated for a transfer of authority to take place there.

Peres also reportedly told a Knesset committee this week there are a few problems posed by early empowerment that he is worried about.

The problems he cited include law-enforcement issues and the administration and funding of services in Palestinian population centers.

Peres greeted Arafat's return to Gaza this week as a hopeful sign for the future.

But Peres was at the same time firm that Orient House, the PLO's headquarters in Jerusalem, would not be permitted to become a center for the administration of Palestinian autonomy.

"The administrative center for those areas is either Gaza or Jericho," Peres said. "But certainly not Jerusalem."

(JTA correspondent Dvora Getzler in Jerusalem contributed to this report.)

#### **GERMAN JEWS GREET PRESIDENT CLINTON DURING HIS VISIT TO BERLIN SYNAGOGUE** By Igal Avidan

BERLIN, July 12 (JTA) -- Leaders of the German Jewish community laid out the red carpet for President Clinton this week when he visited a Berlin synagogue that survived German arsonists in 1938 and Allied bombs during World War II.

Accompanied by German Chancellor Helmut Kohl during his visit to Berlin's New Synagogue on Tuesday afternoon, Clinton appeared moved as he toured the red brick building whose golden dome towers over the Jewish Quarter in the former East Berlin.

"It's a miracle it survived," Clinton said as he toured the synagogue.

Clinton's visit came on the last leg of a six-day European tour that included a meeting in Naples with leaders of the Group of Seven industrial nations.

Among those on hand to greet Clinton at the synagogue were Ignatz Bubis, chairman of the Central Council of Jews in Germany; Jerzy Kanal, chairman of the Jewish Community in Berlin; and Berlin Mayor Eberhard Diepgen.

Renovations on the ruined synagogue structure began in 1989 when the then East German government was intent on improving its relations with Israel. They are expected to be completed next year.

Kanal, a Holocaust survivor, welcomed Clinton to the synagogue and thanked the American people for "defeating Nazi barbarism" and for their support in introducing democracy to Germany in the postwar years.

Of the approximately 40,000 Jews currently living in Germany, about one-quarter live in Berlin.

Before the war, there were some 530,000 German Jews, 160,000 of whom lived in Berlin.

Bubis said it had been Clinton's wish to visit the synagogue.

"He is interested in Jewish life in Germany," Bubis said, adding that the rise of anti-Semitism and xenophobia in Europe played an important role in Clinton's decision to visit the synagogue.

#### 'We Must Reject Those Who Could Divide Us'

Bubis noted that during his visit to Warsaw last week, Clinton also visited the Jewish community and the former ghetto.

While in Warsaw, Clinton laid a wreath at a memorial to the Jews who died in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising of 1943.

Prior to visiting the Berlin synagogue, Clinton spoke at the Brandenburg Gate, which had separated West and East Berlin prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall in late 1989.

Addressing the issue of racial intolerance, Clinton said, "Here in Germany, in the United States, and throughout the entire world, we must reject those who could divide us with scalding words about race, ethnicity or religion."

"I appeal especially to the young people of this nation. I believe you have to live in peace with those who are different from you," Clinton said in a tacit plea against rising neo-Nazism in Germany.

(JTA correspondent Miriam Widman in Berlin contributed to this report.)

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES:****JEWISH GROUPS CAUTIOUSLY ENTER FRAY  
AMID LAST PUSH FOR HEALTH CARE REFORM**  
By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON, July 12 (JTA) -- When leaders of Health Security Express, a newly formed grassroots advocacy group, recently lobbied Jewish groups and others to sign on to a new ad campaign supporting President Clinton's health care reform, participants at the meeting burst into laughter.

Some joked, "Which one?" while others professed, "It's dead."

In the end, at least two Jewish groups agreed to sign on to the campaign to support universal health care coverage for all Americans.

The pledge by American Jewish Congress and the National Council of Jewish Women to participate in the campaign -- which will include a bus caravan around the country later this summer -- marks a shift in strategy and intensified action in the Jewish community as health care reform enters the home stretch.

Other Jewish organizations also have weighed in on health care reform in varying degrees.

But they all agree on one thing: this has been an agonizing and frustrating debate.

Privately, some in the Jewish community suggest they dropped the ball by not acting sooner.

Others fear lost opportunities may translate into a weak final product.

Hillary Rodham Clinton, who has spearheaded the administration's efforts to overhaul the health care system, criticized Jewish organizations and others at a meeting last week for their conditional support for health care reform.

In a speech described by one Jewish participant as "fiery," Clinton chided the groups for backing specific health care issues rather than the president's overall plan.

She said she was "disappointed because of your 'You support us, but' position," according to some individuals who attended the meeting.

**Not Lack Of Interest, But Lack Of Agreement**

Since President Clinton unveiled his Health Care Security Act nine months ago, the Jewish community has voiced support for major aspects of his effort without specifically endorsing the president's proposal.

Responding to Clinton's charge, an official of one Jewish organization acknowledged that this organization, like other Jewish groups, is focused on specific issues.

"It's not for lack of interest," this official said. "It's for lack of agreement. We focus on what we can."

Many Jewish groups have issued statements supporting the principle of universal coverage and long-term health benefits.

But they have been unable to develop a consensus on the means and financing for such a plan.

Jewish leaders attribute the lukewarm effort on the part of the organized Jewish community to a diverse membership and to the constantly moving goal posts of the health care debate.

"It's hard to be forceful on an issue when someone is changing the program on you that week," said Steve Gutow, executive director of

the National Jewish Democratic Council. "You can't support a plan in flux," he said.

That view was echoed by Karen Senter, co-director for domestic concerns at the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, which issued a call for health care reform in this year's Joint Program Plan.

"The bills have been changing daily and we have been unable to see where to push," Senter said. "Until now it was difficult to know where to weigh in."

Despite their uncertainty, many representatives of Jewish groups emphasized that health care reform is "absolutely" a Jewish issue.

"As citizens of the United States, health care is a quality-of-life issue and reforms will affect all, including Jews," said Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Reform movement's Religious Action Center.

"Health care is a historical as well as contemporary concern to Jews," said Martin Hochbaum, director of the American Jewish Congress Commission on National Affairs.

"Not only has the Jewish community prided itself on social action issues, but according to Jewish philosophy, health care is a sacred obligation," Hochbaum said.

He was paraphrasing similar sentiments expressed by the 12th-century rabbinic authority, Moses Maimonides.

Among the groups speaking out on health care reform are AJCongress and the National Council of Jewish Women.

**Will Participate In Bus Caravans**

Both groups are supporting the Health Security Express effort and will participate in the group's bus caravans that will crisscross the country later this summer.

NCJW's main concern has been the inclusion of reproductive rights in any health care reform plan.

The RAC, although not an official sponsor of the caravan effort, has begun to contact synagogues across the country asking them to participate in the bus tour, according to Saperstein.

The Council of Jewish Federations, B'nai B'rith International and NJCRAC have issued general statements and position papers urging health care reform.

These groups generally support universal coverage, benefits for long-term care, and family planning, including abortion.

The American Jewish Committee, though supportive of universal coverage, has chosen not to actively engage in the debate.

The reason is the group's diverse membership, AJCommittee officials said.

Diana Aviv, CJF's Washington director, acknowledged that her organization entered the debate "fairly late because of the complexity of the issue and the complexity of our constituency."

As CJF maps out its strategies, Aviv said, "the scope of our activities right now are focused on the question of universal coverage."

With a major push on in Congress now as lawmakers attempt to pass legislation by the middle of August, Jewish organizational leaders are preparing to support specific measures as bills begin to move toward floor debate in the House and the Senate.

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES:  
BERLIN SYNAGOGUE ENCOUNTERS  
PROBLEMS IN FINDING NEW RABBI**  
By Miriam Widman

BERLIN (JTA) -- Help wanted: Two rabbis needed in major metropolitan city, one for a Conservative synagogue, the other to coordinate youth programs. Salary well above average pay at American synagogues. Women need not apply. Professional requirements: Must speak German and be willing to live in Germany.

The last requirement may well provide the Jewish community of Berlin with difficulties as it seeks a replacement for Rabbi Ernst Stein, who ran the Conservative Pestalozzistrasse Synagogue for the past 14 years before retiring last month.

In a recent interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Jerzy Kanal, chairman of Berlin's Jewish community, expressed confidence that the community's board of directors would find two candidates to fill the openings by the end of the year.

But he admitted that it will be an uphill battle to find rabbis who speak German and want to move to the German capital.

"Germany doesn't have the best image," Kanal said. "We receive lots of delegations from overseas, and there's hardly a delegation that doesn't ask us, 'How can you live here?'"

Kanal added that competition from other Western countries makes the Berlin community's search process more difficult.

"If a rabbi has a position in England or America, he isn't keen to come to Germany," he said.

Kanal added that it is equally difficult to find native-born rabbis, noting that in wealthy Germany, young Jews do not see a need to go into the rabbinate. He claimed that if the economic situation here were worse, there would be more interest in religion.

But the retired Stein is more critical. He said the German Jewish communities, and Berlin in particular, are known among German-speaking rabbis as tough assignments.

**Says Membership Means Business Contacts**

The city's congregants, Stein said, are more interested in political or business contacts they can obtain from membership in the community than they are in religion.

Congregational politics in Germany, the object of many of Stein's criticisms, is different from what might be found in other countries.

Unlike the situation in the United States, where Jews join a temple, Jews here must register with the German Jewish community and then pay a kind of "church tax" that is levied by the government.

The tax amounts to about 8 percent of an individual's annual tax payment.

In another major difference from other countries, a rabbi in Berlin does not deal directly with his or her synagogue's board of directors, because synagogues here do not have their own directors.

The real "machers" are the board members who serve the entire community.

The board has so far interviewed several candidates and has even turned some down, Kanal said. "Not every rabbi fits in," he said.

Following up on an idea from the late Heinz Galinski, who headed both the Berlin Jewish community and the Central Council of Jews in Germany, Jewish leaders here are trying to hire a "youth rabbi."

The new rabbi will not be responsible for a particular congregation, but for keeping young people interested in Judaism after they have their bar or bat mitzvah.

Berlin's Jewish community has placed a special emphasis on its young people. A Jewish high school -- the first in post-war Germany -- opened last year, and the community also supports nursery and elementary schools and a youth center.

One thing about the two new rabbis the community is seeking is already definite: They will be men.

Congregants at the Pestalozzistrasse Synagogue have made it clear to the board of directors that they do not want a woman rabbi.

Kanal has not ruled out that a woman might one day be a rabbi in Berlin. But he said that a woman would not be hired now and not in the near future.

If a replacement is not chosen soon, guest rabbis, probably from England, Israel or the United States, will be imported to handle the High Holiday services of this city's 10,000-member Jewish community and to bolster the efforts of its only remaining rabbi, who is Orthodox.

**TWO YOUTHS CONFESS TO VANDALIZING  
SWITZERLAND'S OLDEST JEWISH CEMETERY**  
By Tamar Levy

GENEVA, July 12 (JTA) -- Two 11-year-old boys have confessed to the desecration last month of more than 100 gravestones at Switzerland's oldest Jewish cemetery, in Zurich, police there announced.

A police spokesman said the desecration should not be taken lightly and brushed off as "nasty kids' games."

He noted that in Germany, extreme right-wing groups use young boys to commit acts of violence.

On June 17, 144 tombstones were overturned at the cemetery. It was the second or perhaps third recent vandalism of the site. In February, 60 headstones were overturned, and it has recently been reported that the cemetery was also desecrated in March.

Repairs to the cemetery, which was opened in 1862, will cost some \$30,000.

Meanwhile, other desecrations and assaults on Jews have taken place in Switzerland.

The latest vandalism of a Jewish cemetery took place in Argau, near Basel, where 11 tombstones were desecrated over the weekend.

Following several attacks on Jewish students, the head of the Zurich schools system, Hans Wehrli, sent a letter to parents and teachers.

In the letter, which was released to news media this week, Wehrli said that about a dozen Jewish teen-agers had been jeered and assaulted in Zurich during the past two months.

Appearing on Swiss television last Friday, Werner Rom, president of Zurich's Jewish community, said the Swiss Jewish community is experiencing great anxiety over the mounting xenophobia in the country.