

**ON FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF OSLO ACCORD,
ARAFAT BLAMES ISRAEL FOR PLO CHARTER**
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Aug. 21 (JTA) -- Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat is blaming Israel for the PLO's delay in revoking chapters in the organization's charter that call for the destruction of Israel.

Speaking at a joint news conference with Foreign Minister Shimon Peres in Gaza City last Friday, Arafat said the anti-Israel clauses of the PLO charter could not be changed because Israel is not allowing all 480 members of the Palestine National Council to enter the Gaza Strip to attend a meeting at which a vote to change the charter would be taken.

In a show of disharmony rare at diplomatic news conferences, Peres, appearing disturbed, interrupted Arafat to say to reporters, "I told the chairman we shall not object to have the PNC meet in Gaza, and (we) invite all its members to come and participate in the meeting."

At which point Arafat appeared to throw the whole issue into question, saying he could not guarantee that the PNC would change the anti-Israel clauses.

Arafat has repeatedly maintained in the past that he would call for the repeal of those sections of the PLO charter that call for the destruction of Israel.

His promise served in part as the basis for the mutual recognition pact between Israel and the PLO that enabled the two parties to sign the declaration of principles on Palestinian self-rule last September in Washington.

The highest-ranking Israeli official to visit Gaza since autonomy began there and in the West Bank enclave of Jericho in May, Peres met with Arafat and Norwegian Foreign Minister Bjorn Tore Godal last Friday.

The meeting marked the first anniversary of the agreement reached in Oslo, Norway, that set the stage for the Israeli-PLO peace accord.

During Friday's news conference, Peres highlighted the issue of security, saying that the Palestinian leadership must stop attacks on Israelis by radical Palestinian groups if the peace accord is to succeed.

'We Will Not Accept Any Challenge To Discipline'

"It is in the Palestinian interest to fight terror," Peres said. "You can't develop Gaza and other areas if the terrorists prevent the development of tourism, industry and the like."

Last week, Arafat ordered the detention of at least 30 members of the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas movement, which has claimed responsibility for recent attacks on Israelis. Most of the detained, however, were later released.

"We will not accept any challenge to discipline in the Palestinian territories," Arafat said at the news conference.

Arafat also used the occasion to renew his pleas for foreign assistance, which donor countries have pledged but withheld, demanding strict accounting procedures on the part of the PLO.

"Not to forget, we are starting from zero and we need help from all our friends everywhere," Arafat said.

The Norwegian foreign minister said his country would help pay the salaries of the Palestinian police until the pledges of foreign assistance, estimated at \$600 million for this year alone, begin to arrive.

Meanwhile, Peres used the occasion to announce that starting this week Israel would transfer responsibility for education to Palestinians throughout the West Bank.

"For the first time in history, the Palestinian people will be responsible for their own children, for their own education," Peres said.

The move represented the first phase in the so-called "early empowerment," the transfer to Palestinian control of such areas as education, health, tourism and taxation throughout the West Bank.

In a related development, Israeli officials announced last Friday the release of some 250 Palestinian prisoners on condition that they remain in the Jericho autonomous region until the end of their prison sentences.

Among those released were Palestinians convicted of killing fellow Arabs suspected of collaborating with Israel.

Israeli authorities said those released were the last of a total of 5,000 Palestinian prisoners Israel had promised to release under the terms of the May 4 Cairo agreement for implementing self-rule in Gaza and Jericho.

Officials said that any new prisoner releases would have to be negotiated in new talks.

Palestinians responded with demonstrations in Jerusalem on Saturday, demanding the release of all remaining prisoners.

**IN LATEST CHAPTER OF STUDY IMBROGLIO,
ADL FORCES OFFICIAL TO RESIGN HIS POST**
By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, Aug. 21 (JTA) -- In continuing fallout from the clash between the Anti-Defamation League and Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition, the chairman of ADL's Southwest regional board has been forced to resign.

The resignation came after Gary Polland signed an Aug. 2 advertisement in The New York Times castigating the ADL for what the ad described as defamation of the Christian right.

The ad was signed by 75 Jews, none of whom listed their organizational affiliations. It listed as a contact Toward Tradition, a Seattle-based group formed in response to its perception of a liberal bias in Jewish organization life.

The group of Jews placed the ad in response to the June publication of an ADL study, which blamed the politically ascendant Christian religious right for posing a threat to pluralism and tolerance in America.

The ad stated that "Judaism is not, as the ADL seems to suggest, co-extensive with liberalism."

On the day the ad appeared, ADL's national chairman, David Strassler, sent Polland a letter

telling him that his name on the ad posed an "irreconcilable conflict with your position" as chair of the Houston-based Southwest regional board.

Two other members of the ADL's Southwest regional board, Phil Aronoff and Fred Zeidman, also signed the advertisement, but were not asked to resign.

According to Jonathan Bernstein, director of ADL's Southwest office, Polland was singled out because of his role as chairman.

Nonetheless, Aronoff, a Republican Party activist, decided to resign on his own. Zeidman did not. Another board member, Robert Epstein, who did not sign the ad, reportedly decided to resign from the board over the imbroglio.

Aronoff and Zeidman declined to speak to a reporter about the issue, and Epstein did not return phone calls.

Polland, a Houston litigation attorney who is active on behalf of both Jewish and Republican causes, said the issue was one of free speech.

"ADL is a big enough organization with broad enough perspectives to allow differences of opinion. It can handle dissent without excluding it," Polland said.

"I like ADL and I wanted to stay; they didn't want me to," he said. "I guess they thought I should slink off into the sunset. They were requiring ideological conformity."

But Bernstein disagreed. "This has nothing to do with free speech. It's also not about a disagreement over the book's content," he said, referring to the ADL study. "We welcome and encourage an open exchange of differing viewpoints."

However, Bernstein said, "it boils down to Gary's failure to work as an organizational leader rather than push his own agenda."

Polland said he had been a board member of ADL for 16 years and an officer for the last seven. As a Republican activist, he said he has served as a delegate to the last four state Republican conventions and works as an adviser to local Republican candidates.

According to an article in the Houston Chronicle, both Polland and Aronoff are supporting the Houston-area Republican congressional candidate Gene Fontenot. Fontenot recently served on the advisory council of Citizens for American Restoration, a group that seeks to advance Christian biblical teachings in government.

Aronoff is also a co-chairman for the gubernatorial campaign of Republican George W. Bush, the son of the former president who is seeking the Texas post.

SEEKING FULL DISCLOSURE ON WALDHEIM, LAWMAKERS MOVE TO RELEASE DOCUMENTS By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON, Aug. 21 (JTA) -- Fueled by the U.S. government's continued refusal to release documents detailing Kurt Waldheim's Nazi ties, lawmakers are seeking full disclosure of all governmental files on Nazi war criminals.

The Central Intelligence Agency has denied repeated requests to disclose its files on Waldheim, a former United Nations secretary-general and president of Austria.

A bill introduced last week by U.S. Rep.

Carolyn Maloney (D-N.Y.) would narrow the provisions in the Freedom of Information Act that has allowed the CIA and other government agencies to keep its files secret.

The bill, which is known as the War Crimes Disclosure Act, would apply to all individuals on the so-called "Watch List" of aliens who are excluded from the United States because of their Nazi ties.

"It is outrageous that the CIA was able to hide Kurt Waldheim's Nazi past even while the State and Justice Departments were placing him on the Watch List," Maloney said.

Debate over Waldheim's war record has resurfaced in recent weeks after Pope John Paul II conferred on him a papal knighthood, drawing the ire of many in the Jewish community.

Waldheim served as an intelligence officer in the Balkans during World War II and has been implicated in connection with deportations and reprisal killings of partisans.

Under current law, a government agency can refuse to disclose documents requested under the Freedom of Information Act by declaring that such disclosure would endanger the "national security."

Maloney's bill would force an agency to release requested information unless it reveals private and personal information, or if it reveals a current intelligence agent or endangers a current intelligence source.

The bill also allows agencies to keep information secret only if there is "clear and convincing evidence" that its release would threaten U.S. national security or foreign relations.

'An Important And Useful Initiative'

Maloney's action drew immediate praise from the Anti-Defamation League and the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

"We've long felt that there is an absolute necessity to do something to streamline this archaic law to ensure the release of these documents," said Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

Jess Hordes, Washington representative of the Anti-Defamation League, commended Maloney for her initiative.

"This is a very important and useful initiative," Hordes said. "For a long time we've been trying to get access to this information."

The Austrian Embassy is supporting the measure as well.

"Waldheim's position and the position of the Austrian government has always been that all documents should be scrutinized to prove there was no wrongdoing and any involvement in war crimes," said Martin Eichinger, director of the Austrian Press and Information Service.

Although Maloney would like to see congressional action before Congress adjourns for the November elections, aides say the schedule will be so crammed during the five weeks left after the summer recess that the bill will probably not come up for a vote this session.

However, if re-elected, the congresswoman plans to reintroduce the measure early in the 104th Congress, according to her aides.

Co-sponsors of the bill were U.S. Reps. Jim Cooper (D-Tenn.), Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.), Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.), Ed Pastor (D-Ariz.) and Henry Waxman (D-Calif.).

NON-ORTHODOX RABBIS GO TO COURT SEEKING SEATS ON RELIGIOUS COUNCIL

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Aug. 21 (JTA) -- The High Court of Justice has ruled that Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert must explain why he has failed to submit a list of candidates for the city's religious council -- a list that could include Reform and Conservative rabbis.

Last week's ruling, the latest development in the continuing battle over religious pluralism in Israel, answered a petition filed on behalf of two rabbis who were chosen by the left-wing Meretz Party to serve on Jerusalem's religious council. One is Reform, the other is Conservative.

Local religious councils are governmental bodies in charge of dispensing basic religious services to all Jewish citizens, including services related to marriage, kashrut and burial.

The petitioners believe that Olmert has put off preparing the list because of the stiff opposition by Haredi, or fervently Orthodox, City Council members to members of non-Orthodox streams serving on the religious council.

The High Court decided earlier this year that candidates could not be barred from serving on religious councils because they are not Orthodox.

"We have the feeling Olmert is trying to delay because he doesn't know how to deal with the problem of the Haredi factors in the City Council who find it impossible to vote for Conservative and Reform rabbis," said Rabbi Ehud Bandel, the Conservative candidate of Meretz.

"But the ruling of the Supreme Court is very clear, and Olmert must abide by it," Bandel said. "What is at stake is the rule of law in Israel."

For his part, Olmert is negotiating with the Religious Affairs Ministry about the list of candidates and will bring it before the City Council when the negotiations are complete, a mayoral spokeswoman said this week.

The Religious Affairs Ministry is entitled to name a certain number of members to the local religious councils and ultimately must approve the full membership.

Civil Law Favors Proportional Representation

While religious councils have historically been run according to strict Orthodox interpretation of halachah, or Jewish law, civil law actually entitles the parties serving in local City Councils to be proportionately represented on the religious councils by the candidates they select.

According to this formula, the Meretz Party, which has four seats on Jerusalem's City Council, may appoint two members to the religious council.

A new religious council is supposed to be appointed within six months after every municipal election.

But Jerusalem's current religious council was appointed 10 years ago, when Meretz was not represented in the City Council.

Meretz tried to have its non-Orthodox candidates appointed five years ago, but they were repeatedly rejected.

That prompted the legal challenge which resulted in the High Court ruling earlier this year barring the exclusion of non-Orthodox members.

That ruling was greeted by Israel's civil

rights association as groundbreaking for ending what it termed the "Orthodox monopoly" on religious councils and recognizing the legitimacy of the non-Orthodox.

Leaders of the Orthodox establishment, however, were outraged, warning it posed a dangerous threat to Jewish law.

Meanwhile, advocates for the Reform and Conservative movements also planned to file a High Court petition this week claiming contempt of court by the Haifa City Council for rejecting their candidates for the Haifa religious council.

WAVE OF VIOLENCE ERUPTS IN WEST BANK

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Aug. 21 (JTA) -- Israeli soldiers shot and killed a Palestinian youth and wounded six others during a clash Saturday in the West Bank town of Ramallah.

According to the Israel Defense Force, Israeli soldiers opened fire after their unit was attacked by stone-throwers while the unit was carrying out what was termed an "operational action."

Israeli authorities imposed a curfew on Ramallah after the clash, which was the most serious incident to occur there since Palestinian self-rule began in the Gaza Strip and West Bank enclave of Jericho in May.

According to news reports, members of the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas movement had organized a riot against the Israeli troops.

ACTIVITY RESUMES ON TEL AVIV EXCHANGE

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Aug. 21 (JTA) -- After closing for two days last week to give Israeli investors a chance to absorb the news of the country's first-ever capital gains tax, the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange re-opened Sunday to some roller-coaster trading.

Trading began an hour later than usual Sunday morning, after traders were informed that buying and selling would be carried out for one day without the usual safeguarding procedures that limit trading to a 10 percent rise or fall.

Last week's two-day suspension of trading came after Finance Minister Avraham Shohat made the surprise announcement that a 10 percent capital gains tax would go into effect on Jan. 1.

Trading began Sunday with some panic selling.

But stocks regained some of their losses when institutional investors and pension funds stepped in to take advantage of plummeting prices.

COST OF LIVING RISES AGAIN

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Aug. 21 (JTA) -- Israel's cost-of-living index rose by 1.1 percent in July, the Central Bureau of Statistics has announced.

The increase, which was higher than the 0.7-0.8 percent rise anticipated by the Finance Ministry, put the annual rate of inflation at 14.5 percent.

July was the third consecutive month that the increase announced by the bureau was higher than that anticipated by economists.

SOUTH AFRICAN MINISTER REASSURES JEWISH COMMUNITY OF ITS SPECIAL ROLE

By Suzanne Belling

JOHANNESBURG, Aug. 21 (JTA) -- In what was described by a Jewish leader here as a "definitive" speech by a high-ranking member of the African National Congress, Foreign Minister Alfred Nzo recently offered his strong support for South Africa's Jewish community.

In a speech presented at the 43rd South African Zionist Federation Conference that was held earlier this month, Nzo paid tribute to the "disproportionate" role Jewish South Africans have played in the transition from the country's system of apartheid to one of full democracy.

"It is a fact that some of the outstanding leaders in the struggle to achieve racial justice in South Africa, as well as to help a political culture which emphasizes the overriding importance of human rights and civil liberties in a true democracy, have been of Jewish descent," Nzo said.

In the wake of recent comments critical of Israel by another Cabinet member, Defense Minister Joe Modise, Nzo's remarks provided Jewish leaders here with reason for optimism that the community will be well-regarded by the new government.

Although Nzo was overseas at the time, the speech was delivered on his behalf by South Africa's ambassador to Israel, Malcolm Ferguson.

In the speech, Nzo also expressed support for the Jewish community's Zionist fund-raising activities, noting that the South African government "views in a positive manner the involvement of South Africa's Jewish community in worldwide Jewish efforts to support Zionist charitable giving."

In a recent interview with Reuters, Modise compared Israeli policies toward Palestinians with the old apartheid regime.

"The things the Israelis did to the Palestinians were not very different from what South Africa did to its own inhabitants," Modise said in the interview.

He also accused Israel of being the "biggest buster of sanctions, including the arms embargo."

Israeli Ambassador Alon Liel said Nzo's speech was a much better reflection of the state of relations between South Africa and Israel than the defense minister's words.

"Modise's statement was a surprise," said Liel.

"Nzo's speech was indicative of how we, at the embassy, hear things all the time," he said.

Mervyn Smith, national chairman of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, said he did not feel Nzo's remarks were made to pacify an angry Jewish community.

"Nzo's statements go beyond previous speeches, for they underscore, underline and accept the deep relationship between South African Jews, their Zionism and their relationship with the State of Israel," Smith said.

JEWISH CONSTABLE FILES COMPLAINT TO SERVE AS TEST CASE ON CONVERTS

London Jewish Chronicle

LONDON, Aug. 21 (JTA) -- A London constable who converted to Judaism has brought a complaint against the Metropolitan Police alleging

he was a victim of abuse by fellow officers. The case will serve as a test case to determine whether a convert to Judaism is protected by laws against racial discrimination.

Paul Thomas alleges that he has been the victim of abuse by fellow police, and that anti-Semitism has blocked his promotion.

But according to legal advisers for the constable -- the British term for police officer -- the Metropolitan Police is arguing that as a convert, Thomas is not Jewish by ethnic origin and therefore not covered by existing legislation.

A preliminary hearing scheduled for Aug. 30 will consider whether Thomas is legally entitled to lodge a claim of racial discrimination.

"We're saying that by converting, he can now claim he is part of that ethnic group," commented Sian Hughes, principal legal officer at the Commission for Racial Equality, which is supporting Thomas' case.

Thomas, 38, converted to Judaism in Israel in 1978 after working on a kibbutz.

He returned to England with his Israeli wife, Dina, in 1980 and joined the Metropolitan Police.

In 1983, the couple returned to Israel but came back a year, and Thomas rejoined the Metropolitan Police.

Two years ago, he received an award for his record of arrests and his training of new recruits.

Dina Thomas alleged that her husband -- who has been on sick leave since February -- has been called "Yid," "Moses" and "Hymie" by other police, and that anti-Semitism has blocked his promotion to sergeant.

BRITISH ROYALTY SET FOR ISRAEL VISIT

By Bernard Josephs
London Jewish Chronicle

LONDON, Aug. 21 (JTA) -- The long-awaited first visit to Israel by a member of the British royal family will take place in October.

Authoritative sources have confirmed that Prince Philip will travel to Israel at that time to attend a ceremony in Jerusalem honoring his mother, Princess Alice of Greece, for her role in saving Jews during the Second World War. He may meet President Ezer Weizman during the visit.

The decision to proceed with the trip comes after months of doubt, both here and in Jerusalem, about whether it would take place.

Although the decision was officially made by Buckingham Palace, royal visits abroad require the approval of the Foreign Office.

The Foreign Office has hitherto opposed all such trips to Israel.

5,000 VISIT YAD VASHEM DAILY

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV (JTA) -- Some 5,000 people a day visit the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem daily, according to the first survey organized by the institution.

The museum and memorial is visited by about 1.3 million people annually, making it the most visited site in the country after the Western Wall, according to the survey.

Avner Shalev, chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate, noted that the museum was originally built to accommodate only about 300,000 visitors per year.