



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **The Council of Jewish Federations released a study showing that government funding for Jewish social service and health care agencies in 45 Jewish communities totaled \$3.67 billion in the 1994-1995 year. The study was conducted to help plan strategies in response to possible government cutbacks.**

■ **Opponents of the peace process marked the second anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Principles with demonstrations in Jerusalem and Washington. In Jerusalem, police used force and water cannons to disperse about 2,000 protesters. [Page 2]**

■ **Israel and Ukraine signed an agreement to cooperate in the defense industry. The agreement came as Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin traveled from Ukraine to Moscow to discuss with officials Russia's planned nuclear sale to Iran.**

■ **Jewish settlers clashed with Arabs for a third day outside a Palestinian girls school in the West Bank town of Hebron. Israeli soldiers who stepped in to break up the melee fired rubber bullets, tear gas and concussion grenades.**

■ **Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres may meet with his Syrian counterpart, Farouk al-Sharaa, in two weeks at a special session of the U.N. General Assembly, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher told reporters.**

■ **New York City named a ramp leading to the Brooklyn Bridge in memory of Aaron Halberstam, the 16-year-old Lubavitch student who died as the result of a March 1994 attack on the van in which he was traveling.**

■ **The French army cleared Capt. Alfred Dreyfus, more than a century after he was arrested as a German spy. The head of the army's history department called the Dreyfus Affair "a military conspiracy which led to the conviction and deportation of an innocent man."**

■ **A Palestinian man was killed in an explosion in the Gaza Strip. The man, a member of Hamas, was apparently building a bomb that went off prematurely.**

Lawsuit against prisons bureau targets Nation of Islam contracts

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Efforts by Jewish groups and members of Congress to terminate federal contracts with Nation of Islam affiliates are getting a new boost by a lawsuit filed against the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

The American Jewish Congress has filed suit to determine whether the prisons bureau has hired or considered hiring affiliates of the Nation of Islam to provide counseling services to federal prison inmates.

For the past year, Jewish activists and members of Congress have been calling on the administration to examine Nation of Islam-affiliated businesses that receive federal funding through contracts. They charge that the organization headed by Louis Farrakhan violates federal employment requirements.

Given the Nation of Islam's "well-documented and very public record of bigotry, it is inconceivable that the Nation of Islam is an equal opportunity employer," said Michael Lieberman, associate director of the Washington office of the Anti-Defamation League, which has been involved with the push to examine the contracts.

"It's not appropriate that taxpayers' funds be spent to pay bigots," said Marc Stern, co-director of the legal department of AJCongress.

The lawsuit has been filed under the Freedom of Information Act to force the prisons bureau to release records of any Nation of Islam affiliates contracted to provide counseling services to inmates.

Apart from violations of employment regulations, those who espouse anti-Semitism and racial separatism "should not be what the government holds up to prisons inmates as a model to society," Stern said.

Attempts to reach the Nation of Islam were unsuccessful, and the prisons bureau did not respond to repeated requests for comment on the lawsuit.

Lawsuit emerges from frustration, disappointment

By law, the government has 60 days to respond to requests under the Freedom of Information Act.

AJCongress expects notification by the end of October.

The lawsuit against the prisons bureau comes largely out of frustration, after months of being "stonewalled" in attempts to access prisons bureau records, Stern said. It also comes at a time of disappointment among Jewish groups and members of Congress over the administration's apparent unwillingness to confront the Nation of Islam.

Last month, the Department of Housing and Urban Development announced the completion of an investigation of Nation of Islam affiliates that provide security services to low-income federal housing projects. Contracts with three affiliates in three cities were not renewed for unspecified reasons. HUD elected not to continue investigating contracts in Baltimore, New York and Dayton, Ohio, housing projects.

Although Jewish groups said HUD's investigation clearly did not go far enough, they saw some encouraging news in the administration's actions.

"The fact that these contracts have been canceled indicates that the free ride is over for the Nation of Islam," Stern said.

Earlier this year, Jewish groups and members of Congress had asked HUD to determine whether the security firms, which held about \$10 million in federal contracts, were in violation of equal employment requirements.

In what it now admits was a "limited" initial investigation, HUD found no "widespread or systematic" problems in employment practices, essentially clearing the security firms of wrongdoing.

In a hearing before Congress prompted by Rep. Peter King (R-N.Y.), HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros said further investigations of the Nation of Islam would "simply be using government resources to persecute" the organization.

Jewish groups blasted HUD, calling the investigation "limited and inadequate."

Cisneros later sought to make amends by denouncing Farrakhan's hate speech and labeling HUD's investigation "ongoing."

In an Aug. 25 letter to King, Cisneros cited several security contracts

with Nation of Islam-affiliated agencies that have been terminated as a result of the investigation.

HUD decided not to renew contracts in Chicago, Buffalo and Washington, D.C., while a review in Baltimore remains open.

In addition, a New York security firm has been cleared of charges that it had been proselytizing and engaging in improper religious recruitment.

"The message has clearly gone out that there's a political price to pay for dealing with the Nation of Islam," Stern said, adding, "These are no longer considered sacrosanct contracts."

Stern added, however, that AJCongress remains frustrated by the government's reluctance to pursue a "formal, frank, head-on investigation."

In his letter to King, Cisneros said he had referred the issue to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which has jurisdiction over "civil rights-related problems."

Three government agencies — HUD, the EEOC and the Department of Labor — have looked at the matter, and all have "kicked the ball" over jurisdiction, Stern said.

The Labor Department's "lack of interest" is particularly "outrageous," Stern said, adding that the administration appears to be shying away from a direct confrontation with the Nation of Islam.

In a related matter, the Department of Health and Human Services has been investigating a Washington AIDS clinic affiliated with the Nation of Islam since April.

The investigation is focusing on patient discrimination at the Abundant Life Clinic, which is run by Farrakhan's national spokesman, Abdul Alim Muhammad.

The alternative treatment center receives more than \$500,000 in federal funding through contracts with local health offices.

HHS officials said they could not comment on the investigation while it remains open.

'Like pulling teeth'

King, who has led congressional efforts to uncover Nation of Islam contracts, said he shares AJCongress' frustration over the government's slow movement in both the HUD and HHS investigations.

"After about a year of complete stonewalling and no cooperation, we're starting to get halfway cooperation," King said through a spokesman. "Everything is like pulling teeth."

King plans to pressure the administration to step up its investigations and will also push for another round of congressional hearings, his press secretary said.

In addition, King has introduced a bill called the Hate Group Public Funding Exclusion Act that would prevent the federal government from contracting with hate groups.

The bill has 21 co-sponsors and has been referred to the House Banking Committee.

"It is my view that these contracts are helping to finance Farrakhan's empire of hate," King said earlier this year.

AJCongress is not endorsing the bill, calling it "imprudent" and possibly unconstitutional. If the bill passes, Stern said, it may be perceived "as an attempt to quash people who disagree with the government, making Farrakhan a martyr to the First Amendment."

AJCongress intends to keep the political pressure on in coming months.

Stern said the group would push for the House Banking Committee to reconvene hearings and continue to impel the Labor Department to fulfill what he sees as its "obligation" to investigate. □

Israelis grapple with accord as protesters mark two years

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM(JTA) — Israeli leaders are planning how to proceed in the wake of Palestinians refusals to hand over two men suspected of killing two Israeli hikers in the Judean Desert in July.

Ministers met here on Wednesday, the second anniversary of the signing of the Oslo Agreement, which was greeted with anti-government protests here and in Washington.

Israel Television reported that during Wednesday's consultations, several ministers suggested that changes be made in the interim self-rule accord now being negotiated in Eilat.

The changes were sought to prevent West Bank cities from turning into safe havens for terrorists after an Israeli army redeployment from the cities, a key feature of the still-evolving accord.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said Israel would bring the issue up at the ongoing negotiations in Eilat. He said Israel would demand that suspected terrorists who flee to Palestinian autonomous areas be handed over to Israel.

But Peres added that from a technical standpoint, the Palestinians had not violated the self-rule accord, because the men had been tried and sentenced to jail terms this week by a Palestinian tribunal.

Peres is scheduled to meet with Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat on Saturday night to try to overcome the remaining obstacles to completing the interim agreement.

Some Israeli opposition leaders have reportedly contended that the two Palestinians, despite receiving 12-year sentences, are not actually in jail.

"Let's face it. The two are not even in prison. This is a big joke at our expense," Rafael Eitan, head of the right-wing Tsomet Party, reportedly said.

President Ezer Weizman also spoke out against the Palestinian's refusal to extradite the terrorists.

"The murderers should be brought to justice the way we see fit," he told reporters.

Referring to Zo Artzeinu, or This is Our Land, the grass-roots settlers group that organized the anti-government protests, Weizman said, "I remind these people that this is the land of all of us, and they should abide by the law."

Police use water cannons

The focus of Wednesday's demonstrations was Jerusalem, where police used force and water cannons to disperse about 2,000 protesters who gathered opposite the prime minister's residence. More than 20 people, including Zo Artzeinu leader Moshe Feiglin, were arrested. Israel Television reported that six protesters were injured.

The protesters slowed traffic at different points in Jerusalem during the evening rush hour. But the organizers' call did not draw as widespread a response as they had hoped for, and traffic was tied up at only a few locations.

In Washington, meanwhile, about 100 people opposed to the peace process protested in front of the White House to mark the second anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Principles.

The hundred protesters who gathered Wednesday from across the country fell short of the "hundreds" organizers were expecting. They said they were expecting additional busloads that never came.

After the rally in front of the White House, the protesters moved their efforts to Capitol Hill. □

(JTA intern Daniel Kurtzman in Washington contributed to this report.)

NEWS ANALYSIS
Two years after historic accord, some changes appear irreversible

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Two years after Israel and the Palestinians signed an historic agreement and just as the Israeli election campaign begins to heat up, the man who wants to replace Yitzhak Rabin as the Jewish state's prime minister insists that the Israeli-Palestinian accord was a big mistake.

"Is there nothing good you can say about the Oslo Agreement?" an interviewer from Israel Radio asked Benjamin Netanyahu, using the popular name for the 2-year-old self-rule accord. "Nothing at all?"

But the leader of the Likud opposition refused to oblige.

What Netanyahu did offer during the interview Tuesday, the eve of the agreement's second anniversary, was the suggestion that Rabin summon up the courage to do what politicians most hate doing: admit that he had made a mistake and start putting things right.

Although few were surprised by Netanyahu's stance during the interview, political observers here noted a shift from his earlier positions as he prepares for the 1996 election campaign.

And even though Netanyahu has long been vehement in his opposition to the self-rule accord, he has abandoned his previous outright rejection of the historic agreement.

Netanyahu's current public position on the validity of the self-rule accord is that if the Palestinians breach its terms, then Israel would no longer have the obligation to honor it.

That is a very far cry from saying that a Likud government would actually suspend the self-rule accord.

At the same time, Netanyahu no longer speaks of reinstating Israel's former boycott of Palestinian Authority head Yasser Arafat as a terrorist leader.

Instead, he lists a string of stiff conditions — deliberately left unspecified — which he says a Likud-led government would demand of any Palestinian leader.

'Dagger pointed at Israel's heart'

Netanyahu's change of stance is attributed to changes in the "facts on the ground" that have been wrought in the two years since the self-rule accord was hammered out in largely secret negotiations in Oslo during the summer of 1993 and signed in Washington in September of that year.

Perhaps most significantly, the Gaza Strip — long known as the "dagger pointed at the heart of Israel" — is no longer under Israeli administration.

Today, there are few Israelis who would support Netanyahu's earlier calls to suspend the accord entirely — particularly if it meant sending the Israeli army back into Gaza.

And if Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization go ahead with signing an interim agreement on Palestinian self-rule, which calls for an Israeli troop withdrawal from the major Palestinian population centers in the West Bank, there would also be little likelihood of a future, Likud-led government sending the troops back in to occupy Nablus, Kalkilya, Bethlehem and the other West Bank towns due to be vacated.

But the essential irrevocability of the changes wrought by the 2-year-old self-rule accord goes even deeper than this.

Despite Netanyahu's contention that Arafat has not properly "recognized" Israel, any future Israeli government would be bound by the exchange of letters of recog-

nitition between Arafat and Rabin that accompanied the self-rule accord — as well as by the spirit of the agreement's preamble.

Israel is effectively bound, on the political and the humanitarian level, by the historic act of recognition that accompanied the accord.

It would, moreover, be fruitless for any future Israeli government to cold-shoulder Arafat and the PLO, and seek alternative Palestinian partners, now that the PLO leadership is solidly ensconced in Gaza and, increasingly, in the West Bank.

For these reasons, perhaps the most important provision of the accord may be the part most usually ignored by readers because it is not legally binding on the two signatories: the preamble.

The government of the State of Israel and the PLO team "agree that it is time to put an end to decades of confrontation and conflict," the preamble states.

Political observers discern a steady, tacit recognition of these realities beneath the rhetoric of the Likud Party.

And they expect this important point to become more sharply apparent once the election campaign gets under way in earnest.

As they fine-tune their campaign rhetoric, Netanyahu and the opposition on the right cite two key areas that, in their contention, the Palestinians have failed to live up to basic tenets of the self-rule accord.

The areas are the failure to abrogate the clauses of the PLO's covenant that call for the destruction of the Jewish state and failure to curb terrorism.

The first contention is a fact that cannot be disputed.

Grim fight against fundamentalists

The best that can be said in Arafat's defense on this score is that he has reportedly undertaken to have the offensive clauses repealed within two months after the interim-phase accord is signed.

The second contention, regarding the PLO's curbing of terrorism, is a matter of dispute between the Rabin government and the opposition in Israel.

The bald facts are that Israeli fatalities have risen in the two years since the Declaration of Principles was signed.

The monitoring group Peace Watch, in a report issued this week, said the number of Israelis killed in attacks between September 1993 and September 1995 was 149.

A total of 86 were killed in the preceding two years, according to the report.

The opposition points to the fact that most of the Israelis killed were the victims of suicide-bomb attacks launched by militant Islamic fundamentalists.

The Rabin government, on the other hand, cites mounting evidence of the Palestinian Authority's grim fight against Hamas and Islamic Jihad as reflecting a revolutionary change among mainstream Palestinians — one that holds out the long-term promise of a genuine reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians.

But as Foreign Minister Shimon Peres recently noted, there is no reason to think that terrorists would have been less active had there been no peace process and had the occupation of Gaza continued.

The series of terror attacks, however they are interpreted by the government or the opposition, have proven that the way toward a full peace is strewn with obstacles.

And the coming years, regardless of which party holds sway in the State of Israel, will doubtless see many more crises. □

PNC head vows to hold covenant until settlers leave city of Hebron

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The Palestine National Council will not amend its covenant calling for the destruction of Israel as long as Jewish settlers remain in Hebron, according to its chairman.

“The council would not be able to proceed” with the problem of Hebron “hanging from the air,” said Salim al-Zanoun, chairman of the PNC, at a meeting here sponsored by the National Association of Arab Americans.

The fate of Hebron has stalled negotiations between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, with the PLO demanding control of the city and Israel insisting it keep forces in the city to protect about 400 Jewish settlers who live among 120,000 Palestinians.

The PNC, the PLO’s so-called government in exile, needs a two-thirds vote of all its members to amend the covenant.

Zanoun’s stance directly contradicts PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat’s promise to amend the covenant within 60 days of presumed Palestinian elections in the West Bank and Gaza.

At the same time, however, the leader of the PLO’s government in exile said he is optimistic that the PNC would ultimately amend the covenant.

“Amending the Palestine National Charter is dependent on the satisfaction of PNC members that the peace process has achieved most of its goals,” he said through a translator. “The PNC, stemming from its firm belief that the Palestinian decision for peace is a strategic and not a tactical choice, would like to see such a meeting take place.”

Zanoun’s Washington visit came as a storm erupted in Israel when a Palestinian Authority official said Jews would be barred from praying at holy sites in the West Bank if the sites came under Palestinian control.

‘Jews can visit, not pray’

Hassan Tahboub, the Palestinian minister of religious affairs, claimed that the sites were Muslim property and reportedly said, “Jews can visit them, but they will not be allowed to pray there.”

“Once they are under our control, we will not allow anybody to turn them into synagogues,” Tahboub reportedly said.

Tahboub was referring to the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, Rachel’s Tomb in Bethlehem and Joseph’s Tomb in Nablus.

But as further indication of divided Palestinian views, Zanoun dismissed Tahboub’s claim.

“As far as I’m concerned, there will be freedom of worship for all,” he said.

As far as amending the covenant — an issue which has served as a rallying cry for Israelis and American Jews opposed to the peace process — Zanoun pledged to call a meeting of the PNC if the following conditions are met:

The Palestinian Authority has extended its jurisdiction over the rest of the West Bank; Israel releases all 6,000 Palestinian prisoners and they are guaranteed the right to participate in the elections; Palestinian elections are held under “honest, free and democratic conditions away from the specter of occupation”; and PNC members living in the diaspora are granted their “natural right to return” and settle as citizens in their “homeland and not simply as visitors or tourists.”

Zanoun met with Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole (R-Kan.) during his visit here.

The PNC leader said he urged Dole “not to allow domestic political considerations to infringe upon issues

that are part of the bilateral negotiations,” he said, referring to Dole’s initiative to relocate the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Resist “introducing Jerusalem into the domestic election campaign,” he said he told Dole. The United States “should not seek any other selfish interest other than the sponsorship of the peace process.”

Zanoun also called for a continuation of aid to the Palestinians.

“We also urge the U.S. Congress through both houses not to fall victim to Likudist Zionist lobbying,” he said.

Before the Dole meeting, Zanoun called for more American intervention in the peace process.

“We blame the United States for leaving the Israeli and Palestinian parties without sponsorship or intervention,” he said.

Zanoun also blamed Israel for stalling the process.

“It is not conceivable for the United States as the premier sponsor of the peace process to simply watch Israel as it violates one deadline after another,” he said.

Zanoun also called for the sides “not to lose this historical opportunity during the lives” of Arafat, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.

“Failing to achieve peace during the life of these current leaders,” he said, “means taking the area back to the vicious circle of violence whenever power is transferred to the next generation, thus causing many more innocent victims, women and children, from both sides.” □

Plan continues for ‘fascist’ Rome road

NEW YORK (JTA) — Despite protests from Jews and left-wing politicians, Rome’s leftist mayor remains determined to rename a street after a top official in Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini’s government.

Mayor Francesco Rutelli has defended wanting to name the street after former Education Minister Giuseppe Bottai, who signed laws ordering Jews out of Italy’s schools, as a way for Italians to come to terms with their Fascist past.

The Italian Zionist Federation, the Evangelical Churches in Italy, Italian Jewish communities, B’nai B’rith and the Simon Wiesenthal Center are among those denouncing the idea.

The Wiesenthal Center also protested the Vatican’s endorsement of the plan. Bottai’s son is the Italian ambassador to the Vatican.

But Rome’s top rabbi, Elio Toaff, said naming the street was of minimal importance.

“Street names come and go with great ease, and I know Rutelli too well to think this represents a tendency towards fascism,” the rabbi said. □

Spy asks Israel for freedom

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An Israeli convicted of spying for the former Soviet Union has asked the Supreme Court to free him for health reasons.

Chief Justice Aharon Barak opened the Monday hearing to the media for the first time, at the request of 76-year-old Marcus Klingberg.

Klingberg has served 13 years of an 18-year sentence.

His attorney asked that the remainder of his sentence be commuted due to failing health.

The representative for the state was opposed to the early release, saying that Klingberg could still reveal information that would be harmful to Israel’s security. □