



## NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations rebuked two member-organizations for what it charged were efforts to undermine the Dec. 10 rally for Israel at Madison Square Garden.** [Page 1]

■ **The American Zionist Youth Foundation, the agency that coordinates Israel programs for Americans and sponsors the annual Salute to Israel Parade in New York, has shut down. Critics had charged that the organization was little more than a clearinghouse for Israel programs and had failed to increase the number of teens who participate.** [Page 3]

■ **The Israeli Cabinet is divided over how to handle the issue of paying compensation to Palestinians wounded during the infitada by the Israel Defense Force. A resolution of the matter is slated to be included in a Knesset bill on implementing the Interim Agreement with the Palestinians.** [Page 2]

■ **Two Israeli yeshiva students were convicted of spitting on the grave of slain Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. The two 20-year-olds will face a maximum of three years in jail when they are sentenced later this month.**

■ **The Senate passed a three-month extension of the Middle East Peace Facilitation Act only hours before the measure was due to expire. The House had already passed MEPFA, which allows U.S. aid to the Palestinian Authority and diplomatic contact with the Palestine Liberation Organization.**

■ **An Israeli teen-ager who killed an Arab farmer in December 1993 was sentenced to 16 years in prison. The youth, a resident of the West Bank settlement of Shiloh, was 16 at the time of the murder.**

■ **Israeli Deputy Defense Minister Ori Orr said Israel would withdraw from the southern Lebanon security zone only if the Lebanese government shows that it can prevent terrorist activities. Orr made the comments during a tour of northern settlements, which were hit last Friday by a rocket attack from Lebanon.**

## Conference of Presidents rebukes two member groups for pre-rally ad

By Cynthia Mann

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations has rebuked two member-organizations for what it charged were efforts to undermine the Dec. 10 rally for Israel at Madison Square Garden in New York.

The Conference of Presidents sent letters to the Zionist Organization of America and the National Council of Young Israel accusing them of "censurable" conduct for taking out a full-page ad in The New York Times protesting the "partisan politics" of what was billed as a unity rally.

The conference, which was one of the major planners of the rally after 51 other member-organizations agreed to support it, reprimanded the two groups for "actively discouraging attendance at the event" with the ad.

The action "goes beyond the acceptable bounds of dissent," said the letter, which was sent by conference President Leon Levy and endorsed by the umbrella group's past chairmen.

The ad and the subsequent reprimand are the latest acts of the drama that engulfed the rally in the volatile wake of the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin. ZOA President Morton Klein said Tuesday that even though he had not yet seen the letter, any such letter "comes dangerously close to trying to squash legitimate dissent in the Jewish community."

He said he was disappointed that the conference denied him "decency and fairness" by ignoring his request for an opportunity to address the concerns of the conference before the appropriate parties. And he said the ad nowhere "tells people not to come."

"It seems the rally is being used to promote a partisan political agenda," the Dec. 8 ad said. "Different views on how to achieve peace are being excluded."

Young Israel President Chaim Kaminetzky said he was "not very happy" about the conference's decision to issue "a letter of censure."

But Kaminetzky said he rejected the claim that his organization violated any rules. Conference members have the right to express different opinions and the obligation to respect those opinions, he said.

The letters were sent partly in response to protests by Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, and David Harris, executive director of the American Jewish Committee.

In a Dec. 14 letter to Levy, Foxman said that even though "there have been specific incidents in the past of member-organizations taking actions against agreed-upon conference policy," the ad "so grossly violates the principles of community unity and responsibility that we believe an examination as to whether their behavior warrants their removal from the conference is in order."

### 'Disciplining outrageous behavior'

Harris called the ad "unfortunate" and asked for "prompt discussion on acceptable and unacceptable modes of behavior" by members in such circumstances.

On Dec. 26, Levy replied to Foxman in a letter in which he referred to the "infamous ZOA-Young Israel ad."

"We are in accord with you on the need to call to account, in a meaningful way, those individuals/organizations, members of the conference, who sought to undermine our collective efforts," he said.

Referring specifically to the ad, Levy also pledged to explore "ways and means of disciplining outrageous behavior by dissidents who take public actions against agreed-upon conference policy."

Conference Executive Vice Chairman Malcolm Hoenlein said the matter has been raised in consultations among members of the umbrella organization.

He stressed that there was no question in the discussions that the organizations "had the right to disagree and to not participate."

Rather, the focus had been on "whether it was inappropriate to take out a full-page [dissenting] ad prior to an event supported by 51 out of 53 member-organizations."

Foxman this week said that he was satisfied by the conference's

actions, given that "there are no clear criteria" for proper conduct "beyond the contract of membership" in the conference.

But he said he would press for the formulation of such criteria so members would "know in advance what is and what isn't expected."

For his part, Kaminetzky said he had been "shocked" by the call for the groups' possible ouster by Foxman, a defender of "civil rights and civil liberties."

"We never told anyone not to go to the rally," he said.

The conference and other rally organizers had sought to depoliticize the rally, which was held primarily to memorialize Rabin, to draw as many people as possible from across the ideological spectrum. Prime Minister Shimon Peres and Rabin's widow, Leah Rabin, were among the keynote speakers.

But the ZOA and Young Israel maintained that what was being billed as a "unity rally" was in fact partisan because "all the speakers represent one particular point of view" on the peace process.

Klein had called on the conference to feature a prominent member of the Likud opposition but also said he would have been satisfied with the inclusion of New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani.

The mayor in October ousted Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat from a local celebration of the 50th anniversary of the United Nations.

Klein wrote a letter Dec. 21 to the conference leadership and members, chronicling examples of members who in the past had taken positions "contrary to Israel and/or the conference" and were not rebuked.

He cited as one example a July 1995 meeting between leaders of Americans for Peace Now and Palestinian Authority officials at Orient House, the Jerusalem headquarters of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The conference has taken a stand against such meetings for its members.

But Hoenlein said Klein's examples were not analogous to the ZOA's ad. The ZOA's actions had more to do with proper conduct by conference members toward a conference event rather than policy differences, he said.

The incident prompted noted Washington attorney Nathan Lewin to jump into the fray. He faxed a letter from Jerusalem to Foxman, chastising him for his criticism of the ad.

"It would be doubly tragic if the assassination resulted not only in the stifling of speech in Israel but also in the American Jewish community's inability to tolerate responsible minority opinions in the United States," he wrote.

He said that if the conference decided to conduct an examination into the ad, he would volunteer "pro bono publico" to defend the ZOA's action.

"I think, however," Lewin added, "that it would be a senseless form of fratricide for any disciplinary measures to be considered or taken on account of conduct that is so plainly within the respected traditions of debate and dissent in the American Jewish community."

Foxman said of Lewin, "He misses the point. The issue is not freedom of speech. The issue is the responsibility of members of an organization." □

### Cabinet divided over issue of compensating Palestinians

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli officials were at odds this week over the issue of providing compensation to Palestinians for injuries suffered during the intifada.

Damage suits pending in the Israeli court system

that are related to the intifada — the 1987-1993 Palestinian uprising against Israeli administration in the territories — are estimated to total hundreds of millions of dollars.

Prime Minister Shimon Peres convened a special forum of ministers, legal advisers and military officials this week to discuss the matter.

Peres said Israel should not be responsible for compensation, because he felt that the damages suffered by Palestinians stemmed from what were essentially acts of war against Israel.

"The intifada was forced upon us," Peres was quoted as saying. "No country in the world has paid damages from such a situation, and we do not have to be the exception."

Peres said that just as Israel has paid damages to Jewish victims of the intifada, the Palestinian Authority should address claims by Arabs.

To this end, Peres said he supported legislation that would bar Palestinians from filing for damages in Israeli courts.

But Attorney General Michael Ben-Yair opposed this stand, saying that it might not hold up in the High Court of Justice.

Because Israel controlled the territories during the period in question, it cannot claim that it is not responsible for what happened, he said.

Ben-Yair said he would support taking the issue out of the courts, but only if an alternative mechanism were found.

"Throughout the years of occupation, the courts in Israel were open to the Arab residents of the territories," Ben-Yair said. "We cannot suddenly [stop] this, without providing a suitable alternative."

Ben-Yair, who suggested the formation of a compensation committee to examine each case, said those who suffered damages because they were directly involved in the intifada should not be compensated.

Internal Security Minister Moshe Shahal said he did not believe that any kind of tribunal should deal with the issue. He said he supported the idea of giving a lump sum to the Palestinian Authority to distribute as it saw fit.

At the end of the meeting, Peres instructed Justice Minister David Libai and Ben-Yair to come up with a proposal for dealing with the issue by the end of this week.

The government is pressed to resolve the issue, because it is supposed to be included in a bill on implementing the Interim Agreement, the accord signed Sept. 28 in Washington for extending Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank. The government would like the bill approved by the Knesset before the Palestinian elections, which are scheduled for Jan. 20. □

### Gene causes daring behavior

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — People who get a kick out of bungee jumping and skydiving are apparently genetically predisposed to such activities.

Israeli and American researchers have isolated a gene that is believed to be responsible for 10 percent of people's adventurous and risk-taking behavior.

The finding was made by doctors at the Soroka Hospital in Beersheba, the Beersheba Mental Health Center and the Herzog Memorial Ezrat-Nashim Hospital in Jerusalem. Their research duplicated that of their colleagues at the U.S. National Cancer Institute.

The head of research at Herzog Hospital, Dr. Richard Ebstein, said the gene, called D4DR, was first discovered in the United States in 1991.

He added that it functions in the section of the brain which controls emotions. □

## Sponsor of youth programs to Israel forced to shut down

By Stewart Ains

New York Jewish Week

NEW YORK (JTA) — The American Zionist Youth Foundation, the agency that coordinates Israel programs for Americans and sponsors the annual Salute to Israel Parade here, went out of business last week.

The AZYF was unceremoniously pushed aside in November by the central Israeli organization with which it has worked.

The Joint Authority for Jewish Zionist Education suddenly decided to sever all ties and to deal with a new consortium that has yet to form.

The authority, whose Youth and Hechalutz Department helped to fund the AZYF, offered no explanation for its decision.

The action caught AZYF officials and others by surprise because it contradicted the recommendation of two studies — including one that was commissioned by the authority itself.

The authority is an arm of the Jewish Agency for Israel and the World Zionist Organization.

In a terse letter Nov. 8 to AZYF Chairman Julius Berman, the authority's director general, David Harman, wrote simply that his organization wished to work in the future "towards the creation of a new entity," which does not yet have a name.

That entity is a consortium consisting of the authority, the Council of Jewish Federations, the United Jewish Appeal and the Charles R. Bronfman Foundation.

The CRB Foundation has spent a significant amount of money over the last several years promoting trips to Israel.

Since its founding in 1963, the AZYF has been the major repository of knowledge and dissemination of programs in Israel — long before they became fashionable.

It was only after the CJF's 1990 Jewish population survey found that more than half the marriages involving Jews in the past five years were to non-Jews that the American Jewish community began to look more seriously at the "Israel experience."

Studies showed that Jews who went to Israel as teenagers were more attached to their religion and were more likely to marry within their faith.

### Web page for teens

Although the director of the CRB Foundation's Israel experience programs, Peter Geffen, declined to discuss the financing of the consortium, it reportedly will operate with an annual budget of \$2 million.

The CRB Foundation is said to have committed \$1 million annually for five years to the consortium.

Geffen said he was surprised that the consortium was asked to replace the AZYF because he said the consortium was conceived only as a marketing tool.

He noted that \$25,000 had been spent to establish a page on the World Wide Web for teens who are interested in Israel programs and that they were referred to the AZYF.

In a letter to AZYF board members, Berman wrote that a series of panels were created in the last year to consult with leaders of the Jewish community about the future of the organization.

That action was in response to criticism of the AZYF's effectiveness.

Critics had charged that the organization was little more than a clearinghouse for Israel programs and had failed to increase the number of teen-agers who participate.

About 10,000 American youths travel to Israel each

year to study or visit, a figure Jewish leaders want to increase to 50,000 in the next few years.

The AZYF had engaged in a housecleaning in the last two years, streamlining and bringing in new leaders, many from UJA-Federation.

Berman noted in the letter that the authority's own American Advisory Council unanimously agreed with the panel's recommendation — as well as that of an outside consultant — that the AZYF continue to "be the most appropriate vehicle through which the Israel Experience should be conducted within the United States."

He pointed out also that the advisory council even called on the authority to "increase its funding of AZYF to enable [it] to carry out its responsibilities effectively."

But at its Nov. 3 meeting, the authority rejected those recommendations — a move Berman said "came as a complete shock to the AZYF leadership."

He added that the AZYF was not permitted to attend the consortium's discussions despite recommendations to the contrary by the advisory council.

The executive director of the authority's Youth and Hechalutz Department here, Ze'ev Machnai, declined to discuss the authority's decision.

But he confirmed that his office would take over the work of the AZYF on Tuesday.

He said the office would have six or seven staffers — less than half of the AZYF's 15.

All AZYF staff is expected to be dismissed.

Machnai said his department would staff the office until September, when the consortium will take over.

Seymour Reich, president of the American Zionist Movement, said he was the only member of the authority to vote against replacing the AZYF with the consortium.

"It was a done deal; my vote was a protest vote," he said.

"It's shameful that in this new endeavor Zionist activists have been eliminated," Reich said. "There is no reason why the AZYF couldn't have worked with the consortium."

Berman declined to comment except to say that the AZYF is now negotiating with the authority to get it to "take over the operations and obligations of the AZYF, including severance for those laid off."

### Parade has uncertain future

Meanwhile, among other organizations there is concern about the uncertainty of the future of the Salute to Israel Parade, which has been a New York institution for 30 years.

The Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, UJA-Federation of New York and State of Israel Bonds have begun meeting to see whether the funds can be found to continue the parade.

The parade has been sponsored by AZYF since 1965.

"We are exploring the various options to ensure the parade's continuation in May 1996," said JCRC Executive Director Michael Miller. "We will do everything in our power to ensure that there will be a parade next year."

The parade has drawn tens of thousands of spectators each year and attracted youth groups from synagogues and organizations throughout the New York metropolitan area.

Stephen Solender, executive vice president of UJA-Federation, said efforts have begun to "find financial support because UJA cannot use philanthropic money for the parade."

"The parade's future is uncertain, but there are a lot of people who are trying very hard to find the resources," he said. □

**NEWS ANALYSIS**
**After renewed talks with Syria, Israelis hope for treaty this year**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The mood here has grown somewhat sober as people begin to realize that despite the markedly improved atmosphere in the Israeli-Syrian negotiations, long and arduous talks lie ahead.

A peace treaty, more likely now than ever, is not around the corner, however.

Adding to the sense of sobriety were some 16 Katyusha rockets that slammed into the northern Israeli town of Kiryat Shmona late last Friday night and Saturday morning, causing extensive property damage but no casualties. The Islamic fundamentalist Hezbollah movement, which took responsibility for the rocket attack, had plainly not given up the hope of disrupting the negotiations by taking innocent Israeli lives.

This mood of sober realism has also rekindled speculation surrounding Prime Minister Shimon Peres' election plans.

Thoughts and theories about early elections are buzzing in the air once more as pundits calculate the relationship between the state of the talks at the Wye Plantation in eastern Maryland and the state of public opinion back home.

The first to lower the level of breathless expectation was Uri Savir, the director general of the Foreign Ministry who is jointly heading the Israeli team with Ambassador Itamar Rabinovich. In remarks to reporters after three days of talks last week, Savir said the "pre-negotiating phase" was still under way.

The Syrian side, he said, understood far better now the Israeli view of the nature of the peace relationship.

But that did not mean that there had been any substantive meeting of the minds on this issue, Savir said, adding that he envisaged many months of negotiations.

**'A year to hammer out'**

Back home in Jerusalem, Yossi Beilin, who is a minister without portfolio and Peres' closest aide on the peace process, told Israel Television's Arab-language service that the treaty with Syria would likely take a year to hammer out.

Diplomatic sources said the first round at Wye proceeded on the "hypothetical" assumption that Israel would withdraw from the entire Golan Heights.

A second three-day session was scheduled to begin midweek, and is expected to be followed by a round of regional shuttle diplomacy later in the month by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

After this, Israeli officials said, the picture will become clearer, with the Syrians perhaps signaling a serious readiness to negotiate a detailed peace relationship resting on a broad spectrum of security provisions involving the two countries and international forces.

The Israeli team was reportedly buoyed by the Syrians' readiness to countenance the idea of Israeli nationals traveling to — or at least through — their country after a peace deal is signed.

The Syrian side, led by Ambassador Walid Muallem, reportedly bridled at the thought of large-scale Israeli tourism to Syria itself.

The Syrians said their country is not one of mass tourism and suggested that waves of visiting Israelis could disturb the social equilibrium.

But they appeared to approve the principle of open borders, meaning that there could be some tourism and — no less important — the right of Israelis to drive through Syria to neighboring Turkey.

For ordinary Israelis, this right will be one of the touchstones of the entire peace process with Syria. It will give them the ability, for the first time since the creation of the Jewish state, to travel completely by land to Europe.

But this benefit alone may not be enough to melt the very considerable opposition among Israelis to a total withdrawal from the strategic Golan.

Some political commentators say Syrian President Hafez Assad will ultimately have to produce a Sadatlike piece of drama if he intends to procure for himself what the late Egyptian leader obtained: Israel's withdrawal from all the territory taken in the 1967 Six-Day War.

The Americans, more active than ever before in their role as mediator, will be required under this scenario to persuade the dour Syrian dictator that nothing less than a trip to Jerusalem will do.

Meanwhile, the new flurry of violence across the Lebanese border raises the old question of whether this is Syria's way of jacking up the pressure at the negotiating table.

Christopher wasted little time pondering the point: He got Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa out of bed in the early hours of Saturday morning for an urgent phone conversation about the Katyusha assaults.

One suspicion troubling officials both in Jerusalem and in Washington is that the Syrians — if indeed they are encouraging or turning a blind eye to Hezbollah actions — may believe that the rocket attacks will spur the Israeli public to support the peace accord.

After all, as Israeli leaders themselves often tell their own people, a treaty with Syria would include Syrian-protected Lebanon, in a new era of lasting tranquility.

The Syrians, as both Israel and the United States maintain, can rein in Hezbollah's activities in Lebanon just as, for 22 years, they have not permitted any terrorist activity across their border with Israel.

This ostensibly logical thinking could backfire.

Israeli opinion could turn tough — especially if there is loss of life from the Katyusha attacks, a situation that could have occurred last weekend in Kiryat Shmona.

On the political front, Beilin's one-year prognostication would have the deal clinched just as the Israeli people vote in the national elections, tentatively scheduled for Oct. 31. This would be an ideally convenient way for putting the treaty to the test of the ballot box, as Yitzhak Rabin always promised to do.

**An escape clause**

But such fine timing is equally likely to backfire, leaving Peres and his Labor Party facing the electorate while still in the throes of tough bargaining with the Syrians. Rather than chance that, Peres may call for early elections before the summer holiday.

Speaking to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz over the weekend, the prime minister insisted that he was not thinking of early elections — but carefully added "at the moment" as an escape clause.

He added that if the government's majority in the Knesset looked shaky — two members of Labor have already broken ranks with their party over the Golan issue — he would have no hesitation about calling an early election.

On the other hand, a treaty — preferably with some fanfare from Assad and a lavish, regional signing ceremony — could presumably swing public opinion strongly behind the Peres government.

Most likely, Peres will plan his domestic strategy in tandem with his negotiating strategy with Syria, once Christopher has made his planned trip to the region and the prospects of a relatively quick deal are clearer. □