

# PLO okays US troop deployment in West Bank, Gaza Strip for Israeli pullout

NICOSIA, Nov 4: An adviser to Yasser Arafat said on Sunday that the PLO would welcome Washington as a venue for the next phase of the Middle East peace process, reports Reuters.

Bassam Abu Sharif added that the PLO would also agree to deployment of US troops in occupied Arab territories if that would bring about an Israeli withdrawal.

"The Palestine Liberation Organisation welcomes Washington as a venue for bilateral talks (between Israeli and its Arab foes)," he said in a statement.

US officials suggested Washington and Williamsburg, Virginia, as compromise sites after Arab delegations rejected Israel's demand that they meet in the Middle East.

Abu Sharif said the PLO had agreed to a proposal from President George Bush for Palestinian self-government in a year as a "transitional step towards the final phase leading to self-determination for the Palestinian people."

But he added that "to accomplish the first phase" Israel should withdraw from territories occupied in 1967.

"We will suggest deploying UN or multilateral forces to replace Israeli troops. But if Israel refuses we will agree to forces from the two powers sponsoring the conference [US

and the Soviet Union) or American forces," he said.

Abu Sharif said the PLO would seek a timetable for Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories along with lines of the South African withdrawal that was part of the UN-sponsored independence settlement in Namibia.

AP adds: Israeli negotiators had their first face-to-face talks with Syrian officials and emerged early Monday with "much frustration," saying the Syrians flatly rejected every suggestion they raised.

The five-hour session that ended before dawn Monday was the first in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

It demonstrated an enormous gap between the parties, although the Israelis said they expect to meet the Syrians again once a location has been agreed on. Despite the tough positions taken, both sides appeared to want to go on talking.

Israeli officials said the Syrians insisted on nothing short of a complete Israeli withdrawal from occupied Syrian territory.

A Syrian official who spoke on condition of anonymity said a statement would be issued later Monday.

The Israelis had expected a tough Syrian stance. But Israeli

negotiator Yasi Ben-Aharon stressed that despite the session's failure, it was a breakthrough simply because the sides met for the first time to talk peace without mediators.

"We have to register the fact with some satisfaction," he said.

There was virtually no personal contact, and no handshakes or even smiles were exchanged during the talks, Ben-Aharon said.

He gave no indication that he thought the progress made in talks Sunday with Lebanon and a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation would be jeopardized.

Ben-Aharon said the Syrians "kept referring again and again to only withdrawal from territories. They said before you withdraw from territories, from the Golan Heights, we cannot discuss anything."

Israel captured the strategic plateau from Syria in 1967, annexing it in 1981.

Israeli sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the Syrians opened the proceedings with a brief reading from the text of the invitation to the peace conference, which states the venue as Madrid, and from UN Resolution 242, which calls for Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories.

Reuters adds: Syria and Israel ended their first face-to-face peace talks early today without making any progress, Israeli delegation head Yossi Ren-Aharon said.

He said the five hours of talks were "not fruitful at all... we did not agree on anything."

But he said that the two sides hoped to resume their discussions at a later date.

Syrian chief delegate Muwaffaq Al-Allaf also expressed dissatisfaction with the talks but he said Syria had not given up hope of eventual progress.

He said the Israelis would not talk about land-for-peace, the concept at the centre of UN resolutions on which the talks are based.

Israel said before the talks that the first meeting would deal with procedural matters such as where the next meeting would be held. Syria said it wanted the talks to focus on substance.

"We are not satisfied," Allaf said.

The Israelis, tried to avoid speaking about withdrawal from the occupied territories. They wanted to make gains without giving anything in return," he said.

"We shall continue with the help of the two co-sponsors (the United States and the Soviet Union) hopefully to try to reach some agreement," he added.

"We were let down by virtually all the subjects that we raised," Ben-Aharon told reporters.

"It was in every respect fruitful because what they kept telling us in return constantly was 'when will you withdraw from the territories,'" he added.

"We invited them to Israel," they said.

"We asked them to establish a link between us," they said. "I don't want to say that it was a complete failure because they very fact that they were sitting and talking is in itself

# Talks off to good beginning: Baker

MADRID (Spain), Nov 4: US Secretary of State James A Baker said Sunday that the Madrid peace conference marked a "good beginning" to ending the regional conflict, reports AP.

But he said that the Israelis and Arabs had not reached an agreement on where to hold the bilateral talks, the next stage of the process.

Speaking about the site and timing of future meetings, he said: "This is an open question."

The Israelis met separately on Sunday with Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese to discuss the time and place of the next stage of the talks, which opened in Madrid last Wednesday under joint US and Soviet sponsorship.

"The Madrid conference was a beginning," Baker told a news conference. "I think it was a good beginning."

"There have been and, as I have said, there will be obstacles. They have not deterred us until now and they will not."

He said that US and Soviet officials would continue to "make proposals as necessary."

Asked to comment on Syrian reluctance to sit down in face-to-face talks with the Israelis, Baker said that the countries involved "have all entered the process against the predictions."

Baker said he was pleased

in particular by face-to-face talks between the Israelis and a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation.

"In terms of a start, I have to tell I was very pleasantly surprised," he said. He said he had not heard the outcome of talks between the Israelis and the Lebanese and the Syrians and the Syrians, which started after the talks with the Palestinian-Jordanian team.

Asked why he seemed so optimistic, Baker said, "The parties are sitting at the table, bilaterally, and beginning to talk."

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The United States and the Soviet Union express the hope that the parties themselves will continue to negotiate in order to reach an understanding.



Venue of ME talks in Madrid

## Baker leaves for home

MADRID, Nov 4: US Secretary of State James Baker left Madrid for home late on Sunday after finally bringing Israel and its Arab neighbours together in face-to-face peace talks, reports Reuters.

Baker told a news conference shortly before leaving that the parties to the Middle East conflict had taken a critical step by beginning direct bilateral talks.

Baker was co-chairman with Soviet Foreign Minister Boris Pankin of the three-day opening phase of the historic peace conference. On Sunday he was at the heart of day-long efforts which brought the first bilateral talks to fruition.

## Shamir travels to US in two weeks

JERUSALEM, Nov 4: Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir will travel to the United States in two weeks but has yet to receive an invitation to visit the White House from President George Bush, Voice of Israel Radio reported today, says AFP.

Shamir is to attend a meeting of Jewish community leaders in Baltimore, according to the radio, in a report that a spokesman for the Prime Minister's office would neither confirm nor deny.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa, returning from the Madrid Middle East peace conference on Sunday, said Washington had been proposed as the venue for continued bilateral Arab-Israeli negotiations.

## Intifada will continue, says Arafat

NICOSIA, Nov 4: PLO leader Yasser Arafat, accusing Israel of arrogance and intransigence, said on Sunday that Palestinians were prepared to continue their Jihad (holy war) against the Jewish state if peace talks failed, reports Reuters.

Arafat, in remarks carried by Tunisian radio, added that the Palestinian Intifada uprising in the Israeli-occupied territories would go on until "the Palestinian flag is hoisted upon Jerusalem mosques and churches."

## 142 settlements in occupied territories

JERUSALEM, Nov 4: Here are some facts and figures on settlements in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

**FIRST SETTLEMENT** — Kfar Etzion was founded in the West Bank in September 1967, three months after the territories were captured in the Six Day War.

**LEGALITY** — The United States and most other countries view settlements as illegal under the Geneva Conventions, which bar occupying powers from moving citizens to occupied land. Israel claims the accord does not apply in the West Bank and Gaza.

**POPULATION** — About 106,000 Israelis live in the West Bank, and about 4,000 in Gaza.

There are 142 settlements. Settler population was 62,000 in 1987 when the Palestinian uprising started. The Palestinian population is 1 million in the West Bank and 750,000 in Gaza.

**SETTLEMENT SIZE** — Settlement range from a few mobile homes on remote hilltops to large towns with schools, swimming pools and hotels.

The largest is Maaleh Adumim near Jerusalem, with about 15,000 residents.

**GROWTH** — Housing Minister Ariel Sharon said he wanted to add 50,000 settlers by the end of 1992. Legislator Dedi Zucker, a settlement foe, said the ministry actually plans to add 90,000 by then.

## Egypt turned Palestinian question into cause of a people: Mubarak

CAIRO, Nov 4: President Hosni Mubarak on Sunday implicitly criticised Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al-Shara, who at the Middle East peace conference last week charged that the Camp David accords had led to the official annexation of East Jerusalem, reports AP.

Mubarak, in a speech at Cairo University in praise of his predecessor Anwar Sadat, argued that the 1978 Egyptian-Israeli Camp David agreements had enabled Egypt to recover the Sinai peninsula, captured by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war.

The accords, signed by Sadat, formed the basis for an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty in 1979.

While one section of Camp David dealt with bilateral questions, a second held out the possibility of Palestinian autonomy on the West Bank and Gaza Strip — an arrangement similar to that being offered Palestinians at the Madrid Middle East peace

conference.

Despite two years of intensive negotiations, Egypt and Israel were never able to agree on what autonomy should mean for the Palestinians and the Camp David accords on self-rule were never implemented.

Mubarak said he wanted to recall the advantages of Camp David "because some at the Madrid conference... said Israel had taken advantage of the agreement to annex East Jerusalem."

It was a clear reference to remarks by Shara, who charged that Israel had abused its peace with Egypt to formally annex Arab East Jerusalem — which it captured in 1967 — and to declare it part of its eternal capital in 1980.

Mubarak noted that at negotiations with Israel in Cairo in 1977 ahead of Camp David the Palestinian flag had been raised.

"Today, this flag cannot be flown anywhere," he said.

"It was Egypt that transformed the Palestinian question from a refugee problem into the cause of a people having a right to their state."

Many Arab leaders denounced Egypt for its 1979 treaty, charging that it had opted out of the struggle with Israel and had thereby abandoned the Palestinians.



## Syria appears to relish tough role in peace talks

MADRID, Nov 4: With the harshest rhetoric and the most dogged bargaining tactics, Syria appears to relish its role as Israel's toughest adversary at the Middle East peace conference, reports AP.

From calling Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir a terrorist to arguing over when and where to start the first bilateral talks, the Syrian delegation attracted attention and plenty of Israeli wrath.

Moderate Arab states Egypt and Saudi Arabia persuaded the Syrians to proceed with the peace process but fear that they have handed the Israelis an advantage by their obstinacy.

The Syrians succumbed to the trap Shamir put for them and are fighting every inch, every minute," said Tahseen Beshir, a former spokesman for the Egyptian government and now a political analyst.

The Syrians have become

tainted in a negative way in the eyes of the West because of this position, but do not forget they are also being considered as positive in the eyes of the Arabs," Tahseen said by telephone from Cairo.

The joint Palestinian-Jordanian avoided unnecessary clashes and were the first to sit down for bilateral talks with the Israelis on Sunday.

Throughout various disputes, the Syrians pointed to the Israelis as the real obstacle.

"We have come here for peace. We shall continue to work for peace out of our faith in this peace," Foreign Minister Farouk al-Shara told the conference. "However, Israel would be gravely mistaken were it to interpret this Arab response as a license for it to perpetuate its intransigent stands within the conference or any of its committees."

Syria's stance extended even to news conferences, where al-Shara refused to answer questions from Israeli journalists.

Since Egypt broke ranks with the Arabs in 1979 and signed the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty Syria has been at the forefront of Arab hostility to the Jewish state.

It was one of the last Arab countries to restore diplomatic ties with Egypt, in 1989. When the United States launched its efforts in March which culminated in this peace conference, Damascus was the last holdout.

Before coming to Madrid, Arab delegates met in Damascus and agreed to the Syrian demand that they adopt a united position and that no one would go ahead with a unilateral peace treaty as Egypt did.

That led to the last obstacle before Syria finally sat down with Israel on Sunday night—a dispute about the location. As a gesture of solidarity with the other Arab contingents, the Syrians insisted that their separate meetings with Israel should all be in the same place, although at different times.

## Israel, Syria end talks on divisive note

MADRID, Nov 4: Arch-enemies Israel and Syria concluded a historic round of direct talks on a divisive note Monday, hours after the Jewish state and a Palestinian team reported progress toward serious negotiations, says AP.

In a milestone meeting, hard-line Syria overcame its hesitations and met for five hours with Israel late Sunday and early Monday. But its foe of 43 years said Syria wouldn't budge from its insistence on a full Israeli withdrawal from occupied territory.

Syria had no immediate comment and said it would issue a statement later.

Lebanon's delegation, meanwhile, met separately with Israeli counterparts under the second phase of the historic Madrid peace talks that opened last week. No details of that third remarkable encounter were available.

He said Syria demanded return of the Golan Heights, a strategic plateau Israel captured here Sunday he would ask Moscow, co-sponsor of the Madrid peace conference, to prevent the settlement of Soviet Jews in the Israeli-occupied territories, reports AP.

Arafat, opening a gathering here on Palestinian rights, vowed that the nearly four-year-old uprising in the territories would continue until the Palestinian flag flies over the churches, minarets and ramparts of Al-Quds (Jerusalem).

He charged that Palestinians in the occupied Gaza Strip were currently hit by a famine that nobody is speaking about. He did not elaborate.

The Syrians contend that negotiation in Israel would be tantamount to recognizing the Jewish state before it has yielded territory. Israel claims such a move would prove the Syrians' good faith.

Earlier, a Lebanese delegation also held separate talks with Israel.

"I think it was a good beginning," said US Secretary of State James A Baker III, who engineered the peace conference with eight Middle East shuttles this year.

"The bottom line is, the direct face-to-face negotiations have begun," he said before flying back to Washington.

The Israelis and a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation displayed an amicable spirit after their own five hours of talks on Sunday, in contrast to last week's confrontational speeches and snubs at the ceremonial opening of the Madrid talks.

## Arafat to ask Moscow to prevent settlement of Soviet Jews

TUNIS, Nov 4: PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat said here Sunday he would ask Moscow, co-sponsor of the Madrid peace conference, to prevent the settlement of Soviet Jews in the Israeli-occupied territories, reports AP.

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I will ask my friend (Soviet President Mikhail) Gorbachev to end the emigration of Jews to the occupied territories, because such a transfer of people is at the expense of the Palestinian people, Arafat said in a speech.

He criticised Moscow for providing travel documents — rather than Soviet passports — to Jews leaving for Israel. Israeli authorities, according to Arafat, simply confiscate the documents before forcing Jewish emigrants to settle in the occupied territories.

Arafat also complained that the conditions of the Madrid conference were imposed on us which reflect US partiality

toward Israel.

The uprising — or Intifada — on the West Bank and Gaza Strip has taken a heavy toll on the Palestinians, the PLO chief acknowledged.

Nearly 2,000 Palestinians have died at the hands of Israeli soldiers and settlers, including 60 per cent who were under the age of 16, and 92,000 others have been wounded since the rebellion erupted in December 1987, he said.

Among the injured were 67,000 who are now handicapped, he added. In addition, 89,000 Palestinians have been detained by Israeli authorities and 7,000 cases of abortion have been registered.

## The excerpts...

MADRID, Nov 4: Here are excerpts of the news conference by US Secretary of State James A Baker III on Sunday at the Middle East peace conference, reports AP.

The Madrid conference was a beginning, I think it was a good beginning. Today the parties have taken another critical step, beginning direct, bilateral negotiations between Israel and the joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, Israel and Lebanon and Israel and Syria.

There have been and, as I have said before, there will be obstacles in this process to

be overcome, but they have not deterred us until now and they do not, in my view, diminish the importance of what has happened this week.

The major issue that we had to work over the weekend was where to hold the bilateral negotiations. This is still an open question, and it is one that will need to be resolved as the negotiations proceed.

The United States and the Soviet Union express the hope that the parties themselves will continue to negotiate in order to reach an understanding.

## New settlement set up after Madrid summit

KELA, Golan Heights, Nov 4: Soviet immigrant settlers and hard-line Cabinet ministers on Monday inaugurated a new Jewish settlement on the Golan Heights, vowing never to return the disputed plateau to Syria, reports AP.

The ceremony took place just hours after Israel and Syria concluded an historic round of direct talks in Madrid that still

left the two sides sharply divided.

"Every new settlement, every Jew... enlarge our grip on the land," said Science Minister Yuval Neeman, whose Tehiya Party has threatened to withdraw from the government over the Madrid talks.

Israel captured the strategic Golan in the 1967 Middle East war and annexed it in

1981. Some 12,000 Jewish settlers, including 1,000 Soviets, have moved to the Heights.

Housing Minister Ariel Sharon, a settlement champion who greeted 36 Kela settlers and some 200 guests in an emotional speech, blasted the Madrid peace conference and Israel's agreement to participate.

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Women countered high unemployment among men by forming cooperatives to sell embroidery, ceramics and dairy products. They set up self-help groups and daycare centres.

They began protesting and even hurling stones at soldiers.

"Circumstances imposed a new role on women. They filled new positions and Palestinian men are accepting it. Women had to support their families, they became politicized, said Ribah Essawi, a Hebrew University Professor active in women's issue.

## Hanan symbolises changed role of Palestinian women

TEL AVIV, Nov 4: Palestinian spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi is more than an articulate voice for her people at peace talks, reports Reuters.

She symbolises the changed role of Palestinian women during a four-year revolt against Israel.

Hanan got up and proved that a Palestinian woman can do the job that is needed and that there is no going back since the Intifada (revolt), said Rana Nashashibi, a Palestinian counsellor in the occupied territories.

Women from all walks of life in the West Bank and Gaza

strip are talking politics and taking jobs and Palestinian men are getting used to it.

Before it was taken for granted a woman was subordinate to man. Now she can be a bradwinner and decision-maker, Nashashibi said on Sunday.

"I don't claim this is the norm. Palestinian society still believes the place of a woman is in the home, but the Intifada has proven they can do more than this."

The uprising brought the most traditional Palestinian women out of their homes to find jobs and assume leadership roles after their husband and sons were jailed, expelled,

Women from all walks of life in the West Bank and Gaza



MADRID: Chief Palestinian negotiator Haidar Abdel Shafi (from L) shakes hands with head of the Israel delegation Elyakim Rubinstein (R) following their meeting. The meeting is part of the second round of the Madrid peace conference which began October 30.

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