

# Palestinians grab diplomatic victory

MADRID, Oct 29: Palestinian negotiators arrived Monday to a hero's welcome from enthusiastic supporters and won a strategic victory before Wednesday's opening of the Middle East peace conference.

No Palestine Liberation Organisation official met the delegates, complying with the Israeli demand that the guerrilla movement be excluded from talks.

But cheering supporters who greeted the delegates with Palestinian flags and signs proclaiming pro-Palestinian slogans said they obtained them from the PLO mission in Madrid.

A convoy of Mercedes limousines and a tourist bus drove to the Victoria Hotel in downtown Madrid. Out front, the crowd began clapping, cheering and shouting, "Long Live Palestine."

The delegates emerged waving olive branches they had been handed in Amman, Jordan, before taking off for Madrid. They gave victory signs as photographers tried to break through a human barrier of policemen and anti-terrorist security officials.

As Palestinian activists Faisal Husseini and Hanan Ashrawi stepped out of their limousine, a Palestinian girl presented Ms. Ashrawi with a bouquet of white flowers and received a kiss on each cheek.

The American, Spanish and Soviet organisers of the conference announced the Palestinian delegation would be granted a full-length opening speech Thursday, overriding Israeli protests.

The 45 minutes would be in addition to 45 minutes granted to the Jordanians, who are attending jointly with the Palestinians. Israel and the other national delegations will receive 45 minutes.

In the rebuttal Friday, the joint delegation will be given 30 minutes, again in two segments, while Israel was granted half the time.

Israeli officials vainly tried to persuade the organisers not to give the head of the Palestinian delegation equal time. To do so would be an explicit recognition of the Palestinians as a separate entity, they argued.

## History of elusive peace

**1947 UN plan**

- Arabs resist UN plan for two states in Palestine
- Israel created by force 1948, Arab-Israeli wars 1956, 1967, 1973 follow

**1973 Geneva meeting**

- US and Soviet Union convene peace conference
- Israel, Jordan and Egypt attend, Syria boycotts
- Israeli-Egyptian working groups set up, borders in Sinai/Suez fixed

**1978 Camp David**

- Israel withdraws from Sinai, settlements dismantled
- Egypt restores relations
- Palestinians to get autonomy in territories in 5-year transition (not implemented)

**1982 developments**

- Arabs reject Reagan proposal to make territories part of Jordan confederation
- At Fez, Arab League agrees to recognise Israel if Palestinian state created, Israel rejects plan

**1988 PLO changes tack**

- At Algiers PLO Parliament renounces terrorism, offers de facto recognition of Israel in return for Palestinian state in Territories, Israel rejects

**1991 Baker tries it again**

- After Gulf War, US brokers Arab-Israeli peace conference
- Israel, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt and Palestinian representatives to meet in Madrid Oct 30 at US-Soviet sponsored meeting
- PLO agrees to stay on sidelines

# Two Israeli settlers killed as assailants open fire on bus

JERUSALEM, Oct 29: Two Israeli settlers were killed and five others wounded Monday when a bus transporting them to a pro-came under fire on the occupied West Bank, police sources and Israeli radio said, reports AFP.

The radio said a 10-year-old was among the wounded and was listed in critical condition at Jerusalem's Hadassah Hospital.

It said two of the passengers died shortly after the 6:15 pm (1615 GMT) attack on the Nablus-Ramallah road. The attack was initially reported by police sources.

The Israeli army sealed off the Nablus-Ramallah road and launched a search for the unidentified assailants.

The settlers were travelling to Tel Aviv to join a demonstration in support of Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, who is leading his country's delegation to the peace conference due to open Wednesday in Madrid.

The team is dominated by hardliners and close aides to Shamir who are staunchly opposed to any territorial compromise and maintain that Israel has the right to build settlements in the occupied territories.

The clandestine leaders of a nearly four-year-old Palestinian uprising called in a statement last week for increased anti-Israeli attacks ahead of the Madrid conference.

According to the Israeli Radio, the army deployed reinforcements in the occupied territories in recent days to brace for what authorities here expected to be a new surge in anti-Israeli attacks in the run-up to the peace forum.

Ten Palestinian groups, including the territories-based Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas, have already denounced the peace conference, seeing in it an attempt to liquidate the Palestinian cause.

## Clashes in meeting called to denounce Madrid conference

AMMAN, Oct 29: Clashes broke out Monday at a rally called to denounce a Middle East peace conference, creating panic among the audience, who smashed windows to get out, reports AFP.

The rally was called by the Muslim Brotherhood and leftist groups under the banner: "No to the Madrid Conference, the Conference of the Liquidation of the Palestinian Cause and American Hegemony in the Region."

But as the first speaker reached the podium, 200 youths began shouting slogans of support to Jordan's King Hussein and the peace forum which is due to open Wednesday in Madrid.

# ME partners differ on why they are in Madrid

DUBAI, Oct 29: The Arab world, and the Gulf states in particular, have welcomed the news of a Middle East peace conference in Madrid on October 30 with guarded optimism. While the mood is far from euphoric, United States Secretary of State James Baker is regarded as having achieved a breakthrough.

But the huge effort of getting Arabs and Israelis to the negotiating table will pale in comparison to the task of getting them to reach a comprehensive peace agreement. The main problem is that both sides (and probably factions within each side) have very different ideas about why they are in Madrid.

From the Arab perspective,

the conference should be about self-determination for the Palestinians and the return of Arab lands which have been occupied by Israel since the 1967 war with Egypt, Jordan and Syria: the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Golan Heights.

Arab and US representatives cite two United Nations resolutions — one passed after the 1967 war, the other after the Yom Kippur War of 1973 — which call on Israel to return lands it has occupied since the wars. If those conditions are met, it is believed the Arabs will be willing to recognise Israel and its 1967 borders.

Indeed, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) has been saying so explicitly since 1988.

The Israeli position is starkly different. Israelis, led by Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, maintain they have already fulfilled their obligations under the UN resolutions by returning the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt following the Camp David accord of 1979. Shamir and other Israeli hardliners claim that remaining occupied territories are an integral part of the biblical greater Israel.

One part of the Camp David deal which has never been upheld by the Israelis calls for a five-year transition to self-rule for Palestinians. That remains an integral part of Arab demands.

After Baker and his Soviet counterpart Boris Pankin announced the conference in

from Mohammed Aslam

Jerusalem, the final sticking point was overcome when the Israeli cabinet endorsed Shamir's decision that Israel would participate.

There had been fears that a right-wing rebellion by hard-line members of Israel's ruling Likud Party could lead to a collapse of the Shamir government, scuttling the whole process so painstakingly put together by Baker during eight swings through the Middle East in as many months.

Arab enthusiasm about the conference is tempered by a lingering distrust of Israeli intentions. Arabs have not forgotten the failed effort to make peace at a similar conference in Geneva in 1973, an initiative

which was also sponsored by the US and Soviet Union. Palestinians were not even invited to those talks and Syria boycotted them.

This time, however, Syria is at the table, as are the Palestinians, albeit not represented by the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, but by a US-vetted list of representatives from the Occupied Territories.

Moreover, better preparations have been made for the Madrid meeting than were made for the Geneva talks. In addition to Syria and the Palestinians, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon and Bahrain will be in attendance.

The Gulf war set the stage for the conference and committed the administration of President George Bush to a fresh peace initiative, payment in kind for Arab assistance to

the US-led coalition against Iraq in the Gulf war. But the war also weakened Arab bargaining power.

Still, Arabs agree on their minimum basic requirement for peace: Israeli withdrawal from the areas seized in 1967 and self-determination for Palestinians.

In talks with Syrian, Jordanian and other Arab leaders in the days leading up to the conference, PLO leader Yasser Arafat pressed for an immediate summit of leaders of so-called frontline states to formulate a common Arab

strategy which will draw the maximum benefit from the talks.

The idea has found some support in the Gulf. In Dubai, the English-language daily *Khaleej Times* urged Arabs to develop a common negotiating strategy at a pre-conference summit. — GEMINI NEWS

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# Don't get your hopes too high, Bush tells Americans

WASHINGTON, Oct 29: President George Bush, preparing to open Middle East peace talks in Madrid, said on Monday that peace would not come easily and cautioned Americans not to get their hopes too high.

"We have a long way to go before we have the makings of — or have an agreement for — peace in that troubled corner of the world," said Bush who was to leave on Monday night for an overnight flight to the Spanish capital.

"I don't want to get peoples hopes too high," Bush added during a White House meeting with business executives.

He was to make a brief appearance on Wednesday at the opening of the Israeli Arab peace conference cosponsored by the United States and the Soviet Union.

He is scheduled to spend about an hour at Madrid's Royal Palace, the conference site where he will give a speech that officials said would exhort Israel, its Arab neighbours and Palestinians to take advantage of the talks to reach a comprehensive peace.

Joining Bush at the conference will be Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, they were to hold private talks on Tuesday, the day before the conference.

Although Bush played down the potential for rapid progress at the peace talks he left no doubt that he believed getting the parties together was worth the effort.

"These are important meetings. It's worth it," he said.

"I am looking forward to this and I am hoping that it will be a first step, in bringing peace to this part of the world that has suffered too long from war and conflict."

Mikhail Gorbachev "can only gain" from sponsoring the Middle East peace talks, but faces tough questions Tuesday from US President Bush on economic and nuclear chaos at home, his aides say.

Gorbachev, who won the 1990 Nobel peace Prize for helping end the Cold War, may enhance his global prestige by co-sponsoring the Madrid talks.

But whatever prestige he gains can do little to stave off rising challenges to his domestic authority from Russian Federation President Boris N. Yeltsin and other republic leaders.

And Bush, meeting with Gorbachev for the first time since the August 18-21 coup that shattered central Soviet authority, is expected to quiz him about the contested Soviet nuclear arsenal and requests

for Western economic aid.

The positive side for Gorbachev is that, unlike Bush or the Arab and Israeli leaders gathering in Madrid, the Soviet leader has invested little political capital in the meeting.

"He can only gain," said Igor Malashenko, a deputy Kremlin spokesman.

Gorbachev's meeting with Bush and his joint sponsorship of the Madrid talks underscore his role as a world leader, said chief Kremlin spokesman Andrei Grachev.

The session "will provide the world powers with a chance to look at world problems," Grachev told Western reporters.

But, he acknowledged, "it is certain that the situation back in the Soviet Union will be of interest to President Bush."

Ukrainian officials say they

do not plan to use the weapons, but want to ensure that they are destroyed in the Ukraine and not transferred to Yeltsin's Russian Federation.

Bush has said he will try to focus his working lunch Tuesday with Gorbachev on the Middle East, but that the talks are "open-ended."

Soviet officials expect the two leaders to discuss Gorbachev's request for Western help to feed the Soviet people and repay the dir 67 billion debt.

US officials had planned to offer Gorbachev further credits to buy American grain. However, they postponed the gesture because the Ukraine had refused to join Gorbachev, Yeltsin and the heads of seven other Soviet republics in signing a pact this month forming an economic union.

## US to support Israeli edge over enemy: Cheney

WASHINGTON, Oct 29: US Defence Secretary Dick Cheney on Monday night pledged that Washington would continue to support Israel's military edge over any potential enemy, reports Reuter.

The statement in a speech to a national Jewish group came as Israeli and Arab representatives prepared to open a Middle East peace conference in Madrid on Wednesday.

Rest assured that the United States will continue to support Israel's qualitative military edge over all possible enemies and we remain committed to ensuring Israel's security in the years ahead, Cheney said in remarks prepared for delivery to a meeting of the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs.

He was presented with the groups Annual Henry M Jackson Award, named after the late US Senator from Washington state and strong supporter of Israel.

Cheney, who will hold talks at the Pentagon on Tuesday with visiting Egyptian Defence Minister Mohammad Tantawi, stressed the long and close relationship between the United States and Israel. He noted that the Pentagon sent Patriot anti-aircraft missiles to Israel during the Gulf war to shoot down attacking Iraqi Scud missiles.

## Israel keen to negotiate pullout from Lebanon

NEW YORK, Oct 29: Israel is willing to negotiate the withdrawal of its soldiers from southern Lebanon, the Israeli official in charge of Lebanese policy said Monday in a discussion on the Middle East peace conference, reports AP.

"I think (a withdrawal) is part of what will have to be the subject of negotiations now between us and the Lebanese," Uri Lubrani said.

Lubrani, at a meeting with Associated Press editors, said Israel has "preconditions" for such a "thing happening," among them the requirement that "the security needs of Israel are fully and irrevocably taken care of."

# Former Moorish fortress to house thorny talks

MADRID, Oct 29: A sumptuous 18th century palace built on the site of a former Moorish fortress will house Middle East peace talks opening in Madrid on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

Misleadingly known as the Eastern Palace, it is a huge, outwardly-forbidding pile of limestone and granite from the nearby Guadarrama mountains.

The largest royal palace in western Europe, it stands on the western edge of the city, overlooking the Manzanares river, outlined against the horizon of a flat plateau now taken over by a Madrid's fast-growing suburbs.

The Marble Hall of Columns, hung with tapestries and decorated with bronze statues where the first part of the conference to be held, has witnessed landmark events of Spanish history.

Dictator Francisco Franco lay in state in the pillared hall after his death in 1975.

More recently, the treaty marking Spain's entry into the European Community was signed there.

Spanish leaders, including Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez who will open the talks, here the hall will be the setting where the first steps towards reconciliation between Arabs and Israelis are taken. Gonzalez' address will be followed by speeches by US President George Bush and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, sponsors of the conference.

The palace, home to eight monarchs of Spain's Borbon dynasty over two centuries, is now only used for state occasions.

Its last occupants were Alfonso XIII and Victoria Eugenia who went into exile after Spaniards voted in favour of a republic in 1931.

Their grandson, King Juan Carlos, and his first wife Queen Sofia, prefer the smaller simpler Zarzuela Palace outside Madrid.

But the throne of Spain's flanked by gilded lions, still stands in the glittering throne room under a tiepolo painted ceiling.

In contrast to the place, imposing but austere exterior, the interior is lavishly decorated, crammed with treasures accumulated by generations of Boron kings.

Its collections include paintings by Spanish artists Goya, Ribera and Zurbarán, manuscripts, weapons, horse-drawn carriages and 800 precious clocks.

Arab delegates arriving for the talks will find a reminder of the times when their Moorish forebear ruled over most of Spain, and gave the small settlement by the Manzanares river the Arabic name of Madjritth.

The Campo del Moro (Moor's Field) gardens by the palace are named in honour of Emir Eli Ben Yusuf, whose Moorish Legion pitched their tents by the Manzanares in 1109.

## The plight of the Palestinians

5m. people consider themselves Palestinians, 17m. live in Jordan

Region	Population	Notes
ISRAEL	700,000	Full legal rights but lack political influence
WEST BANK	700,000	Emergency regulations since 1967
GAZA	650,000	Most have none
EAST JERUSALEM	145,000	Can take Israeli but few have

Legend: Number of Palestinians, Citizenship, Rights

\* When UN voted to partition Western Palestine in 1947, there were 1.2m. Palestinians and 0.6m. Jews

## A dispute over speech

MADRID (Spain), Oct 29: A dispute over a speech, the first since the Arab-Israeli peace talks in Madrid, is a foretaste of what is sure to be a tough and central issue — the future of the Palestinians, reports AP.

Even before the official delegations had reached Madrid, Israel was objecting to giving the Palestinians equal speaking time alongside the Israelis and the other Arab delegations who will meet in the Madrid.

Israel sees it as raising the prominence of the Palestinians — something Jerusalem has fiercely resisted from the outset of this US-mediated process.

"This would connote as if they were a separate national entity," the Israeli ambassador to Washington, Zelman Shoval, said Monday as he headed to talks with US diplomats hoping to resolve the issue.

The Israelis have shown concern in the weeks leading up to Madrid conference that the United States, their long-time ally and financial backer, is coming down harder on them than on the Arabs to get the talks off the ground.

## The T-shaped table: Who'll sit where

MADRID, Oct 29: Israel and its Arab neighbours will share a T-shaped table at unprecedented Middle East peace talks beginning on Wednesday, and the Jordanian-Palestinian delegation will have twice as much speaking time as the Israeli, reports Reuter.

A Senior US official announced the procedure and agenda for the three-day Madrid conference as the first delegations arrived in the Spanish capital on Monday.

Greg Foster, a member of the joint US-Soviet-Spanish organising committee, said US Secretary of State James Baker and Soviet Foreign Minister Boris Pankin would sit at the head of the T-shaped table, separated by a central podium.

On the right side of the table, after Pankin, will sit the European Community observer, the Jordanian-Palestinian and the Syrian delegates.

On the left side, after Baker, will sit the Egyptian observer and the Israeli and Lebanese delegations.

Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez will open the conference at 0930 GMT on Wednesday with a brief welcoming statement. US President George Bush and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev will follow with 20-minute speeches.

The European Community and Egypt will address the conference in the afternoon.

The direct protagonists will make their presentations on Thursday, the second day, with Israel speaking first for 45 minutes.

Ignoring Israeli protests, the organisers have allotted the Jordanian-Palestinian delegation two 45-minute periods to present its position. Palestinians claimed this was a victory in their quest for recognition.

Lebanon and Syria will both speak on Thursday afternoon.

On Friday, each delegation gets a 15-minute summing up period, with the Jordanian-Palestinian team again getting two periods.

Then Pankin and Baker each will make a 30-minute address before the conference ends at 0930 GMT on Friday.

Asked whether Israel had agreed to the Jordanian-Palestinian delegation getting twice as much speaking time as itself, Foster said: "We have no comment on how the schedule came about."

The spokesman said nothing about the next stage of the talks when Israel will hold separate negotiations with each of its neighbours.