

# Palestinians emerge from Madrid confce with confident image

MADRID, Nov 3: The Palestinians have emerged from the Madrid conference with a new voice and confident image, as epitomised by spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi, but they will need more than diplomatic gains to appear hardliners, reports AFP.

The Palestinian leader in the conference hall, Haidar Abdel Shafi, and a smiling Ashrawi at press briefings set the tone of this quiet determination.

Another delegate Saeb Oreykat draped a keffiyeh — the Palestinian scarf and national symbol — over his shoulders to compensate the flags were not allowed in the Royal Palace's Hall of Columns.

Faisal Husseini, meanwhile, coordinated behind the scenes, allowing Ashrawi to handle most of the public relations and shape a new image under the spotlight of the world media.

The influential battle of the press conferences was fought primarily between the Palestinian spokeswoman and the equally articulate Israeli spokesman, Deputy Foreign Minister Binayamin Netanyahu.

Without raising her voice, with minimal hand gestures, an air of confidence and in perfect English, Ashrawi helped bring the Palestinians from the Israeli-occupied territories into the international arena.

Ashrawi spoke the language of the Western media, moving away from the stiff rhetoric and bluster that have been associated in the past with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

The Palestinians have so far sidestepped the restrictions imposed on their participation in the peace conference by Israel and openly declared allegiance to the PLO, without stating they represent the organisation.

"We have been denied the right to publicly acknowledge our loyalty to our leadership and system of government but allegiance and loyalty cannot be censored or severed," said Abdel Shafi.

"Our acknowledged leadership is more than just the democratically chosen leadership of all the Palestinian people, it is the symbol of our national identity and unity.



Hanan Ashrawi represents defiant Palestinian nation

Netanyahu argued that beneath the appearance of moderation and their emotional appeals inside the conference the Palestinians were still not prepared to recognise the existence of Israel.

The Palestinian delegates and their aides travelled to Madrid despite threats from hardliners who accused them — and the PLO leadership — of

own case, under the discreet guidance of the PLO only time will tell whether a new Palestinian leadership has been born or if the organisation itself is being transformed.

US Secretary of State James Baker praised the Palestinian negotiators of Madrid, "whose personal courage in the face of enormous pressures has created. The possibility of a better life for Palestinians."

But with the end Friday of the three day ceremonial opening, the disputes over a venue for direct negotiations with Israel overshadowed any territorial debate sought by the Arabs.

The challenge from radicals is round to rise unless the Arab Israeli debate moves from procedural issues and the possibility raised by Baker to concrete Palestinian demands however, many diplomatic points are scored.

We must recognise... that some of our people harbour serious doubts and skepticism about this process, warned 72-year-old Abdel Shafi who cut a benevolent grandfather figure at the conference.

## 2 top Israelis hopeful of breakthrough

CAIRO, Nov 3: Israeli politicians Shimon Peres and Ezra Weizman have expressed hope in telephone interviews with an Egyptian newspaper that the Mideast talks would eventually lead to peaceful Arab-Israeli coexistence, reports AP.

In the interviews in Sunday's editions of the state-run Al-Ahram daily, Peres, the Israeli Labour Party chief, said his opposition bloc would support Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir if he opted for a peaceful settlement.

"I firmly stand by peace and will do anything in my power to support the peace process," Peres told the newspaper.

He said the peace conference in Madrid has succeeded in bringing Israelis and Palestinians to the bargaining table for the first time.

Meanwhile, Weizman said the Madrid talks represented a first step on a long path begun by Egypt and Israel with their peace treaty in 1978, made possible by US mediation.

Weizman, a former defense minister and presently an independent member of the Israeli parliament, had participated in the process which produced a peace treaty between the two countries a year later.

## Talks often bitter, but hopes still there

MADRID, Nov 3: The bitter language that clouded the Mideast peace conference showed that the Gulf war, far from ushering in a new world order for Arabs and Israelis, has barely jolted the old one, reports AP.

The Berlin Wall may have fallen and the Soviet empire collapsed, but in the Hall of the Columns of the Spanish royal palace, the talk still was rooted in decades-old grievances, and both Israelis and Palestinians were still defending their very right to exist.

Having spent eight months getting the sides to sit together, US Secretary of State James Baker now faces the equally arduous task of keeping them talking.

The conference was supposed to switch formats over the weekend and become direct negotiations between Israel and each Arab country, but agreement was delayed by a complex wrangle over where to hold the talks.

Still, things were far from hopeless. More than ever before, all sides need to please the United States, which is the main reason they came here in the first place. Israel needs US financial help in absorbing Soviet immi-

grants. The Arabs need American might to defend them against men like Saddam Hussein. Sitting in the conference chamber were observers from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, giving their silent blessing to the occasion.

Moreover, they sat at the conference table as equals, just eight months after they consigned themselves to the losing side by king Saddam.

"We removed the dust from our face after the Gulf war, in which we were the first loser. Now we went back again with a clean face, in the picture and on the map," exulted delegate Frieih Abu Meddani, a Gaza lawyer who once spent a year in prison for anti-Israeli activity.

Daoud Kuttub, a Palestinian journalist from Jerusalem, said: "People who come from refugee camps, who have lived under occupation, experienced being beaten and now being given royal treatment — it's amazing."

Both sides had the opportunity to portray themselves to the enemy as real people, not political caricatures. Netanyahu gave a news conference especially for Arab reporters, and clearly relished the vigorous give-and-take.

## 'Show desire for peace'

JEDDAH, Nov 3: Saudi Arabia "supports efforts for peace" in the Middle East but believes that Israel must show its desire for peace, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal said here yesterday, reports AFP.

"Arab countries have already shown their desire for peace, not only by their presence (at the Madrid peace conference) but also by their stand," Saud said after talks between visiting French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas and King Fahd.

# Bilateral talks to be later shifted to Washington

CAIRO, Nov 3: Arab-Israeli bilateral talks due to start in Madrid today will be later shifted to Washington in response to Arab demands, the official Egyptian news agency Mena said Saturday quoting Arab diplomatic sources here, reports AFP.

"In a first phase the bilateral negotiations will take place in Washington," Mena said citing the unnamed Arab diplomats.

"Then they will be transferred to the Middle East once the concerned parties adopt measures of confidence among them."

"But negotiations between Israel and the Jordanian-Palestinian delegation will be maintained in Washington," the agency said.

"It had been agreed that the negotiations between Israel and the Jordanian-Palestinian delegation take place in Washington, Israeli-Syrian talks in Rhodes (Greece), and Israeli-Lebanese talks in Lausanne."

"But it was then decided that all the negotiations with take place in Washington (in a first stage) at the request of the Arab parties," Mena said.

There was no independent confirmation of the report.

The report came as problem mounted in Madrid on the venue for the face-to-face negotiations, amid Israel's refusal they take place in the Spanish capital.

Israel, which has announced it will attend the opening of the talks today in Madrid, has said it wanted the negotiations to be moved to Israel and the Arab countries involved in the peace conference.

But Syria wants the bilateral talks to be held in Madrid while Palestinians have said they would refuse to travel to Israel for talks, because they refuse to negotiate "under duress."

## Madrid brings pride for Arabs

NICOSIA (Cyprus), Nov 3: Many Arabs from Algeria to Bahrain are taking heart that the Middle East in finally getting the full attention of the world. But in bazaars and bus stops, coffee houses and supermarkets, there was little hope Saturday of a breakthrough, reports AP.

"We are sick of watching it on TV. It is the same old story, rhetoric," said Egyptian maid Mohga Abdel-Salam of the Mideast peace talks in Madrid.

Still, live broadcasts of the opening phase of the conference, which ended Friday, underscored the avid public interest in the peace process. And for many, the converge offered glimpses of an adversary rarely seen so directly.

During the Gulf war, for example, Cable News Network broadcasts in Saudi Arabia were delayed for up to eight hours while they were screened for live reports from Israel and other offensive references.

The speeches that seemed to attract most attention were those of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa and Dr. Haidar Abdul-Shafi, the head of the Palestinian delegation.

"Everyone had to say what they wanted. The main thing for me is that the right of the Palestinians has finally emerged and the world is talking about it now," said Irtifaa Al-Khatib, a Palestinian teacher in Abu Dhabi.

"I hold my head in pride when I hear (Palestinian spokeswoman) Hanan Ashrawi at the press conferences defending our cause," said Lufti Abu Asab, a garage owner in east Jerusalem.

Just the fact that the talks took place gave many people hope.

"The mutual Palestinian-Israeli recognition is a chance for peace," said Abdelkarim Sliamani, a 30-year-old office worker in Algeria.

"May be it will lead to a normalisation of relations between Mediterranean countries, including Israel. From now on there should be a development of mutual trust between Arabs and Israelis to finally allow peace in this part of the world."

In Beirut, Lebanese student Saadah Nahleh said he did not think it possible to make peace with Israel, "he cannot get what he wants from Israel. Only if you give a yard, you get an inch," he said.

Many Arabs said they thought the only way forward was for the United States to pressure Israel to give up territory for peace.

But the rejectionists were holding fast to their adamant opposition to the conference.

The official Libyan news agency JANA reported that dozens of members of the Palestinian youth organization went on a 48-hour sit-in and hunger strike in Tripoli to protest the Madrid conference.

In a protest that began Friday in front of the UN office in the Libyan capital, the demonstrators condemned "the plot against the cause of the Palestinian people," said JANA, monitored in Rome.



AMMAN: King Hussein of Jordan (L) hugs PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat (R) outside the Royal Palace at Amman.

## Arafat gets important message from Pankin

TUNIS, Nov 3: PLO chief Yasser Arafat on Saturday received an "important" message from Soviet Foreign Minister Boris Pankin on the Middle East peace conference, the Palestinian news agency Wafa reported Saturday, reports AFP.

Wafa said the message dealt with the three-day ceremonial opening of the conference which closed Friday in Madrid, as well as the bilateral talks expected to open there today.

Wafa said the message was delivered to Arafat by the Soviet Ambassador to Tunisia, Shibirin Boris Alexeevich. There were no further details.

The Soviet Union and the United States are the cosponsors of the peace conference.

Sources close to Arafat have said that the Palestine Liberation Organisation chief has been closely monitoring the conference and the PLO's Executive Committee met Friday to assess the situation.

Arafat on Saturday said that the "Arab nation is engaging Israel in a crucial and historic political and diplomatic battle," according to diplomatic sources here.

## Syria accuses Israel of bid to sabotage peace talks

MADRID, Nov 3: Syria on Saturday accused Israel of trying to sabotage Middle East peace talks in Madrid with its attacks on South Lebanon where hundreds of civilians have fled in panic, reports Reuter.

Israel shelled the south for a fifth consecutive day on Saturday, stoking fears that it was planning to break out of its self-declared security zone and attack pro-Iranian guerrillas.

# Lakhs flee homes as Israel shells South Lebanon

SIDON (Lebanon), Nov 3: Six days of Israeli shelling and air raids in South Lebanon have forced tens of thousands of villagers to flee their homes, Lebanese security sources said Saturday, reports AFP.

Israel was trying to empty villages close to its self-imposed "security zone" in southern Lebanon to protect itself following a string of pro-Iranian guerrilla attacks this week, observers said.

Lebanese delegates at the Madrid peace conference appealed to the United States and the United Nations to make Israel halt its attacks. They also threatened to pull out of the next stage of negotiations.

Thousands of villagers fled their homes early Saturday after an Israeli-backed militia, the South Lebanon Army (SLA), issued two ultimatums ordering them to leave areas near the security zone.

The SLA, trained and financed by Israel, had ordered all residents and Lebanese Army troops to leave areas near the security zone by the evening, or they would shoot at "everything that moves."

The ultimatum provoked a further exodus of villagers, but the Lebanese Army held its ground and vowed to resist any attack.

A few hours later another ultimatum was issued, but it concerned a more limited area and made no mention of the Lebanese Army.

A third of the 8,000 residents who had fled one village, Kfar Remman returned home later Saturday after an unnamed international organisation helped defuse tension in the area, security sources said.

The first exodus by villagers began five days ago-spurred by the intermittent shelling of the mostly Mowlem communities and tens of thousands of people have been said to have fled north, away from Israeli gunners.

Several villages have been half empty for months as Israeli shelling has occurred before.

# Shamir ordered attacks on British officials in Palestine

JERUSALEM, Nov 3: Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, who has been accused in Madrid of being a terrorist and murderer, was the military head of the underground Stern gang which was responsible for anti-British attacks in the years preceding Israel's creation, reports AFP.

Shamir, 76, has never denied having ordered attacks against British officials in Palestine but he has always stressed that the raids were never aimed at innocents.

But nevertheless the Israeli Prime Minister never publicly explained his role in a string of anti-Arab terrorist attacks which swept Palestine at the end of the 1930s, before Israel's creation in 1948.

Nor did he ever explain why his name was linked to the murder of the UN mediator in Palestine, Count Folke Bernadotte, in 1948.

On Friday in Madrid, the Syrian Foreign Minister whipped out what he said was a wanted notice for Shamir when he was aged 32 and accused him of being a "terrorist and a murderer, implicating him in the murder of Bernadotte."

Recent Israeli reports have sought to shade light on Shamir's past, namely on his days as a leading member of underground groups responsible for terrorist attacks.

According to these publications, the Polish born Shamir first joined the Irgun underground group when he arrived in Palestine in 1935.

When Palestinians launched a protest movement in 1936 against the British mandate and Zionist settlements, Irgun countered their action with a wave of anti-Arab attacks.

The raids were strongly denounced by the leaders of the Zionist movement and the Jewish community of Palestine.



JERUSALEM: A Palestinian youth argues with an Israeli policeman during an identity card check in East Jerusalem's Arab neighbourhood. Security has been increased as the Israeli government fears terrorist attacks

Shamir was then the leader of an Irgun unit in the Tel Aviv region which he described 30 years later as a group in charge of "intelligence and various other activities."

In 1940, Shamir quit Irgun for the hardline Stern group which was founded by a poet and extremist, Abraham Stern, himself a former member of Irgun.

Stern's ambition was to launch the armed struggle against the "British occupying forces."

Following Stern's assassination by British military police in 1942, Shamir became military chief of the group which became known as Lehi, combatants for the liberation of Israel, and as Stern Gang by the British.

Lehi's men executed British police or Jewish auxiliaries, attempted to kill the High Commissioner in Palestine and in 1944 succeeded in assassinating in Egypt the British Minister of State for the Middle East, Lord Moyne.

"A man who is going to kill a man he has never met must be convinced of one thing only: that his action will change the course of history," Shamir reportedly told a friend once.

Arrested several times by British police he was deported to Eritrea in 1946 but one year later he escaped.

In 1948 a Lehi commando killed Count Bernadotte in Jerusalem after he suggested that Jerusalem, which Israel considers part of its undivided capital, be part of a Jordanian state.

Bernadotte had also advocated that the newly-created Jewish state give up some of the territory it had seized from the Arabs.

Shamir has consistently refused to comment on the murder. But former leaders in the Stern Gang have said that Shamir had given the green light to the operation although they could not say what his specific role in the assassination of Count Bernadotte had been.

After the murder, the Israeli government ordered the disbanding of the Stern Group and the imprisonment of its leaders.

Years later Shamir emerged unscathed and found himself a job in the Israeli secret service, Mossad. But once again little has surfaced on his activities there.

# US asks Israel to halt attacks on South Lebanon

MADRID, Nov 3: The United States on Saturday called on Israel to halt its attacks on South Lebanon, the scene of daily bombing during the Middle East peace talks here, a source close to the Lebanese delegation said, reports AFP.

US Secretary of State James Baker, in Madrid for talks, told his Lebanese counterpart Fares Boueiz that he had called on Israel's Defence Minister Moshe Arens to cease all Israeli military operations in South Lebanon.

Boueiz said earlier that Lebanon could decide to stay away from bilateral talks with Israel, scheduled for today, if Israel and its militia allies continued to attack the South.

The Minister on Saturday, the sixth consecutive day of bombardment, protested twice to the US delegation in the Spanish capital over the attacks, the sources said, declining to be identified.

Another report adds: Israeli delegations due to meet Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian-Jordanian negotia-

## Peace only if Israel ceases to exist, says Velayati

TEHRAN, Nov 3: Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati on Saturday said that peace and security in the Middle East would only be possible if Israel ceased to exist, reports AFP.

Velayati, in statements published by the Iranian daily Jomhoori Islami, said the Madrid conference would fail to return an inch of Israeli occupied territory to the Palestinians.

Peace and stability in the region will not be secured as long as the Zionist regime (Israel), whose slogan is Greater Israel, from the Nile to the Euphrates continues to exist, Velayati said.

Jordanians and Palestinians comprising a joint delegation have confirmed that they will attend the talks but Syria and Lebanon were still to issue a response.

The Israeli delegation due to meet Jordanian and Palestinian delegates will be headed by Elyakim Rubinstein, Secretary-General of the Israeli government.

Yossef Ben-Aharon, Director-General of the Israeli Prime Minister's office, will lead talks with the Syrians and Salai Meridor, Advisor to the Defence Minister, is to meet with the Lebanese delegation.