

World Beat

Israelis Can Now Seek Compensation from Iraq for Scud Missile Attacks

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Residents of Israel who were injured or whose property was damaged in Scud missile attacks during the Persian Gulf War can now demand compensation from Iraq.

The claims will be submitted to the United Nations.

Israel's Ministry of Justice has set up a special unit to handle the claims, to be submitted within the next two months.

Meanwhile, with an eye toward future precautions, the Israel Defense Force's Home Front Command began a trial distribution of new gas masks among some 800 families in various parts of the country on Oct. 21.

Six pilot distribution centers were opened, and the results of the trial studied to determine how to continue throughout the entire country.

During a 10-month trial period, updated kits will also be distributed to new immigrants, demobilized soldiers and babies, who did not receive masks during the general distribution days before the start of the Gulf War 18 months ago.

Unlike the previous distribution, civilians will be supplied with masks fitted for their facial and head features.

Existing kits will only be replaced against payment for any parts missing or damaged in the old equipment.

Dutch Crash was Not El Al's First

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Contrary to earlier media reports, the crash of an El Al cargo jet outside Amsterdam was not the airline's first.

Forty-one years ago, some months after the national airline was established, an El Al plane crashed on a landing approach to Kloten airport in Zurich, Switzerland. The November 1951 disaster killed six of the seven crew members aboard.

Veteran airline staffers said the DC-4 cargo plane was one of the few in the company's fledgling fleet at the time.

El Al sources said there had never been any attempt to cover up the 1951 crash. "Nobody asked us about it," a spokesman said.

Only one other El Al plane has been downed: a passenger plane was shot down by Bulgarian fighter planes in 1955 for violating Bulgarian air space.

Kosher Chow Coming to China?

TEL AVIV (JTA) — The lack of kosher food in Beijing may soon be solved, according to Shen Jian Xiang, director of the official China International Travel Service in Tel Aviv.

Talking to travel correspondents here, he said that several investors in Israel and elsewhere had expressed an interest in establishing a kosher restaurant in Beijing, to serve not only observant Israelis now beginning to visit China but also the needs of the many Jews worldwide traveling to China.

Shen expects some 5,500 Israelis will visit his country this year, traveling on the new El Al direct flight and the parallel service to be begun next year by Air China. Other Israelis and Jews are expected to arrive on other airlines coming from elsewhere.

Shen warned that it would be difficult, even for experienced travelers, to visit China on their own, not only because of language problems but also because established travel agencies are needed to obtain local air and rail tickets and hotel accommodations.

Israel Cancels Jet Sale to Taiwan

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Israel has announced it is canceling plans to sell 40 Kfir jet fighters to Taiwan, and the Chinese have promised they will only sell Middle Eastern countries defensive weaponry in limited quantities that would not endanger peace in the region.

The announcements, while not linked, were made during the visit of the Chinese foreign minister, Qian Qichen.

Israel Plans to Airlift Tajik Jews

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel is planning a large-scale airlift of Jews from the strife-ridden Moslem nation of Tajikistan as soon as logistical problems are solved.

The former Soviet republic has been racked with internecine violence. Some 10,000 of the country's 12,400 Jews have filed applications to immigrate to Israel, Jewish Agency Chairman Simcha Dinitz said.

Unlike in other Asian areas of the former Soviet Union, the majority of the Jews in Tajikistan are Ashkenazim.

CJF Shifts Continental Responsibility

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Council of Jewish Federations recently took two steps forward toward a North American Jewish community that sees itself — and governs itself — as more than a collection of localities across the continent.

Meeting in St. Louis, the CJF board of directors approved new bylaws for the organization. The move, which needs to be ratified at the CJF General Assembly this month, would effectively turn CJF into a parliament of the local federations of North America. CJF would even have limited power to tax its member federations.

And in a related change, the CJF board of directors approved a plan that will change the way some national Jewish agencies are funded by local federations.

Both moves are being hailed as enabling federations and the CJF to deal more effectively with problems of a continental nature, including funding population studies, disaster aid, dealing with assimilation and the migration of elderly Jews.

CJF also authorized a \$2 million relief fund for the Miami area, following the damage caused by Hurricane Andrew.

Nicaragua Restores Ties to Israel

WASHINGTON (JTA) — With toasts of "L'chayim" and "Salud," Israel and Nicaragua reestablished full diplomatic relations when the countries' ambassadors here signed an agreement ending years of non-recognition under Nicaragua's Sandinista regime.

"Democracy is not just an expression of an idea in Israel, it is a fact of life," Israeli Ambassador Zalman Shoval said during a brief ceremony at the Israeli Embassy here.

"As long as Israel is surrounded by non-democratic countries, peace will not be a

complete guaranteed matter," he said.

Nicaraguan Ambassador Ernesto Palacio called the restoration of relations with Israel, which were severed by the Sandinistas in 1979, of symbolic importance.

"Nearly 50 years ago, Israel was created after much civil strife. We in Nicaragua are trying to create a democratic society after much civil strife," Palacio said. "We will look to Israel for strong democratic values because it is only through democracy that we can heal the wounds of Nicaragua."

The Central American country is the 25th nation to establish diplomatic relations with Israel in the last two years. Russia, China and India have all recognized Israel since 1990.

According to the Israeli Embassy, Guyana is the only other Latin American country with no formal ties with Israel.

E.C. Strengthening Israel Ties

BRUSSELS (JTA) — The European Community is strengthening its cooperation with Israel as several years of strained ties yield to shared views on Middle East peace efforts.

The president of the E.C.'s executive commission said the change in the climate of relations between Israel and the 12-nation body is "indisputable," following the elections which brought Israel's Labor Party to power in June.

Jacques Delors spoke at a joint news conference with Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres after the two met in the Belgian capital. Peres also held discussions with Belgian Foreign Minister Willy Claes.

Delors said the E.C. would "update" its 1975 free trade and cooperation agreement with Israel after failure to ratify new protocols during the previous Likud-led government of Yitzhak Shamir. The E.C. had frequent criticisms of the previous government's policy in the administered territories.

But Delors ruled out for the time being Israeli membership in the European Economic Area, a large market to be created in 1993 between the 12 E.C. member states and the seven member states of the European Free Trade Association.

However, Delors called for an "ad hoc" solution to help Israel.

Peres used the conference to underline the importance of a European role in the multilateral talks on Middle East regional issues. He spoke of sharing participation with Washington, with the United States playing a central role in Middle East Bilateral talks and Europe holding sway in the multinational discussions.

Peres urged the creation of a special bank for the Middle East created on the model of the European Bank for Reconstruction

and Development for the Central and Eastern European states.

Israeli Firm Wins China Contract

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Motorola Israel, a subsidiary of the giant U.S. electronic communications corporation, has won an international competition for design, provision and installation of a communications network for the People's Bank of China.

The Israeli company, which researches, designs and manufactures equipment for local and export sales and for its parent company, won the contract in competition with other firms throughout the world.

The new equipment will update communications between the Chinese Bank's Beijing headquarters and its hundreds of branches throughout the vast country.

Black Hebrews Get Temporary Residence

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Israeli government has decided to grant temporary residence status to the community of Black Hebrews, in a move that may resolve a longstanding dispute. Interior Minister Arye Deri said the status of temporary resident will be offered to members of the sect, most of whom now live without legal authorization in the Negev town of Dimona.

Israel's High Court of Justice issued a ruling six years ago ordering the deportation of 45 members of the sect for overstaying visas.

The Black Hebrews are a Chicago-based sect claiming to be descended from one of the lost tribes of Israel in Africa. They have been in Israel 23 years.

In 1972, the High Court of Justice ruled that the sect members were not Jews and therefore not eligible for automatic Israeli citizenship.

The government hesitated to expel them, however, for fear of harming relations between Jewish and black communities in the U.S., as well as Israeli ties with black African countries.

The community has accumulated debts to the municipal authorities amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars. News reports said the U.S. government has promised the community a grant of \$1 million to establish community institutions.

Jewish Leaders Criticize Bonn For Its Plan to Deport Gypsies

BONN (JTA) — The Jewish community here and overseas has criticized the German government's move to deport thousands of Gypsies back to Romania.

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