

Israel to Release 2,300 Palestinian Prisoners as Part of Peace Pact

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
JERUSALEM — After months of negotiations, Israel released the first of 2,300 Palestinian prisoners Sunday: a curly-haired teenager who said she didn't regret trying to stab an Israeli soldier two years ago.

Twenty female prisoners also scheduled to be released Sunday stayed in jail to protest Israel's refusal to free four others.

Palestinian officials criticized Israel for violating the newly signed Israel-PLO agreement by not releasing the four.

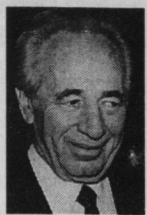
In the accord, signed Sept. 28 at the White House, Israel promised to release all female detainees in the first stage of a prisoner release.

But Israeli President Ezer Weizman

decided against pardoning two women convicted of murder, and Maj. Gen. Ilan Biran, head of the army central command, rejected the release of two others.

"It's a bad omen for the implementation of the whole agreement," Saeb Erekat, Palestinian municipal affairs minister, told The Associated Press.

"The agreement on this issue is black



Israeli Foreign Minister **SHIMON PERES** said the government is working on the prison releases.

and white. Israel has no excuse whatsoever to stall."

Hisham Abdul Razek, chief Palestinian negotiator on prisoners, said Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin had personally promised the women's release when the two sides finalized the autonomy accord last month.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said Saturday that the government had recommended all female prisoners be released, but Weizman and Biran had decided otherwise.

The Israel-PLO agreement also calls for an Israeli troop withdrawal from Palestinian towns in the West Bank, deployment of Palestinian police and Palestinian general elections.

The released prisoner, 18-year-old Bashayer Ali Abu Laben, said she had been in solitary confinement and did not know about the other women's decision to stay in prison.

"It was only when I got outside that my family told me," Abu Laben told The Associated Press. "I felt terrible."

Abu Laben, who was serving a seven-year sentence for attempting to stab a soldier two years ago in Jerusalem, said prison officials told her all the women prisoners were being released.

Surrounded by relatives at her family's home in east Jerusalem, Abu Laben said she'd think twice before doing this again, but that she was not sorry.

"I wouldn't do it again, but I'm not

sorry. I did it for the Palestinian people."

Israel has promised to free 2,300 of the 5,000 Palestinians held in Israeli jails in three stages.

Also Sunday, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat ordered the release of a top leader of

the militant Islamic group Hamas.

The group, which has claimed responsibility for deadly suicide attacks against Israelis, is now negotiating an agreement to renounce violence and become a political party.

Pope's Camden Yards Visit Rivals Ripken's Record Game

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
BALTIMORE — From the cradle of U.S. Roman Catholicism, Pope John Paul II on Sunday urged the faithful to heed America's founding fathers and allow their fellow citizens to express their religious convictions in political debates.

On the final day of his fourth U.S. pilgrimage, the pope celebrated Mass from an altar in center field, where a century earlier stood a saloon run by the father of baseball immortal Babe Ruth.

"Every generation needs to know that freedom consists not in doing what we like but in having the right to do what we ought," John Paul said, warning of the dangers of a permissive society lacking a



POPE JOHN PAUL II

moral foundation.

On a sunny autumn day, the scoreboard at Oriole Park displayed the message, "He is here," as the rock group Boyz II Men serenaded the pontiff touring the baseball stadium in his popemobile. The stadium had not rocked to such cheers since Cal Ripken broke Lou Gehrig's 56-year-old record of playing in 2,130 straight games.

"This is No. 1," said Walter Gentile, an Orioles usher. Ripken's record-breaking game last month? "That's No. 2."

Later, the popemobile took the pontiff in a parade through downtown Baltimore.

Also on his schedule was a meeting with Vice President Al Gore before boarding his TWA plane for Rome.

After an especially busy schedule in New York on Saturday, John Paul appeared less vigorous than he had during Mass in Central Park. He seemed to slouch in fatigue in his green vestments while sitting at the altar, which was set up at the 410-foot mark in deep center field.

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