

Israel will not take Arafat back if he leaves West Bank

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel will not allow Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to return to the West Bank if he leaves the area, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's spokesman said Monday.

The Palestinians have approached Israeli authorities about the possibility of Arafat attending international conferences, Raanan Gissin said.

"He's free to leave, but he's not free to come back," Gissin said the Palestinians were told.

"We have considered Arafat irrelevant for some time, and many in the world are realizing that, too," Gissin said. "If he were not here, perhaps the Palestinians could choose a new way and a new leadership."

Palestinian Cabinet Minister Saeb Erekat called Sharon's stand "despicable" and accused him of sabotaging peace efforts.

Israel charges that Arafat is responsible for nearly two years of Mideast violence by encouraging militants to attack Israel and failing to crack down on extremist groups. Palestinians counter that Israel has neutralized Arafat's security forces in the West Bank, and charge that the Israeli occupation and army operations in Palestinian areas are behind the violence.

With few exceptions, Arafat has been confined to his headquarters in the West Bank town of Ramallah all year by Israeli forces, with tanks surrounding or entering his compound and controlling the area.

Also Monday, Israeli forces shot and killed an armed Palestinian who threw grenades at soldiers in the Gaza Strip, according to military sources, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Soldiers withdrew from a main intersection near the Jewish settlement of Netzarim,

restoring Palestinian traffic through Gaza, the military said. The military cut the road curbing violence last week.

In other developments, Israel's defense minister ordered the army to quickly conclude its investigation into the deaths of Palestinian civilians in recent army raids, Israeli forces in Nablus cut one of the two main roads, and Palestinian educators complained that Israeli restrictions are ruining the new school year.

"If he were not here, perhaps the Palestinians could choose a new way and a new leadership"

— Raanan Gissin
Spokesman for Ariel Sharon

In three attacks from Thursday to Sunday, 12 Palestinians were killed, at least eight of them civilians, including several children. After apologizing on two separate occasions for the deaths, Defense Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer ordered an inquiry to be completed by Friday, an unusually tight deadline.

Some analysts interpreted the quick inquest as a sign of differences between Ben-Eliezer and the new Israeli army chief, Lt. Gen. Moshe Yaalon. In a newspaper interview, Yaalon had called Palestinians a "cancer" and said that they must be totally defeated, while Ben-Eliezer has been work-

ing for easing of tensions and a cease-fire.

After taking control of seven of the eight main West Bank cities and towns in June in response for two suicide bombings in Jerusalem, Israel handed Bethlehem over to Palestinian security last month, part of a test that was to include Gaza. However, there has been no similar movement in Gaza, and each side blames the other.

Israeli media late Monday quoted Palestinian Interior Minister Abdel Razak Yehiyeh calling on his people to stop violent attacks against Israelis and move to nonviolent resistance instead. On Friday, in an interview published by an Israeli newspaper, Yehiyeh, who is in charge of security services, called for an end to suicide bomb attacks.

In Nablus, the largest West Bank city, Israeli soldiers kept a curfew in effect as they blocked one of the city's two main roads, cutting a deep trench with a bulldozer. The Israeli military had no immediate comment.

In Rai, a village north of Nablus, residents say soldiers forced a Palestinian woman to board a jeep and demand that her brother surrender. When she called to him over a loudspeaker that the soldiers were going to blow up her house, he emerged and turned himself in. Then the Israelis removed the explosives and left the village with the Palestinian, they said. The Israeli military had no comment.

The Palestinian Education Ministry said Monday that the widespread curfews are disrupting the new school year, which started Saturday. Thousands of students are unable to reach their schools because of the curfews, confining people to their homes, and Israeli roadblocks and travel restrictions, ministry officials said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Refugees find new life in America

WASHINGTON (AP)—Tightened security imposed after Sept. 11 has, at least temporarily, prevented thousands of people living in squalid refugee camps from starting a new life in the United States.

Increased scrutiny of applicants has produced a sharp decline in the number of refugees — partic-

ularly Muslims — accepted by the State Department for U.S. resettlement.

U.S. officials expect that only half, at best, of the 70,000 refugees projected for resettlement during the year ending Sept. 30 will actually arrive in the country.

Before Sept. 11, many of those still in limbo had already been approved for travel to the United States.

Labor members help support dockworkers

LOS ANGELES (AP) — With labor unrest looming at West Coast ports, the Rev. Jesse Jackson told thousands of union members Monday to "stand your ground" in a rally in support of dockworkers.

President Bush, who has been considering possible federal intervention in case of a walk-out, "wants to make an example of you," Jackson said in a park a few miles from the Port of Los Angeles.

The ports handle more than \$300 billion in trade annually, and a work stoppage would ripple through an already fragile American economy.

Mayor James Hahn sent the president a letter Monday urging him to stay out of the conflict between 10,500 members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union and the Pacific Maritime Association, which represents shippers.

"Federal intervention at this critical juncture is not needed and may well exacerbate the dispute," Hahn wrote.

The contract for workers who

handle trade at 29 major West Coast ports expired July 1. Both sides had kept goods flowing with short-term extensions, but the latest extension expired Sunday.

Without a deal, dockworkers could stage work slowdowns as early as Tuesday. Shipping lines that employ the dockworkers have threatened a lockout if there is a job action.

Union workers ranging from dockworkers to pipefitters to schoolteachers joined in the solidarity demonstration and picnic Monday, where talk centered on the possibility of a strike or lockout.

"If there is no contract, there will be no business as usual at California's ports," said Jerry Acosta, a spokesman for the AFL-CIO.

On average, a full-time longshoreman earned \$80,000 last year and a full-time foreman averaged \$167,000, according to maritime association records.

The sticking points for a new contract are arbitration, health benefits and new technology that could cost jobs.

Congress meets in N.Y. again, 202 years later

WASHINGTON (AP) — The last time Congress met in New York City it rejected royal titles, established the federal judiciary, approved the Bill of Rights and infused the new government with the breath of life.

Members of the Senate and House of Representatives also learned they enjoyed wrangling but could, when pressed, craft a compromise.

Returning this week for the first time in 202 years, Congress convenes at Federal Hall in Manhattan just five days before the first anniversary of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. The special meeting on Friday represents a show of support for the city and a demonstration of resolve in the war against terrorism.

When Congress last convened in New York, the city was home to some 29,000 people, clustered in 4,200 houses on the southern tip of Manhattan Island.

As Congress met in New York's Federal Hall to witness the inauguration of George Washington as the first president, the new government was struggling to define itself.

The old Confederation Congress had ceased to exist on March 3, 1789. The Congress established by the Constitution came into being the next day. But the House and Senate struggled in frustration for more than a month to gain the quorum needed to do business. On April 7, the Congress got to work.

The Senate appointed its first committees, the most important of them charged to "bring in a bill for organizing the Judiciary of the United States."

As it moved from committees to the floor of the Senate and House, the bill tested the ability of both chambers to conduct serious business. And when President Washington signed the Judiciary Act into law on Sept. 24, it was with a sense that the system was working.

By the end of its time in New York, Congress had dealt with appropriation created the State, War and Treasury departments.

Most importantly for the future, it debated and enacted a Bill of Rights, amending the Constitution to protect such basic liberties as freedom of speech, religion and the press.

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