

ISRAEL EASES PLEDGE REQUIREMENT

JERUSALEM (WNS) -- Israel announced a change in the requirement that all foreigners seeking work permits on the West Bank must sign a pledge against support of the Palestine Liberation Organization "or any other hostile organization as defined by law." Instead, the civil administration on the West Bank announced that the pledge has been incorporated into the application for a work permit which each applicant must fill out and sign. Immediate reaction from West Bank academics, who refused to sign the pledge on grounds that it infringed upon academic freedom, charged that the change was merely cosmetic, intended to stifle the storm of controversy the pledge requirement has generated in Israel and abroad. But Israeli legal of-

ficials insisted the change was substantial. These officials said that although the text is identical, the applicant is no longer required to sign a pledge but merely to sign a form to the effect that he or she has been warned that their work permit will lapse if they should engage in any act in support of the PLO or any other hostile group. According to some observers, this difference, though subtle, should enable foreign academics on the West Bank to sign the application without compromising the principles of academic freedom. Pressure to rescind the pledge requirement mounted in recently, especially after reports said that Israel would extend it to foreign clergymen and women who work in social, educational and medical insti-

tutions on the West Bank. In the U.S., Secretary of State George Shultz sharply criticized the pledge requirement and urged the academic communities in Israel and elsewhere to speak out against it. In Washington, the State Department said it welcomed the change of policy by the Israeli authorities but refused to take credit for it. The Department spokesman said it "welcomes what appears to be a moderation" of the earlier directive that would have academics sign the pledge. The spokesman said the matter was an internal Israeli decision and that Shultz' criticism was not the reason for the Israeli action.

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FRENCH GOVERNMENT ACCUSED

PARIS (WNS) -- The French government has brought Franco-Israeli economic relations to a virtual standstill since the beginning of the war in Lebanon, the Israeli Ambassador to

France charged here. Meir Rosenne charged that the decisions taken at a meeting of the Franco-Israeli joint economic commission which last met in April, have not been implemented and

the French have attempted to slow down all commercial exchanges between the two countries.

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