

Israel Praised As An Open Society

WASHINGTON (WNS) — The State Department's ninth annual report on human rights throughout the world again praises Israel as an open society with a democratic government, but with human rights problems because of its control of the West Bank and Gaza.

"Each year we note that despite the tremendous security threat against Israel, it maintains a very vigorous democracy," Elliott Abrams, Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, told a press conference, recently.

Abrams said that the Department's Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1984 finds that the problems for Israel on the West Bank are the result of its having a military government rule there rather than a democratically elected one. He added that there was an increase in violence in the territories in 1984, but it was occupants against occupants — apparently a reference to the Jewish and Arab residents — and not the

military government against the residents. The 1,450-page report, covering 164 countries, was submitted earlier to Congress. It is the fifth such report submitted by the Reagan Administration.

The section on Israel stresses that "Israel is a parliamentary democracy which guarantees by law and respects in practice the civil, political, and religious rights of its citizens."

But it notes, "as in 1983, the most significant human rights problems for Israel continued to derive from the strained relations between Israeli authorities and the Arab inhabitants of the occupied territories. These

problems were exacerbated as a consequence of the activities of Jewish settlers in those areas. During the year, Israeli leaders expressed concern over the potential growth of extreme views and violent actions and their effect on Israeli society."

The report asserts that while living standards in the occupied territories have "risen substantially" since 1967, Israel's economic problems began to affect them last year with less Palestinians working in Israel and a drop in business in the territories.

Iraq's Jewish community, the report states, "is believed to have decreased from 150,000 following World War II to about 400. It was severely

persecuted in the past, but there is no evidence of recent persecution. In 1983 and in late 1984 Western journalists visited the last known synagogue in Baghdad and confirmed that it is still functioning. Only a handful of people, mostly older men, were seen attending services led by two rabbis."

In Syria, "the 3,000-4,000 Jews are free to practice their religion," according to the report. "The situation of the Jewish community has improved in recent years, despite continuing uncertainty over the community's future."

Peres Visits Crash Victims



Jerusalem...Israel Prime Minister Shimon Peres visits Avi, one of the four Israeli soldiers wounded in the crash of a helicopter in a remote desert region, as Avi's father looks on. Surgeons at the Hadassah-Hebrew University Medical Center worked around the clock to minimize the permanent effects of the soldier's injuries. All, except a young soldier now paralyzed from the waist down, are expected to recover fully. The full names of soldiers on active duty with the Israel Defense Forces are withheld for security reasons.

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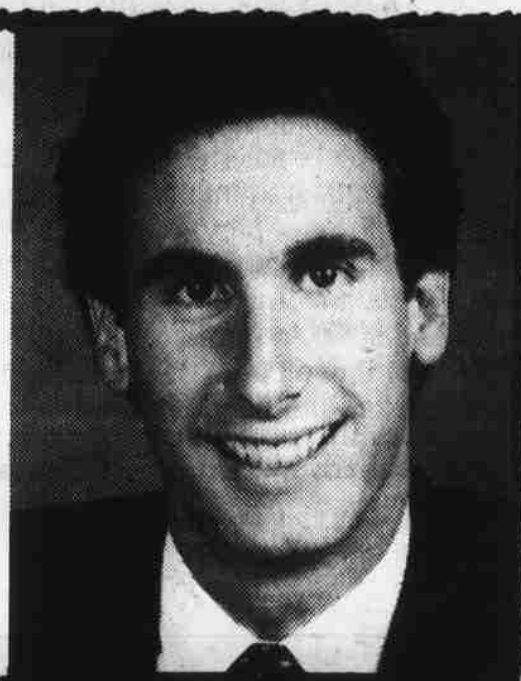


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