

## U.S. Plans To Reject Arab Request To Curtail Israel Trade Benefits

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Israel will not have its trade benefits curtailed by the United States, despite charges from an Arab-American group that Israel has violated the rights of Palestinian workers.

The information is contained in a recommendation by U.S. Trade Representative Carla Hills to President Bush, who is expected to affirm it next week.

In jeopardy was Israel's involvement in the 12-year-old Generalized System of Preferences program, or GSP, which allows certain Israeli products — including gold chains and some chemicals — to enter the United States duty-free.

Last August the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee filed a complaint saying Israel should be disqualified for the benefits because of its treatment of Palestinian workers.

It charged, among other things, that Israel deducts 20 percent of the gross wages of residents of the admin-

istered territories who are legally registered to work in Israel and that it will not allow them to stay overnight within Israel proper.

Israel did not dispute the charges in subcommittee testimony, but convinced Hill, according to the Long Island newspaper Newsday, that "corrective steps are being taken" and that Israel has made "sufficient progress to warrant a continuation" of the trade benefits.

The key point in Hills' recommendation, U.S. and Israeli sources said, was not to consider the administered territories as part of Israel.

According to the Jewish Labor Committee, which testified on Israel's behalf during hearings on the Arab group's complaint, there are 31 independent trade unions on the West Bank and seven in the Gaza Strip.

Israel is "the only democratic country in the Middle East and the only state with a free trade movement," it noted.

## Israelis Release 434 Prisoners

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel released 434 Palestinians from prison recently, but Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin denied that the move was connected in any way with Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's meetings in Washington with Bush administration officials.

The release was officially billed as a goodwill gesture on the eve of Ramadan, the Moslem month of fasting.

Col. Raanan Gissin, of the army spokesman's office, also denied any link between the release and the Shamir visit to

the United States. He said the release would have taken place even if there were no Shamir visit.

The army released 224 prisoners from the Gaza Strip and 210 from West Bank prisons. Most of the freed prisoners were

held for their involvement in anti-Israel activities, including stone-throwing and firebomb attacks.

Many were held under administrative arrest orders for periods of up to six months, without any charges pressed against them. Several were due to be released within a

matter of days. During a tour in the Golan Heights, Rabin told reporters that the release is a gesture of good will toward the Palestinians on the eve of Ramadan. He said the release indicates to the residents of the territories the value of keeping law and order.

## Pianist Jakob Gimpel Dead At 82

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Jakob Gimpel, who made his formal piano debut in his native Vienna at the age of 16, died recently at his home in Los Angeles. He was 82 years old.

As a professor at California State University, Gimpel used to tell his students that "performing artists must have tenacity, endurance and courage."

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