

Canadian Jewish news

Tuxedo Bridge Studio starts new season

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Beilin optimistic about peace with Palestinians

By **SHELDON KIRSHNER**

TORONTO - Yossi Beilin, Israel's dovish justice minister, is cautiously optimistic that Israel and the Palestinians can reach an historic peace agreement that most Israelis would support in a referendum.

Speaking here about three weeks after the collapse of the Camp David summit in the United States, he rated the chances of success at 51 per cent.

One of the architects of the Oslo peace process, Beilin warned that the window of opportunity is fast closing. "In the coming weeks, we'll have to take bold decisions," he said, adding that the era of "false slogans" has passed.

Beilin made his remarks at two venues - a breakfast sponsored by the Canadian Jewish Congress, Ontario region, and UJA FEDERATION and at a meeting with reporters at the Israeli consulate.

Officially here to deliver a keynote speech to the International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists, Beilin met with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and President Bill Clinton's national security advisor, Samuel Berger, before flying to Toronto from Washington, D.C.

Declaring that the "moment of truth" is at hand, Beilin said that Prime Minister Ehud Barak and PLO chair Yasser Arafat had until mid-September to sign a deal.

The tight deadline was dictated by several factors, Beilin observed. Clinton's term is ending, the Palestinians are threatening to declare unilateral statehood, and Barak's coalition government is teetering.

"I hope we have the courage, the creative ideas and the help of the Arab world to move forward."

Beilin doubts whether the Palestinians will reject Israel's "generous" terms to end the conflict. They may never again see an Israeli government as moderate as Barak's.

Pointing out that the two sides have never been closer to resolving their core differences, Beilin declared, "For the first time, we put our cards on the table."



YOSSI BEILIN, Israeli justice minister: He rated chances of success at 51 per cent.

Beilin suggested that a follow-up American-sponsored summit, lasting no more than a couple of days, remained a distinct possibility.

The key issues yet to be resolved are security, borders, a Palestinian state, settlements, Palestinian refugees and Jerusalem. Jerusalem will be the toughest nut to crack, but it is not an "insurmountable" issue, Beilin said.

At Camp David, Barak and Arafat made two crucial concessions. Barak expressed a willingness to cede 28 Arab villages annexed by Israel in the greater Jerusalem area, while Arafat acknowledged that 11 Jewish neighbourhoods built by Israel in eastern Jerusalem since the 1967 Six Day War are in fact Israeli.

The thorniest issue in Jerusalem is the status of the walled Old City, with its array of Jewish, Muslim and Christian holy places. Such is its con-

Parents launch lawsuit against Ont. government

By **BEN ROSE**

TORONTO - The parents of eight-year-old twins diagnosed with autism, are one of 21 couples who are suing the Ontario government for \$75 million.

Robin and Simon Wynberg are part of the group called Friends of Children with Autism. They are suing to cover the cost of being unable to work and for out-of-pocket expenses for therapy for their children. Others involved in the suit include Richard and Sheila Laredo Marcovitz and Susan and Brian Fishman.

In response to the suit, which affects the ministries of health and community and social services, the government, through the attorney general's office, argues that it is not legally or constitutionally bound to provide the services the 21 families are demanding.

The group is seeking to have a therapy known as Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) used with their children in school. ABA is a form of intensive one-on-one therapy based on the work of Dr. Ivar Lovaas of the University of California, Los Angeles.

Autism is a neurological disorder that

tentiousness that the Palestinians still do not grasp the importance of the Temple Mount - the site of the ancient Jewish temple - for Jews, Beilin said.

Some kind of "joint regime" may be the answer in the Old City, he said.

Saying it is in Israel's interest to reach an understanding with the Palestinians on Jerusalem, Beilin noted, "We're the only country in the world without a recognized capital. Why should we be so? Without negotiations, we won't have a recognized capital."

A breakthrough on Jerusalem will make it easier for Israel and the Palestinians to solve the remainder of their problems, he speculated.

Chief among them is the Palestinian refugee issue, the "reddest" of red lines. For demographic reasons, Israel cannot and will not admit Palestinian Arabs displaced by the 1948 war.

"If we agree to absorb the refugees, it is the end of the Jewish state."

Palestinian leaders understand Israel's objection, but they have yet to convey this message to their people. At Camp David, Beilin disclosed, Palestinian negotiators fought for a formula that would appear to give the refugees the right to return to their former homes in what is now Israel.

In his view, the impasse over refugees can be broken through the mechanism of a compensation plan and by their resettlement in an independent

Palestinian state.

Turning to a related topic, Beilin said that Israel wants to annex three Jewish settlement blocs, with 80 percent of the settlers, in the West Bank.

Beilin, however, explored the very concept of settlements in the disputed territories. "The whole idea of settling the areas was wrong," he said, explaining that Israel could have demanded strategic positions in the Jordan Valley had the settlers not been a factor in the equation.

Describing the settlements in the Gaza Strip as "such a huge mistake," Beilin implied that they may be dismantled as part of a peace accord.

Beilin said that Israel has developed "a constructive dialogue" with the Palestinians, but the "sticking points" are "very problematic."

He predicted that Barak will rebuild his shattered coalition government should peace talks fail, and call an election if they succeed.

He did not rule out the possibility of an interim agreement, saying that he was personally in favour of one should a comprehensive accord elude the negotiators.

If a peace treaty is signed, Beilin said, Israel may be able to abolish its state of emergency. Enacted in 1948, the year of its birth, it was extended by the Knesset in July for another six months.

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Canadian Jewish news

Israel erred on international court: Cotler

Could have modified provision aimed at the Jewish State

By **PAUL LUNGEN**

TORONTO - Israel made a key tactical error during the multilateral negotiations in Rome that established an International Criminal Court (ICC), an international law conference was told several weeks ago. As a result, the war crimes offences covered in the Rome Treaty include a provision that appears to be directed specifically at Israel.

Canadian MP Irwin Cotler and U.S. lawyer Jerome Shestack agreed Israel erred during the Rome negotiations. "Many in Israel thought Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) did not have the power to supersede the wishes of the United States," Cotler said.

"Israel made a mistake in its negotiating tactics and the United States made a monumental mistake," Shestack added.

Cotler and Shestack were speaking at a conference of the International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists (IAJLJ). The meeting, which was held in Canada for the first time since the IAJLJ was founded in 1969, brought together about 200 lawyers, professors and judges from across the globe. Participants hailed from Canada, the United States, Israel, Argentina, Britain, France, Germany, Austria, South Africa, Costa Rica,



IRWIN COTLER: Arab proposal specifically targeted transfer of Israeli civilians into West Bank settlements.

Brazil, Greece, Italy and Switzerland.

The conference theme this year was Pursuing Justice in the Global Village.

In the months leading up to the event, the conference was touted as a key development for the IAJLJ. "It signifies a desire of the association to bring it to the attention of many more lawyers and jurists in North America who are interested in the association's work," said conference chair Igor Ellyn.

However, in the aftermath of the event, Ellyn's feelings were mixed. "The conference overall was very successful. The disappointment of the organizers was that considering the potential of a niche market of Jewish jurists, lawyers and law professors, we didn't attract more than the delegates we got. The organizers are puzzled why we didn't get more people."

Ellyn estimated there are as many as 30,000 Jewish lawyers within a two-hour radius of Toronto, including New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. Despite the poor attendance, he felt "the (IAJLJ's) exposure was increased even if people didn't register."

With a break-even figure of 400, the conference will run a deficit, though it's too early to give a specific figure, Ellyn said.

One positive result from the meeting is the desire by some young Canadian lawyers to form local IAJLJ sections in Toronto, Montreal and other Canadian cities, he added. The organization's Web site is: www.iajljtoronto.com.

The conference addressed a broad range of topics, including human rights, democracy, commerce, crimes against humanity, electronic anti-Semitism, and the way in which Jewish and Israeli issues are portrayed in the international media. Participants also heard from

Israeli Justice Minister Yossi Beilin, who discussed recent legal developments in the Jewish State.

While Beilin suggested Israel may yet sign on to the ICC, Cotler and Shestack said Israel might have influenced a different wording of the treaty had it participated in pre-agreement discussions.

They were referring to an Arab proposal that Israeli critics believe enlarged the nature of the offences covered under the treaty to specifically target the transfer of Israeli civilians into West Bank settlements.

Had Israelis "worked with the ICC process, they could change the language (and would have) removed the extension of language that makes it look like it applies to Israel," Cotler suggested.

Shestack, former U.S. ambassador to the UN Commission of Human Rights, said the United States opposed creation of the ICC because it was concerned its peacekeepers could be charged as war criminals by the country's international opponents. Shestack, a past president of the American Bar Association (ABA), said the ABA is "strongly in favour of the United States signing" the treaty.

During a question period, Professor Yaffa Zilbershats of Israel's Bar-Ilan University said she was concerned that by enlarging the universal jurisdiction over war crimes, "people can be prosecuted wherever they go around the world... I fear the fact that states are getting a parallel universal jurisdiction," she said.

In earlier remarks, Cotler noted that on July 7, Canada became the 14th country to ratify the ICC treaty. Sixty states must ratify the treaty before the ICC can be created. Cotler predicted the ICC might be in operation by 2002.

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Your Federation/CJA Gift at Work

"Growing old isn't glorious. For me, this isn't a golden age."

When Hellen was battling depression about a decade ago, she turned to Jewish Child and Family Service. She was placed in a women's group that met regularly. Hellen found great comfort through the connections she made.

But since that time, Hellen's life has become even more challenging. She lost her husband, she needs a wheelchair and her memory is starting to fail her.

Before she moved into an assisted-living apartment complex, a JCFS volunteer - a Jewish university student named Daniel - went grocery shopping with her, and then for her. Today, her meals are taken care of by her apartment complex, but Daniel still visits. "He's a wonderful, young man," says Hellen. "He would have made a wonderful grandson."

Daniel's visits, plus frequent contact with her JCFS social worker, brighten Hellen's life. Her social worker advocates on her behalf, helps her get to medical appointments, offers friendly visits, and, above all, listens. Hellen's face lights up when her JCFS social worker shows up.

"I don't like being dependent, but I appreciate everything the community does for me," she says. "They make my life better."

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