

ARAB STATES - ISRAEL: Egyptian and Syrian leaders are meeting in Cairo to prepare for the opening next week of the Geneva peace conference. The Israelis, meanwhile, are taking forceful steps to halt a spate of terrorist activity in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Syrian President Asad arrived in Cairo yesterday to consult with President Sadat. Asad is expected to attempt to coordinate with Sadat a negotiating strategy for the peace conference. A lower ranking Syrian delegation has been in Egypt for the past few days to discuss such cooperation. Asad came to Cairo directly from two days of talks with President Qadhafi in Tripoli, suggesting that another purpose of his trip may be to help ease the currently strained relations between the Egyptian and Libyan leaders.

Egypt's opening presentation to the peace conference will have a significant bearing on the outcome of Israel's Knesset elections on 31 December, according to well-placed members of the Israeli Labor Party. Sources of the US Embassy in Tel Aviv have stressed that the Labor Party's electoral prospects would be greatly enhanced by a "moderate and constructive" Egyptian statement that the party could present to the public as evidence that the conference could lead to a viable peace settlement. A hard-line Egyptian presentation of nonnegotiable demands, it is felt, would strengthen the showing of the opposition Likud coalition by enabling it to characterize Israeli participation in the conference as a surrender to international pressures.

Israel has taken severe measures to counter the recent surge in terrorist activity in the West Bank. According to press reports, Tel Aviv yesterday deported to Jordan eight Arab residents of the West Bank--including an Arab mayor and a member of the Islamic Council in Jerusalem--accused of urging cooperation with Arab guerrillas. In addition, Israeli authorities for the first time in four years

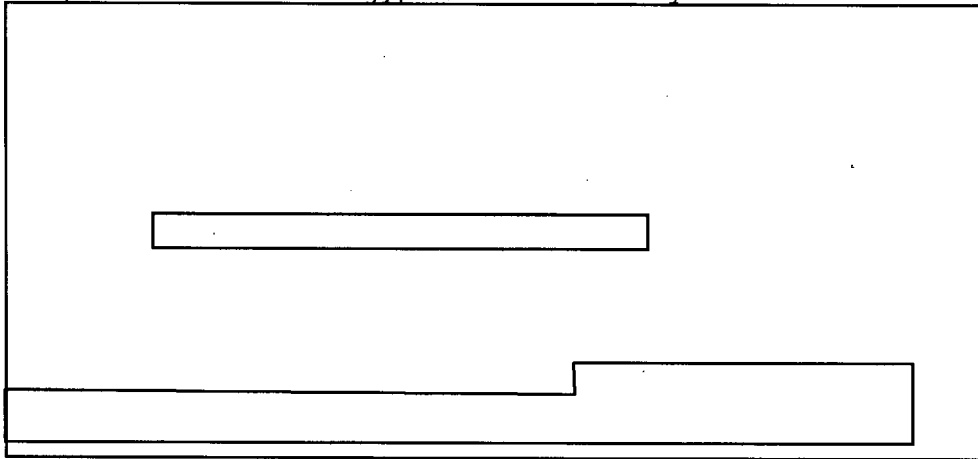
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imposed a curfew in Nablus, the West Bank's major city and the site of the attack on 8 December on the Israeli military governor. Israeli security forces, meanwhile, reportedly destroyed five houses belonging to alleged Arab terrorists. In Amman, a spokesman for the Jordanian Government last night denounced the deportations as a "tyrannical action" that violated international law.

Military activity yesterday was primarily limited to exchanges of small-arms fire and was very light on both the Egyptian and the Syrian fronts.



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