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Autonomy Talks

At the end of the ministerial-level Palestinian autonomy talks in Cairo, Egyptian Foreign Minister Kamal Hasan 'Ali read a final statement on the points of agreement among the participating delegations. Reporting on the statement, Cairo radio said it reiterated the parties' adherence to the Camp David agreement as the only path to peace in the Middle East and their determination to continue the negotiations. The radio said they continued to work toward agreement on a declaration of principles and understanding, which will help to create practical measures for the transitional phase. MENA reported that after 'Ali read the statement he and Israeli delegation head Yosef Burg, the Israeli interior minister, held a press conference. 'Ali said the talks focused on the powers and responsibilities of the proposed autonomy administrative council, but that "there is still a gap between us." Asked if there is a target date for completion of the talks, both 'Ali and Burg agreed that while there is a goal, there is no set date for achieving it. 'Ali explained that no declaration of principles and understanding had been made because there is continued disagreement over "certain main points." Burg acknowledged that while some progress has been made in certain areas, there has been none in others, adding, however, that "we have become more aware of our points of difference."

A Jerusalem radio report said the latest round of the autonomy talks had resulted in no progress.

According to the radio, earlier in the day Egyptian President Husni Mubarak met with the Israeli negotiating team for a little less than an hour. Afterward, Mubarak told newsmen that he will visit Israel next year, MENA reported. Jerusalem radio said that during the meeting the president repeated several times that he has "taken note" of Israeli Foreign Minister Yitzhaq Shamir's recent statement that Israel has made all the concessions it can.

Egypt

Indictment of Plotters -- MENA transmitted the text of the indictment released by the military prosecutor against 24 persons involved in the 6 October assassination of President Anwar as-Sadat. The document notes that the various offenses call for the death sentence.

Charges of Prison Deaths; Hunger Strike -- AFP reported that three Muslim fundamentalists arrested last month after the assassination of President as-Sadat have died under torture, according to allegations by their relatives. AFP noted that a senior Interior Ministry official dismissed the allegations as baseless and also denied a charge by the Muslim Brotherhood this week that an editor of the organization's magazine, Kamal as-Sananiri, arrested during the September purge, died on 9 November in a prison near Cairo.

AFP also reported that in the same prison other prisoners held in connection with the As-Sadat assassination have entered the eighth day of a hunger strike protesting the legal and physical conditions of their detention.

Israel

Arens Remarks -- Jerusalem radio reported that Israeli officials described as a "storm in a teacup" the furor over MK Moshe Arens' remarks in Washington that the Saudi peace plan is a "step ahead." In a statement to the radio, Arens said his remarks had been misinterpreted, adding that he had said that "extremist" Arab states are trying to create an impression of moderation through vague, albeit new, statements. The radio's Arabic service also broadcast a statement by Arens in which he said the Saudi peace plan goes "a little ways in the right direction, but a long ways from making Saudi Arabia a partner for peace negotiations with Israel." According to Jerusalem radio, Prime Minister Menahem Begin's office believes Arens' remarks were a slip of the tongue. Tourism Minister Avraham Sharir said that, if Arens made the statement attributed to him, his candidacy for the post of ambassador to the United States should be reconsidered.