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the peace process

are we getting anywhere or just going around in circles?

Bruzonsky says the only losers are the Palestinians
page 4

Killing marks sixth Arab victim in party store hold-ups in 1992

DETROIT - This week, Najah Nafso was to have taken the oath to become an American citizen.

Instead, he became the sixth person of Arab origin killed in Detroit area party store holdups this year.

Nafso of Madison Heights was shot in the head and leg and robbed about 10 p.m. Saturday by a lone gunman at his west side New Way Party Store, police said Sunday.

He was dead on arrival at Grace Hospital. Police have no suspects in custody; an undetermined amount of money was taken.

Customers said Nafso, 49, had a simple recipe to attract a steady stream of customers: friendly prices and service.

Perplexed customers turned away Sunday from the padlocked store in the 14400 block of Joy Road. Bloodstains on the sidewalk marked the spot where Nafso was killed.

and they were a nickel short, he would give whatever they wanted and say 'Bring it whenever you have it.' The prices were nice and he was a nice person."

"These days in Detroit, you need an Uzi and tanks for your business."

"From what I know, he never had any confrontations with anyone in the neighborhood," said Vivian Garrett, a frequent shopper. "He was real friendly with the kids. If they came in

The shooting has cast a shadow over the normally bustling intersection of Joy and Strathmoor.

"Usually...it's filled with kids
See **SLAIN** page 5

Rights group charges torture being used in south Lebanon

CHICAGO - Detainees in the Khiam detention center in south Lebanon have been tortured during interrogation and many cut off from the outside world for years, according to an Amnesty International report released today.

About 200 detainees are held in the center. "Most men and women held in Khiam have been tortured to get information", AI said, "and we fear this pattern is continuing." Although the overall conditions of detention have improved over the years, detainees in Khiam have no access to families or to humanitarian organizations such as the International Committee of the

Red Cross (ICRC), and appear to be held outside any legal framework, AI said.



Gen. Antoine Lahd

The report gives detailed testimonies of former detainees. They tell of severe beatings with thick electric cables and being doused with water while

hung from an electricity pole. They also tell of electric shocks of increasing voltage, the electrodes placed first on their fingers, then on more sensitive parts of the body such as the tongue, penis or nipples.

Former detainees have also described the torture or ill-treatment of close relatives. One detainee says his 50-year-old mother was tortured while held in Khiam for three months. "They tortured her to put pressure on me", he told AI. "Eventually, when I heard her scream, I confessed". Although the Khiam detention center is staffed by the South Lebanon Army (SLA), evidence indicates that Israeli officials have been directly involved in interrogation and torture in

See **KHIAM** page 3

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Peace talks serving their purpose - to help Bush and Shamir get re-elected

What might be, at least until next year and the likely triumphant return of George Bush to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, the last "round" of "peace talks" concluded here in Washington a few days ago.

Rome is next in this diplomatic merry-go-round with a bunch of sub-stations along the way as regional talks on specific themes break out beginning in Ottawa in a few days.

Since Madrid everything so far has gone pretty much as expected. And that includes Israel's anticipated boycotting of the upcoming regional talks should the Palestinians send "unacceptable" delegates - as they plan to and should. Indeed, it's what they should have done all along, going right back to Madrid, putting the Americans in the hot seat having to decide how to handle their Israeli client.

Overall, the Israelis have combined stalling for time - time which they are using well to further crush the intifada and to further expand control of the occupied territories with a reinvigorated orgy of new settlements and expansion of old ones - together with crafty maneuvering for negotiating position.

With superstar political showmen like Deputy Foreign Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Washington ambassador Zalman Shoval to handle the media, the Israelis have managed to portray absolutely outrageous policies as somehow somewhat reasonable.

Indeed the Israelis have become masters of public deception. Just as they have infiltrated the Middle East with spy rings and clandestine operatives, they have seeded the "peace talks" with one political mine-field after another. Under these circumstances, the chances of a serious breakthrough to a real peace are all but nil.

Israel's latest "pilot municipal elections" ploy hardly fooled the small world of Middle East professionals as anything more than gimmickry. But it did further confuse an already bewildered and increasingly dazed public for which the



by MARK A. BRUZONSKY

"peace talks" are already little more than sideshow - just as the Israelis planned they would be.

For the Israelis this latest "elections ploy" is a careful maneuver that makes much sense and was carried off with characteristic finesse and gamesmanship.

First of all they pre-empted the Palestinian positions, positions which in themselves have become increasingly difficult to understand and inherently complex.

By allowing themselves to be diverted from the key issues of an end to the occupation, independence and Statehood - clear concepts that everyone can appreciate and very many support - the Palestinians have blundered down a path that sweet-talking James Baker has prepared for them.

But most of all this last Washington round of talks has made it more possible for both the Shamir Government and the Bush Administration to go into their respective election campaigns claiming "progress" in the "peace talks."

"Slow progress" and "cautious hope," these are the buzz-terms desperate politicians use when they've little serious to offer but want to get themselves voted back into office.

"Better he you already know - and who is already engaged in pushing forward important initiatives - than someone new" - so the basic message goes.

And the "elections ploy" gambit

may hence become more credible for all too many voters.

Though the polls both in Israel and the U.S. seem to give the challengers a good opportunity to replace those now holding power, it's likely in the end that come 1993 the same players will be in charge.

But even if there should be a Bill Clinton in the White House

rhetoric and tone aside the Bush-Baker Administration is the most pro-Israeli in history, even more so than the Reagan Administration before it!

Just look at the actual facts of what is going on today, Friedman kept pointing out.

First, the Americans insist on keeping Israel militarily far superior to any combination of Arab forces even now with Iraq pretty much knocked out of the equation. Indeed the strategic alliance begun in the Reagan-Bush years has continued to steadily expand in scope and emphasis for more than a decade now.

Second, unlike Reagan who at least verbally backed an international conference, Bush and Baker have done exactly what the Israelis have always wanted by arranging Middle

This administration is the most pro-Israeli in history. The UN and the PLO are out of the picture, autonomy has replaced independence, and occupation proceeds apace. The Palestinians have been diverted from the key issues of an end to the occupation, independence and statehood.

and/or a different Yitzhak heading Israel's government, when it comes to the "peace process" currently underway, there are basic national interests widely perceived by both the U.S. and Israeli political establishments. Consequently, even a change at the helm in either country is not likely to seriously alter overall strategies or base policies, no matter what shifts in tone, emphasis or rhetoric there might be.

The other day - while Arab Americans met across the river in Arlington at the annual conference of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) clearly giving their endorsement, and their hopes, to Bush and Baker - New York Times Middle East correspondent Thomas Friedman was being broadcast on cable TV insisting that

East peace talks totally devoid of any U.N. presence, by pushing the PLO far into the background, by agreeing with Israel to emphasize "autonomy", and by allowing Israel's occupation of the occupied territories to actually expand even while the peace talks take place.

Third, there's all too much evidence of the good guy/bad guy syndrome in regard to today's political moment. Sure the "loan guarantees" have been put on hold. But the overall relationship with Israel proceeds with more money and more arms than ever before. Sure there are rhetorical spats, especially between Bush and Shamir. But isn't this just what one would expect in order to give the illusion of American "even-handedness" when the reality of such is missing?