

Mobile couple sees continuing PLO threat to state of Israel

By SYLVIA HART
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Mobile Paul Filben called the completion of an evacuation of Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) members from Lebanon this week "a significant breakthrough."

FILBEN AND his wife Mary, local Catholic laypersons, spoke to the Mobile Ministerial Association about a trip they took last month to Israel and Lebanon under the sponsorship of the National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel, a U.S. interdenominational organization based in New York which, as its name indicates, is supportive of Israel.

Military forces from the United States, Italy and France this week ended the evacuation of a reported 15,000 PLO guerrillas, Syrians and Palestine Liberation Army members from areas of Lebanon where they were surrounded by Israeli military forces. The Israeli forces had begun their siege in Lebanon in early June.

THE DISPERSING of the PLO members from Lebanon to several Arab countries "breaks down that huge PLO war machine" in Lebanon and "can be an effective deterrent of some world terrorism," said Filben, who is an active participant in Jewish-Christian dialogue sessions which are in their eighth year in Mobile.

In the interfaith clergy meeting at Government Street United Methodist Church, Mrs. Filben said the 56 persons on the trip sponsored by the National Christian Leadership Conference visited an area near Lebanon's capital of Beirut

on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea where "a cache of ammunition and arms had been found" by the Israelis.

THE ISRAELIS "had found a room filled with document after document after document that would prove to the free world that in this little area was where the major terrorists of the whole world were being trained, including the Red Brigade of Italy, the PLO, the Syrians and many more," said Mrs. Filben.

While calling the evacuation of the PLO a positive action, Filben, a staff member of a Mobile hospital, said he still foresees much trouble in the Middle East.

Filben quoted Farouk Kadoumi, head of the PLO political department, who said in an interview by writers for a German magazine, Stern, that "the Palestinians will continue to operate on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in spite of the ceasefire on the Israel-Lebanon border.... We will never allow Israel to live in peace.... Every Israeli will feel that behind every wall a terrorist may be concealed.... Even if the Palestinians achieve a state of their own on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the PLO will never recognize Israel."

The Israeli government this week rejected a proposal by President Reagan that Palestinians who live in the West Bank and Gaza areas should govern themselves "in association with Jordan." The West Bank and Gaza have been occupied by Israel since an Israeli-Arab war in 1967.

MRS. FILBEN SAID Asher Naim, director of the information division in the foreign minister's office in Israel, spoke to the American group, saying that

"Israelis still suffer today for having won the war in 1948. The world has never forgiven the Israelis for winning that war."

Israel came into existence in 1948 after the United Nations voted in 1947 to end British control of Palestine and divide the country into a Jewish state and an Arab state. After the division in 1948, Israel was attacked by Arabs, but Israel was the victor in the war.

Thousands of Palestinians fled from their homes in 1948. Today the Palestinians say they were driven from their homes by the Israelis while the Israelis say the Palestinians left at the direction of Arab leaders, who have since used the Palestinians as pawns in struggles against Israel. The Filbens supported the Israeli version.

THE PLO MEMBERS who were evacuated this week from Lebanon had been based there since they had been expelled from Jordan in 1970.

In 1970, according to Filben, King Hussein of Jordan "was responsible — and this is a matter of record — for killing 10,000 Palestinians in order to preserve his kingship. In the Christian world, Moslem world and among their Arab friends not one word of protest was heard."

The PLO's presence in Lebanon since 1970 was a contributing factor to a Lebanese civil war that broke out in 1975. Involved in that war were Moslem and Christian Lebanese plus the PLO and others.

SINCE THE LATE 1970s particularly conflicts have been breaking out between the PLO in Lebanon and Israeli forces. These conflicts have been across the border dividing Lebanon from Israel.

The Filbens said to the Mobile clergy what they had said in an earlier Press Register interview: "There was selectivity of target areas" by the Israelis in their siege of Lebanon in the past 11 weeks. The Israelis bombed military targets where PLO members were holed

up among Lebanese civilians. The Israelis did not aim at civilians.

FROM THEIR observations in a day's travel across Israel's northern border into Lebanon and up the western coast to Beirut midway in Lebanon, the Filbens presented their view that damage in Lebanon by the Israelis is not as extensive as has been reported by American news media.