

## **Summary of a meeting between Foreign Minister Levy and Algerian journalists, 26 June 2000**

*This was the first time that publicity had been given to a visit to Israel by a delegation of Algerian journalists, most of them also academics. Apart from an exchange of words between Algerian President Bouteflika and Prime Minister Barak at the funeral of Moroccan King Hassan II in July 1999, there had been no formal contacts or ties between Israel and Algeria. FM Levy hoped that this would be corrected in the near future. Text:*

Foreign Minister David Levy met yesterday morning (26 June) with a delegation of Algerian journalists. This is the first visit to Israel by leading Algerian academics.

Foreign Minister Levy expressed his willingness to visit Algeria, if extended an official invitation, and to host senior officials of the Algerian government in Israel.

Levy briefed the journalists on the various tracks of the peace process and gave them an update on Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon. The Minister spoke also about the rights of minorities in the State of Israel and about Algerian-Israeli relations.

Concerning Algerian-Israeli relations, Minister Levy said that Israel desires to improve its ties with Algeria through various means, such as cultural meetings, joint projects, free dialogue and meetings between senior officials of both countries. He concluded that Algeria will always find Israel ready and willing to strengthen the relations between them.

Minister Levy emphasized Algeria's democratic character, expressing his appreciation towards the Algerian government for allowing this type of delegation to visit Israel. He noted the absurdity of the fact that, although we have no quarrel with Algeria, the latter is prevented from enhancing its ties with us.

As for the Syrian track, the Foreign Minister stated that Israel is prepared to renew peace talks with Syria's new leader at any time, and expressed his belief that internal interests will be the deciding factor in future Syrian moves.