

fort. On June 17, BBC "Panorama" aired an hour-long exposé of Sharon's role in the massacre of 800 unarmed Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Lebanon in 1982.

The devastating exposé featured lengthy statements by Morris Draper, President Ronald Reagan's special emissary to Lebanon, who held Sharon (then Israel's Minister of Defense) personally responsible for the massacre. Simultaneous with the "Panorama" exposé, a group of Palestinians who survived the Sabra and Shatila massacres filed a war-crimes complaint against Sharon in a Belgian court. That case is under review.

Washington sources confirmed to this author that, at the time of the massacre, some prominent officials in the Reagan Administration were pressing to bar Sharon from entering the United States. That was averted by Sharon's forced resignation from office.

Sen. Mitchell Delivers Message to Washington

by Michele Steinberg

On June 25, one day before Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon arrived in Washington, former U.S. Sen. George Mitchell, who headed the commission founded at Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, on the causes of Israeli-Palestinian violence, warned that either the recommendations of the commission must be adopted by Israel and the Palestinian leadership, and pursued by the United States, or the "alternative is . . . unthinkable." Mitchell had invited former Sen. Warren Rudman, the other American who served on the five-person commission, to join him at the press briefing. The presence of Rudman, a prominent Republican, was an important signal that the efforts from the United States to stop the drive to Middle East war, must be bipartisan.

Mitchell made one of the most important statements during the question period. It concerned a White House visit by Palestinian Authority President Yassir Arafat, and follows immediately below.

Moderator: Prime Minister Sharon from Israel is going to return to Washington . . . his second official visit. But the Bush Administration has yet to meet with the Palestinian leader Arafat. Do you think the U.S. should invite Mr. Arafat to come and speak with him soon?

Mitchell: Yes, I do. And I think that is the intention of the administration at the appropriate time. I think it would be presumptuous of us to attempt to dictate to the administration . . . in this public forum on when the best time would be. . . . But I believe that it should be, and I expect that it will be, at

the appropriate time.

From Mitchell's formal remarks:

Last October, the leaders of the government of Israel, the Palestinian Authority, the United Nations, the European Union, and the governments of Egypt, Jordan, and the United States, met in a summit at Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt. They agreed that an international committee should be formed to look into the then-recent outbreak of violence between Israelis and Palestinians. In November . . . President Clinton asked us to serve on the committee, along with the former President of Turkey, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway, and the European Union's High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy.

In January . . . Secretary of State Colin Powell, acting on behalf of the Bush Administration, advised us of his support for the continued work of the committee.

Throughout our inquiry, we made it clear to . . . Israel and the Palestinian Authority that we were dependent upon their cooperation, and that if either permanently withheld its support, we would terminate our activities. . . . They chose to support our work.

As we said in our report, a cessation of violence cannot be sustained for long without movement on the further steps. . . . The restoration of trust is essential. We recommend several steps to this end. Given the high level of hostility and mistrust, the timing and sequence of these steps are obviously crucial. This can be decided only by the parties. We urge them to do so promptly.

The Palestinian Authority should make clear, through concrete action, to Palestinians and Israelis alike that terrorism is reprehensible and unacceptable, and . . . make a 100% effort to prevent terrorist operations and to punish perpetrators. . . .

The government of Israel should freeze all settlement activity, including the natural growth of existing settlements. [It] should ensure that the Israeli Defense Force adopts and enforces policies and procedures encouraging non-lethal responses to unarmed demonstrators. . . .

The Palestinian Authority should prevent gunmen from using Palestinian populated areas to fire upon Israeli populated areas and Israeli Defense Force positions. . . .

The government of Israel should lift closures, transfer to the Palestinian Authority all tax revenues owed, and permit Palestinians who had been employed in Israel to return to their jobs, and should ensure that security forces and settlers refrain from the destruction of homes and roads, as well as trees and other agricultural property in Palestinian areas. We acknowledge the government of Israel's position that actions of this nature have been taken for security reasons; nevertheless, the economic effects will persist for years. . . .

Finally, we recommend the parties find a way back to the negotiating table. A halt to the violence, resumption of security cooperation, and steps to restore trust *cannot long be sustained* without serious negotiations.