

# Sharon and IDF Launch The 'Passover War'

by Dean Andromidas

Since Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon came to power 16 months ago, *EIR* has insistently warned that he, and Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) Chief of Staff Gen. Shaul Mofaz, intended to crush the Palestinian Authority and its leadership, and reoccupy the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The West Bank is now all but completely reoccupied, Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat is a prisoner of the Israeli military, other Authority leaders are being hunted, and its security officers are being killed.

*EIR* warned as well that Sharon and his generals were preparing to use the same tactics the Nazis employed in destroying the Warsaw Ghetto. Now, brutal scenes, not witnessed since the Balkan wars, can be seen on living room televisions around the world; the Vatican publicly accuses Israel of practicing the "extermination of Palestinians."

Our warnings also included what Sharon and the IDF generals would do next. Once the territories were reoccupied, phase two would be a new regional war, most likely beginning with attacks on Lebanon and Syria. Under these conditions the Palestinian and Arab-Israeli populations would be pushed across the Jordan River, and the Lebanese and Egyptian borders.

This war plan is now threatening to merge with the "phase two war on terror" of the U.S. global-war faction, centered on an attack on Iraq. On March 28, U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld declared at a press conference, "Terrorists have declared war on civilization, and states like Iran, Iraq, and Syria are inspiring and financing a culture of political murder and suicide bombing."

## Bush Speech Gives a Green Light

U.S. 2004 Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche warned that President George W. Bush's April 4 announcement that he would send Secretary of State Colin Powell to the region was nothing less than a green light for Sharon to continue his atrocities. Israeli press reported that Sharon was "pleased" with Bush's speech, having given the Israeli military "full justification." Bush gave no time limit for an end to incursions into Palestinian territory. The Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* reported that Sharon, via Israeli Ambassador David Ivri, had direct input into the White House speech.

Within 24 hours, had Sharon announced his displeasure with a new UN resolution and his defiance of it, when

informed that the United States, along with the other 14 members of the UN Security Council, had unanimously passed Resolution 1403, which says that the UNSC, "*gravely concerned*" about the "deterioration of conditions on the ground, . . . *demand*s the implementation of its resolution 1402 (2002) without delay." Resolution 1402, passed on March 30, demands that the Israelis withdraw from the occupied territories.

The current Israeli offensive is not a reaction to the horrific Passover terror attack which killed 25 Israelis, but the second phase of an offensive begun last Feb. 28 against Palestinian refugee camps. The suicide bombing gave the pretext, conveniently timed, for the aggression. Those initial attacks, as documented in *EIR*, involved study of the methods of SS Brigadeführer Jürgen Stroop in his extermination of the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943. This prepared Israeli soldiers to engage in war crimes most would never have considered committing. As has been the case since the beginning of the Intifada, the result was a fanatical reaction in the form of suicide bombings by Hamas and other radical groups.

The ongoing IDF war drive appears to be a replay of scenes which took place in Beirut in 1982, though with some ugly new tricks added by Sharon and General Mofaz. During Israel's 1982 war in Lebanon, Sharon had Arafat's PLO headquarters in Beirut surrounded by the IDF, and wanted him assassinated, but the Israeli hit-man refused to pull the trigger. The Reagan Administration agreed to "save Arafat's life" by arranging his and the PLO's evacuation. Sharon then ordered the infamous Sabra and Shatila massacres of remaining Palestinian refugees.

Today, while Sharon has Arafat at gun point, the entire Palestinian population is in the midst of a humanitarian catastrophe at the hands of the IDF.

## The Atrocities Are Unsustainable

With the mobilization of 31,000 reservists, Israel has captured almost every Palestinian city. Although Palestinian sources report that nearly 100 Palestinians have been killed, including women, children, and elderly people, the outside world does not have the full picture of the horror because the IDF has taken the unprecedented move of banning press coverage in areas where military operations are being conducted. Determined journalists have been shot by Israeli soldiers. The representatives of the world's leading media are being systematically expelled, including CNN, ABC, NBC, and Arab nations' television crews, while the Israeli press rely on reports of the totally discredited military press spokesmen.

With a tone of satisfaction, senior IDF sources gave the characterization of their own operation to *Ha'aretz* on April 5: "The cities are completely wasted. Most of the roads have been completely destroyed." That is an understatement.

The IDF military operations have collapsed administrative functions of the Palestinian Authority, which is directly responsible for the livelihood of over 1 million Palestinians.

Access to hospitals is largely cut off; the West Bank is days away from extreme shortages of basic food and medicines.

Sharon's attacks on so-called "terrorist infrastructure" have in fact expanded to include the entire Palestinian population. Ramallah, a city of 100,000 (including 10,000 Palestinians with American citizenship), and the administrative capital of the West Bank, was attacked by 200 tanks and armored personal carriers. All administrative buildings were smashed. Film clips of the execution-style killing of 20 Palestinian policemen were broadcast by Arab TV stations. The entire 100,000 population has been under 24-hour curfew, so draconian that anyone seen on the streets has been shot on sight, as happened to one deaf old woman trying to make her way to the hospital. Four full days of this curfew left the population without food, medicine, or, for the most part, water and electricity. Then, after a four-hour break, the total curfew was reimposed and remains in place. Ambulances were allowed neither to reach the wounded nor the hospitals, and were unable to pick up the dead who were left to decompose in the streets or in the homes of families. A Ramallah hospital parking lot became the cemetery for 18 dead.

These scenes were repeated in one city after another; all Palestinians are "suspected of aiding the terrorists." Thousands of troops entered Bethlehem to eradicate its "terrorist infrastructure"; Israeli tanks surrounded and fired on the Church of the Nativity of Christ, where the 200 desperate souls who sought sanctuary with priests and nuns became "Palestinian gunmen." While this battle scene unfolded, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, who was leading a delegation of priests and nuns on the road from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, was forced to return at gunpoint by Israeli troops.

### Israeli Casualties High

It is not only the Palestinians who are suffering under Sharon's policy. Since Sharon launched this new hard-line policy on Feb. 28, the number of Israelis killed has gone up dramatically. In March, 125 Israelis were killed, which constitutes 25% of all Israeli casualties for the last 18 months. Many of the suicide bombers came from the same refugee camps in which, only days before, the IDF had claimed victory in dismantling the "terrorist infrastructure."

The Israeli peace movement has taken to the streets. On April 3, some 2000 Jewish and Arab-Israelis attempted to march to Ramallah with food and medicines. They were forced to return at gunpoint by Israeli soldiers, after regrouping repeatedly in the face of teargas assaults. The movement of reserve soldiers and officers who refuse to serve in the territories—already 18 are serving prison sentences—is expected to expand as casualties begin to increase among the 30,000 reservists that have been called up. In the city of Haifa, on April 2, a demonstration of 5,000 people was held in support of these soldiers. One demonstrator, Ron Girliz, told the press, "At first, I refused to serve in the territories for moral reasons; today my refusal has become political; the struggle



*Ramallah and other West bank cities now recall Sarajevo of a decade ago, and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon (right) looks more and more like former Yugoslav strongman Slobodan Milosevic (left), now on trial at the Hague for war crimes.*

of the Palestinians is just." A 75-year-old veteran of Israel's 1940s war of independence declared, "Sharon is a war criminal. This army is not my army."

Although the peace movement still lacks the strength to stop Sharon, polls show that 66% of Israelis support the evacuation of settlements in the Gaza Strip; 70% believe settlements that are in areas densely populated by Palestinians should be removed; and 52% agree that the settlements are an obstacle to peace. Most of these Israelis have not joined the peace movement, but if a strong leadership committed to ending the ongoing madness emerges, Sharon will find himself in trouble.

Furthermore, the Israeli economy is not bearing up under Sharon's offensive. The war has already cost at least \$5.5 billion; tourism has collapsed, as have tax revenues, due to economic depression. Massive budget cuts are in the offering.

### What Is Coming Next?

Thus within a few weeks, Sharon will be faced with the decision: to seek political terms acceptable to the Palestinians and the Arab world; or, to expand the war. While it is very hard to imagine Sharon seeking political terms, preparations are clearly being made for the war. But more could be involved. General Mofaz has spoken of a campaign of 4-8 weeks in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In this period, tens of thousands of reservists will be mobilized and become battle ready, and could easily be deployed in a broader war. Mofaz's time frame overlaps the May-June period spoken of for an early American attack on Iraq; that attack could be precipitated by Sharon.

The journal *Israel and Palestine Strategic Update* for March 25, edited by veteran Israeli peace activist Maxim Ghilan, warned that broader war plans have been under discussion by the Pentagon war hawks, led by Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and some of those surrounding

Vice President Dick Cheney, who “have elaborated a strategic plan directed at re-drawing the Middle Eastern map.” This plan is “based on Ariel Sharon’s and Shaul Mofaz’s direct and detailed suggestions. . . . According to this concept, and after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in Iraq by Anglo-American forces, the Palestinians would be ‘evacuated’ [thrown out] from both Western Palestine/Eretz Israel and from the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. This would allow Israel to become an ‘ethnically pure’ Jewish State.”

The journal’s forecast continued, “Jordan would be included in Greater Israel, up to the Iraqi border, perhaps with some minor border-corrections. The Hashemite Kingdom would disappear. . . . The Palestinians would be evacuated and driven over the Iraqi border and settled in population-poor and underdeveloped Iraqi areas. . . . Syria’s regime would be overthrown in a ‘Blitzkrieg,’ a lightning-fast Israeli/American offensive and a new, pro-American free market Syrian state established instead.”

In early April the Israeli-Lebanon border heated up, with the firing of anti-tank rockets and other incidents in the disputed zone. Sharon has threatened to launch a strong reprisal against Hezbollah’s alleged sponsors, Syria and Iran. In this context, Rumsfeld’s March 28 emphatic addition of Syria to the “axis of evil” had dangerous implications. In an apparent reaction, Syria and Lebanon announced on April 3 that 20,000 Syrian troops currently stationed in Lebanon will be redeployed to positions closer to the Syrian-Lebanon border and positions within Syria itself. A glance at the map shows that this redeployment could be aimed at enhancing the defense of the Syrian capital of Damascus from a direct Israeli attack from the Golan Heights.

### Other Flashpoints

The other flashpoints are Jordan and Egypt. Up to eight weeks of military operations in the West Bank will, without doubt, send desperate Palestinians across the Jordan River to seek safety in the Hashemite Kingdom. This possibility terrifies Jordan, which has kept its border closed up until now. With a Jordanian population which is already over 50% Palestinian, it may be impossible to keep these borders closed. A new massive flow of refugees fleeing Israel’s offensive could lead to a collapse of the Jordanian monarchy.

If Israel launches operations in the Gaza Strip, Egypt would face the same prospect of refugees fleeing across its borders. Already in the recent past, Israeli military units have made incursions into Egyptian territory during flanking operations against the Palestinians in Gaza. These incursions, though recently reported in the Israeli press, have been kept out of the international media.

As Israel regionalizes the war, moving against Lebanon and Syria, its forces will be overextended. To be able to maintain the escalation, then, Sharon will be tempted to move to the nuclear option. The two most likely targets for such a nuclear strike, would be Baghdad and Tehran.

# Sharon, U.S. Unleash Threats to Arab States

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

The war launched by Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and the Israeli Defense Forces against the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian people, ignited rage throughout the Arab and Islamic world, expressed by continuing mass demonstrations. U.S. President George Bush’s March 30 remarks from Crawford, Texas, endorsing the Israeli campaign, ensured that the masses taking to the streets would direct their anger, not only at Sharon, but at the White House as well. Thus, whether in Damascus or Beirut, Baghdad or Cairo, posters of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat were raised high, while Israeli and American flags were burned.

As Prof. Mohammed Selim, a leading Egyptian intellectual, remarked, “There is enormous disappointment and anger at the United States, because this is the first time that Bush and [Secretary of State] Colin Powell, have openly, explicitly endorsed the military aggression of Sharon, openly said, that they have given Israel the green light. It’s insulting and humiliating.” What added insult to injury, was that the escalation came on the heels of the Arab League summit in Beirut, during which a comprehensive peace proposal was presented and supported—to be immediately rejected by Israel, in words and bloody deeds. Selim pointed out, that what was occurring, was a “mini-1967,” that is, a mass reaction against Israel, like the one that was provoked by the “six-day war,” when Israel conquered and occupied Gaza; the West Bank, including East Jerusalem; and the Golan Heights. Today, young people, like the tens of thousands of Egyptian students demonstrating daily, who have no direct memory of 1967, are experiencing the same rage and humiliation, which that war produced. It was in the wake of the 1967 war, that the first Islamist reaction emerged; the current wave of radicalization could escalate to unpredictable levels.

The mass demonstrations are of two kinds: those erupting spontaneously, by tens of thousands of students, in particular, as throughout Egypt, but even in Saudi Arabia; and those either sponsored by governments, as in Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Lebanon, or supported by government officials. The numbers are everywhere enormous: 20,000 in Jordan and in Lebanon; and hundreds of thousands in Syria and Iraq. And in several cases, demonstrators explicitly denounced Israel’s policies as like those of the Nazis against the Jews.

Egypt and Jordan, the two Arab nations that have signed peace treaties with Israel, are most directly threatened by destabilization. Their populations, infuriated by the assault