

Sharon Declares War On The Islamic World

by Dean Andromidas

On Sept. 28, 2000 Ariel Sharon marched onto the Al Haram Al Sharif/Temple Mount in Jerusalem, thereby declaring war against the Palestinian National Authority. On March 22, 2004, by assassinating Hamas spiritual leader Sheik Ahmed Yassin, Sharon declared war on the entire Islamic world. There is no doubt that Israel's Prime Minister got the green light for this atrocious war provocation from Vice President Dick Cheney.

U.S. Presidential Candidate Lyndon LaRouche warned on March 24 that Sharon—with the backing of Cheney—has unleashed something that is beyond Cheney's comprehension, let alone that of President George W. Bush. LaRouche said that the only way to stop an inevitable descent into hell, is to dump Cheney.

"Sharon has opened the gates of Hell and nothing will stop us from cutting off his head" was the enraged response of Hamas.

"Let us pray that the assassination of Yassin will not cause the entire Arab world to rise up against us, not drown us all in a sea of blood, and not turn our own maelstrom into a worldwide religious war," wrote Ben Kaspi, leading commentator of *Ma'ariv*, Israel's third largest daily, on March 23. "Let us hope that it was the right decision. . . . What would be the balance of benefit versus damage of a move that could push the entire region over the edge, into chaos? Make a note of the date, March 22, and add it to the list of 'Ten Days of Remembrance.' The last day of Sheik Yassin on earth will become a day of calamity. . . . Killing Yassin will increase the pool of suicide bombers seeking revenge, by the thousands. All Muslims, around the world, will burn with desire to explode next to us."

Zehava Gal-On, member of the Israeli Knesset for the pro-peace Meretz party, declared, "Sharon, who sparked the riots on Temple Mount, has now added more fuel to the fire of the cycle of violence. . . ." And Labor Party Knesset member Yuli Tamir warned that Sharon's decision will lead to "endless bloodshed" and "war."

Sharon's and Cheney's March Towards War

While almost the entire world condemned the assassination, the White House refused to criticize it, and State Department spokesman Richard Boucher even refused to restate the U.S. policy opposing targeted assassinations.

Sharon's launching of a crusade against Islam was care-

fully coordinated with Cheney through the former's cabinet chief Dov Weisglass, who has made no less than three trips to the United States in the last month alone. These trips were conducted under the cover of discussing Sharon's so called "disengagement plan" and evacuation of settlements in the Gaza Strip. Although this might have been the topic of his discussion with National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, Weisglass also met privately with Cheney during each of these visits, and the content of these discussions remained secret. Another recent visitor to Washington was Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz, who is considered the second-most-powerful man in Israel; he also met Cheney but did not reveal the content of their discussion. But the confirmation of Cheney's approval, was the fact that while the decision to kill Yassin was officially taken by Sharon's "security cabinet" on March 14, it was not carried out until Weisglass returned from Washington.

While Yassin was still warm in his grave, Weisglass was once more on his way to Washington. After he met Rice, it was announced that the official discussion had once more been Sharon's ever-elusive disengagement plan. But Israeli press reports indicated Weisglass received a bonus: a promise that the Bush Administration would oppose the Geneva Accord peace initiative of Israel Yehud Party Chairman Yossi Beilin and former Palestinian cabinet minister Yasser Abed Rabbo. The Geneva Accord has gotten wide support internationally, especially in Europe.

"I cannot believe for a moment that Sharon did this without first getting agreement from the White House," said a senior Israeli intelligence source. He added that the green light was given by Cheney in the meetings, and can be seen in the "pussyfooting" response from Washington on the assassination. As for Sharon's so-called disengagement plan and withdrawal from Gaza, the source said it is only the "shadow play" behind which Sharon's escalation toward war is taking place. "I am convinced this disengagement will never take place."

Sharon's decision to kill Yassin was made with the full knowledge that many Israeli men, woman and children will die in the revenge attacks expected to follow. But it was not made in isolation. It is being coordinated with Sharon's neocon allies grouped around Cheney. Despite growing pressure, this cabal continues to be committed to forcing through its determination to overthrow every regime in the Arab world. In the week preceding Yassin's assassination, the Bush Administration leaked to the press its intention to implement the "Syria Accountability Act (SAA)" and slap heavy sanctions on Syria. The move is widely seen as a prelude to war, just as the "Iraqi Liberation Act" of 1998 served Cheney well in his drive for war against Iraq. Sharon's assassination of Yassin is intended to create the escalation of violence that would be used to "justify" strikes in all directions including, Syria, Lebanon and Iran.

So far, Hamas has not fallen into Sharon's trap of launch-

ing attacks outside Israel and the occupied territories, or at U.S. targets. Abdel Aziz Rantisi, who has assumed the leadership of Hamas in Gaza, told reporters, "We are inside Palestinian land and acting only inside Palestinian land. We are resisting the occupation, nothing else. Our resistance will continue just inside our border, here inside our country." Rantisi denied reports that Hamas would join Al-Qaida and called such claims, "Zionist propaganda."

Crossing All Red Lines

Sharon has crossed all the red lines that will provoke war. Consider the following:

The Israeli Defense Forces have assassinated a religious figure revered by millions of Muslims throughout the Islamic world, turning Yassin into a martyr. "Yassin will become stronger in death than in life," a senior Israeli military source said. "He will become a symbol. And Israel will pay a price for doing this." Hamas' thirst for revenge will be met by other Islamic groups around the world.

"This is the beginning of the end of the Zionist project," warned a senior Arab political activist, adding that Hamas is already receiving massive support. "You would not believe how much money and support is flowing into Hamas. . . . [The Israelis and the U.S.] will regret that they left their destiny in the hands of a criminal like Sharon."

There is an unwritten law in war: Don't kill the commanding officers of your enemy, because if they are killed, there is no one to negotiate with, or give the order for a ceasefire. Sharon has crossed that line and is preparing to go further. Within hours after the assassination, Defense Minister Mofaz declared Israel's intention to wipe out the entire leadership of Hamas. And the Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defense Forces, Lt. General Moshe Ya'alon made it clear that both Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of the Lebanese Hezbollah organization, will soon be targeted for death. Speaking to military officers from 35 countries, Ya'alon was referring to those two leaders, when he said that now, "they understand that their turn is drawing near."

The catastrophic consequences of the assassination of Arafat are too obvious to elaborate. Nonetheless, the assassination of Yassin is another blow to the Palestinian National Authority, which had been trying to bring Hamas within a unified Palestinian leadership. Now, Hamas could become the dominant power in the occupied territories.

The killing of Nasrallah, the leader of the Hezbollah, would lead to large-scale attacks along Israel's northern border with Lebanon, providing Sharon and his generals the pretext not only to strike deep into Lebanon, but more significantly, to strike at Syria and Iran, which Israel will claim are Hezbollah's chief sponsors. Even now, in response to the Yassin assassination, the Hezbollah has formed "Sheik Ahmen Yassin Brigades," which have staged attacks along the Israel-Lebanon border. And as the script has already been

written, the Israel military command let it be known that they will strike Syria if clashes along the Israel-Lebanon border continue.

The timing of Yassin's assassination was also aimed at discrediting and, thereby destabilizing, Egypt and Jordan, the only two Arab countries that have peace treaties with Israel.

The assassination came two days after Sharon's office revealed that he had a secret meeting with Jordanian King Abdullah II. The King had put his own credibility at risk by meeting Sharon, according to press reports, to express his concern that Sharon's policies, especially the construction of his Berlin-style Wall in Israel, would lead to huge refugee flows into Jordan, thus fulfilling Sharon's dream of turning Jordan into the Palestinian State. Palestinian refugees and their descendents already comprise almost 50% of Jordan's population, a large percentage of whom identify with Hamas.

Furthermore, in killing Yassin, Sharon broke the promise not to kill him, which Israel made to Abdullah's late father, King Hussein, after Israel released Yassin from prison. As a result, one Israeli source warned, a destabilization of Jordan cannot be ruled out. Following the assassination, Jordanian media denounced it as a massacre.

Sharon also had a message for Egypt. Yassin's assassination took place two days before the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Egypt-Israel peace treaty. More importantly, it occurred just at a time when Egyptian President Honsi Mubarak was trying to broker a ceasefire among Palestinian factions, including Hamas, in order to revive the Road Map for a Middle East peace.

On hearing the news, while meeting with U.S. State Department Middle East Envoy William Burns, an angry Mubarak told a press conference that the assassination was "regrettable and cowardly".

Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Maher was less restrained, comparing Israel to a "terrorist organization." Maher said Israel is not a partner with Egypt in the peace process but is a "government that is clearly determined to ruin and destroy all efforts for peace, despite efforts by Egypt to bring together all concerned parties. . . . The Israeli government is not only content with resorting to the method of assassination, but it announces clearly its determination to continue these assassinations, including that it has a list prepared. It is something that defies description. . . . When an organization carries out such acts, it's called a terrorist organization. So what's the situation when it's a government that carries out these acts?"

On March 28-29, the Arab League, of which Egypt is one of the leading members, will hold a summit in Tunis, Tunisia. They can denounce Israel, and Bush Administration policy, but they will not be able to stop Sharon.

Furthermore, there is no leadership within Israel capable of stopping Sharon's march to war. The change has to be in Washington, as LaRouche has said.