

Can Repeat of Warsaw 1943 Be Stopped In Palestine?

by Dean Andromidas

On March 11, the Israeli military launched the most massive and brutal military operation yet against the Palestinians since the 1982 Lebanon war. Only hours before the tanks began to roll into the Palestinian Authority, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon announced that P.A. President Yasser Arafat would no longer be a prisoner of his office in the West Bank city of Ramallah—a “concession” intended to deflate the mission of U.S. Middle East envoy Gen. Anthony Zinni (ret.). The attack, a cynical display of brutality by Sharon, resulted in more Jewish blood being spilled, as suicide reprisal attacks soon followed in Jerusalem and elsewhere in Israel.

This bloody rampage merely confirms the determination of Sharon and his generals to push the region into a bloody war, in which he can drive the Palestinians into neighboring Jordan and Egypt.

The brutality of the operation and international outrage prompted the Bush Administration to submit a United Nations resolution, “affirming a vision of a region where two states, Israel and Palestine, live side by side.” The Bush Administration hopes such a diplomatic effort will facilitate the visit to the region by Vice President Dick Cheney, while supporting Zinni’s efforts to get a cease-fire on the ground.

The Zinni mission is being seen, especially in Israel, as simply an attempt to create calm on the Israeli-Palestinian front in order to gain Islamic support for an attack on Iraq that could occur as early as June. Given the situation on the ground being created by Sharon and his generals, such a policy would simply be the prelude to the Clash of Civilizations promised by the likes of Samuel Huntington and his cohorts in the Bush Administration.

Sharon’s Nazi Tactics Continue

In the first two weeks of March, Sharon and his generals have deployed 20,000 troops—almost the entire regular army and military establishment—in operations throughout the West Bank and Gaza. Israeli Chief of Staff Gen. Shaul Mofaz told the Knesset (parliament) that the goal of this “Operation Security Imperative,” is to crush the the Palestinians’ “will and capability to act against us.” Mofaz said that the operation was launched ahead of the Zinni mission so that Israel would enter cease-fire negotiations from a position of strength.

The model for Operation Security Imperative is the Nazi assault on the Jewish resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto. Let

there be no doubt of this fact. *EIR* has reported how the Israeli military itself has admitted to studying the “lessons” of that most infamous of military operations, lessons that are spelled out in the after-action report of its commander, SS and Police Führer Jürgen Stroop (see *EIR*, Feb. 8, 2002). The IDF “tested” these lessons on Feb. 28, with assaults on the Balata and Nur al-Shams refugee camps on the West Bank (see *EIR*, March 15, 2002).

Now, Operation Security Imperative is far more massive and brutal. In less than one week, the Israeli military killed more than 200 Palestinians and wounded thousands, mostly civilians. Seven refugee camps have been attacked: the Amari, Balata, Qualqiliyah, Deheisheh, and Nur al-Shams camps on the West Bank, and the Jabalya and Rafah camps in the Gaza Strip. In addition, the West Bank cities of Ramallah, Bethlehem, Tul Karm, and Jenine, and Gaza City and villages in the Gaza Strip, have also been attacked.

Italian journalist Raffaele Ciriello became the first journalist killed since the Intifada (uprising) began in September 2000, when he was shot by an Israeli tank.

The Israel military has dropped all pretense of only targeting so-called “terrorist infrastructure.” In the Gaza Strip on March 12 alone, 30 Palestinians were killed, including two children. According to Israeli press reports, most were killed when helicopter gunships fired into refugee camps, and most were civilians. In this one day of fighting, almost 100 people were wounded, including 22 children.

On the same day, more than 100 tanks entered Ramallah, taking up positions 250 meters from Arafat’s West Bank headquarters, and throughout the city, the largest in the West Bank. The tanks rolled into the city within hours of Sharon’s announcement lifting the travel ban imposed on Arafat. As if to make the point of his overlordship, a Palestinian guard was killed right in front of Arafat’s compound. Israeli bulldozers damaged dozens of water mains while digging ditches across

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New Peace Group Forms

On March 10, a group of Mediterranean personalities gathered in Monaco to form a new Middle East peace organization called the Club of Monaco. Its founding statement declares the participants' intent "to contribute to the search for peace and stability" in the region. According to the March 14 Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*, the statement says that "only a two-state solution on the basis of the June 4, 1967 border can ensure a just and lasting peace for the two peoples." The statement also welcomes the peace initiative of Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah.

The list of initiators includes two former Secretaries General of the United Nations, Boutros Boutros-Ghali and Javier Pérez de Cuéllar; former Arab League Secretary General Ismat Abdel Maguid; former Algerian Prime Minister Sid Ahmed Ghozali; former Prime Minister of Greece Constantine Mitsotakis; the adviser to the King of Morocco, Andrei Azoulay; and the head of the Sahara Fund, Mohammed Madani Al-Azhari.

From Israel is former Justice Minister and architect of the Oslo Accords Yossi Beilin, and from the Palestinian Authority, Sari Nusseibeh, the minister in charge of Jerusalem Affairs, and Leila Shahid, the Ambassador to Paris.

Boutros-Ghali was elected president of the group, and Beilin and Shahid drafted its founding statement.

One senior Middle East source stressed that out of such a group of former heads of state and political elites, a new Oslo peace process could be born.

streets as they built siege-works throughout the city. Geysers of water could be seen in many places, cutting off water to much of the city, which especially affected the hospitals. Military operations prevented ambulances from responding to emergencies, and hospitals were running out of essential supplies, including oxygen and food.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA), which oversees UN-supported relief operations in the refugee camps, formally protested to the Israeli government, charging that the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) has damaged or destroyed 1,620 houses in attacks on three refugee camps, directly affecting more than 10,000 people, mostly women and children. In addition, 14 public buildings were seriously damaged, including nine UNRWA-managed schools, many of which were seized by the IDF to be used as military command centers.

The Israeli-Palestinian group Physicians for Human Rights protested to the IDF for its constant attacks on Palestinian ambulances. Since the Intifada began, there have been attacks against more than 165 ambulances, and more than 135 paramedics have been wounded. In the recent engagements, two doctors were killed, including the head of the Red Crescent in Jenine. Medical officials report that it is almost impossible to perform emergency operations. The group's director, Tomer Popper, also charged that the Israeli military has yet to come up with any evidence to its claims that the Palestinians use ambulances to transport healthy Palestinian fighters.

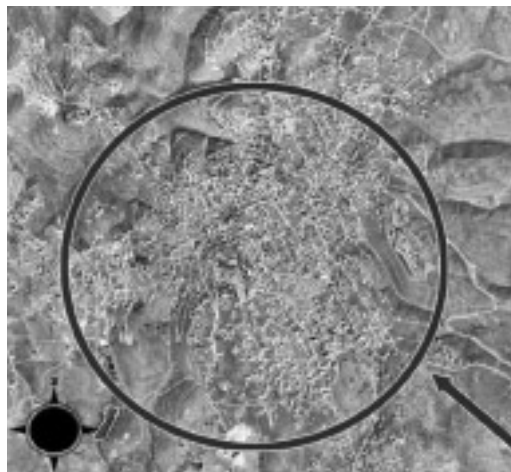
If General Mofaz persists in his declared aim to crush the "will" of the Palestinians, the use of Nazi tactics will escalate. Israel is fighting against a national liberation movement and, as in every people's war, the Palestinian fighters are offering little resistance against Israeli tanks, helicopter gunships, and F-16 fighter-bombers. While the Palestinian paramilitary police are not resisting, the militias have withdrawn their fighters from the front line. Thus, the Israeli military is conducting massive reprisals aimed at the civilian population.

In the early morning of March 12, Israeli tanks surrounded the Deheishe refugee camp, near Bethlehem, and began to indiscriminately fire into the camp as a warning not to resist. A curfew was then announced over loudspeakers, and all male inhabitants between the ages of 15 and 45 were ordered to assemble at one of the camp's two schools, while heavily armed Israeli soldiers conducted house-to-house searches. At the school, the men and boys were ordered to line up, raise their hands over their heads, pull off their jackets and shirts, and empty their pockets. They were then blindfolded and handcuffed and forced to stand for hours in the hot sun. Then, one after another, IDF troops led them to an empty warehouse to be interrogated and photographed. Another group of some 100 Palestinians in the neighboring village of Artas were treated similarly. Each prisoner was forced to wear a colored cap—black designated suspected members of the Al-Aqsa Brigades, red for suspected activists of the People's Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), etc.

Opposition Continues To Grow

Israeli officers gave each prisoner a number, which they wrote on the prisoners' forearms, in precisely the same way the Nazis had tattooed the Jews. Arafat denounced these Nazi-like practices, and outrage is also growing among Israelis. Knesset member Yosef (Tommy) Lapid, leader of the Shinui party and a former concentration camp victim, confronted General Mofaz during a meeting of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. Lapid said that as a Holocaust survivor he found IDF practice intolerable, and expressed his shock.

Arab-Israeli Knesset member Mohammed Barakeh (Haddash), in a letter to Dr. Shevah Weiss, the chairman of Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum, declared, "For many years, the Israeli army, which is ironically called the Israeli Defense



A map of the West Bank city of Ramallah targetted by Israeli Defense Forces on the IDF's website, and a Nazi SS gun crew involved in the attack on the Warsaw Ghetto during World War II. The Israeli military is increasingly using Nazi tactics against the Palestinians.

Forces, have been conducting a massacre of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories under the command of the Israeli government. In these wretched days, I've asked myself more than once how, within such a short period of history, the victim has become the murderer, and a people who, perhaps, suffered more than any other from arbitrary repression and refugee status, is capable of meting out the same fate to others."

General Mofaz claimed he was not aware of the practice, and has now reportedly issued an order to stop it.

The operation against Deheishe has been repeated at many other refugee camps and in villages and cities that have come under attack in recent days.

In response, Palestinian suicide bombers launched an attack on a Jerusalem cafe, 100 meters from the Prime Minister's official residence; the attack was quickly followed by others in the West Bank, Gaza, and within Israel itself. Then came the highly professional guerrilla attacks. The first was near the Israeli-Lebanon border, where a Palestinian squad killed seven Israelis, including two soldiers. Although two Palestinians were killed in the subsequent counterattack, the others escaped. A land mine explosion destroyed an Israeli tank, killing three of its crew. This was the second Israeli tank to have been destroyed within a month.

Further fanning the flames, a rally of 60,000 in Tel Aviv, organized by the Israeli settlers' Council of Jewish Communities in Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip, called on Sharon to spill even more Palestinian blood. No politicians spoke, since it was billed as an "apolitical" event. Nonetheless, Israel's own "Mussolini in waiting," reserve Brig. Gen. Effie

Eitam, whipped up the crowd, calling the Israelis "the eternal people," and demanding that Sharon remember his roots and his desire to "hold the Temple Mount." Jerusalem's Temple Mount, or al-Haram al-Sharif, of great significance to the Abrahamic religions, is now also the epicenter of this growing religious war.

Military Mission Fails

As for crushing the Palestinian "will" to resist the occupation, General Mofaz has failed, according to the "Mid-Term Assessment" of Dr. Gershon Baskin, the Israeli co-director of the Israeli-Palestinian Committee for Research and Information (www.ipcri.org). The Palestinians are well aware of their weakness in the face of Israel's military might, Baskin writes, but "they believe . . . that they are much stronger than Israel, politically and morally. They believe that justice is on their side, and that history sides with them as well. They say that Israel is the last occupying power left in the world, and that the success of the Palestinian struggle for freedom from the occupation is inevitable. They also believe that Hezbollah-type tactics will work, and that the great losses that are inflicted upon them serve to strengthen their resolve, at the same time that it is constructing the most important chapter in the Palestinian narrative. This chapter is one of heroism and struggle that will end with the glorious victory of liberation and freedom. Based on their negative experiences of the Oslo process, the Palestinians believe that they could not have extracted from Israel the total withdrawal from the occupied territories through negotiations. They believe that they will achieve this goal through their struggle."

Dr. Baskin concludes that “the suffering and the bloodshed and mutual destruction will not end in the near future. The Zinni, Cheney, and other visits to the region may create a temporary reduction in violence, but it will not hold. There will be future escalations. This could be termed ‘more of the same,’ but ‘more of the same’ only really means escalation, because each side’s pain is increased and the responses and calls for revenge match the suffering inflicted.”

Dr. Baskin nonetheless sees a “flickering” light at the end of the tunnel, through the establishment of a “joint Israeli-Palestinian peace coalition.” Indeed the Israeli peace movement has been slowly awakening, as more and more Israelis are beginning to realize that 250,000 Jewish settlers in Occupied Palestine, are holding 5 million Israelis in Israel hostage.

Baskin’s assessment is also shared by Roman Bronfman, a Knesset member and head of the Democratic Choice party, which enjoys support within the more politically liberal side of the Russian Israeli community. He is also a member of a group of Israeli parliamentarians that includes Yossi Sarid, leader of the opposition in the Knesset and chairman of the pro-peace Meretz party, and Yossi Beilin, former Justice Minister and architect of the Oslo Accords, who are trying to form a new pro-peace social democratic party.

A War for Independence

In an editorial in the Israeli daily *Ha’aretz*, Bronfman denounced a virulent commentary attacking the Palestinians as representing “Arab evil and fascism.” Bronfman says that the current conflict is “the result of the war of independence the Palestinian people are fighting against the Israeli occupation, just as the Jewish people conducted its own war for independence before 1948. The trinity of land-religion-blood is the bloody heart of fundamentalism, Islamic and Jewish alike.” Bronfman called on people to “turn their efforts to the joint struggle of real peace lovers, without occupation, without settlements, without mutual killing.”

The brutalization of the IDF itself continues to generate revolt among military rank and file. The Combatants Letter 2002, the movement of reserve soldiers and officers who refuse to serve in the occupied territories, continues to gather steam. As of this writing, 331 soldiers have signed the letter, and three are serving prison sentences for their refusal to serve. On March 9, some 500 people, mostly reserve soldiers, demonstrated outside the prison where two of them are being held.

Another group was formed on March 7 that could have a significant impact on public opinion. Called the Seventh Day Movement, it is an offshoot of the highly effective Four Mothers Movement, formed in 1997 to demand that Israel withdraw from southern Lebanon. The name refers to the seventh day after the June 1967 “Six-Day War,” when the occupation began. It calls for a complete withdrawal from the occupied territories.