

Sharon Killing Palestinians To Kill The 'Road Map': Will Bush Stop Him?

by Michele Steinberg

On May 8, in brief, but stunning remarks at the Center for Policy Analysis on Palestine in Washington, D.C., Ghaleb Darabya, the counsellor for political affairs for the Palestine Liberation Organization, told the audience that Israel had given its "answer" to the Road Map already on May 1—with deeds, not words; with blood, not peace. Darabya said that "in the very first day the Road Map was presented," Israel "went into Gaza, killing 18 people" including a "a baby two months old" and several members of a single family of Palestinians. Darabya called the attacks not a coincidence, but a calculated strategy by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and his Cabinet of Israeli Defense Forces generals, to sabotage any peace initiative that is at hand.

The May 1 massacre resembled the July 2002 mass killing by the Israelis in Gaza, Darabya said. Then, the Palestinian leadership was holding talks in Cairo, and was near agreement with Hamas and other "rejectionist" groups to stop terrorist attacks. Sharon gave the order to drop a one-ton bomb on an apartment building in Gaza, to assassinate Hamas leader Salah Shehadeh—an operation which killed 14, including 9 small children, and wounded 145, among whom more children and others subsequently died from their injuries. With that, the ceasefire talks broke down—exactly what Sharon had wanted.

Indeed, after the July 2002 bomb massacre, leading Israeli newspapers denounced the timing of Sharon's decision to assassinate Shehadeh, as aimed at assassinating the ceasefire talks rather than the Hamas leader. The daily *Yediot Aharonot* reported on July 24, 2002 that, just an hour and a half before the Gaza attack, Fatah's Tanzim organization had finalized the wording of a ceasefire declaration, which was to state: "We call on all the Palestinian political organizations and movements to put an immediate end to these attacks [against innocent men, women, and children], and to do so without hesitation and with no preconditions." *Yediot's* sources were Tanzim activists.

It was the horror of that Gaza massacre last July that actually spurred on the discussions leading to the Road Map, the peace plan put together by the "Quartet" of the United Nations, European Union, United States, and Russia. But, unless President Bush pushes the peace plan with "not just

words, but with deeds"—the slogan he was fond of citing to the Palestinian leaders on the need for reform—history will repeat itself, and Sharon will assassinate another totally viable peace plan. Peace advocates, from the United States, Europe, the Arab world, and Israel, have told *EIR* that it is not the text of the Road Map that is the problem—but whether there is any political will to enforce it. Many governments see George W. Bush as a fraud, whose word on the Road Map means nothing in the aftermath of the Iraq war—seen as a Clash of Civilizations war against Islam.

It is well-known that the neo-conservative fascists who ran the Bush Administration's war policy against Iraq completely reject the Road Map, and are actively involved through neo-con "cutouts" in the American Enterprise Institute orbit—Michael Ledeen, Frank Gaffney, and Daniel Pipes—in putting forward a *different* road map—Tourism Minister Benny Alon's plan for "transfer" of Palestinians into Jordan (see *EIR*, May 16). As *EIR* and Democratic Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche have exposed, several of these chicken-hawk leaders—Deputy Secretary of Defense Doug Feith, former Defense Policy Board Chairman Richard Perle, State Department advisor David Wurmser—wrote "Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm," a 1996 blueprint for Israel's then-Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, which called for war against Iraq, and abrogation of the Oslo Accords. Netanyahu today is Sharon's Finance Minister, and led the fight to pass a resolution in the Likud Party against *any form* of Palestinian state. That resolution passed by a landslide.

The Mess Powell Couldn't Fix

LaRouche also agrees that the problem with the Road Map is not in the Middle East, but in Washington. LaRouche, who has campaigned for Palestinian independence and Middle East peace through economic development since the 1970s, warned that nothing much could be expected from the Middle East trip by Secretary of State Colin Powell. Powell doesn't have the backing to accomplish anything on his own; Bush, under the control of the neo-conservative gang—set him up. Bush alone can deliver the threats against Sharon that will make him accept the peace that the world,

including a large majority of the Israeli people—who say they want a peace agreement and a Palestinian state—is waiting for.

And Powell's trip *was* a disaster; he was treated "like dirt" by Sharon at their meeting on May 11. Sharon refused even to acknowledge the term "Road Map," at their press conference, and reportedly lectured Powell in the private meeting about how the Quartet had ruined Bush's true intentions. Immediately after Powell left, Sharon told the *Jerusalem Post* that dismantling Israeli settlements "was not an issue." Sharon said his earlier comments about "painful concessions," and his references to the settlements at Bethlehem, Shilom, and Beit El, were misinterpreted, and that these areas are not "candidates" for Israeli withdrawal. Powell had reportedly talked directly to Sharon about closing settlements, especially since "Phase I" of the Road Map specifically says, in a section called, "Obligations," that Israel "immediately dismantles settlement outposts erected since March 2001." There are over 70 such settlements.

From there, Powell went immediately to meet Palestinian Prime Minister Abu Mazen (Mahmoud Abbas), and a number of his Cabinet ministers, in Jericho in the Palestinian territories. While the meeting—totally opposed by the Bush "chicken-hawks"—was a huge concession by President Bush, who had been urged by them to not only sideline Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, but also to reject Prime Minister Abu Mazen, it accomplished nothing.

Powell's trip was "a failure," Ghaleb Darabya told *EIR*: "Israel did not accept the Road Map. So, there was nothing to discuss." Instead, Sharon put things off until his trip to Washington to meet with Bush on May 20. Powell put pressure on Prime Minister Abu Mazen about the "security issue," but the Prime Minister made clear that progress cannot be made without Israel "fulfilling its obligations."

The major obligation, said Darabya, is for Israel to accept Palestinian statehood, which the PLO Negotiations Support Unit notes, is rejected by the parties of 18 of the 23 Cabinet ministers in Sharon's government. Israel must also "stop the provocations," he added, "including, stopping the incursions into the Palestinian territories; stopping the killing of civilians; . . . and stopping the closures." These requirements are all stated in the Road Map, he said, as well as the Oslo Accords, and UN Security Council resolutions.

On May 12, a day after the meeting with Abu Mazen, Powell was taken to task in Cairo, in his press conference with Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Maher, who diplomatically accused Powell of lying. After Powell had tried to cover up for Sharon, and for Bush's double standard, and told reporters that it is not necessary to "use the word 'accept'" in order to begin "implementation" of the Road Map, Maher shot back in an angry retort. "The word 'accept' is not a dirty word," said Maher. "It seems to me a little strange that if you are willing to do things, you are not ready to say you are willing to do that." Maher's statements reflect a unanimous

view among Arab and Muslim leaders, which is becoming even more widespread. In almost every subsequent press conference, even in Sofia, Bulgaria on May 15, Powell was hounded by the question of what the United States is going to do about Sharon's boasting that he will not remove settlements. Powell finally said that Sharon will have to answer Bush at their May 20 meeting.

Did Bush React?

May 15 is the 55th anniversary of Israeli independence, and sadly, news services around the world ran headlines along the following lines: "Israel Celebrates Independence by Killing 5 Palestinians." On May 14, seventy Israeli tanks rolled into Gaza for yet another assault plan, whose details will only be known after more killings are carried out.

But, the butchery and arrogance by the Sharon government may have pushed too far. Two sudden developments may indicate that Sharon is getting more pressure than he is willing to make public.

On May 14, the gala anniversary bash—"Israel at 55"—at Washington's Convention Center on May 19, was abruptly cancelled and rescheduled for Dec. 18. The Jewish Telegraph Agency reported that Israel's Ambassador to Washington, Daniel Ayalon, had *denied* he had told organizers to call it off because the May 20 meeting between Sharon and Bush was "too sensitive."

On May 15, around midnight in Israel, it was announced that Sharon had set a meeting for Prime Minister Abu Mazen at his residence in Jerusalem on the night of May 17, prior to Sharon leaving for his May 20 meeting at the White House. This is the first Israeli-Palestinian summit meeting in nearly three years. Did Bush force Sharon to set this meeting, against the wishes of Sharon's own Cabinet?

On May 15, DEBKA, a Sharon-controlled Internet intelligence sheet, went to pieces over the fact that Javier Solana, for the European Union, is pushing for the Road Map to be made into a UN Security Council resolution. This would put Israel in violation of yet another Security Council resolution, if it were to happen.

Speaking in Sofia on May 15, Powell came close to denouncing Sharon over the settlements. He did not, but the tension was clear, when he said that *the opportunity embodied in the Road Map cannot be missed this time*. In Washington, dozens of retired diplomats, members of Congress, Jewish activists, rabbis, and Islamic clerics have begun to mobilize *against* the groups hell-bent on destroying the peace talks leading to a Palestinian state—including the Christian Zionists, the neo-conservatives, and the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). On May 14, a full-page ad in the *New York Times* was taken out by Tikkun, an American Jewish group, which calls for creating "An Alternative to AIPAC and the Pro-Ariel Sharon Lobby." This pressure could help to secure what LaRouche calls "the counter-coup" against the neo-conservatives, and provide a path to peace.