

Kahane's revenge may be a new Mideast war

by Joseph Brewda

The Nov. 5 assassination of Jewish Defense League founder Rabbi Meir Kahane in New York City is a dramatic reminder that a Mideast war could be triggered in a variety of unexpected ways in the coming period. Within hours of the killing, two elderly Palestinian peasants were gunned down in an olive grove near Hebron on the West Bank, by Jewish gunmen in a passing car. "I hope it was revenge," Kahane's spokesman Baruch Marzel said after the slaying. "I promise you there will be a river of Arab blood," said another Kahane spokesman, Yoel Ben-David, adding, "Kahane will take more Arab blood with him in his death than when he was alive."

Kahane was shot shortly after announcing to a crowd of 80 followers at the Marriott Hotel that he would be running again for the Israeli Knesset (parliament). He had previously been banned from running for reelection because he promoted racism. His alleged assailant, Egyptian-American El-Sayyid Nosair, was shot and captured while attempting to flee.

A self-confessed former FBI informant, Kahane had first gained notoriety in 1968 when he formed the Jewish Defense League in Brooklyn in order to keep blacks out of Jewish neighborhoods. Since emigrating to Israel in 1973, Kahane built the Kach political party, based on a policy of forcing the 1.6 million Arabs who reside in the Occupied Territories and whom he termed "dogs," out of what he claimed was Israel. Kahane rejected democracy as antithetical to Judaism.

While Kahane was usually dismissed as an "outcast" for his fascist rhetoric, it is well known that he was patronized by Israel's Hitler, Gen. Ariel Sharon, the current housing minister and strongman of the Israeli war cabinet that was formed last June. Sharon reportedly met with Kahane's "Jewish settlers" movement over the summer and ordered a vast increase in their arming and funding by the Israeli government.

The Sharon crowd has long viewed Kahane as a useful tool in providing a pretext for a new war. In one reported scenario, his followers would carry out a killing spree of sufficient intensity to trigger the type of Arab counter-reaction that would "justify" an Israeli strike into Jordan. It is even possible that Israel set up Kahane's murder in order to put this scenario into motion. One thing is certain: that while Kahane may now be dead, his "final solution to the Arab question" policies are in the process of being implemented.

Ongoing provocations

Leading up to the assassination, the Israeli government of Yitzhak Shamir had been steadily increasing its terror against Israel's Palestinian population, especially since the British and Israeli governments manipulated the Bush administration into sending its land and naval forces into the Persian Gulf.

In one hideous incident, Israeli authorities massacred 21 Palestinians at the Harem al-Sharif, site of the Al Aqsa Mosque, in Jerusalem on Oct. 8. The Palestinians had congregated at the site after a Jewish fundamentalist sect affiliated with Kahane had threatened to defile the site that day. The police claimed they were threatened by Arab youths who began throwing rocks in response to the desecration.

On Oct. 21, Sharon provocatively called for prohibiting any Arabs from carrying knives into Jerusalem. Should an Arab be caught with a knife, his house and that of his family should be demolished, he raved. The Israeli government has demolished 1,556 Palestinian homes since 1987 as punishment for family members' throwing rocks at Israeli police.

The day after Sharon's remarks, two female Israeli soldiers were stabbed by an Arab near Haifa, apparently in revenge for the massacre. The Arab was apprehended by a crowd and beaten to death. That same day, an Arab attacked two Jews in Ashkelon with a hammer.

On Oct. 28, Sharon fueled the tense environment by demanding that there be mass firings of Palestinians to make way for jobs for unemployed Jews and new immigrants, mostly from the Soviet Union. As Sharon was speaking, many Arabs returning from the Occupied Territories to their jobs in East Jerusalem, after having been excluded for several days by authorities, discovered that they had been dismissed from their jobs while they had been away.

Israeli government spokesmen estimate that new measures being planned which would forbid Arabs who have police records or who are without proper papers from working within the pre-1967 borders of Israel, would eliminate 50,000 Palestinians from their jobs.

On Nov. 3, Israeli authorities killed one Palestinian and wounded 89 others in the Gaza Strip. A riot had started after Israeli police informed the family of Attiyah Zanin that he had "hanged himself" in prison, 13 days after being detained by police for ties to the Palestine Liberation Organization. Following the riot, the Israelis began a policy of flinging rocks from helicopters at demonstrating Arabs.

Responding to such incidents, U.N. Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar stated on Nov. 2 that the 164 nations that signed the Geneva Convention which protects civilians in wartime should meet to discuss new ways to ensure the safety of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. His recommendation, attached to a report to the U.N. Security Council on the Jerusalem massacre, predictably led to an outburst by the Israeli government, which claimed that the Geneva Convention did not apply, and that Israel "has sole responsibility for administration of these areas."