

## When Will Sharon Show His Real Face?

In mid-February, the world was offered Sharon's very special logic of peace. Commenting on a request by the EU that Israel should ease the economic sanctions against the Palestinian Authority, because they constitute collective punishment, Sharon replied, "I don't believe in collective punishment, but how can I lift the closure when the violence continues?"

When will Sharon drop the peace mask he donned when he began campaigning for Prime Minister? A brief look at his biography might answer the question.

In 1981, during the funeral of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, who had just been gunned down by Islamic militants, U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig spoke with Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. Haig, fearing that the Sadat assassination was only the beginning of a radicalization that threatened to spread throughout the Arab world, asked Begin to begin implementing the clauses of the 1979 Camp David treaty calling upon Israel to begin the process of ending its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Sharon, who had just become defense minister and responsible for the occupation, took on the role of peacemaker with the Palestinians. According to a commentary in the Feb. 9, 2001 *Ha'aretz*, Sharon was effusive: "We shall continue with the peace process! There is a positive change in the air, a feeling that we can live together in mutual respect. We will change our roadblock policies! Residents of the territories hurrying to work will not have to wait in long lines of cars anymore. Anyone in the territories who is willing to talk, will find an open door and an attentive ear." Several roadblocks were removed, and Sharon even offered to relocate some Palestinian refugees inside Israel to relieve the congestion in the refugee camps. He promised to draft a "plan" that would solve these problems. The press gave favorable coverage, and the Reagan Administration seemed pleased.

But, while holding off presenting his "plan" to the cabinet, Sharon continued to issue orders to seize more land in the territories and establish more settlements, in direct contradiction to the Camp David agreements and promises made to Washington.

Also, the negotiations with the PLO were not part of Sharon's peace plan. Discussing Sharon's role in this early period, military affairs commentator Ze'ev Schiff, wrote in the Feb. 9 *Ha'aretz* about how, in the middle of this euphoria and in one of the many positive articles then circulating on Sharon, *Ha'aretz* had reported that he was, at the same time, planning "to take action against the PLO in Lebanon in order to influence events in Jordan, so that it [Jordan] would eventually become the Palestinian state. That was the plan behind the positive headlines" of 1981.

Shortly afterward, the "real Sharon" showed his face, engineering the 1982 war against Lebanon, and carrying out the massacres of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps.

## Palestinians Know Who The Enemies of Peace Are

by Carl Osgood

Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, spokeswoman for Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, warned, during a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. on Feb. 14, that conditions in Gaza and the West Bank are the worst she has ever seen, in the aftermath of Ariel Sharon's invasion of the Temple Mount/Al Haram Al Sharif, in Jerusalem on Sept. 28, 2000, which sparked the Palestinian uprising, known as the Al Aqsa *Intifada*.

The theme underlying Ashrawi's remarks was how the Palestinians have been victimized for decades by the occupation of their lands by the Israelis, and then are blamed for the violence that is the lawful result of an occupying Israeli army, and the illegal settlements, in Palestinian territory. She also pointed to these factors as the reason for the past decade's political instability inside Israel, which has gone through six governments since 1990.

"One of the basic problems," Ashrawi said, "is the fact that every Israeli government has declared its commitment to peace and at the same time sought to impose a unilateral version of peace as designed by Israel," an approach which has undermined "the requirements for peace." Also, she said, the domination of the peace process in recent years by the United States has in effect shut out other participants, especially the United Nations and the European Union.

Ashrawi blamed Sharon for his Sept. 28 provocation. However, all this did was "ignite" what she described as a "powderkeg" that resulted from the loss of confidence in the peace process, and in the Israelis, because there was no correspondence between what was being negotiated and the facts on the ground, over the many preceding weeks. Sharon and his extremist backers "somehow managed to reap the rewards, the fruits of their own acts of provocation and violence, undermining the possibilities for peace."

"I think there is one sure way of stopping the violence," Ashrawi said. "Remove Israeli tanks, Israeli gunships, Israeli checkpoints from Palestinian territory, lift the state of siege, issue orders to the Israeli army to stop its policies of assassination and willful and deliberate and cold-blooded murder. . . . We are not on Israel's land: Israel is on Palestinian land."

Ashrawi rejected calls that Arafat make a statement that all violence must stop, following the incident in Tel Aviv that morning, in which a bus rammed into a bus stop, killing eight Israelis. "Can Arafat tell the Israeli army to withdraw and to stop shooting and stop killing and to lift the siege?" she asked.