

Israel's Sharon Copies The Nazi War Crimes In the Warsaw Ghetto

by Dean Andromidas

The Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* on Aug. 9 published an open letter to "Palestinian partisans" from Dr. Marek Edelman, who had been the deputy commander of the Jewish Warsaw Ghetto uprising against the Nazis in 1943. Edelman, who still lives in Poland and opposes Zionism, called on Palestinians and Israelis alike, to give up violence and reopen peace negotiations. "To this day," he wrote, "a partisan struggle in the cities has never succeeded anywhere in the world; but the armies we fought against also never won. This war also will not lead to any solution. Once again, blood will be spilled needlessly, and people on both sides will lose their lives."

As *EIR* reported on Feb. 8, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) have studied the report by Nazi SS Maj. Gen. Jürgen Stroop, titled "The Warsaw Ghetto Is No More," on what "strategy and tactics" he used to put down the uprising. The IDF was determined to apply Stroop's lessons, in order to wipe out the Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation. Subsequent IDF operations against the Palestinian Authority have shown just how precisely the IDF is replicating these Nazi policies.

In this context, it is very instructive to read another document written by Dr. Edelman, this one in November 1945, entitled "The Ghetto Fights." His 30-page report is a powerful counter to Stroop's "after-action report," and is one of the most important historical documents in existence detailing the methods used by the Nazis, not just to crush the will of the Jews to fight for their lives, but their honor and human dignity as well.

Dr. Edelman's report reveals very disturbing parallels to the ongoing military operations that Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has ordered be carried out throughout the occupied territories.

Sharon is not yet conducting mass executions, nor has he yet forced the Palestinians into cattle cars to be shipped to concentration camps—perhaps because the majority of Israelis will not countenance such a policy. But Sharon continues to commit war crimes that are clearly spelled out in the Geneva Conventions.

'Breaking Their Spirit'

The Nazis employed a method aimed at pacification of the Jewish resistance, as well as resistance from non-Jewish target populations. Edelman wrote that the Germans sought

"to dominate the population from the very beginning by breaking their spirit through persecutions and by evoking a state of passive submission in their midst." They used "devilishly refined" methods to force the Jews to accept the unacceptable. Edelman wrote that, first they eliminated all the personalities to whom the people could look for leadership, while carrying out a campaign of intimidation, terror, murder, against victims whose only crime was to be Jewish.

Sharon's goal has never been to stop Palestinian terrorism, but to force the Palestinians to accept a totally unacceptable policy: either to live as stateless persons in tiny ghettos occupying less than 40% of the West Bank, or to endure mass transfer to Jordan. As long as Sharon is in power, he will not deviate from this unacceptable policy.

Since a popular consensus does not exist for such a brutal policy, Sharon needs the bloody attacks by Palestinians on Israeli citizens—women and children, the old and the young. Sharon's propagandists attack this as terrorism, somehow divorced from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that has its cause in the Israeli occupation. More than 600 Israelis have been killed since the beginning of the al-Aqsa Intifada—the uprising sparked on Sept. 28, 2000, when Sharon, with thousands of Israeli police, personally invaded Jerusalem's al-Aqsa Mosque, atop the holy site of al-Haram al-Sharif (or, the Temple Mount). The continued terror has driven Israelis to support Sharon, or made them passive and fearful.

The IDF strategy, under the cover of "fighting terror," is to break the will of the population as a whole. At the heart of the policy is "collective punishment" of the Palestinians. As all Jews suffered under the Nazis solely because they were Jews, so the masses of Palestinians suffer for the "crime" of being Palestinian.

Edelman wrote in 1945: "The unwritten law of collective responsibility was being universally applied against the Jews. Thus in the first days of November 1939, 53 male inhabitants of the 9 Nalewkic St. apartment house were summarily shot for the beating of a Polish policeman by one of the tenants. This occurrence was the first case of mass punishment, intensified the feeling of panic amongst the Warsaw Jews."

Sharon's propaganda claims that IDF assassinations are aimed at "ticking bombs," those planning imminent attacks, but this is nonsense. Even the Israeli press reports that the IDF is working from a "target bank," a list put together many months ago. While those being assassinated may very well be militants "with blood on their hands," they are being chosen from among the thousands of militants whose names are in Shin Beth intelligence files. This "trial by execution" is not only a war crime, but it brings death and terror to perfectly innocent people. The strategy was demonstrated on July 23, when Sharon ordered that a one-ton bomb be dropped on a block of apartments in Gaza, in order to murder one militant, Hamas leader Salah Sehadah; 15 others were killed, including 11 children, and 145 were wounded. Sharon proclaimed this attack a "great success," and Maj. Gen. Dan Halutz, commander of the Israeli Air Force, called it "morally justified."

After all, the target had the “blood of Israelis on his hands.” Did the children also have blood on their hands?

This, too, is collective punishment.

Human Shields

On Aug. 15, Nidal Muhsien, 19, was killed for only one reason: He was a Palestinian. Muhsien died while being forced to become a “human shield” by Israeli soldiers who demanded that he knock on the door of the a militant’s house which they had surrounded. This particular wanted militant had lost both his legs and an arm in a previous attack. The Israelis claimed that he was planning a mega-terror attack. Muhsien was shot at the door—the Israelis say from the inside, the Palestinians say from the outside.

Ha’aretz on Aug. 17 quoted IDF officers who call this “neighbor practice.” One senior officer said that it has been used “hundreds of times to reach wanted men and to comb houses for fear of booby traps. In recent months it has been used very often during fighting.” The officer described the method: First, they surround the house of the wanted man, demanding over a megaphone that he come out. If he refuses, they send a neighbor to try to convince the suspect. If that fails, they open fire with anti-tank missiles and machine guns, and then bulldoze the house, knocking it down with the suspect inside. “This is a military method,” the officer said, “an efficient and effective method, it’s used by the police and by the army.”

Ha’aretz confirms a report by the human rights group B’Tselem, which quoted reserve officers saying, “It is very organized. First the house is surrounded, and then we knock on the door and announce it’s the army. The men are asked to lift their shirts (lest they be hiding weapons or an explosive belt), and the women and children are put in a separate room. Then the men are taken on a search of the house. We point at things and ask them to touch them. The rationale is the fear of booby traps. In effect, it makes the search much easier.”

Another officer told B’Tselem, “Before the search, we go to a neighbor, take him out of his house and tell him to call the people we want out of the next door house. If it works, it works, and if not we blow up the door or knock it down with a hammer. The neighbor goes in first. If they’re planning something, he gets it. The orders say to send him upstairs first, and to take everyone out. . . . We take their ID cards, and then make the neighbor go through the house. We find who we were looking for and arrest them. . . . The neighbor does not have the option to refuse to do it.”

The Nazis used the same methods to crush the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Approaching an apartment house filled with Jews, who were to be deported to the concentration camps, the SS troops would first surround the house, then send in a Jewish policeman to make the announcement that everyone must leave. Most of the inhabitants would do so, after which the Nazis sent in thugs, usually Ukrainians or locals who were also considered expendable, to “mop up” anyone who was hiding. Then the house would be burned down. If someone

killed or harmed the Jewish policeman, everyone in the house would be executed on the spot.

The death of Nidal Muhsien came weeks after the Israeli Supreme Court had ruled that the IDF could not carry out such practices—yet the war crime continues. Effi Eitam, a minister in Sharon’s government, described it as “very moral.” Eitam, who is the head of the National Religious Party, added that it is “absolutely” moral to endanger the life of an innocent Palestinian, in order to save the lives of Israeli soldiers.

Former Justice Minister Yossi Beilin, a leading Labor Party dove, denounced Sharon and Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer (Labor), calling the practice “immoral and un-Jewish.” He said that Sharon and Eitam were “responsible for the worst moral deterioration in the history of Israel. Not only is the practice illegal, not Jewish, and immoral, Israel is paying an enormous price for it. This government is teaching the Army the worst practices, and is turning the concept of purity of arms, into a slander.”

House Demolitions and Deportation

For Sharon, it is not enough to only kill militants or cart them off to prison; their families must also suffer, as a “deterrent.” This is done through the destruction of the family home. It does not matter if the families knew nothing of the militants’ actions. The Israelis justify this blatant war crime by claiming that they are enforcing a statute that was established by the British during the Mandate period, prior to the creation of the State of Israel! The British used it against Jewish terrorists who were fighting for independence. Since Israel has virtually reoccupied the West Bank, houses are being demolished almost every day. Palestinians have no recourse or appeal, and usually the only warning is after the bulldozers are at their front door, when they are given a few minutes to leave. Afterward, entire impoverished families, up to 20 persons and most of them children, are left to dig through the rubble for whatever belongings they can salvage.

Now, Sharon wants to deport militants’ whole families. Prior to the Oslo Accord in 1993, Israel deported militants all the time. The most infamous case was in 1992, when the Labor government of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin pushed more than 400 Palestinian prisoners across the Lebanese border, but up until now, Israel has never deported entire families. The case is before Israel’s Supreme Court, which has not made a decision yet.

Deportation of individuals and families is not the real issue, however. By opening a national debate on the question, Sharon hopes to gather public support for his actual policy, which is “mass transfer.” His ultimate aim is to transfer the Palestinians to Jordan and Egypt; in the meantime, he wants to transfer Palestinians from outlying villages and towns, into the Warsaw ghettos he is creating in the eight major cities and towns of the West Bank.

The biggest war crimes are the closures, sieges, and curfews that are forming these ghettos, making it more and more

impossible for outlying communities to have access to health care and other essential services provided by cities. The closures and constant curfews, which in many cases are lifted only for a few hours at a time, have brought the economy in the Palestinian Authority to a standstill. Unemployment has officially reached over 45%, but in reality it is much higher. The situation mirrors that in the Warsaw Ghetto, except for the fact that international relief agencies are desperately trying to feed the population.

In his "The Ghetto Fights," Edelman described how poor Jewish children would risk their lives by clandestinely leaving the ghetto to beg for food outside. According to the Palestinian Education Ministry, and confirmed by eyewitness accounts published in the Israeli press, 30,000 Palestinian children as young as seven and eight have dropped out of school. Thousands of these children can be found either begging, or selling pencils and other trinkets inside Israel, mostly in the Arab Israeli towns. Those who have not left home to live in the street, are awakened at 4 or 5 each morning by their mothers, who send them off to sneak past checkpoints, in the hope that they will be able to return that night, with a few shekels desperately needed for the survival of the whole family.

Transfer Has Already Begun

Eighty thousand Palestinians have left the West Bank and the Gaza Strip since January 2002. This is 50% more than the

year before, and accounts for almost 3% of the Palestinian population. These people are escaping the brutality of the Israeli regime in the occupied territories. They have been "transferred" out of their homeland. Another 50,000 are now trying to leave, crossing the Jordan River bridges into Jordan, and the crossing at the Egyptian border, at Rafah in Gaza. The only thing keeping thousands more from leaving, is the fact that Jordan and Egypt have in effect closed their borders, for fear of a mass exodus.

"We are seriously talking about transfer," an unnamed Palestinian official told the *Jerusalem Post* of Aug. 27. "We are holding urgent deliberations with the brothers in Jordan and Egypt to try to stop the influx."

These figures do not include East Jerusalem, where Palestinians have Israeli-issued ID cards and therefore can leave more easily. Israel never prevents Palestinians from leaving, but does prevent them from returning.

Khaled Khatib, a leader of the Palestinian Democratic Union, warned that tens of thousands of Palestinians could be driven out of the West Bank and Gaza when the United States launches a military offensive against Iraq. "Israel might exploit the situation to mount a wide-scale military operation to destroy the Palestinian Authority and expel tens of thousands of desperate Palestinians," he said. "But this plot will not succeed, because our people have learned from previous mistakes."

'Letter to the Palestinians'

This open letter from Marek Edelman "to all the leaders of the Palestinian military, paramilitary, and guerrilla organizations," was published in Forward on Aug. 23.

My name is Marek Edelman. I am a former deputy commander of the Jewish Military Organization in Poland, one of the leaders of the Warsaw Ghetto insurrection. In the memorable year . . . 1943, we were fighting for the survival of the Jewish Community in Warsaw . . . for mere life, not for territory, nor for a national identity. We were fighting with a hopeless determination, but our weapons were never directed against the defenseless civilian populations; we never killed women and children. . . .

We were isolated in our fight, and yet the powerful opposing army was not able to destroy these barely armed boys and girls. Our fight in Warsaw lasted several weeks. Later we fought in the underground and in the Warsaw insurrection of 1944.

Yet nowhere in the world can a guerrilla force bring conclusive victory; nowhere can it be defeated by heavily

weaponed armies. Neither can your war attain resolution. Blood will be spilled in vain and lives will be lost on both sides.

We have never been careless with life. We have never sent our soldiers to certain death. Life is one for eternity. Nobody has the right to mindlessly take it away. It is high time for everybody to understand just that.

Just look around you. Look at Ireland. After 50 years of bloody war, peace has arrived. Formerly deadly enemies have sat down at a common table. . . .

Both you and the State of Israel have to radically change your attitude. You have to create a better future for your loved ones, for your children. I know from my own experience that the current unfolding of events depends on you, the military leaders. . . . You are wise and intelligent enough to understand that without peace, there is no future for Palestine, and peace can be attained only at the cost of both sides agreeing to some concessions.

I am also asking former President Bill Clinton, former French Health Minister Bernard Kouchner, and German parliamentarian Daniel Cohn-Bendit to support my appeal. I want to remind you of our common stand in the matter of Yugoslavia. Perhaps this war, the war which cannot be won, can likewise be interrupted and replaced by talks leading to an agreement.