

was followed by General Ya'alon's powerful statements against Sharon's policies. In addition, young IDF soldiers, including some who recently emigrated from America, have been coming forward, in regional U.S. newspapers, with stories of how they are ordered to brutalize and humiliate Palestinian civilians.

But the intervention by the former Shin Bet chiefs was the most dramatic, covered in four full pages of *Yedioth Aharanot*. "We are heading downhill towards near catastrophe," said Yaakov Perry, Shin Bet chief from 1987-93. "If . . . we go on living by the sword, we will continue to wallow in the mud and destroy ourselves." Israel must "dismantle the illegal settlements." Perry even specifically referenced the violent West Bank settlers saying, "We will have to clash with them."

Ami Ayalon, Shin Bet head from 1996-2000, called for unilateral withdrawal of troops and settlers from Gaza and the West Bank, saying that if the occupation continues, "We are taking sure, steady steps to a place where the State of Israel will no longer be a democracy and a home for the Jewish people." Ayalon is also an initiator of a peace initiative called the People's Voice, with Sari Nusseibeh, a Palestinian intellectual and President of Al Quds University in East Jerusalem. That statement of principles for a peace agreement has been turned into a petition which over 100,000 Palestinians and Israelis have signed, and Ayalon and Nusseibeh jointly toured the U.S. promoting it.

Carmi Gillon, Shin Bet head from just after the Rabin assassination until 1996, called the government incapable of "getting out of this mess." Avraham Shalom, chief from 1980-86, said Sharon's policies were "contrary to the desire for peace. We must once and for all admit there is another side, that . . . that it is suffering and that we are behaving disgracefully. . . . This entire behavior is the result of the occupation."

These courageous outcries have in turn triggered forceful action from international leaders, most notably, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Pope John Paul II. On Nov. 16 in St. Peter's Square, the Pope, for the first time, denounced Israel's apartheid wall, pointedly, on the eve of Sharon's arrival in Italy, saying, "The Holy Land does not need walls, but bridges. . . . [T]he wall . . . is seen by many as a new obstacle" to peace. Just two weeks before, Putin had told Sharon point-blank that Russia would neither withdraw nor alter its UN Security Council resolution on the Road Map and a Palestinian state, which was to be adopted on Nov. 19. "Unfortunately, the momentum for peace seems to have stopped," said the Pope, but his intervention helped turn the tide.

The wide American audience for the voices of peace was reflected in the highly successful Nov. 1-4 tour by Gen. Amram Mitzna, former Labor Party chairman, appealing to America to support the Geneva Accord (see box).

Mitzna: 'We Are Back' For Peace

Gen. Amram Mitzna (IDF-ret.) former chairman of the Israeli Labor Party and current member of the Knesset (parliament), gave this Nov. 1 keynote speech in Boston, Mass., to a conference of Brit Tzedek v'Shalom, the U.S.-based Alliance for Justice and Peace. Mitzna also spoke to capacity crowds in Philadelphia and New York—but not one major U.S. newspaper reported his speeches, showing thus the media bias for the pro-war Likudniks. Here is the opening and an excerpt of Mitzna's Boston speech.

I'd like to begin with telling you that just a few hours ago, thousands of people gathered in the Square. And I'm talking about Rabin Square in Tel Aviv. I remind you that it is eight years since Rabin was assassinated by extremists for the Jewish organizations in Israel. And I think that we should do the same as the people in the Square did. Let's stand up for one minute of silence. . . .

Rabin was assassinated . . . after he was so brave to change his mind and to understand that the reality in the Middle East is not what we thought. . . .

In 1987, 20 years had passed since the war in '67, and many people in Israel thought that it is possible to continue to occupy—then 2.5 million Palestinians, now 3.5 million Palestinians—and we did it so easily, without any real problems. But the Intifada in 1987 showed that it is over. And Rabin, I think, as Begin before, realized that instead of fighting the Palestinians, and losing everything we have, we will have to reach the idea of "Two States for Two Peoples." Instead of fighting, let's negotiate. Instead of occupying . . . let's see what kind of concessions that we have to make—painful concessions—if we want to live as a Jewish and a Democratic state.

He was assassinated, and for the last eight years . . . we went "off-road." I think that the Geneva accord—the Geneva Initiative—the Geneva Agreement is a sign that we are back, talking about "Two States for Two Peoples," with a just conclusion to the conflict. . . .

Now it is very important that the Jewish communities in the United States will raise their voice. . . . and you are not alone—it is in Israel also that the right-wing . . . are much stronger. But now we have an agenda. . . . I believe we were so brave in wars and in combat, we are able to be brave in taking risks in peace attempts and peace initiatives.—*Michele Steinberg*