

Bombings Pave Sharon's Way To Another War

by Dean Andromidas

Hours after a Palestinian suicide bomber with over 100 kilos of explosives blew apart a Jerusalem bus filled with ultra-Orthodox Jewish families on Aug. 19, killing 20 people and wounding scores, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and his generals launched "Operation Defensive Shield 2." Israeli troops were sent into Nablus, Jenin, and other West Bank cities and towns, with orders to "resume" targetted assassinations, which had never really ceased.

The renewal of massive bloodshed between Israelis and Palestinians signals much more than the imminent collapse of the Road Map for a Middle East peace. It is the latest round in Sharon and his generals' drive to start a new Middle East war. This threat of war will never be alleviated, as long as Sharon is in power; and he is merely a hand grenade in the hands of U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney and the Straussian chicken-hawks in the Bush Administration who back him. As long as they remain, the United States cannot do what has to be done to stop the bloodshed inflicted on Israelis and Palestinians alike.

The Jerusalem bomber was an Islamic Jihad imam named Raed Mesk, whose suicide bombing was revenge for the Israeli targetted assassination of an Islamic Jihad operative, Mohammed Sadr, a few days before.

Nonetheless, a senior Israeli Intelligence source warned that the particular chain of events which led to this Jerusalem bombing, did not begin there, but in Beirut on Aug. 2, when a powerful car-bomb killed Hezbollah operative Ali Hussein Salah. That hit was clearly the work of Israel's foreign intelligence agency, the Mossad, said the source, who pointed to the intention of Sharon and his generals to create a regional war. "They think they can launch a short and brutal war directed not only at the Palestinians, but the Lebanese, Syrians, and Iranians as well," said the source.

EIR has warned that regional war plans directed at Iran and Syria were at the center of secret discussions between Cheney and Sharon during the latter's official visit to Washington on July 29-30 (see *EIR*, Aug. 1, "Will Sharon be Cheney's Hand Grenade vs. Iran?"). The collapse of the Road Map, and renewed large-scale violence, will set the stage for spreading the violence into Lebanon and Syria, and will contribute to a pretext for attacking Iran.

Days before the Jerusalem bombing, *Washington Post* columnist Jim Hoagland confirmed that Sharon had told President George Bush in their July 29 meeting, that Israel would

attack Iran's nuclear facility at Bushehr, if Iran's nuclear program were not terminated. Hoagland wrote that Sharon's military secretary, Gen. Yoav Galant, presented evidence that Iran's nuclear program was well advanced. Sharon told Bush, that Israel would not stand aside while Iran prepares a "nuclear holocaust" against Israel.

Writing in the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* on Aug. 19, commentator and Air Force reservist Reuven Pedatzur cited the Hoagland report, warning, "If the Air Force attacks the nuclear facility at Bushehr, it will not only be a strategic mistake; it could also be an operation that does not achieve its goal." Pedatzur advises that Israel would do well to allow the Europeans and the United States to continue pressuring Iran without Israel talking about "existential threats" that don't exist. "Even if Iran has nuclear weapons, Israel's own deterrent capabilities are enough to prevent any Iranian ruler from even considering launching a nuclear weapon at Israel."

Sharon Sabotaging Road Map for Peace

The Jerusalem bus bombing was not only predictable, but also fit Sharon's calculated campaign to destroy the Road Map. Since agreeing to implement it, Sharon has not removed one "outpost" in the Palestinian territories, and has even allowed new ones to proliferate. His government approved no less than 2,000 new housing units for the West Bank, and even in the Gaza Strip, where vast settler neighborhoods stand empty. Of the 157 roadblocks that Israel has thrown up throughout the West Bank, Sharon has removed three—only to close those very roads to Palestinian traffic. He has turned over two cities to Palestinian control, but left the roadblocks and barriers which have turned these cities into Warsaw Ghettos.

At the same time, assassinations and arbitrary arrests continued. Just before the bombing, Sharon had approved reopening Jerusalem's Al Haram Al Sharif/Temple Mount to non-Muslims—a brazen provocation. The site of the Dome of the Rock and Al Aqsa Mosque, it has been closed to non-Muslims since Sept. 28, 2000, when Sharon, accompanied by thousands of police, marched onto it, thereby sparking the "Al Aqsa Intifada." And then there is the "security wall"—the Berlin Wall of the Middle East—by which Israel is grabbing 40% of the West Bank. Its construction continues.

Furthermore, militants involved in attacks during the *hudna*, or cease-fire—including the Jerusalem bomber—staged their attacks from cities under the control of the Israeli military, not the Palestinian National Authority.

Once Mohammed Sadr was assassinated, everyone in Israel was simply waiting for the inevitable revenge attack, which everyone, especially Sharon, had no doubt would occur. In fact, one day earlier, representatives of Shin Bet, the Israeli domestic security services, were in court arguing against the release of Palestinian prisoners, because, they argued, the *hudna* would collapse in a few days.

Sharon's targetted killings always kill the peacemakers,

so it should be no surprise that the first victim following the Jerusalem bombing, was Abu Shanab, an official spokesman of Hamas who had helped negotiate the *hudna*. The assassination accomplished its task, publicly marking the end of the *hudna*. Within minutes, a Hamas spokesman declared, "The assassination of Abu Shanab . . . means that the Zionist enemy has assassinated the truce."

The assassination came within minutes of the announcement by Palestinian Prime Minister Abu Mazen that his government, along with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, would now take moves to dismantle Hamas and Islamic Jihad. After the Israeli assassination of Hamas's Abu Shanab, Abu Mazen was compelled to denounce it, declaring, "There is no doubt that what the Israeli troops carried out today is an ugly crime. We condemn such acts. This is against peace and the peace process."

Who Is Backing Sharon?

Adopting Sharon's line, the Bush Administration demanded repeatedly on Aug. 20, that Abu Mazen dismantle Hamas and Islamic Jihad immediately, before any further Road Map steps take place. The policy reflects the extremely limited intestinal fortitude of President Bush to confront Sharon. A large political apparatus in the United States openly supports Sharon against the Road Map—the same apparatus that supports Cheney, and includes the Christian Zionists, and the gutless Democrats who coddle Sharon, while refusing to attack Cheney.

On Aug. 15, only days before the bombing, Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) gave a joint press conference in Israel with Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom. Speaking of Sharon's new Berlin Wall, McCain claimed, "Many of us in Congress feel it is an important contributor to the reduction of acts of terrorism." Also in Israel, was Rep. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.), after a 90-minute meeting with Sharon, announced he has received strong support for legislation he is sponsoring, which calls for sanctions against Syria, if it does not end its support for Hezbollah and Palestinian militant groups. The legislation is being co-sponsored by Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.). The same week, Tourism Minister Binyamin Elon was in the U.S. "Bible Belt," pumping the Christian Zionists to apply electoral and financial pressure against President George W. Bush so as to sabotage the Road Map. Elon represents the fascist National Union party, whose program calls for the "transfer" of the Palestinian population to Jordan and Egypt—better known as "ethnic cleansing." Elon also met with Gary Bauer, former head of the Christian Coalition, who had gone to Israel in July and promised to mobilize 30 million Christian Zionists against the Road Map.

Two other top anti-Road Map operatives whom Elon met, were Ed MacAteer and Herb Zweibon. The former worked with top neo-conservative Paul Weyrich to co-found Moral Majority and the Religious Roundtable; the latter is another leader of a coalition known as Americans for a Safe Israel.