

## Ariel Sharon Ignites New Middle East War

by Dean Andromidas

How could the most hated of Israeli right-wing hard-liners, Likud Party Chairman Ariel Sharon, have been cleared by Prime Minister Ehud Barak to march into one of Islam's holiest sites on Sept. 28, with an army of 4,000 Israeli police, bodyguards, and supporters?

Sharon's invasion of the Al-Haram Al-Sharif, intended as a provocative demonstration of Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem, ignited a spreading "low-intensity war" between Palestinians and Israeli troops using tanks and grenade launchers. And this, as President Bill Clinton was still formally attempting to negotiate peace between Barak's government and Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority.

The growing conflagration for which Sharon served as "the idiot with the match" has not only weakened both Barak's and Arafat's authority; it threatens to escalate into a new Middle East war, or even a major East-West confrontation. As of this writing, death tolls continue to mount, as clashes continue throughout the Israeli Occupied Territories, and for the first time, in the Arab-Israeli populated areas within Israel itself.

Since Lyndon LaRouche's Aug. 18 *EIR* article, "Wherein Clinton Failed," the more immediate reason for the downward path of the Middle East negotiations has been clear. Under pressure from Al Gore's Wall Street backers, from Gore's pro-Israeli warhawk national security team, and from the demands of Hillary Clinton's Senate campaign, the President pulled back from serious attempts at peace, and allowed Arafat and the PNA to be scapegoated. When Clinton, striving to get Gore and Hillary elected and to hold off a financial breakdown, took all pressure off Israel, the signal was given to those who control Ariel Sharon and his like.

But there is also a more fundamental, strategic factor com-

PELLING Sharon's financial backers, including Henry Kissinger's U.S. circles of influence, to regard such warfare as desirable.

### Wall Street's Reckless Abandon

The fact that the outbreak of violence is occurring in the midst of the ongoing financial crisis, points to powerful financial interests who see war and chaos as the only alternative to losing their power, as the ones who gave Sharon the go-ahead to ignite the powderkeg. The match, Sharon, was tossed in just at the point when leading voices in Europe, particularly in Germany and France, as well as Asia, have begun to openly warn that current Anglo-American monetary policy will lead to a financial crash within the next weeks or months, possibly even before the November elections in the United States. Throughout history, major wars have always begun in the midst of financial and economic crises.

The current fighting has released powerful political and emotional forces on both sides, creating a situation where only a force as strong as the Presidency of the United States could be capable of ending this conflict. Given the fact that Clinton has refused to act, propitiating the right-wing Zionist lobby in the United States in the deluded belief that he must secure the Presidency for a disloyal Vice President, and a Senatorship for his wife, he will be responsible for a bloody war far more dangerous than that of the Balkans or any other war of the last decade.

The failure of U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's "shuffle diplomacy" is the predictable outcome when second-rate diplomats, armed with empty words of cajolement, are sent to stop war.



*The Gaza Strip, 1995. The Anglo-American oligarchy, desperate as their global financial system is faced with imminent collapse, deployed Ariel Sharon to trigger a low-intensity war, which threatens to become a Middle East war, or even an East-West confrontation.*

## **A Decade of Frustration**

Sharon's march onto the Al-Haram Al-Sharif accompanied by cohorts of heavily armed police, unleashed a decade of pent-up frustration and rage in the Palestinian population, and the Arab and Islamic world more broadly.

As of this writing, clashes are continuing. The death toll among Palestinians is approaching 100, while at least 13 Israelis have died. These are clashes between heavily fortified, fixed Israeli positions deep inside Palestinian-controlled areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which should have been evacuated years ago as part of negotiated agreements, and rock-throwing teenagers deployed in classic *intifada* tactics.

Parallel to the clashes in the Occupied Territories, massive clashes have erupted between Israeli security forces and Israeli Arabs. This is an unprecedented development, because these Arabs have lived as Israeli citizens within Israel. Numbering more than a million people, their taking to the streets was a totally spontaneous development. Police use of the same tactics as in the Occupied Territories, including firing live ammunition, have led to ten deaths.

Clashes are occurring not only in the high-density Arab towns and cities in northern Galilee, but in Arab neighborhoods in Hebron, Israel's major port, and in Jaffa, which is, in effect, a suburb of Tel Aviv.

Israeli security forces have employed heavy-handed tactics from the beginning. For 24 hours after Sharon's provocation touched off disturbances, Israeli paramilitary police were deployed to the Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount during Friday prayers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque. They shot at Palestinian stone-throwers as they came out of the Mosque, thus ini-

tiating what is now known as the "Al-Aqsa Massacre" and the "Al-Aqsa War."

The Israeli Army and security forces have deployed tanks, helicopter gunships, and anti-tank missiles, while reinforcements are being sent into the Occupied Territories. The Israelis have all but admitted that most of the Palestinian deaths have been caused by snipers who have orders to shoot to kill. Israeli military spokesmen have hinted at implementing military contingency plans to re-occupy large areas of the West Bank and Gaza in a military operation which would involve armored regiments and reentering heavily Palestinian populated areas. Under these plans, the Jewish settlements in large contiguous areas would be annexed to Israel. Furthermore, Israeli forces would deploy throughout the West Bank and Gaza, bringing Israel's most heavily armed military division right up to the Jordanian, Syrian, and Egyptian borders.

The Israeli-Palestinian clashes are rapidly becoming the epicenter of region-wide tension, particularly in neighboring countries where millions of Palestinians reside in refugee camps, as the Arab population mobilizes in support of the Palestinians. In Syria, home to many "rejectionist" Palestinian organizations, 4,000 students stormed the American Embassy grounds. Demonstrations have been held in Jordan, where half the population is Palestinian; in Lebanon, where several large Palestinian refugee camps are located; in Iraq, where tens of thousands of Palestinians reside; and in Egypt, Libya, and even such moderate Arab states as Oman.

Jordan, apparently with the clearance of Israeli authorities, has even deployed helicopters into the West Bank to supply Palestinian hospitals and airlift the seriously wounded

to Jordanian hospitals, where they are treated as heroes in the struggle.

A senior Middle East intelligence source expressed fear that the situation is primed for a broader regional conflict that could be touched off by any number of potential flash points. The most immediate danger would be massive uncontrolled demonstrations or riots erupting in neighboring Jordan and Egypt, forcing their governments to demonstrate Arab solidarity in a much more militant way.

## War by Miscalculation

A senior Israeli intelligence source told *EIR* that the situation is a classic example of how miscalculation by leaders can lead to wars that go beyond anyone's expectations.

The first miscalculation, was President Clinton's failure at Camp David, where, out of electoral considerations, he avoided putting pressure on Israel, and failed to insist on the broader economic requirements to establish an effective and just peace. Worse, Clinton publicly propitiated the right-wing Zionist lobby, accused Palestinian President Arafat of intransigence, and threatened to move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem—a threat that no acting President has ever made before. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak left Washington declaring that Arafat was not “a partner” for peace, while Arafat left empty-handed.

Moreover, the politically explosive issue of Jerusalem and the Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount, was brought to the center of the conflict.

It rapidly became clear that a calculated decision had been made to postpone any serious negotiations until after the U.S. elections.

Meanwhile, Sharon, and those seeking a new Middle East war, made their own calculations, and took the opportunity to strike.

In August, shortly after the collapse of the peace talks, a leading moderate in Sharon's Likud party warned *EIR* of an impending trip to the United States by Sharon, aimed at sabotaging any hopes for a “Camp David II” meeting to finalize a peace deal. Sharon, the source warned, was prepared to bring the Mideast to the brink of war, if that was what it took to stop the deal.

On Sept. 22, Sharon travelled to New York, where he met with his leading financial backers. High on the list was Ronald Lauder, scion of the multibillion-dollar Estée Lauder cosmetic empire. Lauder was the principal financier of former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose reign as Prime Minister (1996-99) more than once brought the Middle East to the verge of war. Lauder also is a trustee of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, and a major supporter of the right wing of the Republican Party.

Lauder had just recently been elected to the chairmanship of the Conference of Presidents of the Jewish Organizations, the umbrella group of all the major Jewish organizations in

America. His election had been contested at the time by the organization's moderate elements, who supported the peace process.

According to Israeli press sources, Sharon met with Lauder and the deputy chairman of the organization, Malcom Hoenlein. They mapped out a campaign to undermine the peace process through mobilizing American Jewish support against any peace agreement that would give sovereignty to the Palestinians in any part of East Jerusalem, especially the old city and Temple Mount/Al-Haram Al-Sharif. They coined the slogan “Bedrock of our Faith,” in reference to the Temple Mount.

This would even go beyond Netanyahu's election campaign slogan, “Peres will divide Jerusalem,” which was the brainchild of Netanyahu's electoral adviser, American spin-doctor Arthur Finkelstein. The new slogan would also be used for Sharon's bid for Prime Minister if early Israeli elections were held.

Shortly after the meeting, Hoenlein called on American Jews to protest any compromise on the Temple Mount. Hoenlein's unprecedented statement was even attacked by the Israeli government as an intervention in Israel's internal affairs.

Six days later, back in Jerusalem, Sharon made his defiant claim to Israeli sovereignty over the city of Jerusalem, and over one of Islam's most holy sites.

In a commentary in the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* after Sharon's provocation, author Akiva Eldar referred to the above meetings, and drew the obvious connections to the subsequent conflagration. “By this logic, riots in the wake of a visit by Jews to the Mount prove to American Jews that Barak is surrendering and betraying the capital of the Jewish people. If there is any one subject which might mobilize American Jews, that subject is the Temple Mount.”

Sharon's schemes were also calculated to have an impact on the internal political situation in Israel which was thoroughly destabilized after the collapse of Camp David. First, Barak's government coalition imploded, leaving him with fewer than 40 members in the 120-member Israeli Knesset (parliament). This left the prospect of early elections being called, once the Knesset returned from Summer recess later in October.

Then, in the middle of a political atmosphere charged with the prospect of early elections, and on the very day of Sharon's provocation, Israeli Attorney General Elyakim Rubinstein closed an investigation for fraud and corruption against former Prime Minister Netanyahu, thus opening the way for his reentry into politics. When the decision was announced, Netanyahu was in the United States meeting with potential financial backers of his reentry.

## Would-Be ‘King of Greater Israel’

Thus, when a new war broke out in the Palestinian territories, Israeli politics reverted to the defense of the Zionist home-

land against the Arab masses. It is in this explosive atmosphere that Sharon posed the most threatening danger. Because, more dangerous than Sharon's ability to ignite the flames of hatred among Arabs, is his ability to catalyze radical Zionist ideology among broad masses of Israelis. His policies, including the "Jordan is Palestine" policy, envision large-scale expulsion of Palestinians and other Arabs from Israeli-occupied territories. These are policies shared by significant sections of the political elite and military and security establishment. Under conditions of war, they would become Israeli national policy.

As of this writing, in the midst of the current conflagration, Prime Minister Barak has opened negotiations for a national unity government with Sharon. Neither Barak, nor any member of his government or party has publicly attacked Sharon since his provocation ignited the current fighting; all, to a man, have attacked Arafat. Only the pro-peace Meretz and Arab-Israeli parties have dared to attack him.

To understand why this has happened, it is necessary to go back to the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. A recent issue of *Newsweek* (see *EIR*, Sept. 22, 2000) revealed previously secret details of a 1995 agreement between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority that would have formed the basis for a final peace agreement. It was initialed

by its negotiators and awaited final approval by Prime Minister Rabin and Arafat.

That peace pact was never signed, because five days after it was struck, Rabin was assassinated.

The significance of that assassination was that major elements in the Israeli establishment, of which Sharon is a leading player, were not committed to going ahead with the peace process devised by Rabin, Arafat, and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres. They were willing to assassinate an Israeli Prime Minister rather than accept a final peace deal with the Palestinians. Their success was shown in the fact that the peace process never regained its initial momentum.

Sharon's latest provocation is the moral equivalent of the assassination of another prime minister, with the goal of drowning the peace process in a sea of blood. As the Israeli political class failed to bring the real murderers of Rabin to justice, they will not stop Sharon or Israel's march toward war.

A senior Israel intelligence source who has lived through all Israel's wars since 1948, told *EIR* that the only way to stop this emerging war, is if the President of the United States were to cut off all financial aid to Israel. He warned that no other political force or concert of nations is in a position to act.

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