



# **SHARON: For Whom the Bell Tolls**

**Frederic F. Clairmont**



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“The peoples of an enslaved Palestine do not have Apache helicopters. They do not have F-16s. They have neither tanks nor missiles. But here are a fighting people whose souls and minds and bodies have been forged in the cauldron of the most appalling colonial genocide, indignity, repression and poverty that has ever visited any people on earth for such an enduring span of more than half a century.”

— Sheik Ahmed Yassin, 24 April 2002

The targeted assassination of Sheik Ahmed Yassin<sup>1</sup>, spiritual leader of Hamas<sup>2</sup>, in the early hours of 22 March was not an aberration. It was inherent in the relentless pursuit of state terrorism geared towards the untrammelled aggrandizement of land settlement and, as a corollary, the extermination of all vestiges of the national resistance struggle.

The sheer magnitude of Israel’s crimes and territorial expropriations<sup>3</sup> would have been inconceivable without the overt, sustained, massive economic, military and diplo-



matic support of the United States, within and outside the United Nations.

There has not been a single resolution over these long years condemning Israel for its explicit crimes against humanity that was not subject to a US veto in the United Nations and the Human Rights Commission and elsewhere. In short, the crimes of Israel are the emanations of the US/Israeli axis. It must not be ignored that Israel's stratagems continue to be bankrolled (private and public) to the tune of \$5 billion yearly from the United States and world Jewry. This rises to a cumulative sum of around \$270 billion since 1950. A non-stop aid package that's unprecedented in economic history. And that for a country of only 6 million.

The 750-kilometre-long, 8-metre-high wall girdling the occupied territories at a cost of \$1.87 billion, condemned by the UN General Assembly (with the exception of the United States), will be paid for by US taxpayers. Israel stands as the sole contemporary embodiment of the apartheid state. In its occupied settler lands with its minefields, its checkpoints and barbed wire, it has spawned Bantustans that would have made their South African models look like a paradise.

Not a single day passes without the slaughter of Palestinian men, women and children, a grisly fact that the Zio-corporate US media sedulously ignores. In the slums of the over-populated Gaza Strip — the world's most densely populated area — there is not a single building that remains unscathed by tank and missile rocket fire. Many of the buildings, if they can be called that, are rickety

vermin-ridden hovels that could crumble at any moment. Unemployment englobes over 65% of the adult labour force. Around 65% of all Palestinian children are victims of endemic malnutrition and traumatic afflictions. Their food supplies originating largely from the UN are precarious but even these paltry handouts are threatened by Sharon's embargo. The Nazis sent their victims to the gas chambers as "the final solution"; Sharon's predilection is death by starvation.

**T**he Sheik's execution marks one of the most significant milestones in the blood-drenched repression of the occupied territories and in the unfinished carnage of the Middle East. The quest of the occupier and its US backers was to smash one of the most heroic resistance movements of all time by military exterminism. It signaled Israel's adamant refusal, buttressed by successive US administrations, to accept an effective political solution.

The US Black Hawk helicopter gunship moved in on its target at 05.30 hrs when the Sheik and his entourage were leaving the mosque. In the bloody annals of the occupation it is one more abomination that will be neither forgiven nor forgotten by an indignant humanity. After delivering his lethal strike the pilot exultantly shouted: "We've zapped them!" This is the mould of a cold-blooded SS killer. After all, the victims were Arab Untermenschen. It was not a video game but murder.

When the last missile smashed the aged, half-blind paraplegic in his wheelchair, it destroyed not only eight

persons, including a 10-year-old girl, but a political and religious symbol and the idea he incarnated. The news was received immediately with shrieks of joy by the Israeli cabinet. Ariel Sharon personally supervised the attack, according to Israel public radio, and went on to boast that “we’ve smashed the head of the snake and it won’t be long before Hamas will crumble.” After all, he has hunted Arabs, as he gloated, for over half a century. The predator’s chase is obviously not yet over.

Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz assures us that the Sheik’s liquidation is not the grand finale because such targeted killings are a permanent agenda. In this cesspool of targeted murder US National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice calls for calm. “We’ve got to step back and see things coolly. There’s going to be better days for the Middle East.” I couldn’t help wondering if this woman is an extraterrestrial creature. If so, from what galaxy has she descended upon us? Or is she simply blind, deaf and, above all, stupid? Palestinians are being targeted and butchered daily and when they fight back she beseeches them to keep cool. Her wretched exhortation itself is revelatory of the moral bankruptcy of the wholly corrupt and mendacious administration in which she continues to play a pivotal role.

Regarding the “better days” that are ahead for the Middle East, I was curious to know where she plucked that gem. Is it evidenced in Iraq, in the fierce resistance struggle in Falluja or the mass Shia uprisings in Najaf with their dozens of dead and hundreds of wounded and innumerable arrests and incarcerations? Rice and her gang should understand that the genii are out of the bottle.

The so-called roadmap was always a US public relations stunt. It is dead. So is the peace initiative hammered out in Geneva.

The Sheik's murder was condemned worldwide but not by the White House. Its mouthpiece, Scott McClellan, justified the crime by recourse to the all-too-familiar one-liner that Israel was acting in self-defence and that Hamas was a terrorist organization. How often have we heard this claim and others of its vintage.

To contend, as Bush has done, that Washington did not know about the targeted killings — this one and others of its kind — is hilarious. Where Mossad ends and the CIA begins, and vice versa, is impossible to say. They have chosen to meld their common fates.

The conception and implementation of these killings that are an integral part of Israeli policy has been deliberately executed with the unstinting support and knowledge of all US security agencies. There is no need for faxes, phone calls or e-mails. The Israeli army is also operating as part of the US army in its commando raids in all major Iraqi cities. Its skills were honed in battering down the homes and doors of Palestinians. Indeed, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and its commando units are generously sharing its skills learned in the Palestinian killing fields with its US accomplices. This is payment in kind for mutual back-scratching.

Meanwhile, Yassin's murder has thrown the Arab ruling class, which has always been a backer of US imperialism, into a state of disarray. In particular, this applies to "the

kept women”, as one Lebanese publicist labelled Egypt and Jordan, that have been on the US payroll for years. Yassin and his movement were never friends of the Arab ruling elites. As Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan admits, leaders of the region are running scared of the Arab masses, and well they should be. This advancing cataclysm is exacerbated by the daily hammering of imperialism by the resistance forces in Iraq.

The Arab League, created in 1947, was never intended to blueprint far-reaching changes of a democratic and distributive nature for these oil-rich neo-colonies in the Arab world. It was nothing but a façade in an Arab world confronted with the fires of the anti-colonial struggle in the immediate aftermath of the great anti-fascist victory in 1945. Its goal was social pacification designed to give the appearance of change. Its parasitical ruling classes, with Saudi Arabia the prime exemplar, grasped the nettle that its enemies were the Arab masses. Its unique path to survival was through accommodation and subordination with US and British imperialism that would guarantee its continued power and profits. Democracy, even in its most innocuous manifestations, was therefore anathema to its very existence.

The organ of the City, the Financial Times, with the undisguised loathing of the master for his domestic, has well depicted the fatuous palaverings of the Arab ruling castes as “a bunch of failed states who pay lip service to Arab unity, bicker behind closed doors and emerge with long-winded resolutions that are promptly ignored. The

Arab public yawns. Dismissing these meetings as a further reminder of their governments' impotence." The cold sweat of impotence that grips the Arab League mirrors the fears of the Arab bourgeoisie. Fears that have grown with the ferocity of the Iraqi resistance to the Anglo-American raj and its quisling regime, and not least with the presence of Hamas.

**T**he Washington/Tel Aviv axis nourished for years the illusion that the Sheik's obliteration would bleed Hamas and the resistance struggle. But this is a pipe-dream.

A sick and aged Arafat holed up in his bunker at Ramallah and his corrupt Palestinian Authority (PA) is on the skids. Certainly, Sharon's election victory and the subsequent systematic destruction of Arafat's PA by the looting of ministries, and confiscation and destruction of tax, administrative and police files were galvanized to ensure that the emergence of a Palestinian state became impossible. The squeaks of Arafat's prime minister are wisps of air with no force in the occupied territories. It's a mockery even to stick the label of "prime minister" on him, as it is to label Arafat a "president".

Power grows out of the barrel of a gun, was Chairman Mao's revolutionary maxim in Yenan. In the occupied territories, that gun and the organizational power against the Washington/Tel Aviv axis is wielded by Hamas and its highly structured resistance forces. The PA is squirming in a pit of its own making. Authority is in the doldrums.

The belief that the PA could act as a battering ram against Hamas was always the aspiration of the Washington strategists. However, any attempt by the PA apparatchiks to bring Hamas to heel is delusory inasmuch as such punitive measures at this point in time would engender the perception that the PA is in open collusion with the US/Israeli axis.

Indeed, Yassin's murder has boomeranged against the PA and Israel. It is for this reason that a battered Bush (joined to the pleadings of the Arab League) has told the Likud leadership to stop the planned killing of Arafat. This move has nothing to do with respect for human rights, but with the simple calculation that Arafat's liquidation would compound the US crisis in the Middle East.

The goal at this stage is to salvage what is left of Arafat's tattered PA so that he could be used to shore up the fortunes of the Sharon/Bush duo. What remains to be seen is how fast Hamas is able to regroup its forces for a concentrated counter-offensive against the PA and hasten the withdrawal of Israel, as a first stage, from the Gaza Strip.

The resurrection of the ghost of Arafat is thus seen as an indispensable rampart for the continued presence of the Israeli occupant — albeit in an attenuated form — and his killing would complicate matters by directly pitting the Israeli/ Washington axis against Hamas, one of the most militant elements of the Arab liberation struggle.

**O**f the greatest moral significance is that a mighty and growing Israeli peace movement is battling, with word and deed, the crimes of Sharon's cabal.

Central to their message of hope is their conviction that Sharon and his cohorts must not be allowed to conceal their acts beneath the mantle of the imperishable millenary historical and cultural legacies of the Jewish peoples bequeathed to humankind. The Gush Shalom peace movement has warned that the Sheik's assassination was a provocative act by a government which has lost all restraint and is bent on perpetuating a heritage of permanent war and outrage against the Palestinian peoples and the Islamic world: an act that will inevitably cost the lives of unforeseen numbers of Israeli citizens.

And let us listen to the harsh but not cynical judgment of one of Israel's most trenchant literary critics, Ben Michael, that conjures up for us in poignant apocalyptic imagery the reverberations of flinging wide open the gates of purgatory. His is a voice that cannot and will not be stilled, for it encapsulates the authentic yearning of the peoples of Israel and the Diaspora:

"The whole nation is huddled up in the corner, like a little dog that urinated on the carpet, waiting meekly for the cruel strike that will come. Nobody has any doubt that it will come. Only W-H-E-R-E will it come — that is not yet known. And who are the walking dead that meanwhile pace among us, that is not yet known either. They were not notified in advance, or asked for permission, prior to being volunteered as a sacrifice on the altar of the Sharon-Mofaz military games. Let us hope that their last days will be sweet, before the good earth will take them."<sup>4</sup>

Sharon and his transatlantic accomplice have defecated on every article of the Geneva Conventions. In so doing, it has tragically blocked all roads to a peaceful solution of its horrendous crimes by passive, peaceful resistance. The Likud killers are smirking once again like the proverbial Cheshire cat after a luscious dish of cream. But Sharon and his breed should note that such succulent morsels are ephemeral joys, and the moment of reckoning is at hand. After all, the Yassin file is not yet closed.

## Endnotes

1 He was born in the now-occupied port city of Ashkelon in 1938. His family, like thousands of others, were expelled from their ancestral lands in 1948. His family migrated to the Gaza Strip where most of the 1.3 million Gazan expellees now reside.

2 Hamas in Arabic means zeal. It is an acronym for the Islamic resistance movement. Sheik Yassin founded it in 1987.

3 Assassinations and targeted killings, the British historian Philip Whitcelo observes, were the midwives to the birth of what would become the most rabidly racist apartheid state in the world. The slaughter of Sheik Yassin was nothing more than the continuation of a deliberate policy of state terrorism that became the dynamic of the regime. Such acts included the killing of Lord Moyne, the British resident in the Middle East, in 1944; the killing of the UN-appointed mediator, Count Bernadotte, in 1948 by the Stern gang;

and the serial bombings of hotels, restaurants, bars, markets and police stations between 1937 and 1948 by the professional terrorist Menachem Begin, later to become Israeli prime minister and political boss of the Likud party. To this inventory was added his mass killings of Palestinian refugees. Cf *Financial Times*, 24 March 2004.

4 Quoted in the Israeli newspaper *Yedioth Achronot*, 23 March 2004.

## About the author

DR FREDERIC F. CLAIRMONT was for many years a permanent senior economic affairs officer in the UN Economic Commission for Africa and the UN Conference on Trade and Development (Unctad). He is one of the world's leading international marketing and financial analysts. He combined his duties as a UN civil servant with academic teaching. He taught at the University of Kings College and Dalhousie University in Canada, the University of Lovanium in the Congo and the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore. He was educated at Sir George Williams College and McGill University in Montreal as well as the University of Geneva. He is the author of the celebrated work, *The Rise and Fall of Economic Liberalism*, and several major works on trans-

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