

"It is our view that responsibility is to be imputed to the Minister of Defense for having disregarded the danger of acts of vengeance and bloodshed ... and having failed to take this danger into account when he decided to have the Phalangists enter the camps ... These blunders constitute the non-fulfillment of duty with which the Defense Minister was charged."

Report of the Kahan Commission of Inquiry
into the Events at the Refugee Camps in
Beirut 2/9/83

"What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood cries unto me from the ground." Genesis, Chap.4, Verse 10

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In February, 1983, the findings of his own government's official inquiry into the September, 1982, Beirut Massacre forced Ariel Sharon to resign his post as Israeli Defense Minister. Now he is on leave from his latest post as Israel's Minister of Industry and Commerce to pursue a libel suit against Time, Inc. He is seeking \$50 million in damages to protest an article inferring his complicity in the refugee camp slaughters.

Sharon claims he is not seeking personal exoneration, but rather to vindicate the honor of the entire state of Israel. More recently, he has amended this statement to include the honor of Jews throughout the world.

We, in turn, present some pertinent facts regarding Sharon's political history, and clarify the role he played in the civilian massacres at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Lebanon.

WHO IS ARIEL SHARON?

** Sharon first came to prominence as Commander of Unit 101 of the Israeli Army. It was created in 1953 for the express purpose of carrying out weekly terrorist raids against the Palestinian civilian population.

** On October 14-15, 1953, in retaliation for an attack from Jordan that had killed a Jewish woman and her 2 children, Major Sharon blew up 45 homes in the Palestinian village of Qibya, killing 69 civilians, half of whom were women and children. His official explanation: "I didn't know anyone was inside." (Kapeliouk, Sabra and Shatila, 1984)

** On February 28, 1955, in a raid called, "Black Arrow," Sharon entered the Gaza Strip, then under Egyptian control, killing 37 Egyptian soldiers, some as they slept in their tents. (New York Magazine, 8/9/82)

** During the 1956 Sinai War, Colonel Sharon, disobeying orders, dropped his paratroopers into the Mitla Pass, a blunder resulting in 38 Israeli dead and 120 wounded -- an action from which he narrowly escaped court martial. Four of his junior officers officially accused him of sending men to their deaths for his own glory.

** Following the 1967 war, Sharon was assigned the task of "pacifying" the newly occupied Gaza Strip. As routine policy, he blew up homes, bulldozed refugee camps, and in violation of international law, imposed severe collective punishment for acts of resistance.

** In 1973, General Sharon cleared the area surrounding a complex of settlements called the Rafah Approaches by "resettling" 30,000 Bedouin Arabs. Bedouins' lands were expropriated, their groves bulldozed and their homes, schools and mosques leveled. (Ha'aretz, 9/3/73)

** In 1977, Sharon became Begin's Minister of Agriculture and extended the "pacification" policies to the West Bank. Accusations of improprieties within his Ministry forced him to resign.

** Upon becoming Minister of Defense in 1981, Sharon quickly took control of all aspects of Israeli arms sales in order to direct policies that would increase Israel's global military influence. During his tenure, Israel expanded its role as the main arms supplier to seven Latin American dictatorships: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti and Honduras. In 1981, Israeli arms exports were valued at nearly \$1.3 billion, 40% of Israel's total exports.

** In 1981, when Reagan wanted to give more money to El Salvador than Congress had allotted, Israel acted as the US proxy by "lending" the US government \$21 million approved for its own use, which was then transferred to El Salvador. Israel also began supplying the "contras" in Nicaragua and sent military advisors to El Salvador. (Israel's Arms Exports, ADC Background Paper #8)

** Under Sharon, Israel expanded its role as the main military supplier to South Africa. His last acts prior to resignation were to establish comprehensive military aid programs to the right-wing dictatorships of Zaire and Honduras.

** On June 6, 1982, Sharon launched the Israeli invasion of Lebanon -- Operation Peace for Galilee -- occupying and destroying Southern Lebanon, invading Beirut, and leading up to the massacres at Sabra and Shatila.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE MASSACRES

** August 21, 1982, the PLO forces begin to evacuate from Beirut, after receiving the written guarantee of US Envoy Philip Habib for the safety of the Palestinian civilians left behind.

** September 14, 1982, Lebanese President-Elect, Bashir Gemayel, of the Phalangist Party, was assassinated.

** September 15, 1982, 9 A.M. Ariel Sharon arrives in Beirut to direct the Israeli Defense Force as they move to occupy West Beirut, in violation of the Habib agreement. Sharon sets up Israeli headquarters on a rooftop overlooking the city and the Sabra and Shatila camps. The stated intent of the occupation -- "to prevent bloodshed." US Envoy, Morris Draper, is in Israel as government plans the takeover of Beirut.

Nightfall - the electric power is shut off in all of West Beirut. An Israeli soldier reports that at 10 P.M. his unit received orders to fire illumination flares above Sabra and Shatila beginning at midnight.

** September 16, 1982, Under the IDF's aegis, the Phalangists enter the refugee camps and begin a 48-hour "mop up" operation. The Phalange militia was once described by Eitan Haber, military correspondent of Yed'iot Aharonot as "an organized mob with uniforms ... guilty of abominable and cruel deeds." Phalangist liaison to the U.S., Eli Hobeika, is found by Kahan Commission later to have been in direct control of massacre.

** September 17, 1982, The U.S. absolves itself by sending telegram to Sharon: "You must stop the massacres ... you are in absolute control of the area and therefore have responsibility for the area." The U.S. 6th fleet stands off the coast of Beirut; the largest US C.I.A. station is in Beirut monitoring all communications. Massacre continues unabated until September 18th.

THE RESULT OF THE MASSACRE

** Between 3,000 and 3500 men, women and children were massacred in the 48 hours between September 16th and 18th.

- 663 bodies were recovered and buried by the Red Cross (9/22/82)
- 762 more recovered bodies (L'Orient le Jour 10/14/82)
- 202 unidentified bodies buried in mass graves
- 302 bodies identified and cremated by local rescue teams
- 248 additional bodies identified and buried by Red Cross
- 1200 bodies claimed by their families and buried in mass graves
- an estimated few hundred victims buried by Phalangist assailants in mass graves during the carnage
- a few hundred estimated bodies remained buried under the rubble of 200 destroyed homes

This does not include the unknown number of people transported from the camps in trucks, taken to unknown locations, and never seen again. It is estimated that 3/4 of the victims were Palestinian and 1/4 were Lebanese.

SHARON'S LIABILITY

Sharon assumed control of West Beirut, international law placed him under a direct unequivocal duty to protect the civilian population in the camps. He not only failed to carry out this responsibility, he actively facilitated the arming and provisioning of the armed militia which entered the camps. According to the Geneva Conventions and the Genocide Conventions, which Israel is signatory to, Sharon's acts constitute war crimes.

"We intervened to prevent anarchy. We were the only military force on the scene. Therefore from the international viewpoint, the responsibility for what happened is ours." Mordechai Zippori, Israeli Minister of Communications.