

Israel to lift Bethlehem blockade

Reuters

JERUSALEM, Dec. 28. — Israel said it would lift an army cordon on the West Bank town of Bethlehem for continuing Christmas festivities, but Palestinian leader Mr Yasser Arafat was still banned from going to Jesus's birthplace.

The measure came towards the end of a day of relative calm and talk of ideas to end 15 months of bloodshed in the Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation.

It came too late for the 24 December Western Rite Christmas Eve mass — from which Mr Arafat was also barred — although it could ease travel to the town for other celebrations, including next month's Greek Orthodox and Armenian Christmas celebrations.

Early today, Palestinian sources in Bethlehem said they had seen no change in the Israeli deployment.

Israeli forces have maintained a crippling grip on the West Bank and Gaza since the start of the Palestinian uprising.

Right-wing Israeli Prime Minister Mr Ariel Sharon's government says the blockades are needed as a security measure after suicide bombings killed scores of Israelis, but Palestinians call them collective punishment for the uprising. Israel's ally the USA has joined international criticism of the ban on Mr Arafat going to Bethlehem.

Mr Ahmed Abdel-Rahman, Palestinian Authority general secretary, said the decision to keep the ban could thwart efforts to restore calm.

"Their stupid decisions touching on religious issues can never create the suitable atmosphere that allows for calm and stability," Mr Abdel-Rahman told Reuters.

But a senior Palestinian negotiator said that talks between Israelis and Palestinians were focusing on proposals that could provide a way out of their current conflict. Since Bethlehem came under Palestinian rule in 1995, Mr Arafat has attended both the Western Christmas Eve mass on 24 December and the Greek Orthodox Christmas which starts on 6 January.

Palestinian security sources said yesterday police shut down two Hamas workshops used to make mortars in the Gaza Strip.

Israeli forces arrested eight suspected militants from the Muslim militant group in a raid in Hebron as they came under fire from Palestinian gunmen. Palestinian negotiator Mr

Nabil Shaath said fresh talks between Israelis and Palestinians were focusing on a four-point document to try to chart a path beyond the violence and negotiate the establishment of a Palestinian state.

In Gaza, a Palestinian suicide bomber tried to carry out an attack today, the Israeli military said, the first such incident since Mr Arafat called for an end to attacks earlier this month.

In Cairo, an Arab League spokesman today said that the Arab League will hold its annual

summit in Beirut in late March, and the Palestinian issue will be high on the agenda.

"The summit will take place in the last week of March," the spokesman said, without giving the exact dates.

He said Arab leaders attending the summit in Beirut would discuss ways to deal with deteriorating violence in the Palestinian territories, but added a detailed agenda was still being ironed out. Other items on the agenda would likely include reform of the Arab League and the regional situation, he said.



An elderly Palestinian enters Gaza Strip on Friday after the Rafah crossing was reopened.— AP/PTI

THE STATESMAN

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For a fair deal

IN A match at the last soccer World Cup, France's striker and hero, Zinedine Zidane, stamped on an Arab, if one remembers correctly a Saudi Arabian, player. France went on to win that match and the World Cup of course. But for a Berber woman living in a Marseilles tenement the defining moment of that match, and perhaps of the Cup, was the one in which Zinedine's studded boot smashed down on to an Arab leg. "That was Zinedine's revenge against the Arabs," she was to tell a reporter.

The Berbers of Algeria have risen in protest since the beginning of this summer. They do not appear to have made any declaration that they are fighting "Arab oppression". Neither does it appear that Berbers have necessarily suffered on an individual basis merely because of their belonging to a linguistic minority since they have reached high office in their country. However, the Berbers have a very deep if quiet pride in their separate identity. In any casual conversation with an Algerian Berber, it does not take too long before the talk veers to the topic of how able their people are and to an accounting of the Ber-

bers who have made a name for themselves. As a collective it is a different matter.

Berbers have for long demanded that their language should be given a status equal to Arabic. Successive Governments have resisted the demand fearing that the grant of such recognition would disrupt Algeria's unity and undermine its independence. At the height of the Islamic militancy in the 1990s, the Algerian authorities took another measure that the Berbers could have considered as inimical to their interests. In an effort to outflank the fundamentalists, the Algerian Government gave pre-eminence in the constitution to the Holy Koran in the Arabic language. At the time the Berbers, who largely kept out of the fundamentalist movement, did not appear to have made much of an issue of it.

Now that the fundamentalist wave has subsided considerably in Algeria, other more enduring tensions appear to have re-surfaced. When the French ruled Algeria, they gave special treatment to the Kabyle region where the Berbers predominate. It was perhaps on account of the Mediterranean origin of the Berbers, as against the 'eastern' origins of the

The Berbers of Algeria have risen in protest since the beginning of this summer. Kesava Menon details the issues involved.

Arabs, that they were given the privileges under France's divide and rule policy. Being the better educated, the Berbers were also well accommodated in the administrative hierarchy. Such special treatment did not, however, stop the Berbers from joining the fight for independence and the strongest Berber party of today, the Socialist Forces Front (FFS), was set up by Hocine Ait Ahmed a hero of the revolutionary war.

The FFS claims that the current confrontation with the Government is not directly the result of pent-up Berber frustration at the authorities failure to concede their long-standing demands. In fact, the Berbers say the Government is trying to mislead the rest of Algeria by saying that the people of Kabilye are only agitating for the fulfilment of these demands. The FFS says that it trying

to give raise issues that are common to all Algerians such as employment, housing, more democratic rights and an end to corruption. From the fact that the protests were to spread to non-Berber regions, the FFS appears to be right to the extent that a great many people in the country are agitated by these issues.

It was the death of a youth in custody on April 18 that sparked off weeks of anti-Government protests in the Kabilye region. By mid-June, it was estimated that about 80 people had been killed by security forces in this region. When they launched their protests, the Berbers' main demand was for the withdrawal of the gendarmerie, a branch of the security forces that is regarded as brutal and corrupt. As protests spread to other parts of the country, the issues raised more often were those of unemployment and corruption. The official rate of unemployment is 20 per cent but it is believed to be as high as 80 per cent among people under 25 years of age.

Half a million Berbers are estimated to have taken part in the march to Algiers on June 14. The marchers, called out by the FFS, tried to submit a list of demands to the President, Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, but were stopped by the police who unleashed batons and water cannons. To the FFS' later regret, the marchers turned violent and much property was damaged in the capital. This development, of course, played right into the Government's hands. They could portray the protests as being Berber-centric and fuelled solely by Berber demands. Whether this new application of the divide and rule policy will do any good for an Algeria that has barely recovered from the decade of Islamic militancy is not something that the hidden coterie of generals, who are believed to be the real power in the country, appears to have considered carefully.

Algeria's Islamic movement has failed as the outlet for peoples grievances. But those grievances, all ultimately traceable to Algeria's failure to develop a healthy and viable democratic system, have not disappeared. The Algerian establishment might be in a self-congratulatory mood after surmounting the dire situation that Islamic militancy had created. But it needs to realise that the people of Algeria are tired of the studded boots that pin them down.



Berber women stage a rally in Tizi Ouzou against the Algerian Government.

Transit facilities to Central Asia

Iran rejects Pakistan request

SI-5
20/7

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD, July 29. — Iran has turned down Pakistan's request for transit facilities for its vehicles to reach Central Asian Republics (CAR). This has further strained bilateral ties.

Teheran and Islamabad have had differences over the Indo-Iran gas pipeline, which has proved to be a major irritant in Pakistan-Iran relations.

Media reports here said Iran had declined Pakistan's request made in the recent joint ministerial meeting here to permit transit facilities to Pakistani vehicles to reach CAR through Iran.

"The Iranian government said it would permit Pakistani vehicles to travel deep into Iranian territory up to CAR borders. However, the vehicles would not be allowed to cross CAR border as from that point goods would have to be transported in Iranian vehicles," a Pakistan daily, quoting official sources said today.

Pakistan had made the request for the transit facility last year as it wanted to take its fruits to CAR markets. The request was accepted by Iran but at a time when the season of citrus fruits was already over, it added.

At last week's joint meeting,

Pakistan had also raised the issue of Iran's "going slow" on the development of the railway track from Zahidan to Kirman in Iran, which would allow Pakistan to establish railway links with Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) states as well as with Europe through Turkey, the report said. more

Though under the ECO decision in 1990, all the member states had to establish railway links, Iran, however, did not develop railway links from Zahidan to Kirman, the paper reported.

Iranian authorities had assured the Pakistani delegation that the railway track would be ready by 2004 and asked Pakistan to upgrade its railway track from Quetta to Taftan, saying it was not up to the mark, it said.

At the joint ministerial meeting, Pakistan reportedly asked the Iranian authorities to make efforts for narrowing the trade imbalance, *The Dawn* newspaper said.

Last year, Pakistan imported goods worth US \$130 million from Iran while Teheran imported goods worth US \$11 million only from Islamabad.

These issues could be discussed during a working group meeting to be held in two months' time, the newspaper reported.

WEST ASIA / 'STONE LAYING' BID TRIGGERS VIOLENCE

Police storm Temple Mount

HD-66

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), JULY 29. A wholly unnecessary clash today between Israelis and Palestinians at the Temple Mount/Haram al Sharif complex in Jerusalem threatens to further inflame passions all around just when there were signs that the situation could take a turn for the better.

Twenty Palestinians were said to have suffered the effects of tear gas inhalation and 10 Israeli security personnel suffered minor injuries in a stone throwing incident at the complex. The Palestinians were protesting the attempt by an extremist Jewish group to assert what they claim is their exclusive right to the area.

Sunday was the day on the Hebrew calendar when Jews observe the destruction of their Second Temple in 72 AD. A group which calls itself the Temple Mount Faithful have tried to install the foundation stone for a third temple which they hope will eventually come up the ridge of land on which the Muslim holy sites of Al Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock are situated.

Last Wednesday, the Israel judiciary turned down a petition in which the group sought permissions to install the foundation stone inside the Temple Mount/Haram al Sharif complex. The court, however, allowed the group to take their stone out for display from the building where it is normally stored. After consultations the Israeli security services allowed the group to display their stone outside but in the vicinity of the Old City walls.

Since yesterday, the Palestinians, indeed the Arab and Muslim world as a whole, have been warning that the action by the Temple Mount Faithful would have grave consequences. The Palestinians had called for a day of rage and both secular and religious wings of the *intifada* movement had called on their faithful to mass at the Dome/Al Aqsa complex to prevent the Jewish group from carrying out its plans.

Today, the Israeli security forces did stop the Temple Mount Faithful outside the Old City walls and are even reported to have brought forward the stone-displaying ceremony by an hour so as to confuse news camera crews. At the same time, Jewish worshippers were allowed to proceed to the Western Wall which lies at the foot of the Dome/Al Aqsa ridge. Stones were thrown at these worship-



Israeli policemen evacuate Jewish worshippers from the Western Wall on the Temple Mount complex in Jerusalem on Sunday as Palestinians hurl stones at them. — AP

pers by the Palestinians massed inside the Dome/Al Aqsa complex and the Israeli police fired tear gas shells and later stormed the complex. By mid-afternoon, the Israeli police were said to have gained control of the area.

If nothing else, this episode has shown that authorities on neither side are willing to take that proverbial extra step to calm down the situation. The Israeli Government could argue that the display of a stone by a fringe group on a Jewish holy day at a distance from the place where they want to install it was a harmless gesture. This Israeli coalition is more right-wing than left and it is ruling at a time when a majority of Israelis are completely alienated (to use a very mild term) from the Palestinians. It is also a period when the Jews, like the Arabs, need to show that they have a historic right to the sacred enclosure. But everyone else would have thought that the top-most priority was to do everything possible to calm

down the situation and bring a stop to the daily cycle of death.

Ditto for the Palestinians. They too could have dismissed the development as a futile move by a fringe Jewish group. But the Palestinians have become extremely sensitive to any Israeli move in respect of the sacred enclosure especially since the current *intifada* was sparked off by the then Opposition leader and current Israel Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, by his triumphant swagger through the enclosure on Sept. 28 last year.

The Palestinian leadership, however, did not clarify what they would consider a provocation. Were they upset about the display of a stone, the fact that some Jewish groups actually believe that they might be able to erect a temple on the spot on which the mosques stand at present, or was it a display within the sacred enclosure or its vicinity that they would regard as real provocation.

Ararat calls for US to renew peace process

Jerusalem, December 29

PALESTINIANS HAVE called for renewed US mediation in West Asia, saying they were ready to show what they had done to meet Washington's conditions for the return of its envoy.

But the funeral on Saturday of a suspected Palestinian suicide bomber killed by Israeli troops on Friday highlighted the difficulty in meeting the main US condition — working to stop militant attacks on Israelis.

After its weekly meeting on Friday, the Palestinian Cabinet urged the United States to send back envoy Anthony Zinni to begin implementing proposals for securing peace with Israel.

Zinni, a retired Marine Corps general, left the region earlier this month after witnessing some of the worst violence of the 15-month Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation.

In Washington, a State Department official said the aim was that Zinni would return to the Middle East after the holidays, "but there is no specific plan".

The US said after his mission that he would return only if Palestinians took more concrete steps to end attacks by militants and if Israelis eased restrictions on Palestinians.

"The leadership is ready to send a security and a political team to Washington to explain the measures taken by the Palestinian side," said a statement after the Cabinet meeting chaired by Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

Zinni should begin implementing a ceasefire plan drawn up by CIA director George Tenet and a truce-to-talks blueprint from a panel headed by former US Senator George Mitchell, the Cabinet added. An Israeli Government spokesman dismissed the call. Arafat called for an end to militant attacks on Israel on December 16, but Israel says he has not done enough to act against groups behind attacks.

Reuters

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Sharon's assurance on peace talks

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JERUSALEM, DEC. 27. Israeli troops arrested seven suspected Islamic militants in an incursion into the west Bank town of Hebron early today, prompting Palestinian complaints that Israel is sabotaging cease-fire efforts.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, assured activists of his hard-line Likud party that he would manage future peace negotiations with the Palestinians, not moderate Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, who was talking to Palestinian Parliament Speaker, Mr. Ahmed Qureia, about the framework for a possible peace deal.

"When the day comes for peace talks, I will run them... In coordination, of course, with the Foreign Minister, but I will run them," Mr. Sharon said.

Israel today also insisted it would not let Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, attend Ortho-



Palestinians cross the border from Egypt, through Israel, to Gaza Strip at the Rafah border crossing on Thursday. Israeli check point is at the back ground. — AP

dox Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem on January 6 unless he arrests the assassins of an Israeli Cabinet Minister. Israel drew

worldwide criticism for barring Mr. Arafat from this week's Christmas festivities in Jesus's traditional birth place.

Despite the tensions, Israeli and Palestinian security commanders met yesterday, and Israel agreed to ease some restrictions on Palestinians in the Gaza strip, including reopening the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt. Palestinian officials said Israel also agreed to let the Palestinian authority rebuild the landing strip at Gaza international airport, which was torn up by Israeli bulldozers earlier this month in response to attacks by Palestinian militants.

However, Israeli Defence Ministry adviser, Mr. Yarden Vatikay, said today that the rebuilding still required Israeli Cabinet approval.

Israeli troops today entered Palestinian-controlled areas of Hebron and arrested seven suspected members of the Hamas and the Islamic Jihad groups, Palestinian security officials said.— AP

23 DEC 2001

THE HINDU

JERUSALEM / SHARON RESISTS PRESSURE

It's a crime, says Arafat

RAMALLAH/JERUSALEM, DEC. 25. The Palestinian President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, termed Israel's decision to ban him from attending Christmas mass in Bethlehem a "crime".

In a radio and television address, he said: "I speak to you and my heart is heavy because the tanks, the cement checkpoints and the aggressor's oppressive guns have prevented my participation with you at our annual celebrations on this holy occasion, which I have not missed since I returned to this beloved land," Mr. Arafat said in his address, broadcast on loudspeakers in Bethlehem yesterday.

The Israeli decision, he said, would not affect his determination and that of the Palestinians "to pursue the path of a permanent and just peace".

The Palestinian leader, who attended Christmas mass in Bethlehem since the city reverted to Palestinian control in 1995, was forced this year to remain in Ramallah after the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, refused to let him leave until he had arrested the suspected killers of the Israeli Tourism Minister, Rehavam Ze'evi, who died on October 17.

Mr. Sharon resisted growing international and domestic pressure to change his stance from the Israeli President, Mr. Moshe Kat-



An empty chair in the front row has a black and white checkered Keffiyeh headdress draped across it symbolising the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat's absence, during the Midnight Mass at St. Catherine's Church in the West Bank town of Bethlehem.— AP

zav, as well as the Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres.

'A stupid decision'

Israeli press today lambasted Mr. Sharon for barring Mr. Arafat from attending the midnight mass in Bethlehem.

"Israel shot itself in the foot," read the headlines of the *Maariv* daily, quoting anonymous officials. Top-selling *Yediot Aharanot* warned "Arafat had won the

world's sympathy" thanks to Mr. Sharon's decision to block him from travelling to Bethlehem, where he has been bunkered since Israel unleashed military strikes in response to a wave of suicide attacks at the start of the month.

"It is a stupid decision and an impossible one to defend," high-ranking Foreign Ministry officials told *Yediot*. — DPA

26 DEC 2001

THE HINDU

Arafat barred from Bethlehem mass

Associated Press

BETHLEHEM, Dec. 24. — Despite European and US intervention, Israel said today it would not let Palestinian leader Mr Yasser Arafat attend Christmas Mass in Bethlehem unless he arrests the assassins of an Israeli Cabinet minister.

In Bethlehem, Christmas festivities got under way without the Palestinian leader for the first time since 1995. Scouts playing drums and bagpipes marched in a Manger Square procession led by Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah, the top Roman Catholic clergyman in the Holy Land. Manger Square was decorated with Palestinian flags, an Arafat poster and a large banner reading: "Sharon assassinates the joy of Christmas".

An Israeli settler, meanwhile, was shot and seriously injured near the West Bank town of Nablus, officials said - the first such victim in about a week.

The Vatican today criticized as "arbitrary" the Israeli decision to prevent Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat from attending Christmas services in Bethlehem. "A diplomatic demarche has been made by the state secretariat to prevent this ban imposed arbit-



Palestinians, wearing Santa Claus costumes, greet children. In Gaza City on Monday. —AP/PTI

rarily," Vatican spokesman Mr Joaquim Navarro-Valls said.

In Gaza Strip, Palestinian security forces have shut down five factories used by Hamas to make rockets. Hamas says it has fired several homemade "Qassam" rockets at Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip during a 15-month-old Palestinian uprising against Israel, and Israeli sources confirmed fragments of at least one rocket were found.

THE STATESMAN

25 DEC 2001

✓ Hamas softens, onus on Israel

Jerusalem, December 22

PALESTINIAN NEGOTIATOR Saeb Erekat says a decision by the Hamas and Islamic Jihad to suspend suicide bombings and mortar attacks in Israel leaves the next step in the quest for West Asia peace up to Israel.

Senior Hamas leader Abdul Aziz al-Rantissi has also agreed in principle to be put under house arrest here, a Palestinian political source said on Saturday. Members of Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement and the Hamas brokered overnight a potential solution to the tense standoff between the Palestinian Authority and Rantissi, whom security forces want to arrest, the source said.

The two sides agreed Rantissi would remove armed guards outside his home, where seven people had been injured on Thursday when a sea of police attempted to arrest Rantissi, the source said. Rantissi would then permit police to put him under house arrest at a site of their choice.

Erekat said he told Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres in a telephone conversation on Friday that he now expected Israel to stop its pre-emptive strikes on suspected Palestinian militants and to lift its blockade of Palestinian towns and villages.

"The ball now is in the Israeli court to stop all acts of aggression, to stop the policy of assas-



AP PHOTO
Palestinians run for cover during a gunbattle between Palestinian Authority police and militant groups in Gaza Strip on Friday.

inations, to lift the closure and to return to the negotiating table," he said.

Israel's reaction to the Hamas decision was guarded. In the past 15 months of fighting, scores of Israelis have been killed in attacks by Islamic militants, including 36 this month.

"What's positive? That they stop terror activities in one place, but keep murdering women and children somewhere

else?" said Raanan Gissin, an adviser to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. "As long as the terror activities continue ... we will implement our right of self-defence, and we will act against them with all our might."

"The issue will be decided finally by the leadership abroad," he said, adding that the decision had been taken out of "concern for Palestinian unity...Islamic Jihad will not be

a cause for creating internal tensions and strife."

The Hamas announcement, seen as boosting chances for a US-brokered truce to take hold, came at a time of renewed internal Palestinian fighting in which six people were killed in a gun battle in a Gaza refugee camp.

It followed two days of clashes between Palestinian police — who have been trying to enforce a ceasefire — and supporters of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad. In all, six Palestinians have been killed and 94 hurt in internal confrontations since Thursday.

Hamas said in a leaflet that it ordered attacks in Israel suspended "until further notice" to preserve Palestinian unity. The announcement was seen as a victory for beleaguered Arafat who has been under intense US and European pressure to prevent attacks on Israel.

It was the first time Hamas had made such a promise in the 15 months of fighting. However, the Hamas decision only referred to stopping suicide attacks within Israel's borders, not in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, leaving open the possibility of further violence against Jewish settlers and soldiers there. The ban on mortar fire extended to both Israel and the Palestinian territories, according to the leaflet.

Agencies

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

23 DEC 2001

Peres, Sharon divided over new peace plan

Agence France-Presse

JERUSALEM, Dec. 23. — Israeli foreign minister Mr Shimon Peres has proposed to the Palestinian Authority a peace plan whereby Israel would recognise an independent Palestinian state just eight weeks after signing an accord, an Israeli daily reported today.

But the office of hardline Prime Minister Mr Ariel Sharon reiterated that there would be no political talks until all violence had ceased. Mr Peres presented the plan to the Palestinian parliamentary speaker Ahmed Qorei, the daily *Yediot Aharonot* said.

Under the plan, Israel would pull its forces out of all auto-

nous Palestinian areas reoccupied since the Palestinian intifada or uprising, begun in September, 2000.

The Palestinian state would initially exist on all the land under full or partial Palestinian Authority control, the newspaper said.

A total US-sponsored ceasefire would take place in the six weeks following the signing of an accord.

Palestinian police would collect all illegal weapons while Israel would ease the blockade it imposed on Palestinian towns and cities.

But Mr Sharon said he would stick to his policy of refusing to negotiate until there is a total halt to violence in the region, his office said in a statement.

Meanwhile, Palestinian leader

Mr Yasser Arafat has issued a defiant challenge today against an Israeli ban on his travelling to a Christmas mass in Bethlehem.

"No one can prevent me from reaching Bethlehem," he told reporters in Ramallah.

Mr Arafat's request to spend Christmas in Bethlehem was rejected by Israel's security cabinet early today. Israel has demanded

Mr Arafat's arrest the fugitive militants who gunned down Zeevi in an east Jerusalem hotel on 17 October and also arrest Mr Ahmed Saadat, head of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestinian, which claimed the assassination.

Several senior Israeli ministers, including Mr Peres and defence minister Mr Benjamin Ben-

Eliezer, have said they think the Palestinian President should be allowed to travel to Bethlehem.

In Gaza City, two top militants of the Islamic Jihad group, which has refused to suspend suicide attacks against Israel, were arrested yesterday for allegedly opening fire on police during bloody Palestinian clashes which left six teenagers dead.

The leader of the armed wing of Islamic Jihad for northern Gaza Strip, Shadi Mohanna and his companion were arrested late yesterday. Some 4,000 Palestinians led by Hamas marched through the streets of Jabaliya earlier yesterday to bury four of the teenagers killed in the gunbattles and vented their anger at Mr Arafat.



Mr Yasser Arafat in Ramallah on Sunday. — AP/PTI

THE STATESMAN

24 DEC 2001

Sharon threatens to step up raids

JERUSALEM, DEC. 9. The Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, on Sunday said that his Government might step up military operations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in retaliation for a wave of Palestinian suicide bombings.

Speaking to reporters shortly after a Palestinian suicide bomber

the end of the Israeli weekend. Israel's air force has hit Palestinian security installations and the army has carried out limited ground troop raids in Palestinian-ruled areas since Palestinian suicide bombers killed 26 people in attacks in Jerusalem and Haifa last weekend. Israel says the operations are intended to pressure the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, to round up militants behind attacks since an uprising against occupation erupted almost 15 months ago. Palestinians say it is a declaration of war and have called for international assistance.

The suicide attack came on a working day in Israel when the intersection were full of cars and bus stops were packed with people. Ambulances raced to the scene and police closed off the area. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the blast. Recent suicide bomb strikes have been carried out by two radical Palestinian groups, Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

Rescue workers said the casualties were lightly to moderately wounded. The suicide bomber himself was the only fatality, police and rescue workers said.

Minutes after the blast, flames leapt from the body of the bomber lying on the street just in front of the bus stop, which was slightly damaged. Israeli firefighters, crouching behind traffic barrier in the middle of the road, fearing additional blasts, aimed a fire hose at the burning body.

Meanwhile, Israeli troops killed four Palestinians and arrested 25 activists in a pre-dawn raid on Sunday on a Palestinian-ruled village in the West Bank, witnesses and hospital sources said.

The Israeli army said it was mounting an operation against "terrorists" in the village of Anabta when four Palestinians trying to escape in a car opened fire on troops. — Reuters



The New York Mayor-elect, Mr. Michael Bloomberg (left), the Mayor, Mr. Rudolph Giuliani (centre), the Jerusalem Mayor, Mr. Ehud Olmert (second right) and the Governor of New York, Mr. George Pataki (background third left), pose for photograph underneath a street sign that reads New York street outside Sbarro Pizzeria, the site of a suicide bomb attack in August in downtown Jerusalem, on Sunday. — AP

blew himself up near the northern city of Haifa, Mr. Sharon said: "We have not finished our operations. In light of what is happening, we may have to step up our activities." At least eight people were injured in the blast near a hitch-hiking post crowded with soldiers returning to their bases at

THE HAV

DEC 10 1991

Arafat cool to Israel offer

Jerusalem, December 19

ISRAEL IS prepared to loosen its military grip on the biggest Palestinian city in the West Bank to help Yasser Arafat crack down on militants, a senior Israeli source said on Wednesday.

An aide to the Palestinian President gave a cool response to news of the offer, which coincided with US pressure on the Palestinian President to do more to translate into action his call for an end to armed attacks on Israelis, and for Israel to be ready to reciprocate.

"(The Palestinians) are complaining all the time that we are hindering their efforts to take action," the Israeli source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said. "In order to lay to rest all these excuses, we said: 'Take a given area, we'll pull out of there, we'll stop all our operations there,' the source added, after news of the offer was broadcast by Israel Radio.

The source said Israel had proposed Palestinian-ruled Nablus, the largest West Bank city, as a starting point. "In Nablus they have a lot of Hamas activists and suicide bombers, not to mention bomb factories," the source said, referring to the militant Islamic

resistance group.

The Israeli army tightened a blockade of Palestinian cities following a recent wave of suicide bombings in Israel. Palestinian officials say the Israeli travel restrictions make it difficult to mount operations against militants. Ahmed Abed-Rahman, an Arafat aide, said the Israeli offer did not go far enough. "The issue is not lifting the siege in one area in order to conduct a security mission...we need to see a complete withdrawal of the Israeli troops from all Palestinian territories and an end to the closure and siege," he said.

Under intense international pressure to act after a wave of suicide bombings in Israel, Arafat has outlawed the military wings of Hamas and other groups and arrested dozens of militants. Israel has accused Arafat of going after low-level activists rather than arrest the militants Israel most wants to see behind bars after 15 months of Israeli-Palestinian violence in which more than 1,000 people have been killed.

In the Gaza Strip, five jeeps carrying 30 members of the Palestinian security forces travelled to refugee camps to shut six Hamas offices on Tuesday, Pales-



ARIEL SHARON

tinian officials said. The closure brought to about 30 the number of offices belonging to militant groups in Gaza and the West Bank that have been shut recently by Palestinian authorities.

Secretary of State Colin Powell telephoned Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on Tuesday, two days after the Palestinian leader said armed attacks against Israelis must end.

Powell told Sharon that "Israel needs to be prepared to do its part to create an environment in which Palestinians can sustain and expand their efforts," Bouch-

er said. "It's important that Israelis work to alleviate the pressures on the Palestinian people, especially restrictions that impose real hardships," the US spokesman said, apparently referring to Israeli blockades of Palestinian cities.

Asked if Arafat's actions so far merited an Israeli response, Boucher said, "I wouldn't ask for any specific steps at this moment. But it's necessary to be ready."

Sharon appeared to be in no mood to for any such request. The Prime Minister's Office said he told Powell, "Arafat continues to give a green light to terrorism and is not making arrests or doing anything to prevent terrorism."

Mohammed Dahlan, a Palestinian security chief, said Arafat reaffirmed to Powell that the Palestinian Authority "would carry out its side of the commitments." He also asked him to "pressure Israel to implement its commitments and to stop its attacks on the Palestinian people," Dahlan said.

Palestinian militants have vowed to defy Arafat. West Bank ambushes wounded three Israelis on Monday and one on Tuesday.

Reuters

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

20 DEC 2001

U.S. vetoes 'anti-Israel' motion

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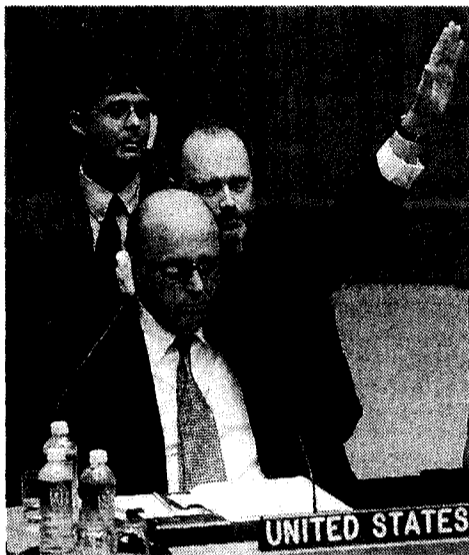
UNITED NATIONS, DEC. 15. The United States vetoed a Security Council resolution early on Saturday condemning "acts of terror" against Israelis and Palestinians and demanding an end to nearly 15 months of West Asia violence.

The U.S. Ambassador, Mr. John Negroponte said the Palestinian-backed resolution was aimed at isolating Israel politically and never mentioned the recent suicide bombings and attacks against the Jewish State or the terrorist organisations responsible, including Hamas and Islamic Jihad. The resolution was supported by 12 of the 15 Council members, with Britain and Norway abstaining.

The United States has only vetoed six resolutions since May 1990, all dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. It was the second U.S. veto this year against a Palestinian resolution seeking protection for Palestinians civilians through a monitoring "mechanism," which Israel strongly opposes. The U.S., Israel's closest Council ally, also blocked two similar resolutions.

Arab nations requested the Council meeting after Israel cut contacts with the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat and launched new military strikes against Palestinian Authority targets. This followed new suicide attacks against Israelis, which Jerusalem blames on Mr. Arafat's failure to crack down on militants. Despite the threat of a U.S. veto, the Palestinians demanded a vote on the resolution.

"We are the little guys," said the Palestinian U.N. observer, Mr. Nasser Al-Kidwa. "We are the people under occupation, and it is our right and a duty to come to the body responsible for international peace and security, to the United Nations, to the Security Council,



The U.S. Ambassador, Mr. John Negroponte, votes at the United Nations Security Council on Saturday. — AP

and try to help the situation." The resolution failed, he said, "because of unreasonable American positions." "In spite of our regret for the block of the resolution, nevertheless we think...the voting pattern, would send the appropriate message to both sides, and we hope (it) will contribute in bringing about a better situation on the ground," Mr. Al-Kidwa said after the vote.

But Israel's deputy U.N. Ambassador, Mr. Aaron Jacob called the resolution "unbalanced and counterproductive" and said "it

cannot help the parties return to the negotiating table." The U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush has called on Mr. Arafat to act against those responsible for the terrorist attacks against Israel, but has not called for restraint from Israel.

The United States complained that the original draft resolution did not even mention terrorism. The Palestinians agreed to a French amendment to condemn "all acts of terror, in particular those targeting civilians." Diplomats said this was critical in getting Russian and French support. But Mr. Negroponte said: "One of the fundamental flaws of this resolution is that it never mentions the recent acts of terrorism against Israelis or those responsible for them." "Terrorist organisations such as Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad are deliberately — and brutally — seeking to sabotage any potential there may be for Israelis to conclude a negotiated peace," he said.

While reiterating the Bush administration's support for a Palestinian State, Mr. Negroponte said Mr. Arafat must "take a strategic stand now against terrorism" and arrest those responsible for terrorist attacks and destroy their operations.

In an apparent reference to Israel's policy of targeted killings and destruction of Palestinian facilities, the draft resolution would have condemned "all acts of extra-judiciary executions, excessive use of force and wide destruction of properties." The defeated resolution demanded "the immediate cessation of all acts of violence, provocation and destruction," a return to positions prior to September 2000 when the latest violence erupted, and "a final agreement on all issues." — AP

THE HINDU

18 DEC 2001

Arafat crackdown on hardliners

According to Egyptian President Mr Hosni Mubarak there is no alternative to Mr Arafat and any Palestinian leader would have to support the uprising against Israel, report agencies

GAZA CITY, Dec. 16. — Thirteen offices from the Islamic Jihad and Hamas radical movements in the Gaza Strip have been closed on the order of the Palestinian Authority, according to a Palestinian police officer. He said the closures took place on Friday and yesterday. Three more Islamic militants' offices were expected to be closed today, he added. The administration of the two organisations' mosques will be transferred to the ministry of religious affairs, the police officer said.

On Wednesday night, the Palestinian Authority ordered the immediate closure of all Hamas and Islamic Jihad offices in the Palestinian territories following a destructive wave of Israeli reprisals for Palestinian suicide attacks.

Mr Yasser Arafat has been kept bunkered at his Ramallah headquarters in the West Bank since 3 December, trapped by an Israeli blockade and under enormous pressure from Israel and the USA to rein in extremists involved in anti-Israeli attacks.

Hamas and its smaller Muslim fundamentalist rival Islamic Jihad have been behind most anti-Israeli bombings since the start of the Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation in September last year.

On Friday, Mr Arafat sent a message to the US administration pledging to do "everything he can" to meet US and EU demands if Israel stops its aggression, sources close to the Palestinian leader said.

Mr Arafat today called in an address to his people for a halt to all armed activities, including suicide bombings, against Israelis and said Israel must stop its own "brutal war".

"I today reiterate (a call for) the

complete and immediate cessation of all military activities. I renew the call to completely halt any activities, especially suicide attacks which we have condemned and always condemned," Mr Arafat said.

Speaking on Palestinian TV, he accused Israel of "launching a brutal war" against the Palestinian Authority and its institutions, and urged Israel to return to peace talks as the sole means to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Under international pressure to rein in militants behind a recent wave of suicide bombings against Israelis, Mr Arafat said the Palestinian Authority had already declared illegal "groups that carry out terrorist activities".

Reaffirming a commitment to a US-brokered truce that never took hold, Mr Arafat pledged to hunt down and punish those behind armed attacks. Israel launched air raids last week against Palestinian Authority targets to punish it for a series of attacks on Israelis.

In a statement to mark Id, the Palestinian President urged the Arab and Muslim people to help the Palestinians defend Muslim and Christian sites in Jerusalem.

Mr Arafat, speaking after attending prayers in the West Bank town of Ramallah, predicted "the day will come when one of our sons or daughters will raise the Palestinian flag over the walls, minarets and churches of Jeru-salem".

"In these blessed days, we exhort the Arab and Muslim nations to help us defend the holy Islamic and Christian sites," Mr Arafat said, reported the Palestinian news agency Wafa.

Mr Arafat singled out Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, Islam's third holiest shrine, whose site is also revered by the Jews as the spot where their temple stood before its destruction by the Romans, and the West Bank town of Bethlehem, the traditional birthplace of Jesus Christ.

"We defend these holy sites despite their (Israelis') attempts to Judaise them," Mr Arafat said after attending the early morning prayers that marked the end of Ramadan and the start of Id.

Mr Arafat still speaks for the Palestinian people, US secretary of state, General Colin Powell, said today, three days after Israel severed ties with the Palestinian leader, a report adds from

Washington. "I will continue to talk to Chairman Arafat," Gen Powell told CNN. "He is the recognised head of the Palestinian Authority. The Palestinian people see him as a leader." Israel broke with Mr Arafat on Thursday, a day after a member of the Islamic militant group Hamas ambushed a bus carrying Jewish settlers in the West Bank, killing 10 and wounding more than 30 in the bloodiest incident in the occupied territories since the Palestinian intifada, or uprising, began in September last year.

Gen Powell also insisted that recalled US special West Asia envoy Mr Anthony Zinni remain the US point man for the West Asia and his return to the USA did not imply that Washington was less engaged in the region.

"We can't give up. We can't walk away. The stakes are too high. We will continue to do everything we can, as in the past, to get a ceasefire," Israeli and Palestinian officials blamed each other for his recall.

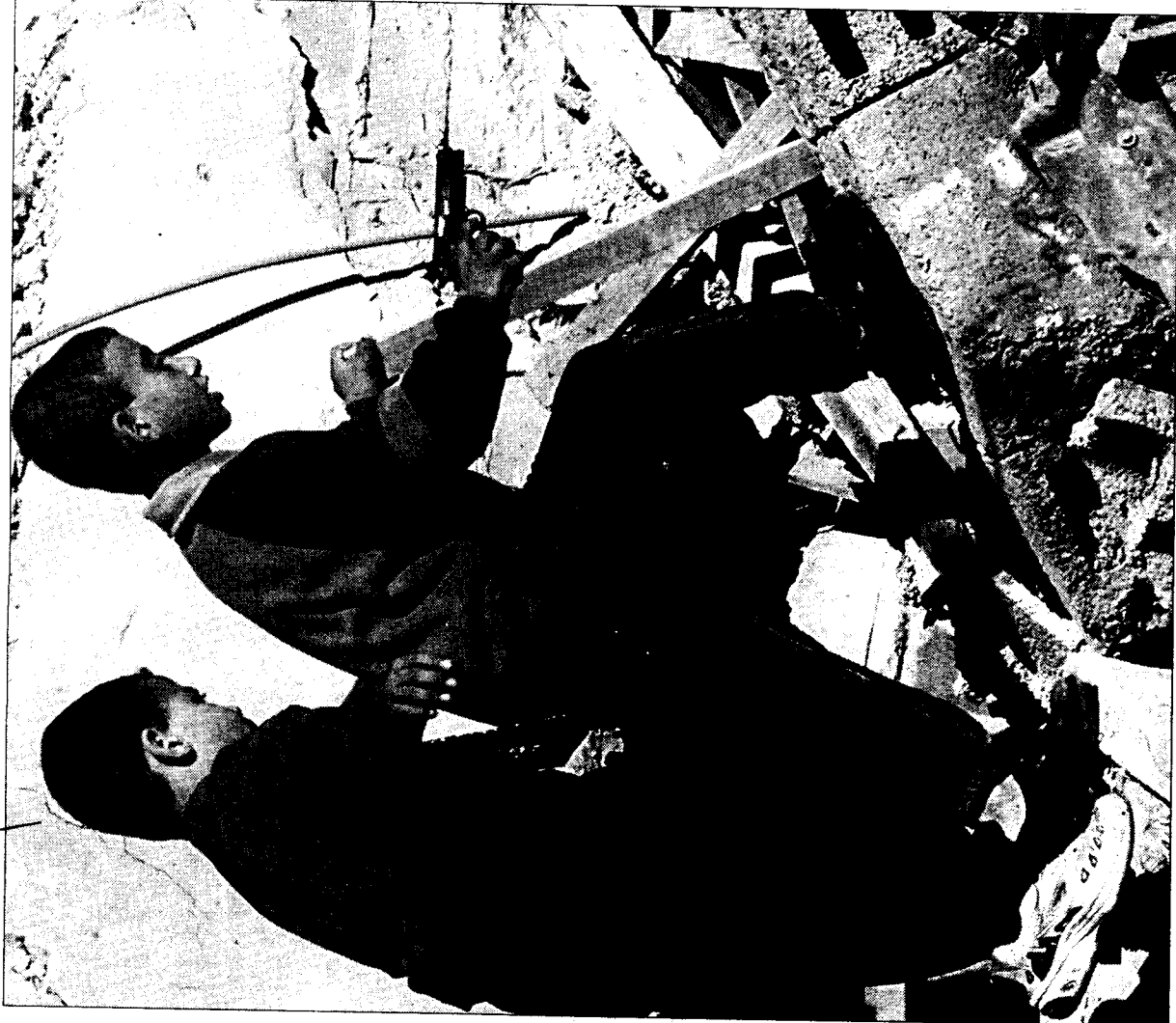
Mr Zinni, whose mission Gen Powell had described until recently as "open ended," was sent to West Asia on 26 November to "push and prod" Israel and the Palestinians into resuming peace negotiations and ending more than a year of steadily rising violence.

But since then, more than 100 people have been killed in a vicious cycle of attack and counterattack — with Israel answering Palestinian suicide bombings in Jerusalem and Haifa with tank incursions and airstrikes.

There is no alternative to Mr Arafat and any Palestinian leader would have to support the uprising against Israel, Egyptian President Mr Hosni Mubarak said in remarks published today, a report adds from Cairo.

"I would like to warn those who are considering dealing with other Palestinian leaders, ... it would be a big catastrophe," Mr Mubarak said, referring to Israel's statement last week that it considered Mr Arafat irrelevant and would no longer deal with him. In an interview with the pro-government newspaper Al-Gomhuria, the Egyptian leader said any Palestinian leader had to be popular among his people.

"Nobody could reach this popularity unless he undertakes guerrilla acts against Israel as a



A Palestinian boy, with a gun, walks over the ruins of the house of Hamas leader Salah Sahed on Sunday. The house, in Beit Hanoun at the northern end of the Gaza Strip, was demolished by Israeli troops. — AP/PTI

reaction to what's going on now," Mr Mubarak said.

"I repeated more than once that Mr Arafat is the only Palestinian leader who is capable of reaching peace with Israel. I warned more than once against Israeli attempts to act as if Mr Arafat is not capable or has no desire for peace," Mr Mubarak said.

Mr Mubarak said Israel's current policy cannot lead to a solution, "but it could lead to danger without limit." Turning to the war against terrorism, Mr Mubarak said the 11 September attacks on New York and Washington had caused Western

nations to pass legislation similar to the Egyptian laws that human rights groups criticise as undemocratic.

The European Union's external affairs commissioner said today that there is a "potential" difference of emphasis between the EU and the USA on the West Asia crisis. European countries have appeared more likely to emphasize the need for a return to negotiations while the USA lately has backed Israel's demands that the Palestinian leader, Mr Yasser Arafat, should crack down effectively on the sponsors of suicide attacks.

"I think there are differences of view frankly within the EU, and there are also potential differences between the EU and the USA, though so far I think we have managed to work together reasonably successfully," Mr Chris Patten said in an interview on Sky television. "I hope that a real difference of view doesn't open up," Mr Patten added. "I hope that we can both continue to focus on what both sides should do. We should encourage Mr Arafat to do more to deal with terrorism, the Israelis should be urged to recognise that taking security measures isn't enough."

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2001

TWISTING ANTI-TERROR NORMS

THE ARROGANT FIAT by Israel to immobilise Mr. Yasser Arafat, the internationally recognised President of the Palestinian Authority, within a tiny stretch of territory at Ramallah cannot be condemned enough in a civilised discourse. Israel's imperious high-handedness is seen by the besieged Palestinians as a declaration of war on them. The Jewish state has indeed transgressed the palpable international principles of engaging the leaders of adversarial powers (or a state-like entity in this case) during crises of political showdown. What the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, seems to be really seeking is nothing short of an utter humiliation of Mr. Arafat and a total devastation of the Palestinian dream of territorial sovereignty and political independence. To achieve these transparent objectives, Mr. Sharon has conspicuously chosen to twist the logic of the present U.S.-led 'campaign' against all forms of globalised terror. Washington's stated military objectives in Afghanistan at this time call for the demolition of the terror-axis between the Taliban and Osama bin Laden besides the elimination of Osama's Al-Qaeda network. Washington's declaratory agenda has largely been endorsed by the international community in the specific context of the terrorist offensive that jolted America on September 11. In contrast, dubious indeed is the anti-terror justification of the war-like manner in which Israel has now laid a seige around Mr. Arafat. It is simply political nonsense to portray Mr. Arafat as a Palestinian Osama bin Laden.

Outwardly, Israel's argument is that Mr. Arafat, who will not be physically harmed, can be brought to his political senses only through such actions. The Jewish state's adventurist argument is that the terrorist organisations such as the Hamas and the Islamic Jihad, which make no secret of their anti-Israel ideologies and actions, should first be deprived of Mr. Ara-

fat's alleged moral support. It is a sordid fact that the Hamas and the Islamic Jihad have been implicated, either by their own claims or as a result of Israel's accusations, in regard to a series of gruesome terrorist attacks that occurred within the security-conscious Jewish state in recent weeks. Pledging to cut the presumptive links between Mr. Arafat and these groups, Israel has already pounded the Palestinian-controlled territories with deadly missiles and other weapons. The latest phase of the Israeli ire is defined by a furious assault of the military and psychological kinds on every conceivable aspect of the Palestinian Authority's legal jurisdiction. The Israeli attitude is one of blatant expansionism which, if unchecked by the international community, might deprive the Palestinians of their promised political separateness on their own traditional land.

W. K. S. (10) 11-10 15/12
The current Israeli offensive is reported to have hampered the free movements of a designated U.S. emissary who has been camping in West Asia for some time now in a bid to broker a truce between the Palestinians and the Sharon administration. As a steadfast and strong ally of Israel, the U.S. had sent its envoy in the recent context of a strategic decision to support the idea of a full-fledged Palestinian state itself. Washington calculated, no doubt, that its decision might endear itself to the big Islamic bloc in the midst of a military campaign in Afghanistan. At this qualitatively new stage, though, the U.S. will be well advised to eschew the temptation to allow Israel to play havoc in the Palestinian areas in the name of taming some terrorist groups, which America might have earmarked for its own punitive strikes in the future phases of the overall anti-terror 'campaign'. For Israel, too, the dangers inherent in a self-deluding imitation of America's anti-terror 'war' can be real indeed.

15 DEC 2001

THE legion of international peacemakers, striving to revive the West Asian peace process, has had its fill of Yasser Arafat. The Americans, the UN, the European Union and the Russians are all pressing the Palestinian leader to act to stop terrorist attacks on Israel. They no longer hesitate to brand the gunmen and the bombers as "terrorists".

The change, a European diplomat explained in Tel-Aviv this weekend, reflects a recognition that Mr Arafat has not done enough. "What he says and

what he does don't match. It's not an assessment the EU has made, or wanted to make, until now. The readiness to give him the benefit of the doubt has withered away very substantially."

After Islamic gunmen ambushed an Israeli bus on the West Bank on Wednesday night, killing 10 and wounding about 30 people, President George Bush's special envoy, General Anthony Zinni, said: "There can be no justification or excuses for not acting to combat terror in a sustained and comprehensive manner. Chairman Arafat and the Palestinian Authority must move immediately to arrest those responsible for these attacks and destroy the infrastructure of the terror organisations that support them." The UN's roving West Asia Ambassador, Terje Larsen, said while the Israelis and the Palestinians were "as close as we have ever been to a full military confrontation", the Palestinian Authority had to make the moves first "to save itself". Only then might the international community intervene.

Europe's troubleshooters, Javier Solana and Miguel Moratinos, have become increasingly frustrated with the Palestinian leader. The two Spaniards inspired a blunt statement issued last Monday by the EU's General Affairs Council, which urged Mr Arafat to dismantle the Hamas and Islamic Jihad networks and arrest and prosecute those responsible for the terrorist attacks.

The Europeans pointedly also insisted that he call for an end to the armed *intifada* - in Arabic. They did not want him saying one thing in English for international consumption and another to his own people. That doesn't mean that Europe endorses the Israeli government's announcement later in the week that Mr Arafat is "no longer relevant." The Irish Ambassador to Israel, Patrick Hennessey, said: "There has not been any change in the fundamental belief that the Palestinian Authority remains an essential partner in the peace process, and that Israel should talk to them and refrain from actions that would undermine Yasser Arafat and the Authority." But the emphasis has switched. The change stems from more than impatience with Mr Arafat's prevarication. The Europeans were provoked by the vicious intensity of the recent wave of terrorist attacks, which killed 44 Israelis in two weeks, and by their timing just as Gen. Zinni arrived to try and achieve a ceasefire and as the Israeli government's patience was wearing thin.

It looked like an attempt to sabotage the retired marine commander's mission. The American-led war on terror played a part, too. The 11 September raid on the World Trade Center made international opinion less tolerant of terrorism. The unexpectedly

Arafat on a downward spiral

The Palestinian leader should call for an end to *intifada* in Arabic for international consumption, writes ERIC SILVER

swift collapse of the Taliban in Afghanistan showed that it could be countered. "This has reinvigorated the international determination to root out terrorism," a European diplomat said. "Against that background, it would be extremely difficult for us to seem to be soft on Mr Arafat."

After Wednesday's murderous bus ambush, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's government erased the very word "soft" from its lexicon. "Chairman Arafat", it announced after an emergency meeting of the inner security

Cabinet, "has made himself irrelevant, as far as Israel is concerned, and therefore no contacts will be maintained with him." The government despatched its tanks, helicopter gunships and F-16 warplanes deep into Palestinian-controlled towns, villages and refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Mr Arafat was marooned in Ramallah, his administrative capital, with tanks deployed barely 100 metres from his office. Police stations and other security installations were demolished. Bulldozers felled the antenna of the Voice of Palestine radio station, accused by Israel of inciting hatred and violence.

Yet, Israel insisted that it was not trying either to assassinate Mr Arafat or to banish him back into exile. Nor was its aim to undermine the Palestinian Authority or permanently reoccupy Palestinian lands. Both Mr Sharon and Mr Arafat urged Gen. Zinni not to pack his bags and fly back to Washington. The door remained open to diplomacy, but only just. Israeli Army spokesmen said their core assignment was to smash the terrorist infrastructure tolerated, if not fostered, by Mr Arafat. Israelis recognise, however, that it is a high-risk mission. A stray bomb or missile could hit a school or a hospital. Palestinian securitymen, armed only with automatic rifles, have been reluctant to challenge Israeli tanks head-on, but that could change. Then casualties would multiply, on both sides. International acquiescence in Mr Sharon's blitzkrieg would melt overnight.

Some Israelis are also questioning whether they can write Mr Arafat out of the script. Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, who shared the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize with him, warned: "Mr Arafat is not finished yet. It may be that our military activity against him will actually strengthen his status among the Palestinian people, the states of the Middle East and Europe. I hope that Mr Sharon is taking that into account."

Oded Granot, an Arab affairs analyst, commented in the mass-circulation *Maariv* on Friday: "Mr Arafat will become irrelevant only when the people surrounding him, and of course the Palestinian street, decide that he is irrelevant."

A cartoon in Friday's *Jerusalem Post* said it all. A glum, but stubborn Mr Arafat is sitting on a staircase. A wary Mr Sharon is turning his back, but looks at him out of the corner of his eye. "Yesterday upon the stair," Mr Sharon says, "I saw a man who wasn't there. He wasn't there again today. I wish to heck he'd go away."

(The author is The Statesman's Jerusalem-based correspondent.)

16 DEC 2001

16 DEC 2001

Militia vows to attack Israel

Agencies

GAZA, Dec. 17. — Militant Palestinian groups defied a call by Palestinian President Mr Yasser Arafat to halt suicide bombings and armed attacks against Israel today by vowing to continue fighting the Jewish state. The Islamic Hamas Movement and the military wing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine issued separate statements rejecting Mr Arafat's last night plea to lay down their arms and halt attacks against Israel.

"It's an unjust formula that can't be accepted," Hamas said in a statement in which it defended suicide bombings as "the only weapon to preserve Palestinian rights." The PFLP's Abu Ali Mustafa's armed brigades said they would continue "armed resistance." "Operations will continue as long as the occupation exists," the group said.

"We are waiting to see whether the Israeli government will stop its aggression on the Palestinian people. The operation in Hebron proves there is no Israeli truce," said Sheikh Abdel-Majid, Hamas representative in Bethlehem, referring to Israel's killing of a Hamas militant in Hebron earlier today.

Saed Seyam, a prominent Hamas leader in the Gaza Strip, said: "The killing of the...brother in Hebron will never go without punishment. Hamas has taught us that it will never leave the killing of its people without revenge."

Mahmoud Ghazal, a local Hamas leader in Nablus, said: "Today the Israelis assassinated Yakoub Idkadak in Hebron. We can't accept that (Mr Arafat's call) while Israelis are not committed to the same agreement. I think the interest of the Palestinian people is to continue the Intifada."

Yakub Adkediq (28), was shot as he fled his home at 3:00 a.m. (6.30 a.m. IST) when Israeli police tried to seize him, police said. His body was found in the morgue hours later.

He was the first person to be killed in the region since Mr Arafat called for an end to anti-Israeli attacks late yesterday and a return to negotiations.

Palestinian police said Adkediq was on Israel's list of wanted militants and that the Israeli army had tried to arrest him before.

In Jerusalem Israeli police have detained two leading Palestinian officials and their aides after the government banned them from holding what it said was a "nationalist" gathering in the disputed

sector of the city.

The five Palestinians who were taken for questioning today included the Palestine Liberation Organisation's top representative in east Jerusalem, Mr Sari Nusseibeh, who is an outspoken proponent of peace with Israel.

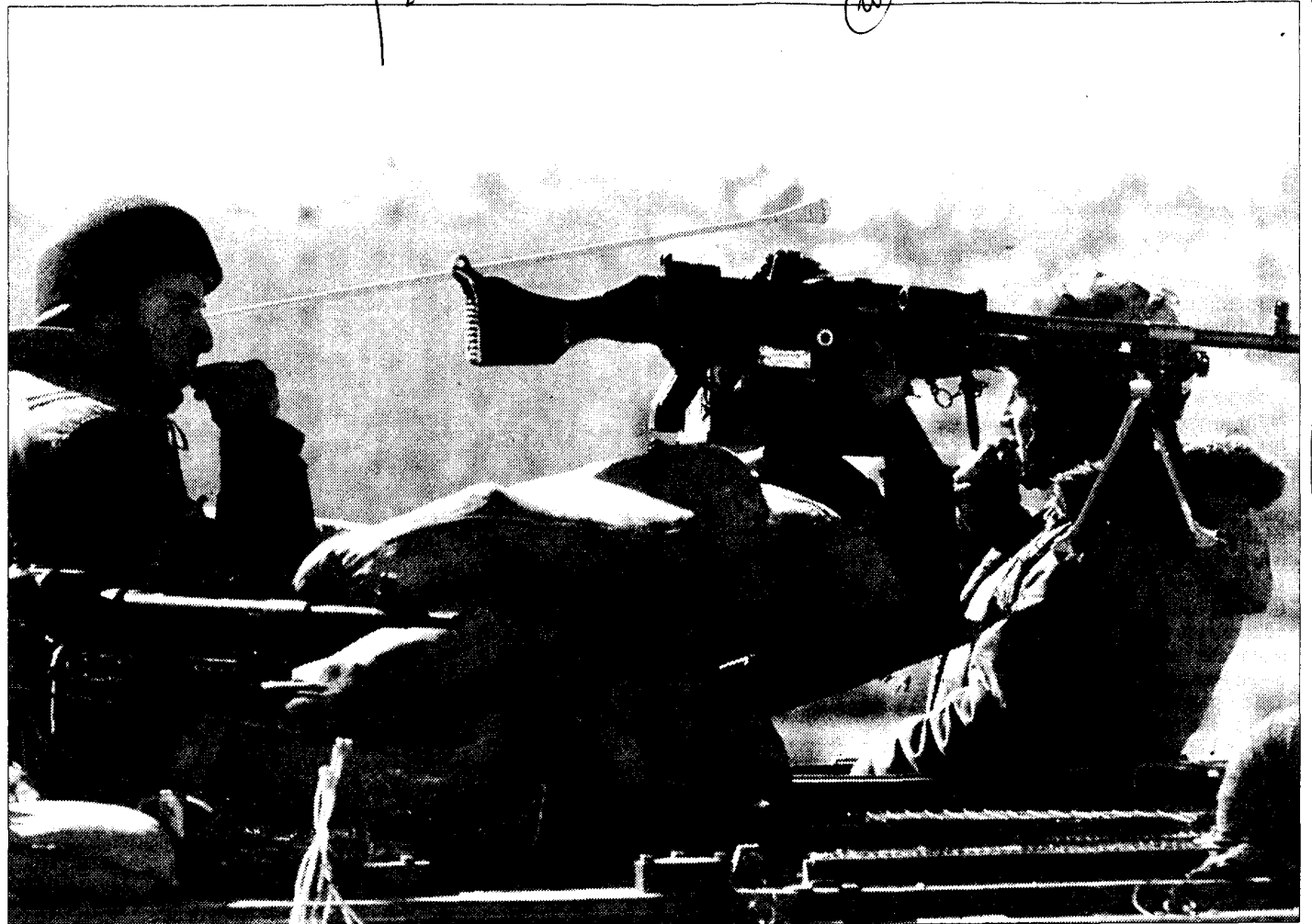
Another detainee was Mr Hatem Abdel Khader, the local leader of Fatah, Mr Arafat's party and a Palestinian legislator.

The officials were taken away by police from the Imperial Hotel in east Jerusalem where Mr Nusseibeh was slated to hold a reception for Id-ul-Fitr.

Hours earlier, the Israeli Cabinet had issued an order banning the event after ministers were asked in a rare telephone vote overnight to decide on the issue raised by public security minister Mr Uzi Landau.

Mr Landau said that Mr Nusseibeh, as the leading PLO official in Jerusalem, was violating peace agreements by holding an event of nationalist nature since diplomats were invited. "When such an event is organised by the Palestine Liberation Organisation, the long arm of the Palestinian Authority, it is no doubt nationalist activity," Mr Landau told army radio. "We can't accept this by any means."

Mr Nusseibeh, a philosophy professor, said he had only intended to hold a holiday event. He confirmed that diplomats were invited.



Israeli soldiers atop an armoured tank near the West Bank town of Ramallah on Monday. — AP/PTI

Tough task ahead for Arafat, Sharon

Eric Silver in Jerusalem

Dec. 17.— Palestinian President Mr Yasser Arafat has put himself and Israel Prime Minister Mr Ariel Sharon in a spot. After ordering a ceasefire and vowing to combat terrorism, the Palestinian leader now has to demonstrate that he has the authority to deliver. If he does, Mr Sharon will have to reassess his declaration that Mr Arafat is "no longer relevant."

In a half-hour television address on Sunday night, Mr Arafat decreed that all forms of armed activity should be stopped. "There should be no more attacks, especially suicide bombings. We shall arrest all those who plan these attacks. We shall outlaw organisations that start terror activities." Palestinian officials said that they had already closed 33 Hamas and Islamic Jihad offices.

Mr Arafat discounted any suggestions that he might be acting in response to the military offensive Israel launched last Thursday, or to the mounting international pressure for him to exercise control. The

terrorist attacks, he said, violated the Palestinians' supreme national interest. "Those who violate it will be penalised firmly." Appealing directly to the Israelis, he reaffirmed his commitment to dialogue. "We want a viable Palestinian state, alongside the state of Israel," he added. "I call on the people and government of Israel to return to the negotiating table and to cease these inhumane measures against our people."

This is not the first time since the armed Intifada broke out 15 months ago that Mr Arafat has called for a ceasefire or promised to stop the gunmen and the bombers. However, with Israeli tanks 200 yards from his headquarters in the West Bank town of Ramallah and the international community losing patience with him, this new declaration had an unprecedented urgency. He has good, objective reasons to act.

As Mr Oded Granot, an Arab affairs analyst, commented in the daily *Ma'ariv*: "The principle importance of the speech is that these things were said in his own voice, in a direct appeal to the Palestinian people.

Arafat, who understands that he is in big trouble and that for him it is now a question of to be or not to be, also made a public commitment to take a hard line against anyone acting counter to his instructions. If he does not do so, he is digging another hole for himself."

Israel responded with predictable scepticism. One anonymous security official mused: "Why should we believe someone who has lied to us so often?" The foreign minister, Mr Shimon Peres, told reporters: "The only way to judge is by what's being done, not only what's being said. I still hope that there will be a renewal of the political accord. Our call upon Mr Arafat is that he will establish one authority over all armed groups. You cannot handle them just by speeches. It is not for the sake of Israel, but for the sake of the Palestinians themselves that Mr Arafat has to assert his authority."

Mr Arafat strove to do just that. "We will not allow more than one national authority," he said grimly to camera. "Once that authority takes a decision, it has to be respected. When it makes a commitment, it has to be honoured. When it signs an

agreement, it must have full credibility."

It was as if the two men, who shared the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize, had coordinated their lines. Mr Peres acknowledged that it would be "a terrible mistake" to think the present crisis could be resolved by force. "We have the right to use military measures for self-defence," he said, "but we cannot solve the problem by military means."

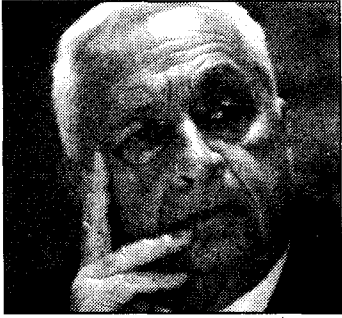
Mr Arafat's broadcast was an attempt to retrieve an increasingly desperate situation.

US President Mr George W Bush's special envoy, General Anthony Zinni, flew back to Washington on Saturday night after failing to get anywhere near the ceasefire he had come to broker. An American spokesman said he would return if the prospects improved. The European Union was demanding that Mr Arafat act. It was no longer giving him the benefit of the doubt.

The right-wing of Mr Sharon's coalition government was baying for the Palestinian leader's blood. Egypt and Jordan, the two Arab states that have signed peace treaties with Israel, feared that the unrest might spill over and destabilise their own regimes.

West Asia peace deal must be made to work

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Ariel Sharon: Needs to introspect

Perhaps, one can see an end to the war in Afghanistan, even to Osama bin Laden, but can anyone see an end to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict? America has shown that with its awesome armoury that defeat is swift for anyone who publicly dare step into the ring for a round or two, which the Taliban, by giving refuge to Bin Laden, decided to do. (It is another matter if Al-Qaida now bunkers down in secret cells all over the place.)

But who is going to deliver the decisive blow with Palestine/Israel? This is a war of attrition that could knock on and drag on until not much is left standing. On the Palestinian side, the outcome certainly could be a degree of material destruction that could make much of the country rubble; on the Israeli side it is more likely to make it simply unliveable. While the buildings and infrastructure may be left standing many people, especially those with marketable professional skills, may decide this is no place to

bring up a family and simply pack their bags. Already there are 30,000 Israeli emigrants living and working in San Francisco's South Bay area alone. So bad is the situation that the American envoy, General Anthony Zinni said last Sunday, a mere two weeks after his arrival in Israel, that he was considering pulling out. Yet when he arrived, he said he would stay as long as it took to restore calm and restart peace talks. So what next?

Where, for starters, does Prime Minister Ariel Sharon go? He could order his secret service to assassinate Yasser Arafat, as many of his advisers have been pushing him to do. That would shake things up. It could hand power to Hamas, the most powerful of the militant groups which could then strike a deal with Mr Sharon that nobody in Palestine would dare challenge. But that is a long shot. It would more likely lead to both a more intensive *intifada* and to a fratricidal conflict within Palestine. Though so far the militants have not shown much interest in being associated with the Al-Qaida, would they refuse an offer from an Al-Qaida cell that decided to make Israel pay? Mr Sharon, who gambled and lost in Lebanon, would be a fool to gamble again with taking the life of Mr Arafat.

At some point, Mr Sharon has to stop playing politics and ask himself why Mr Arafat walked away from the Camp David deal and more particularly from that worked out afterwards at Taba in Egypt a few months after *Intifada 2* had got going? There can only be two explanations. The first, which Mr Sharon seems to believe, that Mr Arafat does not want peace with Israel, that his secret agenda is the one that he revealed in a sermon in a South African mosque

a few years ago: to drive Israel into the sea. The second is to believe that Mr Arafat would have clinched the deal if the then Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Barak, could have delivered on it. But with an election looming and the immovable Mr Sharon, the likely winner Mr Arafat would have gambled all, only to have it thrown in his face.

Mr Barak, who wasted time on an impossible deal with Syria and a drawn out negotiation over Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon, had simply left it too late. The first explanation is no explanation. Palestinian rhetoric at its worst has always contained the end-of-Israel expletives. But a deal on the lines of Camp David/Taba, if finalised by Mr Arafat and Mr Sharon, would be set in cement. The Palestinian educated, professional class would not stand for playing with it. Neither would other Arab governments.

Whatever the doubts in governments such as Saudi Arabia or Syria, they would go along, as they eventually felt compelled to over Egypt's historic rapprochement with Israel 24 years ago. Besides, at this point a great deal would deserve to be guaranteed internationally - by America, Europe and Russia. What was the Taba deal?

It is worth reiteration: a Palestinian state to control 95 per cent of West Bank and Gaza; Israeli settlers to be concentrated in about 5 per cent of the land which Israel would annex, with

Palestine being compensated with Israeli land in the Negev desert; the Arab neigh-

bourhoods of Jerusalem, including those in the Old City to be absorbed by Palestine; the Haram al-Sharif mosque to be under Palestinian sovereignty and the Wailing Wall under Israeli; and Palestinian refugees to be either compensated with money, settled in Palestine or, on a case-by-case basis, in Israel. For sure, there were bits and pieces still to be negotiated: the Negev desert was not a good substitute for loss of part of the West Bank and the

world view

JONATHAN POWER



Yasser Arafat: Refuses to spell out vision for a deal.

refugee deal needed to be fleshed out. But compared with what Mr Barak first put on the table, all these concessions were Israeli milestones.

Given the right political climate in Israel - a Right wing being led with an element of foresight - they are sellable to the electorate. Short-term political perspectives have to go out of the window - Mr Sharon waiting for a week without violence before he will talk; Mr Arafat refusing to spell out in public at home his vision of a deal; and President George Bush waiting until he has defeated Al-Qaida.

Mr Bush has to stand up, with Europe and Russia at his side, and tell Mr Sharon and Mr Arafat, this has to be your deal and we are going to make it stick.

THE STATESMAN

Israel cuts all ties with Arafat

■ Palestinian leader banned from moving out of West Bank town of Ramallah

AGENCIES
JERUSALEM, DECEMBER 13

ISRAEL banned Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat from leaving the West Bank town of Ramallah on Thursday after the government severed ties with him in a move that seemed likely to scupper the latest US West Asia peace efforts. It sent warplanes too against Palestinian targets on Thursday.

"Israel won't attack him personally but he will stay where he is," Israeli Justice Minister Meir Sheetrit told Israeli Military Radio hours after the Cabinet decision was endorsed after a bus ambush and a double suicide bombing that killed 10 Israelis.

General Ron Kitrey, Israeli Army chief

spokesman, told the radio that the army had occupied three positions around Ramallah. "We have no intention to bring down the Palestinian Authority or to harm Arafat physically or even to expel him," Kitrey said.

To travel, Arafat must ask permission from Israeli authorities who control the skies over West Bank and Gaza. A senior Israeli official said any request would be examined and Israel "reserves the right to reject or accept it according to situation".

Israeli planes struck in a wave of retaliatory raids for a double attack by Palestinian militants, who killed 10 Israelis and wounded dozens in West Bank and Gaza Strip on Wednesday. Israeli Army bulldozers demolished the Palestinian Television

and Radio Broadcasting Centre in Ramallah and blew up the main transmitting mast, sources said.

The raids were the start of a wider military operation announced by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's Security Cabinet which decided in a meeting early today to let the army "arrest and confiscate weapons".

The Cabinet also decided that Arafat "is no longer relevant as far as Israel is concerned and there will be no more contact with him". It said the decision did not mean Arafat would be personally harmed.

"As far as someone to deal with, he does not exist," said Danny Ayalon, diplomatic advisor to Sharon, said of Arafat in a telephone interview. Officials said the decision meant there would be no more

meetings with Palestinian officials and Israel would not rely on the Palestinian Authority to fight "terrorism".

"Arafat will no longer be the address for Israel to take care of the terror issue and from now on we will do whatever we can as a country to defend ourselves," Israeli Justice Minister Meir Sheetrit told a news conference after the meeting.

Officials said he was in the office at the time. Tanks fired at positions held by Arafat's elite Force-17 guard. "It is impossible to implement our commitments under the shadow of comprehensive war," Palestinian Information Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo said. "The minute this campaign stops we will carry out our duties."

INDIAN EXPRESS

14 DEC 2001

WEST ASIA / ISRAELI MOVE DECLARATION OF WAR, SAYS PALESTINE

Arafat banned from leaving Ramallah

GAZA CITY (GAZA STRIP), DEC. 13. Israel severed all contact with the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, early today, launching retaliatory air strikes on his West Bank headquarters and sending troops to Palestinian towns after militants killed 10 Israelis in a bus ambush.

A report from Jerusalem said Israel had banned Mr. Arafat from leaving the West Bank town of Ramallah. Quoting the Israeli Justice Minister, Mr. Meir Sheerit, it said "Israel will not attack him personally but he will stay where he is." Mr. Arafat was bunkered in Ramallah when Israeli tanks were deployed around 200 meters from his offices.

To travel, Mr. Arafat must take the permission from the Israeli authorities who control the skies over West Bank and Gaza.

A senior Israeli official said any request by Mr. Arafat to travel outside Ramallah would be examined and that Israel "reserves the right to reject it or accept it."

Mr. Arafat's spokesman called the moves "an official declaration of war against our people" and another top Palestinian official said Israeli strikes had rendered the Palestinian Authority unable to fulfill its commitment to crack down on terror.

The Palestinian attack came at 6 p.m. local time, when gunmen ambushed a bus carrying Jewish settlers from the Tel Aviv area to Emanuel, not far from Nablus, the largest Palestinian city in the West Bank. The Israeli military said a gunman who fired on rescue workers was shot and killed by Israeli forces.

The violence appeared to mark



An Israeli soldier walks in front of an Army bulldozer as it destroys the Palestinian Authority's radio station in the West Bank town of Ramallah on Thursday. — AP

a new crisis point in the bitter 14-month old conflict and threatened to wreck U.S. efforts to arrange a truce. Israel's Security Cabinet ruled out talks with Mr. Arafat hours after the Palestinian

leader bowed to long-standing Israeli demands and ordered the offices of the militant Hamas and Islamic Jihad groups closed, but did not outlaw them.

The Cabinet statement said Mr.

Arafat was "directly responsible" for the deadly bus attack "and, therefore, is no longer relevant to Israel, and Israel will no longer have any connection with him." The Israel Army Radio, however, said low-level talks between the two sides continued.

Hours later, after a night of strikes in Gaza and the West Bank, the Palestinians backed away from the pledge to shut the Hamas and Islamic Jihad offices. "It's impossible for the Palestinian leadership to implement its commitment under the shadow of this comprehensive war," said the Palestinian Information Minister, Mr. Yasser Abed Rabbo. "We are committed to all that we promised but we can't implement it."

The ominous moves from both sides followed a day of violence and retaliation on Wednesday. Ten Israelis were killed and about 30 wounded when Palestinians set off a bomb and opened fire on a bus and several cars in the West Bank, at the same time as two Palestinian suicide bombers blew themselves up next to Israeli cars in Gaza.

Responding swiftly to the attacks, Israeli planes and helicopters struck targets around Gaza and the West Bank, including a building in Mr. Arafat's West Bank headquarters in Ramallah. The Palestinian leader had been evacuated shortly before the strike.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, Mr. William Burns, said in Damascus today that his country would continue to deal with Mr. Arafat as the leader of the Palestinian people. — AP, AFP

THE HINDU

14 101

Arafat to close Hamas offices

RAMALLAH, Dec. 12. — Palestinian President Mr Yasser Arafat today decided to immediately close down all institutions belonging to the militant Hamas and Islamic Jihad groups after a deadly ambush on an Israeli bus.

"The Palestinian authority in an urgent meeting headed by Mr Arafat has taken a decision that Palestinian security forces will immediately close down all Hamas and Islamic Jihad institutions, including education, health and political offices," an official statement said.

Earlier, a report from Beirut said the military wing of the radical Palestinian movement Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack on the bus, the television station of Lebanon's Hezbollah movement said.

Ten Israelis were killed when armed Palestinian militants attacked an Israeli bus in the West Bank late this afternoon, an army spokesman said. About 25 to 30 people were also injured in the ambush near the Jewish settlement of Emmanuel to the southwest of the Palestinian town of Nablus, the spokesman said.

A report from Gaza Strip said two Palestinian suicide bombers blew themselves up outside a hotel in the southern Gaza Strip Jewish settlement bloc of Gush Katif this afternoon and injured four people, Palestinian security sources said.

"The Israelis have informed us that there have been two suicide bombings," a senior security official said. "One blew himself up near the gate of the Palm Beach hotel and some 100 metres away there was another suicide bombing and another explosion," he said.



A father of one of the four Palestinians killed grieves in front of a morgue at Khan Yunis refugee camp, Gaza Strip, on Wednesday. — AP/PTI

Meanwhile, Israel government spokesman, Mr Avi Pazner, said Israel holds the Palestinian authority responsible for the bus attack and will "certainly find a way to respond."

"We hold the Palestinian authorities responsible for the activities of these terrorist groups who operate in daylight and in the full knowledge of the Palestinian authority and continue their

deadly attacks against civilians," Mr Pazner said.

In another development a US diplomat confirmed today that Washington's special envoy to West Asia had secured an accord between Israel and the Palestinians for a conditional 48-hour calm period to allow Palestinians to crack down on extremists.

"During the meeting of the High Security Committee on yesterday,

Mr Zinni proposed a 48-hour period of calm that the Israeli and Palestinian delegates accepted in principle," said a US official.

He said, however, Israelis had laid down two conditions.

Israel exercised its opt-out clause within hours of the meeting, when its helicopters blasted a Palestinian security building in the Gaza Strip, killing four Palestinians and injuring 17 others.

THE STATESMAN

13 DEC 2001

US Marine Cobra attack helicopters circle above larger CH-53 helicopters on Tuesday at the US Marines operation base in southern Afghanistan before heading out

Gulf leaders blast Israeli air raids

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Reuters

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DUBAI, Dec. 4. — Gulf and Arab leaders today condemned Israel's overnight strikes on Palestinian targets and regional newspapers said the attacks heralded an all-out war.

"The Israeli aggression will lead to dangerous consequences and more violence in the region," Yemen's official news agency quoted the President, Mr Ali Abdullah Saleh as saying.

It said Mr Saleh had discussed the strikes by telephone with United Arab Emirates President Sheikh Zaid bin Sultan al-Nahayan and Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah late on Monday and that all three leaders denounced the escalation.

Israel launched air strikes on a Gaza Strip compound for Palestinian President Mr Yasser Arafat and the West Bank city of Jenin on Monday in retaliation for Palestinian suicide bombings that killed 25 people in Israel over the weekend.

Hospital officials said at least 17 people were injured in the strikes.

Today, a Palestinian official said missiles had struck near Mr Arafat's headquarters in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

Mr Arafat was inside at the time but was not hurt.

Qatar's Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, whose country was one of two Gulf states that established ties with Israel, also condemned the strikes and called on the international community "to work to stop Israeli attacks on the defenceless Palestinian people".

His comments were carried by the official Qatar News Agency, which also quoted a Qatari official as saying Mr Arafat had asked for an emergency meeting of the world's largest Muslim body, which Qatar currently chairs, to discuss the strikes.

Most Gulf leaders, close allies of the USA, have yet to publicly comment on the Israeli strikes, which came in response to the bloodiest Palestinian attacks in 14 months of Palestinian-Israeli violence.

Many regional dailies, however, criticised the Israeli military operation as terrorism.

The newspapers, which normally reflect official thinking in this secretive region, also insisted that the USA had given Israel the go-ahead to launch the strikes, despite assurances from the White House to the contrary.

"Mr Sharon starts a fullscale war with American consent," read a banner headline in the United Arab Emirates' *Khaleej* daily. In an editorial, the newspaper said that by not condemning Israel, the USA had given Israelis

"the green light to violate more Palestinian land".

In Bahrain, headquarters of the US Navy Fifth Fleet, the *Akhbar al-Arab* daily incredulously asked: "How can a superpower ... give the green light to an occupying state to practice assassinations, demolish houses and kill children?"

Israeli troops are battling a Palestinian revolt which erupted in September 2000, shortly after peace talks stalled.

At least 742 Palestinians have so far been killed in the violence which has fuelled Gulf Arab rage against Israel and its ally the USA. At least 222 Israelis were also killed.

In Saudi Arabia, Washington's firm Gulf ally, *al-Watan* daily questioned the USA's sense of balance, particularly as it wages an anti-terrorism campaign against Afghanistan.

"Why is the USA pretending not to see the terrorism practised by Israel while it has declared war on terrorism and wants support from others?" the newspaper said.

Pakistan condemned the Israeli strikes against the Palestinian Authority in Gaza and the West Bank but called for restraint and a resumption of peace talks. "The latest military action is a part of deliberate Israeli policy of undermining the Palestinian Authority," a foreign ministry spokesman said.

THE STATES

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Israel strikes Arafat's Ramallah hqrs

JERUSALEM: The Israeli army on Tuesday confirmed its partial re-occupation of the autonomous Palestinian cities of Nablus, Ramallah and Beitunia in the West Bank overnight as part of Israel's reprisals against the Palestinians for last weekend's suicide bombings.

Armoured units penetrated areas which agreements had placed entirely under Palestinian control around Ramallah and in nearby Beitunia, a military spokesman said. Israeli forces also took up positions west of Nablus



to tighten an existing blockade around the city and "prevent terrorists mounting operations from there", the spokesman said.

These developments came even as Israeli helicopter gunships on Tuesday launched a second wave of strikes in as many days on Palestinian targets, including Yasser Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah, but the Palestinian leader escaped unhurt.

At least two persons were killed and some 120 injured, 60 of them students, in the strikes on eight Palestinian security buildings, including the Ramallah police



An Israeli soldier looks out from his tank in the West Bank town of Ramallah as Israeli helicopter gunships fired a missile into the outer entrance of Yasser Arafat's headquarters on Tuesday.

Reuters

headquarters next to Mr Arafat's own offices, where he was present.

Reacting angrily to the Israeli attacks, Mr Arafat accused Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of trying to sabotage his efforts to deal with terrorism by launching the air strikes on Palestinian targets. Mr Arafat said Mr Sharon wanted him to fail in dealing with terrorist activities as "he does not want the peace process to start".

The strikes came hours after the Israeli cabinet called Mr Arafat's Palestinian Authority a "terrorist-supporting entity" that must be dealt with. The cabinet also said it considered Mr Arafat's Force 17, and Tanzim, a Palestinian group loyal to Mr Arafat's Fatah faction, as "terror organisations, and the activity against them will be in accordance".

However, the UN ignored Israeli pleas that it take into account the recent suicide attacks and adopted a series of resolutions backing a Palestinian state, calling for withdrawal of Israel from the Golan Heights and demanding self-determination for the Palestinians.

On the other hand, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell reiterated a call to Mr Arafat to work to end the new wave of violence, ahead of his talks with Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres.

Mr Powell said he planned to discuss with Mr Peres how to defuse the latest upsurge of unrest, sparked by weekend suicide bombings which killed at least 25 Israelis. "This is the time for Chairman Arafat to use all of his influence, all of his authority, all of his prestige, to bring these terrorist elements under control," Mr Powell said in Bucharest. (Agencies)

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

Israeli bombs chase Arafat in Ramallah

Ramallah, December 4

ISRAEL LAUNCHED air strikes across West Bank and the Gaza Strip today, hitting a police building near Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's main West Bank offices while he was inside. Arafat was not hurt.

Two people were killed and dozens wounded in today's attacks on the Gaza Strip, said Palestinian doctors. Palestinian officials said Arafat was in his office in the West Bank city of Ramallah when a missile slammed into the police building. "The missiles hit less than 30 metres from his office," Palestinian Cabinet Minister Saeb Erekat said.

"Ariel Sharon's Government is exercising terror. They have destroyed the peace process and

now they are destroying the Palestinian Authority. The world has to stop this madness immediately," he said.

Israeli warplanes also struck security targets in Gaza City and in the Khan Younis refugee camp in southern Gaza. A 15-year-old boy and a police officer were reportedly killed in Gaza City. Witnesses said several children were wounded by shrapnel and flying debris.

The air attack followed a declaration by Israel's Government branding the Palestinian Authority "a terror-supporting entity" after Palestinian suicide bombers killed 25 people in serial suicide attacks over the weekend.

The decision prompted ministers from the moderate Labour Party to walk out of the Cabinet

meeting in protest. Some Labour leaders hinted the party might quit the coalition Government.

Israeli helicopter gunships fired missiles at targets in the West Bank towns of Tulkarim and Qalqilya. The headquarters of Force 17, Arafat's personal guards, in Tulkarim were hit.

Israel's dovish Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said he did not expect Israeli forces to target Arafat personally. "Israel is hitting material, not people."

Under pressure from Israel and the US, Arafat had made large-scale arrests in the past few days. A Palestinian official said the Israeli strikes are weakening the crackdown.

Palestinian Information Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo said: "This is a war against Yasser Arafat

and the Palestinian Authority, not against terror. We have the right to defend ourselves as we are under occupation. Sharon will be defeated in this war."

Addressing the nation shortly after the strikes, Sharon blamed Arafat for what he said was a war of terrorism and called him the biggest obstacle to peace.

Arafat called for an urgent meeting of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference after the air strikes. Just hours later, the army thrust into parts of several West Bank cities and troops moved within yards of Arafat's Ramallah compound. Head of the Arab League, Jordan, has called for an emergency Arab ministerial meeting on Sunday.



A Palestinian schoolgirl screams in shock as an Israeli missile lands in Gaza City on Tuesday.

AP PHOTO

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

✓ 'How far will Israel, Bush go?'

Geography, and history, predictably divides editorial opinion across the globe

'In the path of a falling WTC tower'

THE JERUSALEM POST, Israel

IT took almost three months, but Arafat has managed to step into the path of one of the falling towers of the World Trade Center. After September 11, Arafat quickly donned a homemade jersey with "Coalition" emblazoned across the front, and hoped no one would notice him sneaking over from the opposing bench to the home team. Arafat literally gave blood for the victims in New York, while his thugs made death threats to reporters who had the temerity to film celebrating Palestinian crowds. Now Arafat's pretense has been exposed and the demand for full anti-terrorist credentials placed at his doorstep. The threat to Israel from terrorism is ultimately even greater than to America. Israel's means of response must be no less resolute.

No quick fix solutions

HAARETZ, Israel

THE terrible terrorist attacks that claimed the lives of so many Israelis have naturally created a climate in which it appears there is no choice but for a wide-scale response that could undermine the Palestinian Authority. Despite all its failures and weaknesses, the PA is the recognised representative institution for the residents of the territories. Dreaming about its elimination is wishful thinking derived from anger, and an attempt to actualise those wishes could bring chaos down on both the Palestinians and Israel. It can be argued that Israel is already at war against various Palestinian organisations and militias. It is possible that the recent terrible attacks and fear of Israeli reprisal for them, along with international pressure on Arafat, are now motivating the PA to take more serious action against the terror organisations.

On the brink of chaos

THE GUARDIAN, UK

THE gunships that raked Mr Arafat's Gaza helicopter pad yesterday could be a signal of worse to come, of a complete break with the Palestinian leadership, of the destruction of its infrastructure and of the dispersal and expulsion of its personnel. But it is impossible to believe that Mr Sharon has returned from Washington with an American mandate for such a course. The odds are that Israel will take military mea-

Dry Bones



Jerusalem Post

sures which will target buildings and areas connected with Hamas, Hizbollah and Islamic Jihad and will also damage the Palestinian Authority, but will fall short of an all-out assault. Chaos and a complete loss of control have never been nearer in the Middle East. Mr Arafat could have given in to those who have been urging him to devolve power to younger leaders, who could perhaps rein in attacks on the Israelis more effectively, but he has not done so, thinking that September 11 had handed him better cards. The Israelis could have helped him by dropping the impossible condition of a perfect ceasefire before any talks, but they preferred to let events develop in such a way as to enable them to paint him as an accomplice of terrorism.

Green signal or amber?

THE INDEPENDENT, UK

EVER since 11 September, when America's new "war against terrorism" became juxtaposed with the deepening cycle of violence in the Middle East, many who see justice in the Palestinian cause have had a hard time rebutting one seemingly straightforward assertion: how can it be wrong for Israel to take stern reprisals against the Palestinian terrorists who wreak such bloodshed on its soil, when America is

engaged in an all-out military campaign to hunt down Osama bin Laden? Until the carnage of last weekend, President Bush trod a delicate middle way. But the horrific, presumably synchronised, suicide bombings in Jerusalem and Haifa have forced Mr Bush's hand. A dangerous mood is emerging in Washington, into which the latest dreadful events may only feed... Mr Bush may have given a green light in public. The private message to Mr Sharon must still be amber, if not red.

Arafat's last chance

NEW YORK TIMES, USA

YASIR ARAFAT has a long and frustrating history of fudging or postponing hard decisions. Now he can postpone no more. Last weekend's deadly terrorist attacks in Jerusalem and Haifa by Hamas suicide bombers have all but shattered his credibility as a negotiating partner. Mr

Arafat's reluctance to shut down terrorist groups like Hamas has again led to the death of innocent teenagers and adults and thrown yet another set of Israeli families into mourning. Still, Israel should not take this decisive step just yet. Although Mr. Arafat's latest pledges of a thoroughgoing crackdown on terror seem familiar and unconvincing to most Israelis, they ought to be tested over the next few days... Mr. Arafat is still the only Palestinian political leader with enough authority to sell a territorial compromise to his own people.

How far will Sharon go?

ARAB NEWS, Saudi Arabia

IT MUST be feared that the missiles that I rammed into Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's seaside headquarters and the airstrikes in Gaza and the West Bank represent more than the hit-for-hit strategy that Israel has been following since the intifada began. It could be the first move in a bigger plan. The White House sees in the airstrikes the exercise of Israel's right to self-defense. Gone are the calls for restraint. The question now is, how far more will Sharon's Israel go, and Bush's White House agree that it should go? That is why a much deadlier response has now to be feared.

INDIAN EXPRESS

INDIAN EXPRESS

- 5 DEC 2001

Israel bombs Palestinian police HQ

Gaza, December 7

ISRAELI WARPLANES bombed the Palestinian authority's main police headquarters today, injuring at least 18 people, in fresh retaliation for the deadly suicide attacks in the Jewish State.

The air strike in Gaza City, hub of the Palestinian-ruled Gaza Strip, reduced two four-storey buildings to rubble, officials and witnesses said. Two huge explosions sent a large plume of smoke billowing over the area and the impact shook people out of their beds and shattered windows hundreds of yards away. But initial reports suggested most were lightly or moderately hurt.

As the warplanes were striking, troops backed by tanks

launched incursions in the southern Gaza Strip and seized two Palestinians — an intelligence official and a Palestinian journalist. The latter was arrested after soldiers were unable to find his brother who belongs to a militant group.

A Palestinian policeman was killed and another injured when Israeli tanks stormed into Palestinian self-rule land near Beir Lahia yesterday on the northern Gaza Strip. His body kept by Israeli forces. The Israeli security sources said the raid came after Palestinians fired five mortar bombs at a Jewish settlement in the area.

In Hebron, a 45-year-old Palestinian teacher died of a heart attack yesterday after the ambulance carrying him to hospital in

the West Bank was delayed at several Israeli army checkpoints.

The bombardment in Gaza City ended a two-day pause in Israel's air campaign against Palestinian security targets in response to last weekend's Palestinian suicide bombings.

The air raid came hours before Israeli and Palestinian officials were to relaunch US-brokered security talks that US peace envoy Anthony Zinni arranged after meeting leaders from both sides. It seemed unlikely the talks would go ahead.

Israel had warned it would step up its military strikes until Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat acted against militants threatening the Jewish State's security. The Israeli army said the air raid was aimed against "Pales-

tinian authority bodies that support and aid terrorist activity".

In Gaza, Palestinian public security chief, Major-General Abdel-Razek al-Majaydeh said: "The Israeli attack has destroyed our entire effort to restore calm... It will only lead to an escalation of tension."

Ariel Sharon has accused Arafat of making only token arrests in response to Israeli and US demands for a crackdown on militants behind the recent wave of attacks in the Jewish State.

Palestinian police raided an ammunition factory in the Gaza Strip, arresting activists running the operation and confiscating machinery. The arrests may be part of the counter-terror action promised by Arafat.

Reuters

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 9 DEC 2001

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W. ASIA / HAMAS PROTESTS LEADER'S ARREST

W. Asia (W)

Militants, Palestinian police clash

GAZA CITY (GAZA STRIP), DEC. 6. Hundreds of Hamas supporters clashed with Palestinian riot police outside the home of the group's leader on Thursday in a first sign of resistance to Mr. Yasser Arafat's intensifying crackdown on Islamic militants.

A Hamas supporter was killed in an exchange of fire at the scene, witnesses said. The Palestinian leader is under growing Israeli and U.S. pressure to rein in the Hamas and Islamic Jihad groups that have sent dozens of suicide bombers to Israel, including four this week.

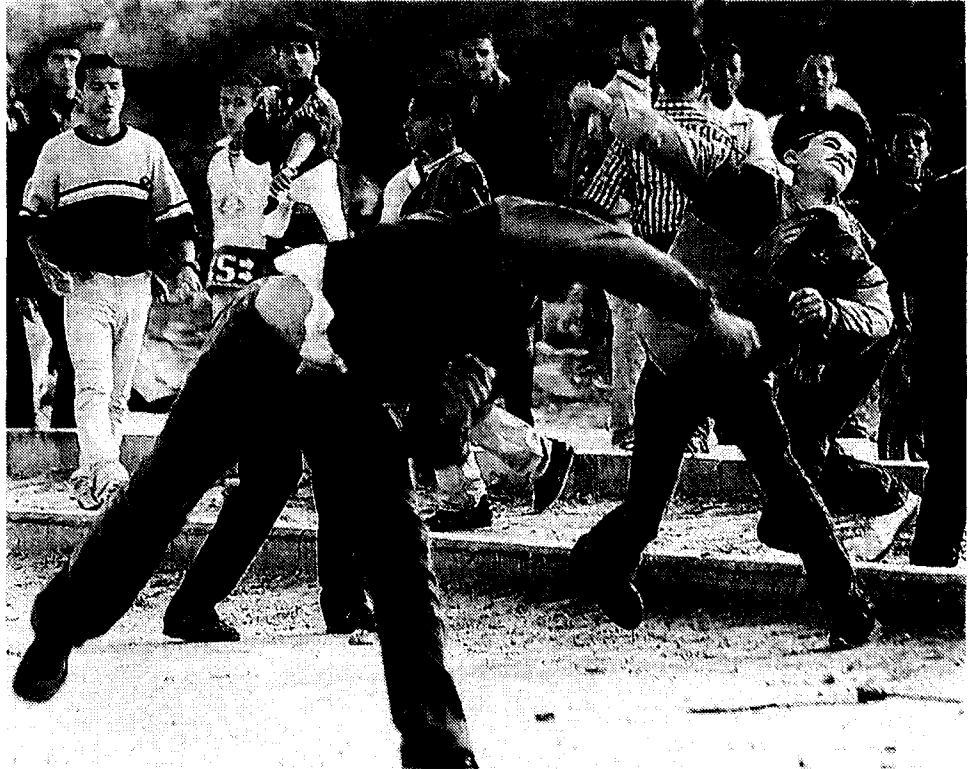
Israel told Mr. Arafat he must arrest leading militants quickly or face a resumption of Israeli reprisals. "This is the last chance (for the Palestinians) to do what they are supposed to do," said Mr. Raanan Gissin, adviser to the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon.

The U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush, said Mr. Arafat must "use everything in his power to prevent further terrorist attacks in Israel" and that the Jewish state could not be expected to conduct negotiations under fire. In Mr. Arafat's boldest move yet against Hamas, the movement's founder and spiritual leader, Sheik Ahmed Yassin, was placed under house arrest. Palestinian officers set up checkpoints around his Gaza City home on Thursday, clashing on and off for hours with more than 1,500 Hamas supporters. Mr. Arafat's crackdown was accompanied by a flurry of diplomatic activity on Thursday.

Egypt sent its Foreign Minister, Mr. Ahmed Maher, on a new mediation mission. He met with Mr. Sharon and was to hold talks with Mr. Arafat later in the day.

Also, the U.S. envoy, Mr. Anthony Zinni, held separate talks with Mr. Peres and Mr. Arafat. Mr. Maher's sudden visit came even though Egypt has shunned high-profile ties with Israel since Mr. Sharon, a hard-liner, became Israel's Prime Minister in March.

Palestinian security officials said a total of 180 Islamic militants have been rounded up since the arrest sweep began on Sunday. Some of the arrests were carried out overnight. In the West Bank town of Nablus, Palestinian police posted officers outside two mosques late Wednesday, checking the ID cards of worship-



Supporters of the radical Islamic group Hamas throw stones at Palestinian police during skirmishes close to the Hamas leader, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin's house in Gaza City on Thursday. — AFP

pers against a list of wanted people. No arrests were made at the mosques, but police said they found several kgs of explosives in a Nablus hideout of a Hamas militant.

Israel has complained that those detained were lower-level activists, and that the planners of attacks are still at large.

In Gaza City, police told Mr. Yassin, the Hamas leader, that he was under house arrest, barred all but his relatives from visiting him and cut his phone lines.

In response, protesters threw stones at police vans and officers on foot and set a police jeep on fire. After daybreak, officers wielding clubs and holding up shields charged forward sending the crowd running.

Both sides occasionally fired automatic weapons in the air, and witnesses said there also was a brief exchange of fire in which 21-year-old Hamas supporter, Mohammed Simi, was killed. His death was confirmed by Palestinian security officials. — AP

Arafat appeals to Bush for more time

Associated Press

WASHINGTON, Dec. 6. — Mr Yasser Arafat appealed to President George W. Bush, in a hand-delivered letter, for more time to prove he really is trying to stop terrorist violence against Israelis.

"Now is his time," the US President said yesterday.

"And other nations around the world that are interested in peace must encourage Mr Arafat, must insist that Mr Arafat use everything in his power to prevent further terrorist attacks in Israel."

Norwegian Prime Minister, Mr Kjell Magne Bondevik, who met Mr Bush yesterday told reporters he gave the President "fresh messages" from West Asia: Mr Arafat's letter plus word from Israeli Prime Minister, Mr Ariel Sharon, that Israel had ended its retaliatory strikes on Palestinian targets.

On the Palestinian leader's message to

Mr Bush, "The main message was, 'Give me a chance,'" said Mr Bondevik.

A White House official said the seven-paragraph letter addressed to Mr Bondevik asked the Norwegian leader for diplomatic assistance in halting unspecified Israeli actions.

It also asked that Mr Arafat be given "room to act" in rounding up terrorists, the official said.

The letter also asked Mr Bondevik to convey Mr Arafat's gratitude for Mr Bush's efforts toward West Asia peace. The administration in recent weeks has begun to talk openly about a Palestinian state.

Meanwhile, angry Palestinians shot machine guns in the air, threw stones at Palestinian police and fired on Jewish houses today in fierce protests against what may have been the first steps of a crackdown by Mr Arafat on Islamic militants.

More than 600 supporters of Hamas — which claimed responsibility for a deadly wave of suicide bombings in Israel last

weekend — gathered near the home of the group's founder and spiritual leader after Palestinian police put him under house arrest.

Protesters carrying guns and throwing rocks demanded the release of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, who makes frequent statements on radio and TV supporting Hamas attacks but claims he doesn't plan them. Some of the demonstrators set a car on fire and others shot their automatic weapons in the air.

The intense resistance was a hint of the trouble Mr Arafat is likely to encounter if he bends to US and Israeli demands to sharpen his crackdown on the increasingly popular militants responsible for a wave of terror attacks on Israel.

"We came to show our solidarity with our sheikh and to reflect our rejection of any thought of political detention, and to reiterate our commitment to continue the intifadah resistance, said a protester outside Sheikh Yassin's house who gave his

name only as Achmed.

Palestinian security officials said Sheikh Yassin, a quadriplegic confined to a wheelchair, would be allowed no visitors except for relatives, and his telephones would be cut off. It was Mr Arafat's boldest move yet against Hamas.

In the West Bank town of Beit Jalla, Palestinian gunmen opened fire yesterday on the nearby Jewish neighbourhood of Gilo, hitting three houses.

Such gunfire is frequent, but Palestinians said this time, it followed the arrest of a leading Palestinian militant by Mr Arafat's police.

No one was hurt in Gilo, and the Israeli military returned the fire.

Palestinian security forces said they arrested 22 militants yesterday around the West Bank and Gaza, bringing the total to 172 since the weekend.

Israel dismisses many of the arrests as meaningless, saying the suspects are mostly low-level supporters of militant groups.

not terror planners.

The Israeli foreign minister, Mr Shimon Peres, said yesterday he told Mr Arafat he should act within 12 hours to arrest 36 leaders of the militant movements.

Mr Arafat's moves follow two days of Israeli military strikes which Mr Sharon said were aimed at forcing him to take tough action against terrorists.

Retaliating for the weekend suicide bombings, Israeli war planes targeted Palestinian security and police buildings on Monday and Tuesday, and the Israeli Cabinet declared that Mr Arafat's Palestinian Authority is an "entity that supports terrorism."

Up to now, Mr Arafat has hesitated to confront Hamas and Islamic Jihad, the militant groups opposing peace with Israel, for fear of setting off a civil war.

The two groups have claimed responsibility for dozens of attacks, including suicide bombings that have killed dozens of Israelis and wounded hundreds.

Mr. Asin (11)

String of Palestine suicide strikes on Israeli cities

West Asia ⁽¹¹⁾ explodes on Bush ³⁹¹² ¹⁻⁴

Jerusalem, Dec. 2 (Agencies): Israel, a decisive factor in America's coalition against terror, plunged overnight into one of its bloodiest weekends when a Palestinian suicide bomber killed 15 people in Haifa hours after a double suicide attack blew up 10 people in Jerusalem.

The bombings, among the deadliest in Israel in years, threatened to wreck a new US peace mission, crucial for President George W. Bush to bolster Arab support for the war against terror.

Bush led the architects of the anti-terror coalition in condemning the bombings and demanding rapid action from Palestine President Yasser Arafat, whom Israel held responsible. Secretary of state Colin Powell, too, scrambled to avert a feared Israeli backlash that could tear apart Bush's alliance.

But Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who met Bush in Washington, was quoted by an aide as telling the President that "we will act against those who perpetuate terror and those who send them on their missions". Israel has called an emergency Cabinet meeting tomorrow.

Under intense pressure, Arafat's Palestinian Authority declared a state of emergency and ordered its security forces to arrest militants who had planned and carried out the attacks.

"This is a moment where the advocates for peace in the Mid-

dle East must rise up and fight terror. Chairman Arafat must do everything in his power to find those who murdered innocent Israelis and bring them to justice," Bush said minutes before meeting Sharon.

Talks between Bush and Sharon were brought forward to Sunday from Monday to enable the Prime Minister to fly home early to tackle the crisis.

The militant group, Hamas, which opposes Israel's existence, claimed responsibility for the strikes. It said they were to avenge Israel's November 23 killing of Mahmoud Abu Hanoud, a military leader regarded by Israel as a master bombmaker.

The Israeli army responded to the bombings by announcing it was tightening its blockade of the West Bank by encircling Palestinian cities it had not already surrounded.

The two almost simultaneous bombings in Jerusalem hurled victims and severed limbs through the air. Ten people were killed and 150 wounded.

It was the worst attack in Jerusalem since a suicide bomber killed 15 people in August in a pizzeria near the scene of Saturday's blasts.

Hours later, a Palestinian boarded an inter-city bus in the port city of Haifa and blew himself up. The explosion tore the roof off the bus, shattered windows and killed at least 15 people.

■ See Page 3

THE TELEGRAPH

THE TELEGRAPH

3 DEC 2001

Iran keeps all its options

THEY HAVE more reason to hate the Taliban than almost anyone else, they are allied with arguably the most competent anti-Taliban commander in the field and they have a lot to gain from the collapse of the Taliban. Yet, the Iranians, who opposed the Islamic militia since it swept to power, appear to be wavering just when a whole coalition of forces poses the biggest threat to the Taliban it has ever had to face.

There have been reports of Taliban officials travelling to Mashad for talks with Iranian officials and also about a delegation from Tehran going to Kandahar. These reports have neither been confirmed nor denied by Iranian authorities but the absence of denial or admission need not mean much. The Iranians do not bother much about reports in a Western media they believe has been consistently hostile. In any case, the machinations Iran might mount could be more effective if shrouded in mystery. The former Mujahideen commander Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, currently based in Iran, is reportedly reaching out to the Taliban and the reports that he is doing so at least partly on behalf of his hosts have not been denied either.

If the Iranians have indeed turned friendly, it would have come as a huge relief to the Taliban. Despite the Pakistan Government's claim that it has responded to U.S. requests to choke off supplies to the Taliban, supplies can still slip across the porous border with or without Islamabad's connivance. However, a supply route from Iran, especially for the oil without which no war can be fought in modern times, will be infinitely more assured and a little more secure from interdiction by U.S. warplanes.

Iran's attitude towards the Taliban is said to have changed because of its apprehension that the U.S. was keen on re-installing the former King, Mohammed Zahir Shah, after the overthrow of the Taliban. This line of analysis does not make much sense. Why should Iran worry whether a Taliban-free Afghanistan is a monarchy or a republic or some other form of Government as long as it is peaceable? The return of monarchy to Afghanistan could, say some, give rise to the demand for a return to monarchy in Iran and, a theocratic regime that overthrew the Iranian monarchy cannot tolerate even the slightest possibility of such a development.



Iran's President, Mohammed Khatami, with Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi... Teheran is yet to show its hand.

But there is hardly anyone who wants the monarchy to return to Iran. Those who speak out against the theocrats are demanding more democracy not a return to rule by the Shahs.

If Iran really had fears on this score, they would have been further reduced by the developments on the Zahir Shah front. The former King's representatives failed to turn up at the conference called by that most loyal of former mujahideen leaders, Pir Gilani. While the Northern Alliance claims it has drawn up its list of candidates for a *Loya Jirga* that might be held under the King's chairmanship at some time, there seems to be very little coordination on a daily basis between the Alliance and the King. A long-standing incompatibility between those Afghans who have actually done the fighting for the last 20 years and the "Gucci Muj" — reportedly busy right now vying for seats at a Luciano Pavarotti concert — does not appear to have been bridged in the least.

What does really worry Iran — that faces U.S. allies on its south-western and north-western flanks — is the prospect that America might become entrenched in a post-Taliban Afghanistan. It does not, therefore, want a very pro-Western Pashtun element — whether the King or groups like

Iran's current moves appear directed to ensure that the dominant Pashtun element in a post-Taliban Afghanistan is nationalistic and not subservient to the U.S., writes Kesava Menon.

his — to become the dominant force in the neighbouring country. At the same time, Teheran has been clear — and it had recognised this earlier and more clearly than almost anyone else — that there can be no stable Government in Kabul without a strong Pashtun element.

Iran's moves currently appear directed to ensure that the Pashtun element which becomes dominant is nationalistic and not subservient to the U.S.

That Iran's current moves are purely tactical, and do not represent a strategic repudiation of the Northern Alliance, is apparent from the fact that it continues to provide material assistance to the Alliance. Not much news is coming out of western Afghanistan these days but Ismail Khan, for-

mer Governor of Herat, was the first to gain significant chunks of territory from the Taliban.

Another question is whether Iran's current moves are not connected with its overall diplomatic objectives? It is very difficult to deny that the current developments have provided Iran with an opportunity to further whittle away at its estrangement from the U.S.

There have been reports that Iranian authorities have told Western diplomats in closed sessions that they agree with the war goal of removing the Taliban from power and that public rhetoric to the contrary should be ignored.

Iran, in an unprecedented move, has offered the use of its air space for missions that might be mounted to search and rescue downed U.S. airmen. At the end of this week, Iran also declared that it was re-calling military advisers sent to help Muslim warriors in places as diverse as Kosovo and Lebanon.

Next week, the Iranian President, Syed Mohammed Khatami, will be addressing the U.N. General Assembly.

It is not the Iranian style to make dramatic political announcements but Mr. Khatami's speech will still be noted with interest.

11 NOV 2001

11 NOV 2001

WEST ASIA / 'MILITANTS PLANNING ATTACK'

Israeli Ministers shifted from homes

W Asia
JERUSALEM, NOV. 9. Two Israeli Cabinet Ministers and their families have left their homes after security services told them of plans by Palestinian militants to attack them, officials said on Friday.

The precautions followed the Oct. 17 assassination of the Tourism Minister, Rehavam Zeevi, by militants from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, in revenge for Israel's killing of the PFLP leader, Mustafa Zibri.

In violence on Friday, Palestinians opened fire on an Israeli vehicle in the West Bank, killing an Israeli woman, settlers and the military said. The attack took place near the Palestinian town of Jenin in the northern part of the West Bank, the military said. The car overturned after it was hit by bullets.

The Minister without portfolio, Mr. Dan Naveh, his wife and two small children left their recently completed home in the village of Shoham in central Israel, said a neighbour, the Member of Parliament, Mr. Mossi Raz. Shoham is a new community near Israel's international airport and 5 km from the West Bank.

Media reports said the Health

Minister, Mr. Nissim Dahan, was told to leave his house on weekends, because of intelligence about a possible attack. He lives in Hashmonaim, an Israeli settlement just inside the West Bank. Security experts said the precautions were almost unprecedented. Several months ago, the Cabinet Minister, Mr. Avigdor Lieberman, who lives in a West Bank settlement, was spirited out in a military helicopter after intelligence reports that he was about to be attacked.

Mr. Gideon Ezra, a Member of Parliament and former deputy head of the Shin Bet, said asking Mr. Naveh and his family to leave their home was "an unusual occurrence."

Meanwhile, roadblocks remained in place near cities in Israel's north, close to the West Bank, though police foiled an apparent suicide bombing early on Thursday. Police would not comment about the alert, but Israel Radio said security services had intelligence reports about a suicide bomber about to leave the Palestinian town of Jenin, at the northern end of the West Bank.

Israeli forces still hold parts of

10-18
10/11
Jenin and nearby Tulkarem, two of six West Bank towns Israel seized after the Zeevi assassination. Over the past week, Israeli troops have pulled out of four towns. However, the withdrawal from Jenin and Tulkarem was apparently being delayed because of intelligence reports about possible attacks.

Telegraph reports:

The United States was putting the final touches on a limited West Asia peace initiative after the British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair, and the U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush, held a long one-to-one council of war to discuss military and diplomatic strategy. U.S. officials said the peace plan, the first by the Bush administration after the failure of the intense mediation effort by the former President, Mr. Bill Clinton, could be unveiled in the coming days by the U.S. Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell.

But in a sign that the details and timing are still under review, Ms Condoleezza Rice, the U.S. National Security Advisor, warned the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, that he was not doing enough to halt violence.

THE HINDU

10 NOV 2001

Targeted killings in self-defence: Peres

PARIS, NOV. 8. The Israeli Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, told French lawmakers on Wednesday that his country's policy of targeted killings of Palestinian militants suspected in terror operations was a necessary act of self-defence. He said the policy was needed to face "a completely new phenomenon" — the suicide attacker.

"The only option is to eliminate him before he acts," Mr. Peres said. "When he starts to act, it is already too late." Palestinians charge that the so-called targeted operations are assassinations, sometimes of political leaders. Mr. Peres, speaking to the French Parliament's Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee ahead of a meeting with the President, Mr. Jacques Chirac, also said he does not believe the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, will use the upcoming U.N. General Assembly debate as a forum to declare an independent State.

Mr. Peres was responding to a news report that Mr. Arafat was considering making the declaration at the annual U.N. debate, which starts over the weekend. "This would be a declaration without territory," Mr. Peres said, because the borders of an eventual Palestinian State have not been defined. "A State without borders is no better than territories without a State," he said.

The Palestinian Information Minister, Mr. Yasser Abed Rabbo, said the report, published on Tuesday in the London-based Arabic-language newspaper Al-Hayat, was false. Mr. Peres has confirmed that he is working on a new peace initiative with the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon. After a meeting with Mr. Chirac, Mr. Peres said the main obstacle to relaunching the peace process was one of "credibility" of the Palestinians.

"They have made good statements, promised important things, but when you get to the concrete things, we are met each time with much difficulty," Mr. Peres told reporters.



TARGET PRACTICE?: An Israeli soldier raises his weapon as a Palestinian woman pulls her children in the divided West Bank city of Hebron recently. — Reuters

"The biggest problem we (Israelis) have is the credibility of the Palestinians." Mr. Sharon said this week that Israeli forces had killed 15 militants in targeted operations during its incursion into parts of six Palestinian towns, as well as 42 in clashes.

The incursion came after the October 17 assassination of the Tourism Minister, Mr. Rehavam Zeevi.

Meanwhile, a Palestinian suicide bomber detonated explosives today as an elite anti-terrorist unit closed in on his hideout in a West Bank village, police said. The assailant was killed and two Israeli commandos were hurt.

The Israeli Defence Minister, Mr. Binyamin Ben-eliezer, said he expected the conflict with the Palestinians to escalate and predicted an increase in attacks on Israelis. Mr. Ben-eliezer warned of a possible attack with non-conventional means, including anthrax.

Today's blast went off in the village of Baka al-Sharkiyeh, along the invisible line between Israel and the West Bank. Security forces in central and northern Israel had been on high alert since yesterday, after receiving warnings that a Palestinian militant was en route to Israel, with plans to carry out a suicide bombing. — AP

WEST ASIA

Pak nuclear arsenal in safe hands: Rumsfeld

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, November 5

US DEFENCE Secretary Donald Rumsfeld used his whistlestop India tour to reiterate that the fight against terrorism was a global one. He also claimed a "vast improvement" in the airstrikes against the Taliban. The bombing, he said, was now being guided by ground forces inside Afghanistan, and he hoped that the military campaign would take the least possible time.

Addressing a joint press conference with Defence Minister George Fernandes on Monday morning, Rumsfeld said the US would go after terrorist networks wherever they existed after the campaign in Afghanistan was over. "This fight is much bigger than Afghanistan. Afghanistan happens to be the first problem because of the al-Qaeda network there. It has to be stopped before it kills thousands more," the US Defence Secretary said.

Referring to US President George W Bush's "unambiguous" line, Rumsfeld promised that the US "will pursue terrorist networks wherever we find them", once the campaign in Afghanistan ended.

Asked if the issue of terrorist training camps in Pakistan came up during the 90-minute discussion with the Indian side, including a 20-minute one-on-one with Fernandes, Rumsfeld said, "We talked of terrorism in a broader sense. We talked of terrorism that affected both our countries, the concerns we share and the importance of dealing with this problem."

Addressing concerns about Pakistan's nuclear arsenal falling into jihadi hands, he expressed the belief that these were in safe hands. "Countries



DONALD RUMSFELD

with nuclear weapons have a healthy respect for the power (these weapons confer) and take appropriate steps to ensure that they are handled in a way that reflects the danger they pose," the US Defence Secretary, who arrived in New Delhi from Islamabad last night, said. He is on a whirlwind five-nation tour.

Rumsfeld disclosed the presence of a large number of US ground troops in Afghanistan. Responding to a query about Fernandes' scepticism about US

tactics, he said that the "effectiveness of bombing has vastly improved". "There are large number of teams on the ground assisting with targetting and humanitarian activity," he said. He hoped that the campaign would take the "least possible time".

On his reservations about US tactics expressed to a German publication, Fernandes said, "Military tactics should be left to military persons. We should accept what's happening."

Rumsfeld ducked a query on the continuing US military sanctions against India. "Sanctions related to nuclear or missile technology is something for the US Department of State and the Government of India to discuss," he said.

Echoing Fernandes' sentiment for building a strategic relationship, Rumsfeld announced that the US Pacific Command chief Admiral Dennis Blair and Under Secretary of Defence Douglas Feith would visit India soon to discuss linkages for a strong military-to-military cooperation.

Vajpayee calls for global front against religious terrorism

PRIME MINISTER Atal Bihari Vajpayee today said that religious terrorism has emerged as the "new menace" and the "main danger" to peace, stability and the civilised world order in the new century and called for the fight against it on the basis of "widest possible" international cooperation.

In Russia on the second day of his three-nation tour to focus on the global campaign against the scourge, he spoke to a group of intellectuals and ideologists saying the September 11 terrorist attacks on the US have highlighted the evil face of this new menace.

Recalling that the world grappled with the momentous issues and developments in the 20th century, the Prime Minister said that recent events have starkly shown that the beginning of this century has witnessed emergence of terrorism as the main danger to peace, stability and civilised world order. **Agencies**

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Sharon, Peres discuss peace plan

JERUSALEM, NOV. 6. In a new hint of momentum to break the stalemate with the Palestinians, the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon and his moderate Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, are holding discussions on a peace plan, officials said on Tuesday.

The initiative came amid new violence on Tuesday: Palestinian gunmen and Israeli soldiers clashed south of the West Bank town of Nablus, and three Palestinians were killed and an Israeli soldier was wounded, the army said. In a bid to end 14 months of violence, Mr. Sharon and Mr. Peres have met once and plan another session on Friday to discuss the new peace initiative, but differences remain between the two, Mr. Sharon's spokesman, Mr. Raanan Gissin said.

Mr. Peres acknowledged last week that he was working on a new peace plan. Israeli news reports said at the time it called for a Palestinian State and the dismantling of Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip, where about 7,000 Israelis live amid more than a million Palestinians.— AP



The Israeli Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres (left) glances at the Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat (seated right) as he passes behind him at the beginning of the Euromed conference in Brussels on Tuesday. It was the second time in one week that the two sat at the same conference table. — AFP

THE HINDU

7 NOV 2001

Peres moots limited evacuation

Jerusalem, November 2

ISRAELI FOREIGN Minister Shimon Peres said in an interview today that Israel should evacuate some Jewish settlements and conduct peace talks with the Palestinians even as violence rages.

Peres' remarks contrast sharply with the views of his coalition Government partner, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. They were published by the *Maariv* newspaper before Peres' expected meeting with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat in Spain this weekend.

Peres was asked whether he would evacuate some Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, where Palestinians are waging a 13-month-old uprising against occupation.

Peres did not specify which settlements he would empty. "Sharon thinks every settlement is important. I think the map of settlements makes things difficult for Israel and prevents it from drawing a map of security and peace," Peres said.

The Jewish settlements were built on land Israel captured in the 1967 Middle East War and are regarded as illegal by the international community. Palestinians have often targeted them in their uprising aimed at establishing an independent state. Sharon has also made a renewal of peace talks conditional to end the uprising, which flared in



British Prime Minister Tony Blair gestures during a meeting with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat in Gaza City on Thursday.

AFP PHOTO

September 2000.

"If I was Prime Minister, we would be in a much better position," Peres told *Maariv*. "I would conduct peace talks under fire ... because you can't stop the

fire with fire alone."

Despite right-wing criticism, Sharon has given his approval for Peres to travel to an economic conference on the Spanish island of Majorca set for Friday and

Saturday.

Peres said he would not negotiate with Arafat, but would meet him. They were due to participate in a panel discussion at the conference on Saturday. The two

architects of interim Israeli-Palestinian peace deals last met on September 26 to reaffirm a US-backed truce-to-talks plan which has not taken hold.

Reuters

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

3 NOV 2001

WEST ASIA / MILITANT GROUP THREATENS REVENGE

Israeli missile kills top Hamas leader

NABLUS (WEST BANK), NOV. 24. An Israeli helicopter fired two missiles at a van in the West Bank on Friday, killing a leader of the Islamic militant Hamas group and two other activists, Palestinians and Israel army radio said. The Israeli military refused to comment.

A total of seven Palestinians were killed on Friday, making it the single bloodiest day since October 26 when 10 died in clashes with the Israeli military. The rocket attack killed the man Israel considers the most wanted Palestinian in the West Bank, Mahmoud Abu Hanoud, head of the military wing of Hamas, officials said.

Hamas had earlier denied that Abu Hanoud was caught in the raid, but later reversed its position and declared three days of mourning, while calling for a general strike throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip on Saturday as a mark of protest. Hamas also threatened bloody revenge. "Revenge for our martyrs is something related to our military wing, but we hope that the answer and the tough reaction will come soon for this ugly crime," said Abdel Aziz Rantisi, a Hamas leader in the Gaza Strip.

Palestinian hospital officials, however, said they had not yet been able to make a positive identification of body parts found near Abu Hanoud's burnt-out van, hit as it travelled on a deserted road in the northern West Bank. Two other corpses were identified as belonging to the Hamas leader's deputy, Ayman Hashaykah, and Hashaykah's brother, a lower-ranking Hamas activist.

Prior to the incident, Israeli security forces went on alert after receiving an intelligence warning that three armed Palestinians were on their way to carry out an attack inside Israel, Israeli security sources said. It was not known if the alert and the attack on the Hamas trio were connected. A 15-year-old Palestinian was shot dead by troops dispersing stone throwers in the Gaza Strip refugee camp of Khan Younis where a day earlier five boys had been killed by what Palestinian police said was a bomb planted by Israeli forces. There were growing demands in Israel that the military make swift disclosure of its investigation into the deaths. Also in Gaza, a Palestinian taxi driver was killed and three of his seven passengers were wounded when the vehicle came under Israel fire. Two of the wounded were



Palestinians inspect the remains of the car that carried the Hamas leader, Mr. Mahmoud Abu Hanoud, near the West Bank town of Nablus on Saturday. (Inset Hanoud). — AFP

critically hurt with head injuries, doctors said.

The Palestinian Cabinet Secretary, Mr. Ahmed Abdel Rahman said the killing of the Hamas activists just a day after the deaths of the Gaza schoolchildren, suggested a deliberate attempt by the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon to sabotage a new American push to calm the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. "I think he wants to make the American effort fail and it is an attempt to push the Palestinians to react," he said.

In recent months, Israel has killed some 50 militants it suspected of involvement in bombing and shooting attacks on Israelis. More than a dozen bystanders have also died in such targeted killings. The United States has condemned the practice.

In the Gaza Strip, thousands joined the funeral procession for the five boys killed in

Thursday's blast. The victims ranged in age from seven to 14 and all members of the same clan. After the funeral, about 200 Palestinians marched toward the nearby Jewish settlement of Neve Dekalim, throwing stones at the fence. Israeli troops fired stun grenades and live rounds, killing a 15-year-old boy, doctors said. The army said it fired warning shots in the air, and did not see anyone being hit.

Two U.S. mediators, the Assistant Secretary of State, Mr. William Burns and retired Marine Corps, Gen. Anthony Zinni, are to arrive in the region next week. They are to press the two sides to implement accords already agreed on — a truce negotiated last May by the CIA director, Mr. George Tenet, and the April report of an international commission headed by the former U.S. Senator, Mr. George Mitchell, with a formula for restarting peace talks. — AP

SEE VIDEO

25 NOV 2001

A NEW CALL FOR WEST ASIA PEACE

A CANDID ADVOCACY of a "viable Palestinian state" may have enhanced the credentials of the U.S. as a self-styled honest broker in West Asia at this psychologically salient moment. America's ongoing military offensive in Afghanistan has already accentuated Washington's dilemma in regard to the Muslim world in general and the Arab bloc in particular. Washington is keen on avoiding any political backlash from the Arabs in the parallel context of the American manhunt for Osama bin Laden, the identified wizard of terror. It is not that Osama is a folk hero among the Arab masses despite his undoubted sway over the minds and hearts of many among them with an anti-West disposition. However, conspicuous indeed is the Bush administration's cultivated sense of compulsion to woo the Arabs for the fear of sending out a wrong racist-religious signal to them about America's real intentions in seeking to break the Taliban-Osama axis in Afghanistan. Quick in sensing Washington's desire to keep the Arab leaders and people in good humour, Israel lashed out against the U.S. soon after its anti-Osama offensive began last month. Israel then sought to caution the Bush administration against lurching towards a possible "appeasement" of the Muslim world. The Jewish state even angered Washington by reminding it about Neville Chamberlain's historically infamous appeasement of the European fascism and ultra-nationalism of a bygone era. It is in this contemporary setting of the American options for friendly ties with the Islamic universe that the U.S. Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell, has now floated a measured initiative of calling for peace between the main warring parties in West Asia — Israel and the Palestinians.

The U.S. is planning to depute emissaries to the region to defuse the current tensions so that

a fresh peace initiative, not so novel in its details though, may have an even chance of being put to the test by the parties concerned. This being the first major effort by the U.S. in this regard in the new globalised milieu of a 'campaign' against terror, Gen. Powell has exercised sufficient care to speak on the issues at stake in the new moralist idiom of stark choices. Addressing the Palestinians, he called upon them to stop the anti-Israel "violence" and "terror" so that the Jewish state can live "free from terror as well as war". His message to Israel is that it should put an end to its "occupation" of the Palestinian territories by giving up the policy of "settlements" as also the other controversial practices.

Now, there is no dearth of basic principles that might serve as guidelines for a solution in the present situation. Yet, Gen. Powell has done well to remind Israel and the Palestinians of two critical fundamentals without which a workable peace settlement is unthinkable. The Jewish state has been asked to bear in mind the need for a "viable" Palestinian state, while the Palestinians are being told of the importance of a solution based on the idea of "secure" and recognised borders on both sides. Urging a forward movement towards the long delayed "final status" negotiations, the U.S. is keeping in constant focus the need for some preliminaries such as a truce as also a cool-off period and confidence-building measures. In all, the U.S. is equally eager to reassure the Palestinians that they are not being hustled towards a fast-track peace process. Debatable, however, is whether Washington's new sense of urgency is not designed to debunk Osama's arguments about the alleged American neglect of the Palestinian cause.

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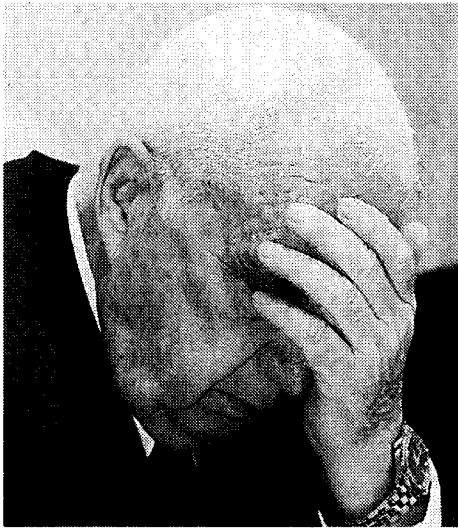
Peres preparing for new initiative

HD-16

JERUSALEM, OCT. 30. In a sign of a possible rift within the Israeli Government, the Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, was preparing an independent initiative aimed at breaking the deadlock with the Palestinians, an aide and reports said on Tuesday.

The Israeli newspaper *Maariv* said the plan, to be presented in coming days, includes a pullout from all of Gaza and the dismantling of Israel's settlements there — an idea that in the past has been opposed by the Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon. In Gaza, unrest continued, meanwhile, with Palestinians firing several mortar rounds into a Jewish settlement early on Tuesday and Israeli troops briefly entering Palestinian-controlled territory in search of the source of fire. The Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, on Tuesday called on Mr. Sharon to return to peace talks. "I call on Sharon to go back to the negotiating table," said Mr. Arafat, who was in Rome on an official visit. "Let's go back to implementing the accords, let's go back to saving the peace process with no conditioning, no military pressures."

Israeli and Palestinian security commanders failed on Monday to set a new timetable for Israel's pullout from occupied areas of four West Bank towns, with Israel demanding the Palestinians arrest more militants before it



BENT HEAD, RISING CONCERNS: The Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, rests his head in his hand during a meeting of his Likud party faction in the Knesset (Parliament) in Jerusalem on Monday. — AP

withdraws. Israel has killed 38 Palestinians, including civilians, in the assault which began

after the assassination two weeks ago of the ultranationalist Israeli Cabinet minister Rehavam Zeevi. The radical Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine claimed the killing a revenge for its own leader's Aug. 27 killing by Israel.

Israeli forces arrested scores of militants but failed to net Zeevi's killers in the operations, which have been strongly opposed by the United States which is concerned that the fighting here could endanger the brittle support among moderate Arabs for its operation against Osama bin Laden and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Despite the U.S. pressure, no agreement was reached at a meeting of Israeli and Palestinian security officials in Tel Aviv on Monday for Israel's withdrawal from the areas of Tulkarem, Qalqilya, Ramallah and Jenin that it has occupied. The meeting came hours after Israel completed its withdrawal from areas of the Biblical town of Bethlehem and adjacent Beit Jalla.

There has been growing tension between Mr. Sharon and members of Mr. Peres' moderate Labor Party over the incursions in the West Bank, Israel's widest military operations in 13 months of Israeli-Palestinian fighting that have killed 730 people on the Palestinian side and 191 on the Israeli side.

THE HINDU

3 1 OCT 2001

Israel begins pull-back from Palestinian village

W Annan
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JERUSALEM: Israeli troops withdrew early on Thursday from a Palestinian village taken over a day earlier as Prime Minister Ariel Sharon called high-level consultations to consider a further pull-back from West Bank areas occupied last week.

In renewed violence on Thursday, a Palestinian police officer was killed in an exchange of fire in Bethlehem, Palestinians said. The Israeli military said soldiers fired at armed Palestinians.

There was heavy gunfire through the night in the town, with Israeli tanks positioned a few km from the Church of the Nativity, marking the traditional birthplace of Jesus.

In Tulkarem, Israeli soldiers advanced from their positions on the outskirts and surrounded the Palestinian governor's house, firing rifles and machine guns, Palestinians said. No one was hurt.

The Israeli military refused to comment on its operation. The sweep through the West Bank village of Beit Rima on Wednesday sparked a gunbattle and left five Palestinians dead, according to villagers. They said three others who were taken to an Israeli hospital also died, but hospital officials said one was seriously wounded and the other two lightly wounded.

The five dead were Palestinian policemen at a checkpoint at the entrance to the vil-

lage, witnesses said.

The Israeli army said soldiers arrested Palestinians suspected of involvement in the assassination of Israeli tourism minister Rehavam Zeevi.

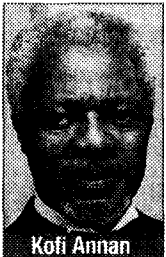
Israeli troops pulled out of Beit Rima early Thursday after operating to "prevent further terror attacks on Israeli civilians and to root out the infrastructure of terror," the army said in a statement. Palestinian security officials confirmed the withdrawal.

On Wednesday, Powell renewed a demand on Israel to withdraw "immediately" from the West Bank towns. The call was echoed by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the U.N. West Asia envoy Terje Roed-Larsen.

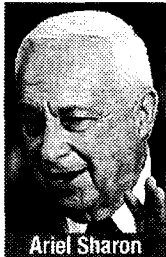
The Palestinian cabinet called the Israeli sweep in the village of Beit Rima an "ugly massacre" and declared a day of mourning Thursday, ordering public and private institutions to close for the day and flags to be flown at half-mast.

The dead and wounded, as well as 11 people who were arrested, belonged to militant Palestinian groups, the Israeli military said.

Ben-Eliezer said the brother of the gunman who killed Zeevi was captured in the Beit Rima raid. The purpose of the operation was to "bring about the arrest of these murderers," he said. (AP)



Kofi Annan



Ariel Sharon

THE TIMES OF INDIA

26 OCT 2001

Sharon defies US, refuses to withdraw troops

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Jerusalem, October 23

PRIME MINISTER Ariel Sharon on Tuesday defied pressure from the United States and his own coalition partners to end Israel's biggest military offensive against the Palestinian Authority.

Sharon brushed off a US demand that Israel immediately withdraw troops deployed in or around most cities in the Palestinian-ruled West Bank after a far-right Israeli Cabinet minister was assassinated last Wednesday.

The US is anxious to end over a year of Israeli-Palestinian fighting as it seeks to bolster Arab and Islamic support for its military strikes in Afghanistan.

Yet tensions rose further when Palestinians blamed Israel for the explosion of a booby-trapped car in the West Bank city of Nablus on Monday night that killed a Palestinian militant accused of being behind a series of deadly suicide bombings.

"Israel does not plan to take control of (Palestinian-ruled) areas, but the murder of Tourism Minister Rehavam Zeevi crossed a red line and Israel, like any democratic country, is fulfilling its right to self-defense," Sharon's office said in a statement late on Monday.

Gunbattles raged overnight where Israeli forces remained, particularly in Bethlehem. In the West Bank town of Qalqiliya, Israeli tanks and bulldozers raided part of the city overnight, destroying a Palestinian security force installation and the house of a suicide bomber who killed 21 people in Tel Aviv in June.

Palestinian officials said a 13-year-old youth died of wounds inflicted in violence in Qalqiliya on Monday.

At the UN, the Palestinian delegate to the UN called for the Security Council to demand Israel withdraw its forces from areas taken in the past five days.

US officials initially reacted to the raid by saying they hoped the military operation would not be lengthy. But in unusually strong language aimed at one of America's staunchest allies, Washington ratcheted up its criticism five days into the offensive.

"Israeli defence forces should be withdrawn immediately from all Palestinian-controlled areas and no such incursions should be made," State Department spokesman Philip Reeker said.

Sharon reiterated his demand that the Palestinian Authority "hand over cabinet minister Zeevi's murderers and those who sent them, fight terror organisations and dismantle them."

Israeli diplomatic sources said the army would remain in its current positions to prevent attacks by Palestinian militants amid "severe warnings" of imminent assaults.

Sharon came under domestic pressure from the Labour Party which said it would consider pulling out of his government if the offensive against the Palestinian Authority continued.

The State Department called on the Palestinian Authority "to do all in its power to halt violence and terror," adding that failure to do so "is absolutely unacceptable." **Reuters**

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

24 OCT 2001

Pullout pressure on Israel as Arafat bans Zeevi killers

W. Arafat
 Jerusalem, October 22
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AP PHOTO
 A Palestinian gunman shoots at Israeli forces in the West Bank town of Bethlehem on Monday.

PALESTINE, UNDER huge military pressure, yesterday outlawed the militant group that assassinated Israel Cabinet Minister Rehavam Ze'evi last week. The group was blamed for giving Israel a pretext to deploy tank and troops in and around six of its main autonomous towns.

Pressure was also mounting on Israel, with the Labour Party, the single largest formation in Right-wing Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's National Unity coalition, expressing unease at the scale of the military operation sparked by Ze'evi's killing.

Israeli tanks escorted armoured bulldozers into Ramallah, razing a building of Arafat's special force 17 guards and destroying caravans housing guards of the PLO's no 2 Mahmud Abbas, alias Abu Mazen, security officials said. Israel in turn accused Palestinians of using churchyards in Bethlehem to shell Israeli positions. Christian churches in Jerusalem however blamed Israel on Saturday, and called on the international community to urge it to end its incursions. "Tanks are everywhere, buildings



ARIEL SHARON

have been besieged; some areas are under curfew and there is extensive shooting," the heads of churches in Jerusalem said.

Sharon and his Defence Minister Binyamin Ben Eliezer have said the aim of the sweeping raids and lock-down on the 6 towns is not to dismantle the Palestinian authority but to twist its arm into acting against extremists.

Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Colin Powell said he was assured by Israeli PM Ariel Sharon that Israeli troops would soon withdraw from Palestinian territories. "Hopefully the Israelis will be able to leave the territory that they have occupied recently," Israeli Foreign Minister Shi-

PALESTINIAN SHOT DEAD

A PALESTINIAN fired on Israelis in west Jerusalem on Tuesday, injuring four before being shot dead by an Israeli soldier, police said. The man pulled out a pistol in the commercial and industrial area of Talpoteh, opening fire before being shot. *AFP, Jerusalem*

mon Peres assured that Israel did not intend to remain in West Bank areas under Palestinian control. Peres, in Washington for talks with Powell and other officials, said yesterday "Our interest is to help the Palestinian people gain their independence."

But Peres mixed his usual dovish stance with a call on Arafat to arrest the members of the militant group responsible for killing Ze'evi and hand them over to Israel for prosecution. Arafat could never achieve his destiny if he did not act against terrorists. "You cannot fight terror just with words," Peres said in a speech last night to a national meeting of the American Jewish Congress. *AFP/AP*

THE FINESSTAIN

Israel takes 2 more towns

Jerusalem, October 20

ISRAELI TROOPS entered two more West Bank towns on Saturday and killed four Palestinians in gun battles in what is emerging as the broadest Israeli military operation in more than a year of fighting.

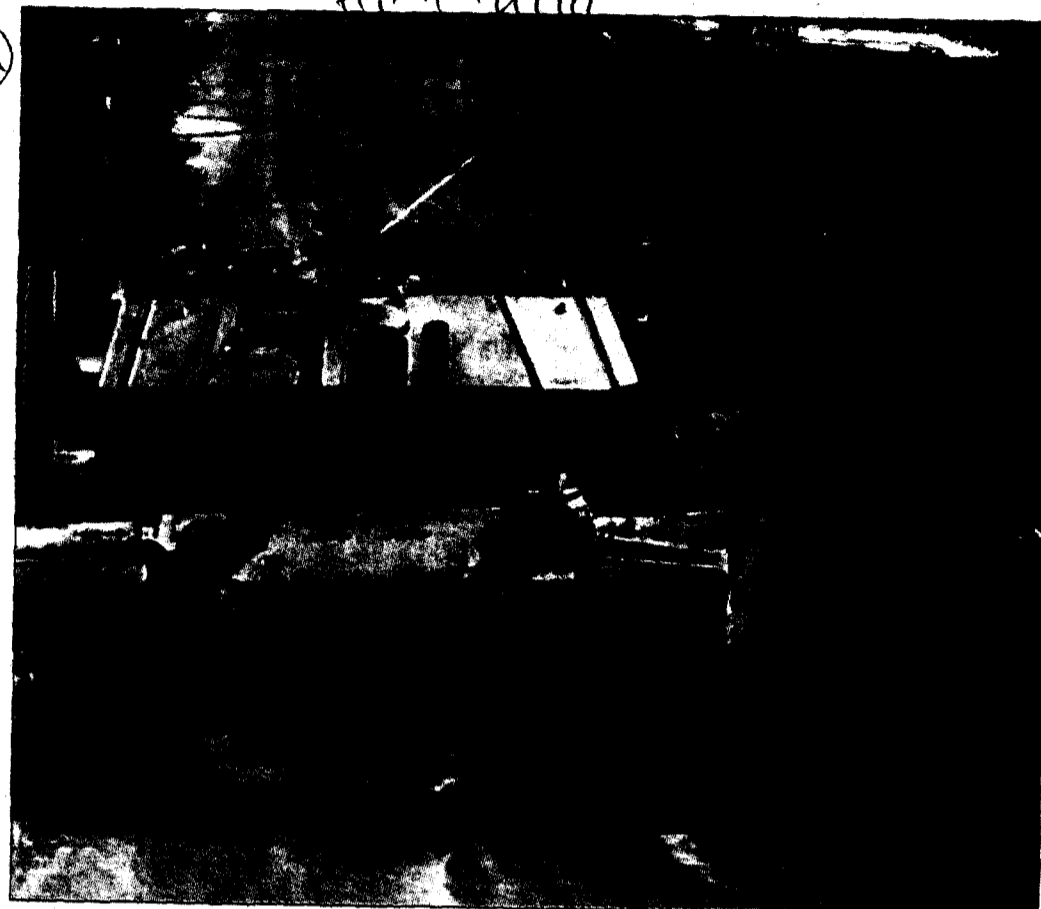
The incursions — six in three days — were triggered by the assassination of an Israeli Cabinet minister by Palestinian militants earlier this week.

The US State Department said on Friday that the Israeli incursions "complicate the situation and should be halted." The escalation threatens Washington's efforts to retain Arab and Muslim support for military action against Islamic militants suspected of having masterminded the September 11 terror attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The US is courting moderate Arab states and fears Israel-Palestinian violence could interfere.

At about 3 am on Saturday, Israeli tanks entered the towns of Qalqilya and Tulkarem in the northern West Bank. Troops were met by Palestinian fire, and four Palestinians were killed in the fighting, doctors said.

In Qalqilya, Israeli soldiers took over the two-story police headquarters, which Palestinian officers had left before the incursion, Palestinian security officials said. Troops also seized the rooftops of four homes and set up positions there.

In the fighting, a Palestinian policeman and an activist in the Islamic militant group Hamas were killed, doctors said. Israeli soldiers arrested five activists Hamas activists, including four brothers of a man who had carried out a suicide bombing in Israel in 1994, Palestinian officials said. Two members of Force 17, a Palestinian security



An Israeli tank crushes a car under its tracks in the West Bank town of Beit Jala on Saturday.

service, were also detained.

In nearby Tulkarem, Israeli tanks shelled a Palestinian police outpost, killing two policemen, Palestinian security sources said. Troops seized the rooftops of five homes and set up positions. The Israeli army confirmed the incursions, and said they were launched to protect Israeli citizens.

Israeli Justice Minister Meir Sheerit said Israel had no intention of holding on to Palestinian territory but had to "stop Palestinian attacks against Israel."

In addition to Qalqilya and Tulkarem, Israeli troops have entered and sealed the towns of Ramallah, Jenin, Bethlehem and Beit Jalla since Thursday. Palestinians are barred from entering or leaving those communities.

Israeli troops have repeatedly entered Palestinian towns in the past year, but the series of raids launched on Thursday marked the broadest Israeli military strike so far. It was apparently aimed at pressuring the Palestinian Authority to arrest and

extradite the killers of Israeli Tourism Minister Rehavam Zeevi, who was shot Wednesday in a Jerusalem hotel. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a radical PLO faction, has claimed responsibility, saying it assassinated Zeevi, an ultranationalist, to avenge its own leader, Mustafa Zibri, who was killed in a targeted Israeli rocket attack in August.

The Palestinian Authority has said it will try to track down the suspects, but will not extradite them.

AP

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

21 OCT 2001

Will they turn it down?

W Asia
(W)
HC-17

TILL the assassination on October 18 of Israel's Tourism Minister, Rehavam Ze'evi, it could have been said that the overall impact on the West Asian situation of the global political processes set off in connection with the U.S. military strikes in Afghanistan was positive. The Israelis and Palestinians had resumed security talks, Israeli forces were pulling out of two Palestinian towns and Israel's Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, was also talking about the possibility of a Palestinian state. With Ze'evi's assassination, the West Asian wheel seemed to have spun out of control once again but the global stakes are so high that the odds are that the situation

2/10

hand over Ze'evi's killers. Considering that Ze'evi was the first Israeli official of Cabinet rank to have been killed by Palestinians and against a backdrop where Israeli retaliation has tended to the excessive, this was a mild response.

It is unseemly to talk ill of the dead, but among the Israeli

The pressure on the Palestinians and the Israelis to keep matters under control is stronger than ever, writes Kesava Menon.

that Israeli Arabs — including presumably the Bedouin among them who have served in the Israel military — be likewise transferred to east of the Jordan river. Ze'evi's assassination followed two instances, in successive days, wherein Israel revived its policy of assassinating wanted Palestinians by killing Hamas activists. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, which claimed responsibility for Ze'evi's murder, said it was in retaliation for the killing of its leader, Abu Ali Mustafa, in August. Unlike in the past, the Palestinian Authority did not react to the murder of the Hamas activists by breaking off political contacts with Israel, and issued a swift

running against Israel. He had seen that the U.S., in trying to build a global coalition against terrorism, was considering linking up with Iran and Syria — two states Israel accuses of abetting terrorist activities against it.

Like his counterparts in India, Mr. Sharon has been worried that in its pre-occupation with the brand of terrorism represented by Osama bin Laden, Washington would ignore other forms of the menace. That had induced remarks about how the West was dealing with the current circumstances in much the same manner as Britain had dealt with Hitler in signing the Munich Pact. This remark was withdrawn after a severe reprimand from the White House. The brusque dismissal of Mr. Sharon's concerns was accompanied by the dawning realisation in Israel that even the much-vaunted clout of its lobby was not going to sway the U.S. from its obsession with Osama. Further confirmation came when the British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair, standing next to Mr. Arafat, declared that the vision of a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict had the full approval of the international community.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Authority had ensured a drastic scaling down of the violence from its side and resumed talks at the level of officials concerned with security matters. Taken together with the U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush's earlier statement that a Palestinian state was part of his administration's vision, there was a clear trend that renewed efforts for a final deal would be launched once the anti-Osama campaign was completed.

The entire Palestinian leadership, like most of the Arab world, firmly believes that Osama has nothing to do with the Palestinian cause and has only sought to hijack it. There is also a consensus in the entire non-Israeli West Asia that a just solution to the Palestinian cause is an absolute prerequisite if the angst and anger that feeds the Osama phenomenon is to be overcome. That view now appears to have taken hold in the West as well.

In these circumstances, the pressure on the Palestinians and Israel to keep matters under control and moving forward to a more durable truce and then, if possible, towards peace is stronger than ever.



DEEPSEATED RAGE: Palestinians at a refugee camp in Gaza.

will be contained.

The last opinion would appear a foolhardy prediction given the vast scope for unpredictability in the region. But the clearest indication that regional players were being pressured to not let the situation spin out of control was provided by the relatively mild Israeli response. Instead of sending F-16s and helicopter-gunships swooping over Palestinian towns or immediately bumping off a couple of Palestinian politicians in retaliation, Israel satisfied itself (at least initially) with demanding that the Palestinian Authority identify, arrest and

politicians who have done the utmost to provoke Arabs, the 75-year-old Ze'evi had good claim to be among the foremost. Those who eulogised Ze'evi at his state funeral — including Mr. Sharon and the President, Mr. Moshe Katsav — spoke of his knowledge of Jewish history and his commitment to his people and the land. But Ze'evi's vision did not appear to include any humane sentiment for the people who lived on the land for centuries before Israel was created. He had advocated expelling the entire Palestinian population from the occupied territories. Ze'evi also advocated

condemnation of Ze'evi's assassination. But Mr. Sharon quickly sought to pin the Palestinian Authority and its leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, to the mat by saying the Rais bore personal responsibility for the murder. He also ordered a halt to political contacts with the Palestinians and sent his tanks back into Ramallah, a process that resulted in the death of two including a seven-year-old child.

Besides his natural proclivity for an aggressive response, Mr. Sharon probably calculated that Ze'evi's murder provided the opportunity to reverse a tide in international affairs that was

Yasser Arafat declares emergency

4/12

JERUSALEM, DEC. 3. The Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, held emergency consultations with key Cabinet Ministers on Monday to decide on Israel's response to weekend suicide bombings by Palestinian militants, while Mr. Yasser Arafat's security forces rounded up 110 Hamas and Islamic Jihad activists in the biggest sweep in five years.

In response to the attacks in Israel, Mr. Arafat declared a state of emergency in the Palestinian areas. A Palestinian security official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Mr. Arafat had given orders to confiscate illegal weapons. Those speaking out against ceasefire efforts would be muzzled, the official said.

Mr. Sharon is under growing pressure from his right-wing constituents and members of his Likud party to expel Mr. Arafat, and there was widespread scepticism about the arrest sweep. Still, Sharon aides suggested Israel will carry harsh military strikes but stop short of trying to crush the Palestinian Authority. Mr. Sharon returned on Monday morning after cutting short a U.S. visit because of the bombing and shooting attacks that killed 26 persons and wounded nearly 200, most of them Israelis, in a 12-hour period. Israel's full Cabinet was to convene later Monday to approve possible retribution.

There was no indication that in his meeting with Mr. Sharon on Sunday at the White House, the U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush, sought to persuade the Israeli leader to hold back. Mr. Arafat "must do everything in his power to find those who murdered innocent Israelis and bring them to justice," the President said.

In the West Bank, Israeli troops enforced a tight blockade of Palestinian communities, barring residents from entering and leaving. At one Israeli checkpoint between Jerusalem and the West Bank town of Ramallah, soldiers fired tear gas and rubber-coated steel bullets to keep back about



Palestinian Hamas supporters raising one finger signifying one God swear to continue their armed campaign against Israeli targets during the funeral of a Hamas militant in West Bank on Monday. (right) An Israeli woman reads from the book of Psalms as mourners gather to pray and light candles around an improvised memorial at the site of Saturday's explosion downtown Jerusalem on Monday. — AP

150 Palestinians trying to get through the barrier, paramedics said. In new violence, a Palestinian was killed in a firefight with Israeli troops near the West Bank town of Tulkarem late Sunday, and a Palestinian farmer was shot dead early Monday as he walked toward his field. The Israeli military said troops shot a Palestinian man they suspected was trying to plant a bomb.

In Israel, police were on highest alert for terror attacks, and thousands of officers patrolled malls and markets. In Haifa, where 15 passengers and bystanders were killed in a bus bombing Sunday, policewomen with cocked weapons guarded at a pedestrian crossing in a residential area. "We are at war," said a banner headline in the *Yedioth Ahronot* daily, accompanied by two rows of photos of the victims, including 10 teenagers killed late Saturday in a back-to-back suicide attacks at a pedestrian mall in Jerusalem.

In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Palestinian security forces arrested 110 members of the militant Hamas and Islamic Jihad



needs quickly released. Mr. Sharon reportedly dismissed reports of the current arrest sweep as window dressing.

Palestinian Authority officials have said they could not be expected to take harsh action against their own people at a time when Israel was killing dozens of suspected militants in targeted attacks and life in the Palestinian areas was being severely disrupted by Israel's security closures.

However, the weekend attacks marked a turning point, Palesti-

nian officials said. "These attacks on Israeli civilians have pushed us into a corner," the Palestinian Planning Minister, Mr. Nabil Shaath told Voice of Palestine radio. "We live in a world that is busy with the war against Afghanistan and international terror, and we have to keep trying to be part of the international community and not be isolated." In Gaza City, defiant Hamas activists threatened more attacks on Israel, and demanded that the Authority stop making arrests. — AP

Israel strikes Arafat's heliport

9/12
Press Trust of India
and Associated Press
5/1

JERUSALEM, Dec. 3. — Israeli army helicopters today launched missile attacks on the heliport of Mr Yasser Arafat in Gaza City.

Tel Aviv has said this is a clear signal to the Palestine Liberation Organisation chairman to firmly rein in the Islamic extremists who set off a series of attacks in Israeli cities a day before.

Barely an hour later, Israeli F-16 fighter bombers struck on Palestinian security targets in the northern West Bank town of Jenin. Helicopters also hit Bethlehem.

The Israeli Prime Minister, Mr Ariel Sharon, held Mr Arafat directly responsible for attacks on Israeli citizens and declared a "war on terror". Israel would act with all the means at its disposal, he said.

The PLO reacted angrily to Mr Sharon's statement saying it was a "declaration of war."

Mr Sharon spoke in a televised address just before a Cabinet meeting was to decide on further reprisal for a series of suicide attacks and shootings by Palestinian militants since Saturday. He compared Israel's campaign to that waged by the USA against Osama bin Laden. "Just as the USA acts in its battle against world terror, ... so shall we do... with all the means at our disposal", he said.

Meanwhile, Jordan's state security court today sentenced Palestinian extremist Abu Nidal of the Fatah Revolutionary Council to death for the murder of a Jordanian diplomat in 1994, adds AFP from Amman. Four others were also sentenced to death for the murder of Naeb Omran Ma'ayteh, a former first secretary at the Jordanian embassy in Beirut.

Earlier report on page 6

THE STATESMAN

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Toughest test stares at Arafat

W. Arafat
W

FROM TIMOTHY HERITAGE

Jerusalem, Dec. 3 (Reuters): Palestinian President Yasser Arafat faces one of the toughest tests of his long political career over a pledge to crack down on militants following a devastating wave of suicide attacks in Israel.

Acting under intense US and Israeli pressure, Arafat's security forces said they had arrested more than 100 militants within 24 hours of the suicide bomb attacks which killed 25 people in Jerusalem and the port city of Haifa at the weekend.

But Israel and the international community are sceptical that Arafat will finally make good on his often repeated promise of a crackdown, which has resulted in periodic sweeps for militants but has often seen prisoners quickly released.

Arafat risks a political backlash and perhaps even violence among rival Palestinian groups if he cracks down effectively on the militants, but he risks international isolation and a harsh Israeli military response if he does not.

Israeli politicians are now openly proposing trying to oust Arafat and his Palestinian Authority, although Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has never publicly adopted such a stance.

"Arafat is now coming under more pressure than he's ever been before from the United States and from Israel," said Palestinian political analyst Khalil Shikaki.

"He has to deliver what he promised the Americans he would do, but his ability to do much is limited... He will act but he won't act in the manner that Israel wants."

Israelis are even more sceptical, saying it is almost impossible for Arafat in political terms to do what Israel and the Americans want. "My bet is that he will continue to play a cynical game," said Israeli political analyst Hillel Frisch. "I used to think Arafat was in control but I am not sure any more."

Acknowledging Arafat's

problems, US secretary of state Colin Powell said he faced a "moment of truth".

Words and deeds

Arafat has said nothing in public of the bombings, although the Palestinian Authority has condemned them and vowed to find those responsible.

"The Palestinian Authority is serious and there is no compromise with those (militant) people, individuals or groups," Jibril al-Rajoub, head of Palestinian Preventive Security in the West Bank, said today.

But Israel and the United States say that throughout 14



Yasser Arafat

months of Israeli-Palestinian bloodshed, Arafat has failed to live up to his promises to carry out arrests and end violence.

"Now more than ever, Chairman Arafat and the Palestinian Authority must demonstrate through their actions and not merely their words their commitment to fight terror," Bush said in a statement.

That is why the Palestinian leadership's actions so far — declaring a state of emergency, rounding up more than 100 militants, and threatening to outlaw militant groups — have failed to satisfy Sharon or Bush.

THE TELEGRAPH

4 DEC 2001

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Arafat accuses U.S. of pro-Israel bias

U.S. News (10)

GAZA CITY (GAZA STRIP), DEC. 8. Israeli helicopters fired missiles at Palestinian security buildings inside a refugee camp early Saturday in retaliation for the firing of mortar shells at Jewish settlements, the army said.

No injuries were reported. Palestinian security buildings throughout the Gaza Strip had been evacuated on Friday after an Israeli F-16 jet struck a police compound in Gaza City early in the day, injuring 20 persons. In Saturday's strike at the Rafah refugee camp in southern Gaza, three buildings belonging to military intelligence and the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat's personal guard, Force 17, were badly damaged, Palestinian security officials and witnesses said. The missiles blew large holes in the roofs of the buildings and toppled some walls, witnesses said. Dozens of people gathered at the scene chanting support for Mr. Arafat.

The five mortar shells that were fired at Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip late Friday injured no one, the army said. It claimed the Palestinian security offices that were targeted in the helicopter attack should have prevented the shellings. Israel had renewed its airstrikes on security stations in Palestinian areas on Friday after a two-day lull. The attacks earlier in the week were retaliation for suicide bombings that killed 25 in Haifa and Jerusalem last weekend.

Despite the violence, the U.S. envoy, Gen. Anthony Zinni, pressed ahead with efforts to quell the crisis sparked by the suicide bombings. Gen. Zinni hosted a four-hour meeting in Tel Aviv between top Israeli and Palestinian security officials on Friday,

but both sides said the atmosphere was highly charged and little progress was made.

A Palestinian official speaking on condition of anonymity said things were so bad that the talks would have ended in a fist fight if the Americans had not intervened. Another Palestinian official said his side had explained that its forces could not capture terrorists if Israel did not lift restrictions on movement and stop the airstrikes. An Israeli security official, who also declined to be identified, called the talks "pretty rough," and said Mr. Arafat must rein in terrorists before Israel ceases its strikes.

Angered that the United States has not criticised the Israeli attacks, Mr. Arafat accused the Americans of pro-Israel bias in an interview on Friday with Israeli television. He was visibly irritated when asked by the interviewer for Channel One television about the American pressure on him to clamp down on Islamic militants.

"Dear God, who cares about the Americans," Mr. Arafat said in the interview on Friday in the West Bank city of Ramallah. "The Americans are on your side and they give you everything. Who gives you airplanes? The Americans." Mr. Arafat was referring to the \$2.7 billion in annual American aid, which Israel uses in part to buy fighter jets. When the interviewer attempted to ask Mr. Arafat about Gen. Zinni's diplomatic efforts, Mr. Arafat cut him off, saying; "Don't talk to me about the Americans." Mr. Arafat told Israeli television that Palestinian police near the West Bank town of Jenin had arrested 17 of the 33 persons on a wanted list given to him by Gen. Zinni. — AP

THE HINDU

- 9 DEC 2001

Israel strikes at Arafat security hub

Gaza, December 8

ISRAELI HELICOPTER gunships struck Palestinian security buildings inside a refugee camp in the southern Gaza Strip on Saturday, driving home Israel's demand that Palestinian President Yasser Arafat do more to rein in militants.

The missile attack in the early hours devastated the Rafah offices of the Palestinian Intelligence services and Force 17, Arafat's elite bodyguard unit, hours after a new round of US-brokered security talks aimed at halting the spiralling violence.

The were no immediate reports of casualties. A Palestinian official said the compound had been evacuated in anticipation of the attack, the latest Israeli retaliation after Palestinian suicide bombers killed 25 people in Israel last weekend.

During the three-hour security talks near Tel Aviv, brokered by US envoy Anthony Zinni, Israeli security chiefs rejected a Palestinian request that they ease the pressure in the occupied territories.

Israel says it will keep up its strikes until Arafat acts against militants threatening the Jewish state's security in a 14-month-old Palestinian uprising against occupation. "It was a difficult meeting," an Israeli official said. "We were firm in raising our contention that the Palestinians are arresting only second- and third-rate terrorists, rather than going for the main culprits."

Palestinian security chiefs briefed Arafat on the meeting afterward but made no comment on the outcome. Nabil Abu Rdainah, a senior aide to Arafat, said only that another meeting had been scheduled for Sunday.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has accused Arafat of making token arrests in response to Israeli and US demands for a crackdown on militants. A US Embassy statement issued after the security meeting said the session focused on "practical steps to combat terror and violence".

In a rare interview with Israeli television, Arafat said on Friday night he was doing all he could to

arrest militants. He said he had so far arrested 17 people on the list of 33 given to him by Zinni, along with "dozens of others".

When the TV interviewer suggested the US saw the arrests as a sham, Arafat became visibly agitated: "Who cares about the Americans? The Americans are on your side and they gave you everything. Who gave you the planes?... Who gave you the tanks?... Who gave you all the money?"

The Israeli army said the Rafah strike came in response to ongoing Palestinian mortar attacks against Israeli settlements and military targets in the Gaza Strip. The Palestinian security services whose offices were hit "had direct or indirect responsibility for the mortar attacks", an army statement said. A Palestinian security official rejected the charge.

"The security services which were hit had been working to spread security and stability in the Palestinian territories and to maintain the ceasefire," said Major-General Abdel-Razek Al-Majaydeh, Palestinian Authority public security chief.

The Israeli army said in a statement it killed two Palestinian gunman near Adik village in the West Bank late on Friday afternoon. The army said soldiers intercepted the men when they came armed to a road in the area where there have been numerous shooting attacks.

Mustafa al-Malki, governor of the Palestinian town of Qalqilya, accused the army of assassinating the two men, who he said were wanted activists from Arafat's Fatah faction.

"Undercover Israeli units waited for them, and when they approached the soldiers opened fire and killed them outright," the governor said.

At least 750 Palestinians and 222 Israelis have died since the Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation erupted in September 2000.

Israeli helicopters fired missiles at Palestinian security buildings inside a refugee camp early Saturday in retaliation for the firing of mortar shells at Jewish settlements, the army said.

Reuters

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 9 DEC 2001

death issue for many — and lives are precious in every part of the world.

71-10 Test for Tel Aviv 19/10

For a brief moment recently, we saw the glimmer of a silver lining in the war clouds — a possible resolution of the vexatious Israel-Palestine problem. But like an unfolding classical Greek tragedy, violence has once again overwhelmed any prospect of peace with the brutal assassination of Israel's tourism minister Rehavam Zeevi allegedly by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The sheer audacity of the attack outside the minister's hotel room in the heart of Jerusalem has prompted threats of terrible and swift retribution from Israel, something which will perpetuate the cycle of death and destruction in the volatile region. While Israel's anger at this violation is understandable, it has almost immediately sought to pin the blame on Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. This despite Mr Arafat's categorical denial of any hand in the killing. Israel knows by now that the eye-for-an-eye policy it has so assiduously pursued has not paid off; indeed, hostilities have only escalated. Surely, something has to give; someone must muster the courage unilaterally to call a halt to the violence. At the moment, painful though it is for Israel, such a move can only come from Tel Aviv. To an extent, the moral responsibility for such targeted killings must vest with prime minister Sharon and his government — the killing of Zeevi was in retaliation for the murder of Mustafa Zibri, leader of the PFLP, as part of a campaign to eliminate Israel's opponents.

Israel's state-sanctioned assassination policy has certainly succeeded in creating terror but it has not been able to bring about a just and comprehensive peace. In perpetuating this vicious cycle, Tel Aviv appears to have played straight into the hands of terrorists like Osama bin Laden. He and his fanatical followers had cited the oppression of the Palestinian people as one of the main motivations behind Terrible Tuesday. To their credit, the Palestinians have always rejected any form of fanaticism and Mr Arafat minced no words in his condemnation of the attacks on the US. Not a single Palestinian has been found even remotely to be involved in the crime. This is perhaps what has led to a rethink in the West about equating the Palestinian cause with terrorism of other kinds in the region. Just before the killing of Zeevi, British prime minister Tony Blair had spoken of the need for a Palestinian homeland with the caveat that the US had been thinking along these lines shortly before September 11. Israel, above all, has the most to gain from a secular and moderate Palestinian regime in the area which could be a bulwark against other less tolerant governments. Mr Sharon too appeared to have realised this, toning down his over-the-top rhetoric against Mr Arafat to actually agreeing to lead a delegation to discuss the future contours of Palestine. Of course, Zeevi's death has changed all this. Mr Arafat, on his part, must extradite Zeevi's killers to stand trial in Israel. After this, Mr Sharon must not insist on imposing further conditions for the resumption of talks. Peace in West Asia would be perhaps a much greater blow to the Osama bin Ladens of the world than all the pounding and shelling going on at the moment in Afghanistan. New Delhi and now Washington which have suffered firsthand the depredations of terrorists must counsel Tel Aviv that peace, however painfully arrived at, is the only antidote to terror.

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

19 OCT 2001

Israeli minister assassinated, another front opens up for US

MICHELE GERSHBERG
JERUSALEM, OCTOBER 17

US efforts at establishing peace in West Asia, and its parallel plan for Afghanistan, suffered a severe setback today when Palestinian gunmen assassinated an Israeli cabinet minister to avenge the killing of their militant leader. This was the first Arab assassination of a member of Israel's government.

The radical Palestinian Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) claimed responsibility for shooting tourism minister Rehavam Zeevi, a 75-year-old former general who advocated the 'transfer' of Arabs from land claimed by Jews.

Zeevi, popularly known as 'Gandhi', was shot twice outside his room at the Hyatt hotel, where many ministers and legis-



Rehavam Zeevi

lators stay during the working week. Ironically, he had resigned from the government on Monday — effective today — in protest against the government's recent relaxing of rules for Palestinians.

The incident immediately sent tension levels in the region

shooting up after relative calm over the past few days. "Everything has changed", Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said, and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat was solely to blame.

The charge was denied by an Arafat aide; earlier, the Palestinian Authority had condemned the shooting.

"The responsibility is Arafat's alone, as someone who has carried out and is carrying out acts of terrorism and never took steps against it", Sharon told a memorial session of parliament.

"We will carry out a war to the bitter end against the terrorists, those who help them and those who dispatch them", Sharon said, accusing Arafat's Palestinian Authority of harbouring "murderers".

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

INDIAN EXPRESS
INDIAN EXPRESS

18 OCT 2001

MINISTER'S KILLING / PALESTINIAN REBELS OWN RESPONSIBILITY

Sharon pins the blame on Arafat

By Kesava Menon #10-14

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), OCT. 17. Israel's Tourism Minister, Mr. Rehavam Ze'evi, was assassinated in Jerusalem today. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, which claimed responsibility for the attack, said it was in retribution for the killing of their leader Abu Ali Mustafa in August.

Israel's Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, has held the Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, personally responsible for today's attack and said the situation from now on would not be like it was till yesterday.

Gunmen are reported to have waylaid Mr. Ze'evi in the corridor of the Hyatt Hotel in Jerusalem where he was staying. They shot him at close quarters and though doctors tried several procedures, Mr. Ze'evi succumbed to his injuries two hours later. Mr. Ze'evi, who leads the fanatic right wing Moledet party, had announced on Monday that he and the deputy head of his party would resign from the Cabinet. Their resignations were to have come into effect on Wednesday afternoon.

Mr. Ze'evi, who was nick-named Gandhi, appears to have only one thing in common with the Mahatma — the fact that they were both assassinated. This right-winger among the right-wingers had stood for the "transfer" of all Palestinians from the occupied territories - in other words, for ethnic cleansing.

He had decided to resign from the Cabinet because he thought that hawkish Mr. Sharon was being too "soft" on the Palestinians.

There are at least two different versions of how Mr. Ze'evi came to acquire a nick-name that all Indians would consider an abhorrent mismatch. One version is that he had dressed up in a toga for a play while in school that his classmates started calling him Gandhi.

The other version is that Mr. Ze'evi's violent proposals vis a vis the Palestinians was so opposite to all that the Mahatma stood for that the appellation Gandhi was seen as a macabre



DANCE OF DEATH: Palestinians perform the Dabkeh, a traditional dance, as one of them carries his gun as they celebrate at the Ein el-Hilweh refugee camp near the southern Lebanese port city of Sidon on Wednesday the assassination of the Israeli Tourism Minister, Mr. Rehavam Ze'evi (Inset), in Jerusalem. — AP

joke. Predictably enough, Mr. Sharon has sought to use the assassination to strike for the high ground in his dealings with the Palestinians. The West has revived its interest in the Israel-Palestinian negotiations in the course of its effort to maintain the coalition against Al-Qaeda. British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair, has just recently announced his support for the formation of a Palestinian state while standing next to Mr. Arafat.

That Western pressure has been brought to bear on both sides is also evident from the de-escalation of violence in recent weeks and announcements by Israel that it was going to ease the closure on some parts of the Palesti-

nian territory. Just yesterday, Mr. Sharon had said that he would not be opposed to the formation of a Palestinian state if certain conditions were met. Now, Mr. Ze'evi's assassination has given Mr. Sharon the opportunity to revert to the hard stance towards which he is more naturally inclined.

Reuters reports:

The Palestinian Authority today condemned Mr. Ze'evi's assassination but urged Israel to stop its policy of killing Palestinians.

Mr. Yasser Abed, Cabinet Minister of the Palestinian Authority, said, "We feel sorry about this assassination. We reject all forms of political assassinations".

THE HINDU

18 OCT 2001

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14/11

Their anger is palpable

W Asia (10)

OSAMA BIN LADEN has displaced Mr. Saddam Hussein as the hero of the Arab street. The public displays of anger against the U.S. were far more frequent and intense whenever the Iraqi President and his country were targets of U.S. attacks post-1991, than they have been since the U.S. began operations against Osama and his Al-Qaeda. But in private, the hero worship of Osama has been far more widespread.

This hero worship did not manifest itself so palpably in the aftermath of the East African embassy bombings or the attack on the USS Cole linked to the Al-Qaeda. So was it the spectacular audacity and the meticulousness in the planning of the September 11 attacks that generated this hero worship? For all his defiance, Mr. Saddam Hussein did not really rock the West with the Scuds that he fired into Israel in 1991. There is no doubt the September 11 attacks rocked the U.S. and the rest of the West to their core. In a bleak sense, they represented the biggest success the Arab world has been able to register against the West in recent times.

In his by-now famous telecast over Al Jazeera, timed to coincide with the start of the U.S. bombing campaign in Afghanistan, Osama portrayed the attacks as just retribution for the many wrongs the West has committed against the Arab world. The colonial experience (including the weird mapping of the political geography of the Arab world which is one of the enduring legacies of that experience), the blind support to Israel, the harm done to Iraqi children by way of sanctions and the imposition of a U.S. military presence in Saudi Arabia were among the grievances cited to justify the September 11 attacks.

Osama has never articulated his position on these Arab issues, barring that pertaining to the U.S. military presence in Saudi Arabia, so explicitly before. The main protagonists in some of these issues — the Iraqi Government, Lebanese and Palestinian political organisations — had also disassociated themselves from the September 11 attacks. Yet, after the Al Jazeera telecast it appeared that the Arab street had accepted Osama as the



Palestinians in Jerusalem read of the attacks on Afghanistan... ominous undercurrents.

It appears that the Arab street has accepted Osama bin Laden as the most effective articulator of its grievances, writes Kesava Menon.

most effective articulator of these grievances. Non-Arab sympathisers too appeared to readily accept that the Osama phenomenon could be explained purely on the basis of these long-standing grievances.

A historical analogy might be appropriate here though it is likely to be controversial. Adolf Hitler did after all give voice to the grievances of a German people subjected to ignominy and misery by virtue of the Treaty of Versailles. But Hitler's political agenda took a course very different from an appropriate and just redressal of these grievances. The kind of state the Taliban established with Osama's complete support — bizarrely lauded in some quarters as the "purest Islamic

state" — clearly stands for the ultimate objective that Osama has in mind. If the world could transport, through a time-reversal process, the wisdom acquired after the Second World War to the period before Hitler's ascent it would probably have tried to deal with the German grievances in such a fashion that Nazism would have been nipped in the bud. That would have entailed the addressing of the German grievances as well as specific measures to block and eliminate Hitler. Has Osama, as the U.S. would insist, left the world with no time? According to the Bush administration Osama's agenda is well advanced through the creation of a wide network that will try and implement his political programme through terror. The U.S. feels there is an urgent need to cut up and eradicate this network before the underlying grievances that give it sustenance can be addressed. A plausible case can also be made that the addressing of these grievances immediately after the September 11 attack will only feed the phenomenon of terror since it will show that terrorism

produces the results that rational interaction can never achieve. An equally incontestable fact is that the seed of Osamaism has fallen on very fertile ground. The real success of the Al Jazeera telecast lies in the fact that Osamaism will sprout irrespective of whether the man and his associates are killed or not. If he survives for some time he will be acknowledged as the greatest of *Ghazis* (holy warriors) and if he dies he will become the greatest of *Shaheeds*.

Tackling Osamaism will obviously require more than the elimination of his terrorist network and the "drying up of the swamp of finances and other resources" that give him sustenance. It will most definitely require the redress of the Arab and Islamic world's grievances. But it will also require something more.

When people elsewhere in the world have shrugged off, or are trying to overcome, the colonial experience the Arab world still wallows in self-pity about what was done to it. Osamaism will never fully die out till the Arabs take control of their own destinies.

THE HINDU

'Palestinian concerns must be addressed'

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, OCT. 12. The British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair has returned home after a high-pressure visit to West Asia convinced that the West cannot hope to win the "hearts and minds" in the Muslim world unless there is a fair settlement of the Palestinian issue.

He admitted that the West was losing the propaganda war in Arab countries, and the message that the West was not at war with Islam was simply not getting through.

Mr. Blair's admission of a sense of frustration came after Saudi Arabia, in what is seen as a public "snub", declined to receive him in view of the prevailing strong anti-Western sentiment, and the Egyptian President, Mr. Hosni Mubarak warned that there could be no long-term end to terrorism until the Palestinian concerns were addressed. Mr. Blair looked uncomfortable when at a joint press conference in Cairo, Mr. Mubarak chastised the West for its approach to the Palestinian problem, and said it lay at the heart of the growing climate of violence. Observers noted that Mr. Mubarak offered only "qualified" support to the military strikes in Afghanistan and made clear that his country would not back any action against Iraq or any other country.

Later talking to accompanying journalists, Mr. Blair acknowledged that much needed to be done to improve communication with the Muslim world and win its confidence. "One thing becoming



NO, THANKS: One month after the attacks on the World Trade Center, Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia, chairman of Kingdom Holding Company (right), hands the New York Mayor, Mr. Rudolph Giuliani a check for \$10 million for the Twin Towers Fund in New York, on Thursday. However, the Mayor rejected the cheque after the Prince said that the U.S. should re-examine its West Asia policies. — Reuters.

increasingly clear to me is the need to upgrade our media and public opinion operations in the Arab and Muslim world. There is need for us to communicate effectively," he said.

He added that even moderate Arab governments were under pressure from their own people who believed that "we have lost interest in the Middle East peace process". This, he stressed, needed to be countered, admitting in an article in a London-based Arab newspaper that there was "enormous pressure" to resume talks between Israel and Palestinian leaders.

Mr. Blair's official spokesman

told foreign correspondents here that "reinvigorating" the peace process was on top of the agenda. He said moves in this direction had begun even before the September 11 events, but they had now assumed a new urgency.

On Saudi Arabia's refusal to receive Mr. Blair, he said it had not been "logistically" possible to fit in the visit — a line also taken by the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Jack Straw — but observers were more inclined to accept the version of *Asharq al-Awsat*, an Arab newspaper, which said domestic sensitivities were behind Riyadh's reluctance to host a Western leader at this juncture.

Commentators noted that the fact that even a pro-Western country such as Saudi Arabia had been forced to be more cautious in being seen as a Western ally was an indication of the "ugly" public mood. "The Saudi Government fears that such a visit (by Mr. Blair) could further inflame domestic opposition to the air strikes and lend support to radical Islamists who have been responsible for bomb attacks against Westerners," *The Daily Telegraph* said, while *The Guardian* pointed out that the West was worried about the "dangerous schism between Arab leaders who basically support the West and are appalled by bin Laden, and sections of their people to whom he has become a potent symbol of defiance".

The Secretary of State for Defence, Mr. Geoff Hoon, meanwhile, indicated that the deployment of ground troops in Afghanistan could be delayed until the next spring because of the harsh winter which is about to set. "Historically we know that civil wars that have plagued Afghanistan tend to close down in the winter months.

That is obviously a factor that any military plan must take account of," he said. An opinion poll today showed that Mr. Blair's personal popularity was at its peak, outstripping Ms. Margaret Thatcher's during the Falklands war and that of Mr. John Major at the height of the Gulf War. His standing compared with Winston Churchill's during the Second World War.

THE HINDU

13 OCT 2001

Sharon says sorry for remark

W. Asia (u)
11-11
8/10



ARIEL SHARON

Washington, October 7

ISRAELI PRIME Minister Ariel Sharon has apologised for recent remarks, in which he accused the United States and other western powers of trying to appease Arab nations, saying he was misunderstood.

"Unfortunately, the metaphor in my words was not understood correctly, and I'm sorry about that," Sharon said in a brief telephone interview with *The New York Times* published today.

On Thursday, Sharon called on Western democracies, in particular the US, not to repeat the terrible mistake made in 1938, when European democracies sacrificed Czechoslovakia for a temporary solution to their problems with Germany.

The White House said President George W Bush had found

TWO PALESTINIANS KILLED BY OWN EXPLOSIVES

TWO PALESTINIANS were killed early on Sunday when a bomb went off in their car in the northern Israeli town of Beit Shean, an Israeli police officer said, on condition of anonymity. The two had apparently been either transporting the explosives or on their way to plant the bomb, he said.

The death toll from the year-old Palestinian uprising now stands at 866, including 668 Palestinians and 175 Israelis.

AFP, Jerusalem

the remarks "unacceptable." In the interview, Sharon expressed regret five times in less than five minutes, according to the daily.

He said he had spoken with Secretary of State Colin Powell three times on Friday and once yesterday.

"It's behind us," he said of the dispute over his comments. "It's completely behind us."

Sharon said the United States had not unfairly put pressure on Israel to resolve the conflict with the Palestinians, but he suggested that he had been concerned that such pressure was coming, *The Times* reported.

"Now, we have not been under pressure," he said. "What worried me was what might be."

He promised "full support" for Bush's goal of "eradicating terror."

AFP

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

8 OCT 2001

Israel raids Hebron, 5 Palestinians killed

Hebron (West Bank), October 5 ^{to Abu} ¹¹⁻¹¹ ¹¹⁰

ISRAELI TANKS and forces raided a Palestinian area of the West Bank city of Hebron this morning, capturing positions and killing at least five Palestinians, the Israeli Army and witnesses said.

The raid into the Palestinian-controlled Abu Sneineh area, which overlooks the Jewish settlement in the divided biblical city, came two days after Palestinian gunmen fired on a crowd of thousands of Jewish worshippers, wounding two Israelis.

The violence further threatened a shaky ceasefire reaffirmed last week by Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat, and Israel Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.

The ceasefire agreement has been left in tatters by ongoing fighting and attacks despite intense pressure from the United States to end the year of fighting as it tries to build an anti-terror alliance with Arab countries.

A Reuters television cameraman in Hebron said that about 50 tanks and armoured personnel carriers, accompanied by other military vehicles, rolled into Abu Sneineh and adjacent areas under cover of darkness.

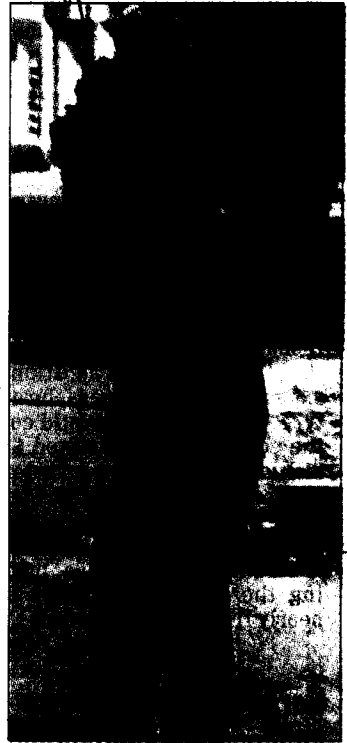
A gun battle erupted in which 5 Palestinians were killed and about 45 wounded. Israeli forces demolished, shelled and rocketed homes in the Palestinian areas. Troops entered 15 homes, forced residents out and took position on the rooftops.

The Army said it entered the areas after the Palestinian Authority failed to enforce order as it had vowed to do under peace deals and allowed gunmen to fire on Jewish worshippers at the tomb of the biblical patriarchs, revered by both Jews and Muslims. "The forces will be present and carry out military operations in the area based on operational needs. This in order to prevent continuous shooting at the Jewish settlement and security forces," the Army said in a statement.

"Israeli Army forces will remain in the area and carry out the necessary activities for a limited time that will be decided based on the operational needs on the ground," it added.

Israeli forces last entered Abu Sneineh and other Hebron neighbourhoods in August after Palestinian gunmen wounded two Israelis in a Jewish settlement below the Palestinian-ruled hills.

The New York Times



AP PHOTO

A Palestinian boy watches an Israeli tank in the Palestinian-controlled Sheikh neighbourhood in the West Bank town of Hebron on Friday.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

10/5/2000

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WEST ASIA / FLARE-UP DAMPENS ENTHUSIASM

W. Asia

Israel, PA cool to Bush initiative

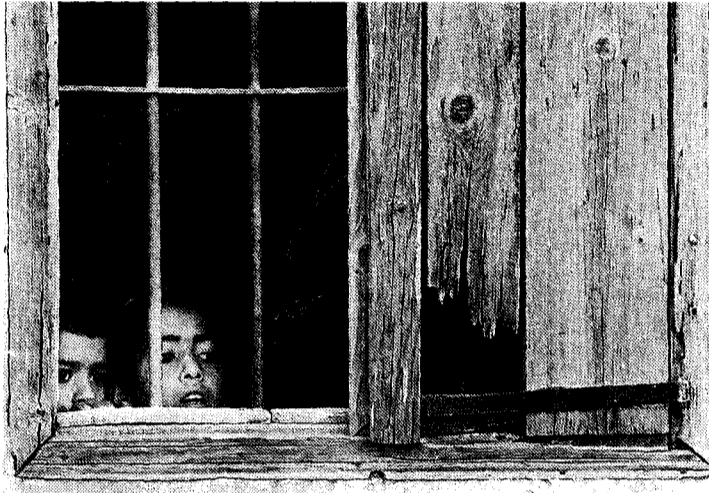
By Kesava Menon

MANAMA, OCT. 3. Both the Palestinians and the Israelis have reacted coolly to the U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush, statement endorsing the idea of a Palestinian state.

Mr. Bush's views are currently of academic interest mainly because he has said that any U.S. initiatives in this regard must await an end to the violence. Though considerably reduced, the violence continues with a Hamas suicide attack on a Jewish settlement in Gaza yesterday inviting an Israeli attack on Palestinian police posts today.

A teenage Israeli soldier and her boyfriend were killed and 15 others, including a baby, injured when Palestinian gunmen infiltrated the settlement in the northern Gaza strip late last evening and opened fire. Two gunmen took shelter in a house and most of the injuries were reported to have been caused in the exchange of fire with the Israeli troops who surrounded them. The gunmen were shot dead and Hamas today released a video-clip which showed them reading their message before proceeding on their mission. In retaliation, Israeli tanks fired shells at a Palestinian police post near the settlement. Three Palestinian policemen were reported to have been killed.

The Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, condemned the attack on the settlement and has ordered his security forces to crack down on



SHELL-SHOCKED: Palestinian children peep through their house window during shelling by Israeli tanks at Beit Lahia in Gaza Strip on Wednesday. — AFP

those who planned the attack or were preparing for more such action. The Authority also claimed that the Hamas gunmen had slipped past Israeli security cordons besides their own. However, Israel has accused the Palestinian Authority of having abetted the attacks by not doing enough to apprehend those prepared to carry out attacks on Israeli. Israel's Security Cabinet which met last night has also warned that it could revive the assassination policy if the Authority does not institute a crack-down on militant groups.

Mr. Arafat had ordered a complete cease-fire soon after the

Sept. 11 terror attacks in the U.S. Israel too had said that it was suspending military operations against the Palestinians. Mr. Arafat met Israel's Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, and both sides had agreed to strengthen the cease-fire.

There has been a drastic reduction in the levels of violence since then but sporadic clashes have continued all along. Over a dozen Palestinians have been killed in these clashes and several Israelis have also been killed in attacks by Palestinian militants.

Hamas and Islamic Jihad had rejected Mr. Arafat's cease-fire call and Hamas has said that last

night's attacks were in specific retaliation for the deaths since the Arafat-Peres meeting.

Israel had declared that it would begin listing restrictions on the movement of Palestinians and ease the closure of their towns and villages if there was peace over a twenty-four hour period. According to the Israeli media their Security Cabinet was preparing to act on these lines yesterday's attack. Israel's Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, had so announced yesterday though while his country was prepared to cooperate with efforts to build an international coalition against terror, they would not remain quiet so as to "appease" the Arabs if their own citizens continued to be killed.

Developments over yesterday and today have dampened whatever enthusiasm could have been generated by Mr. Bush's comments. The U.S. President was acting to a story in *The New York Times* when he said that a Palestinian state had always been a part of the U.S. vision for the future of the West Asia. The newspaper reported that the U.S. administration was about to endorse the idea of a Palestinian state and the Secretary of State, Gen. C Powell, would make a major announcement on the U.S. policy Israel-Palestine relations at U.N. General Assembly.

Yesterday, however, Mr. Arafat made clear that any U.S. initiative will be contingent on both sides putting an end to the violence.

THE HINDU

4 OCT 2001

Six Palestinians killed in Israeli revenge strike

ERIC SILVER
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

575 110
JERUSALEM, Oct. 3. — One week after Israeli and Palestinian leaders agreed to enforce a ceasefire, the ground was burning more fiercely than ever today.

The truce, which was never implemented, was in a shambles, though neither side was ready to pronounce it dead. The dialogue of the deaf continued.

Israeli infantry and combat engineers, backed by tanks, rampaged one km into Palestinian-controlled territory in the northern Gaza Strip this morning, ripping up crops and demolishing Palestinian security posts. Six Palestinians, four of them policemen, were killed when a tank shell hit their look-out post.

The Israelis were retaliating for a raid by two Islamic militants, who broke into the coastal set-

H. A. W. (U)
tlement of Alei Sinai on Tuesday, night firing automatic weapons and hurling grenades.

They killed a young couple, then holed themselves up in an empty house. A gun battle raged for about five hours before Israeli special forces shot dead the infiltrators and confirmed that they had taken no hostages. An officer and 14 other Israelis were injured.

Army spokesmen said today's invasion was designed to protect Alei Sinai and neighbouring Jewish settlements, but wouldn't predict when their troops would pull back.

In a communique issued after an emergency meeting of Mr Ariel Sharon's inner security cabinet, Israel said the army would "take all necessary measures" to protect its citizens. This was interpreted as ending the self-denying ordinance — on invading Palestinian territory and liquidating suspected ter-

rorists — adopted since last Wednesday's meeting between the foreign minister, Mr Shimon Peres, and the Palestinian leader, Mr Yasser Arafat.

Israel accused the Palestinian authority of failing to arrest more than 100 "prominent terrorists" on a list presented to them. The Palestinians, who denied any commitment to detain them, accused Israel of poking Mr Arafat in the eye.

"What happens now," said Mr Tzipi Livni, Israel's information minister, "depends on chairman Arafat. If he comes to his senses, arrests terrorists, prevents terror attacks and stops incitement against us, there is still a hope of progress. If not, we are going backwards. It's not too much, in a world fighting terror, to expect the Palestinian authority to take the necessary steps. But they didn't, so we are doing the job for them."

ALL STATES

4 2001

TWO PALESTINIANS KILLED

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Israel stands by shaky ceasefire

Jerusalem, September 30

TWO PALESTINIANS were killed early on Sunday, while Israel's inner cabinet decided to go ahead with a ceasefire reached with the Palestinians and lift a crippling blockade in areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Raging violence during the weekend in which at least 16 Palestinians were killed threatened the fragile truce which the United States hopes will bolster Islamic and Arab support for an anti-terror coalition it wants to establish.

In the latest bloodshed, Israeli troops shot dead two Palestinians and wounded 14 others near the West Bank village of Attara

when they were on their way to work in Israel, taxi driver Azmi Azem, who witnessed the incident, and Israeli radio reports said. There was no immediate comment from the Israeli army.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's inner security cabinet decided in a four-hour meeting to give Palestinian President Yasser Arafat at least another 48 hours to fulfil the truce, including the arrest of militants, Israeli officials said.

The cabinet also decided to lift a blockade around the West Bank city of Jericho on Sunday and open the Gaza-Egypt crossing at Rafah, the officials said. "We have to make the most of the process...by opening roads, hold-

ing meetings between officers, opening the Rafah crossing and lifting the closure on Jericho," officials quoted Defence Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer as saying. "Israel has to carry out its obligations and that should not prevent the army from protecting itself and its soldiers," Ben-Eliezer said.

Arafat and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres reaffirmed a truce in talks on Wednesday. But violence during Palestinian marches marking the first anniversary of the Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation prompted Palestinian officials to accuse Israel of carrying out a "military escalation."

Reuters

PERES BELIEVES ISRAELI ARMY CHIEF WANTS TO KILL ARAFAT

ISRAELI FOREIGN Minister Shimon Peres is "convinced" that deputy army chief General Moshe Yahalon wants to kill Yasser Arafat, the daily *Yediot Aharonot* reported on Sunday. It said Peres was certain Yahalon wanted to see Arafat liquidated, but the dovish left-wing Foreign Minister opposed any such move. "Suppose we liquidate him, what will happen afterwards? In his place we will have Hamas or Islamic Jihad," he said in the paper.

AFP, Jerusalem

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 1 OCT 2001

Peres, Arafat agree to ceasefire

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), SEPT. 26. Israel and the Palestinian Authority have agreed to a ceasefire almost exactly a year after the outbreak of bloody confrontations that has left over 700 dead, the vast majority of them Palestinians.

While pressure from the U.S., which sees the resumption of the Israel-Palestinian dialogue as vital to its efforts to build a coalition against terrorism, was a major factor that motivated both sides to agree to the truce, there were other reasons as well. Israel's coalition Government has begun fraying and the Palestinian Authority is aware as never before of the dangers of unbridled militancy.

Only a brief statement was issued after the meeting between Mr. Arafat and Mr. Peres in the VIP hall of the Gaza airport. In the statement, read out by the Palestinian chief negotiator, Mr. Saeb Erekat, the two sides merely promised to make maximum effort to enforce the ceasefire to which both had declared their commitments several times over. These earlier declarations of willingness to observe a ceasefire were issued unilaterally and failed to hold because there were infractions from both sides.

However, the ceasefire agreement now arrived at should last, provided the provocation by either side is not too severe, since both sides are under tremendous pressure. This ceasefire is intend-



The Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat (right), talks with the Israeli Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, at the Gaza Airport in Rafah, near the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt, on Wednesday. — AFP

ed to enable both sides to seriously move towards the implementation of the Mitchell and Tenet plans.

Briefing the Israeli media later, Mr. Peres said the measures to be implemented in the first week included the resumption of meetings of the joint security committees. CIA representatives will attend these meetings as supervisors and arbitrators. As the ceasefire begins to take hold, Israel will remove the blockades of Palestinian towns or villages where quiet has been maintained. They will also make it easier for Palestinians to travel between

their towns and villages.

It is not, however, likely that the Palestinian Authority will hand over those who are arrested to the Israelis. If there is total quiet for a week Israel will withdraw its forces to the positions they were in before the Palestinian uprising broke out on September 28 last year. The international border crossings to the Palestinian territories and the airport will be reopened and additional Palestinians will be allowed to enter Israel for work.

Hamas and the Islamic Jihad have already declared that they will not honour the ceasefire.

THE HINDU

27 SEP 2001

Sharon rejects Straw talks

ASSOCIATED PRESS

JERUSALEM, Sept. 25. - Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and President Moshe Katsav have cancelled meetings planned with British Foreign Minister Jack Straw, due to arrive in Israel today.

Mr Straw wrote in a commentary published yesterday in an Iranian newspaper: "One of the factors that helps breed terror is the anger that many people in the region feel at events over the years in Palestinian territories." Mr Straw was on a visit to Teheran as part of the American and British effort to form an international coalition against terrorism in the wake of the suicide attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington.

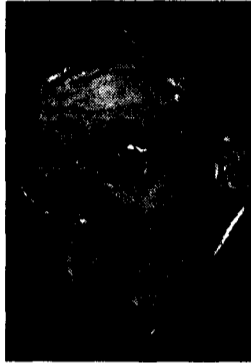
Israel told the Britain yesterday that it is concerned about statements by Mr Straw which could be interpreted as "ascribing blame" to Is-

rael and "understanding for terrorist attacks against Israeli citizens," the Israeli foreign ministry said.

Foreign ministry director general Avi Gil has conveyed Israel's concern to the British ambassador to Israel, Mr Sherard Cowper-Coles.

However, Sharon's spokesman Raanan Gissin and Katsav's spokeswoman Elisheva Braun-Lapidot both

said the meetings with Mr Straw were cancelled due to "problems with the schedule." Mr Straw is due to arrive in Israel at 3 p.m., as guest of foreign minister Shimon Peres.



Mr Jack Straw

THE STATESMAN

26 SEP 2001

W. Asia truce talks called off

W. Asia *HO-15*
JERUSALEM, SEPT. 24. The long-awaited Israeli-Palestinian truce talks sought by Washington were on hold again on Monday, possibly until next week, after Palestinian gunmen killed an Israeli woman in a West Bank road ambush.

Also on Monday, Israel set up a large military buffer zone in the West Bank that is off-limits to Palestinians except those who live in it. Israel said the zone was meant to prevent attacks by Palestinian militants. Palestinians said Israel was violating earlier peace accords and the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, said the zone marked a "very dangerous esca-

tion." The United States wants Mr. Arafat and the Israeli Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, to meet as soon as possible to work out a formal cease-fire. A fresh outbreak of Israeli-Palestinian violence would hamper Washington's efforts to bring Arab and Muslim states into an international alliance against Islamic militants.

However, the meeting, which Mr. Peres and Mr. Arafat have been trying to arrange for the past month, has been postponed repeatedly.

On Sunday, the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, unexpectedly vetoed talks set for later

25/9
in the day, saying the Palestinians had not met his condition of restoring calm for at least 48 hours before a meeting.

On Monday, the fatal shooting in West Bank reset the clock for a 48-hour countdown, said Mr. Sharon's adviser, Mr. Raanan Gissin.

"This is not a cease-fire," Mr. Sharon told the visiting French Foreign Minister, Mr. Hubert Vedrine, on Monday, referring to Arafat's efforts.

The U.S. Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell, has been in touch with both sides by phone repeatedly in recent days to help arrange the talks. — AP

H9-17
2/9

Palestinians, Israel agree to renew talks

JERUSALEM, SEPT. 20. Palestinian police enforced an informal truce with Israel on Wednesday, patrolling hot spots, and both sides agreed to renew U.S.-hosted talks on resuming security coordination.

The calm was disrupted by an explosion at a Jewish settlement that injured two Israelis and a two-hour gun battle in the West Bank town of Hebron in which five Palestinians were injured. Each side accused the other of starting the exchange of fire, and Israel said it was too early to tell if the truce was taking hold. The U.S. has been prodding Israel and the Palestinians to work out a cease-fire. Calm in West Asia is seen as essential for Washington's attempt to bring Arab and Muslim states into a coalition that would support military retaliation for last week's terror attacks.

In a first step toward cementing a truce, Israel and the Palestinians agreed that top commanders would meet to talk about resuming security coordination. Palestinian officials said the meeting would be held in Tel Aviv with U.S. participation. Israel said a time and place had not yet been set. In the next stage, the Israeli Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, would meet the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat. The meeting could take place before the end of the week, said a

Ministry spokeswoman. Israel has said a Peres-Arafat meeting could take place only after 48 hours of calm. Despite the announcements, there were several skirmishes late on Tuesday. The West Bank and Gaza Strip were largely quiet on Wednesday — with the exception of the Jewish settlement of Oranit in the West Bank and Hebron. At Oranit, two security guards in a patrol car ran over an explosive device that went off, injuring them both. In Hebron, the Israeli army said Palestinians fired from the Abu Sneineh neighbourhood at a Jewish settler enclave, and that an Israeli tank fired four shells at the gunmen in response. Earlier in the day, Palestinian police had patrolled Abu Sneineh for the first time in a year of fighting. Palestinian security officials said the officers left when the neighbourhood came under Israeli fire. In the past, Palestinian gunmen have often initiated exchanges of fire in Hebron. The shooting went on for two hours. Israeli officials indicated that the Hebron shooting would not derail truce efforts.

Previous cease-fire efforts have failed, most recently a U.S.-brokered deal in June. There was also some concern that Mr. Arafat might not be able to rein in Islamic militants and small bands of gunmen. The militant Palestinian groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad said on Wednesday they would not abide by Mr. Arafat's cease-fire order. — AP

INDO

2001

Sharon calls Arafat for peace

Arafat says he is committed to ceasefire

Gaza, Sept. 17: Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, in a Jewish New Year's message on Monday to the Israeli people, said he had ordered Palestinians to abide by a ceasefire he had declared in the past.

"I have issued strict instructions for a total commitment to the ceasefire," Mr Arafat said in the open letter, released by his office less than 24 hours after Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon called on him to announce a truce.

"I hope the Israeli government will respond to this peace appeal and will take the decision to cease fire and will stop its escalatory military measures against our people," the letter said.

Arafat aide Nabil Abu Rdainah said: "Today there was a reconfirmation of the ceasefire order that was ordered before."

Mr Arafat declared a ceasefire in June after a suicide bombing in Tel Aviv and reaffirmed the order on Friday following talks with a UN West Asia envoy.

However, the familiar sounds of battle echoed in the West Bank and Gaza Strip after Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon made truce talks with the Palestinians conditional on 48 hours of peace.

"I'm still giving (Palestinian leader Yasser) Arafat a chance," Mr Sharon said in an Israeli television interview before the start on Monday evening of the two-day Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashana.

While the world continued to focus on events in the US, the Israeli Army announced it would make a 30-km-long area of the West Bank adjacent to the border off-limits to Palestinians, save for local villagers. (Reuters)



HEARTBREAK: Samira Barghouti, mother of suicide bomber Raed Barghouti, who blew himself up in Jerusalem earlier in the month, cries inside her home in the West Bank town of Aboud on Saturday. Barghouti was one of 21 Palestinians who blew themselves up in the past year. (AP)

What drives suicide bombers

BY KARIN LAUB

Aboud (West Bank), Sept. 17: By choice, Raed Barghouti died a horrible death, his body torn to shreds in a powerful blast. Witnesses say the 26-year-old teacher of Islam smiled just before detonating the bomb in his backpack.

His aim was to kill as many Israelis as possible and gain entry to paradise. There, he told his family some months earlier, he would spend eternity in the company of great Islamic leaders, tended by 72 virgins.

Barghouti, who injured 20 Israelis in the September 4 attack outside a French school in downtown Jerusalem, was one of 21 Palestinians who blew themselves up in the past year, killing more than 50 Israelis in a sustained campaign of suicide attacks.

The human bombs have made Israelis wonder what could drive so many to such extremes — a riddle also being pondered now by Americans after the devastating attacks on New York and Washington last week.

Religious zeal is part of it — the Palestinian bombers were Islamic militants, as is Osama bin

Laden, the prime suspect in the US attacks — there are other reasons.

The bombings in West Asia come in the context of Israeli-Palestinian fighting that has left more than 800 people dead, four-fifths of them Palestinian.

Personal motives also come into play — avenging a relative killed by Israeli soldiers, or emulating an admired friend.

In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, suicide bombers are recruited by the militant Hamas and Islamic groups, both pledged to Israel's destruction.

Most are devout, unmarried men in their 20s. They are often poor, and the generous stipends paid to their families by recruiters are a consideration, but usually not the overriding one.

The bombers are seen as heroes in the Palestinian struggle.

Their pictures are plastered on walls everywhere. They are celebrated at rallies. A July poll showed 60 per cent support for the bombers, more than what it was four years ago when hopes for a deal were strong. (AP)

THE ASIAN AGE

18 SEP 2001

Palestinians, Lebanese gunmen celebrate on news of attacks

From Page 1

NEW YORK Mayor Rudolph Giuliani said there had been a "tremendous number of lives lost" in the assault on his city. But five hours after the attack, the full dimensions of the tragedy were still far from clear.

One TV station reported that 200 fire-fighters were missing in the World Trade Center. Experts said it could be days before the full death toll was established.

As international flights were diverted to Canada, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) shut down all flights in the United States. Part of the land border between the United States and Mexico was closed.

Hospitals overwhelmed: Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and gunmen at refugee camps in Lebanon fired into the air to celebrate news of the attacks.

Hospitals in New York were overwhelmed with patients as a

massive cloud billowed into the blue skies over Manhattan where the city skyline had been dramatically and permanently altered.

"Hundreds of people are burned from head to toe," said Dr Steven Stern at St Vincent's Hospital in the Greenwich Village neighbourhood of lower Manhattan.

"The whole of lower Manhattan is coated in half an inch of dust," Reuters reporter Daniel Sternoff said.

The attacks forced the evacuation of all government buildings in Washington, including the White House and other tall buildings across the country, cut cell phone communications on the East Coast and grounded all commercial planes in the United States.

World leaders expressed shock and horror and foreign financial markets fell sharply on news of the attacks. The London FTSE index plummeted 5.7 per cent, while oil prices spiked up. US markets were



OUR'S IS NOR TO REASON WHY: Children near east Jerusalem hold Palestinian flags as they flash the V-sign, reacting to the World Trade Center attack on Tuesday. — AP

closed.

Early reports said all three planes used in the attacks were hijacked, one of them from Boston

and one from Washington. It was not immediately known who flew the planes and what happened to them. The day of horror began just

before 9 a.m. (1300 GMT) in New York when the first plane ploughed into the south tower of New York's World Trade Center, as thousands of workers were streaming into the building to begin their day.

It opened a huge hole near the top of the building. Two hours later, the whole building in which thousands of people work, collapsed on itself in a huge cloud of smoke and fire. TV stations caught the second plane ploughing into the second of the twin towers, exploding in a fireball a few minutes after the first impact. That building caved in about an hour after the first.

Shortly afterward, a third plane crashed into or near the Pentagon in Washington, throwing people off their feet inside the building and setting off a massive fire. Amid confusion, news organi-

sations reported another explosion at the State Department, but that was later denied. Other reports spoke of another hijacked plane

heading toward the capital. All government buildings, including the White House and the Capitol and the CIA were evacuated. The FAA grounded all planes in the United States — an unprecedented step. "It's clear that this is terrorist-related, we're not sure who is responsible," one official said of the Pentagon attack.

"We have not seen an attack like this, certainly not since Pearl Harbor," said Admiral Robert Natter, commander of the US Atlantic Fleet, which was dispatching ships and aircraft for air defence, along with amphibious troops, to Washington and possibly New York. The attacks took place near the anniversary of the 1978 Camp David accords that led to peace between Israel and Egypt.

Bin Laden, a Saudi millionaire and Islamic militant, believed to be in exile in Afghanistan, was blamed for the 1998 bombings of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. — Reuters

49-19

Israel blames everyone else for abduction

11/7

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA, JULY 10. The Israeli Army continues its gyrations as it desperately seeks to shift blame for the abduction of three of its soldiers last year on to someone else. Thankfully its penchant over the last two days to pick on an unit of the Indian Army has faded. This might be connected to reports that the Israel Foreign Ministry and the embassy in New Delhi were concerned about the detrimental effect of these accusations on relations with India.

Maj. Gen. Uzi Dayan, head of Israel's national Security Council, was the latest to complain against the U.N. Interim Relief Force in Lebanon, which includes contingents of the Indian Army. He was reported to have said on Israel's Channel Two television on Monday that it appeared that the UNIFIL men could have done a lot more to foil the abduction.

By now, the whole of Israel knows that the contingent involved was the Indian one. So Maj. Gen. Dayan's "generous" non-mention of the identity of the contingent is not something to be grateful for. The senior officer and other military men have not been asked to explain what exactly UNIFIL could have done when the rules under which it is deployed prohibit it from doing anything. It can only observe the situation on the border and report

any violation to the U.N. headquarters; it cannot even issue warnings of possible attacks.

Neither have the Israeli officers clarified what UNIFIL could have done to stop the abductors from making off with the captives when their own Army started shelling the area soon after the incident.

Israel is usually prompt in ordering probes in military affairs. It is not clear whether such an enquiry was held, and if so what its conclusions were. Israeli media, which follows military affairs closely, has not reported about any enquiry in connection with the recent accusations.

If the Israeli soldiers were abducted while they travelled on a route prescribed for them, there was little that UNIFIL could have done to intervene even if it did have the mandate. If they were travelling on a route or were in areas they were not supposed to be, it would have been that much more difficult for UNIFIL to have helped them.

Surprisingly, some Israeli officers whose names have found mention in these despatches are people who have had contact in the past with the Indian military attache in Tel Aviv. They have surely discussed these matters with the Indian Air Force officers who have served as attaches over the period.

This blind drive to dump the blame on somebody is inexplic-

able when military exchanges between the two countries form a major part of their relationship. The Israeli media has at last woken up to the fact that the Indian unit that shot the videotape a day after the abduction was 2 Madras and that they were substituted by 5/9 Gorkhas in December last.

Meanwhile, the Israel Foreign Ministry and the Embassy in New Delhi are reported to have taken cognisance of the reports appearing in this newspaper. According to *Haaretz*, Israel's diplomats were worried that the controversy could sour "what had been an improving relationship".

Of particular concern were reports in some Israeli publications (an editorial of *Haaretz* not excluded) that some jawans might have been bribed by the Hizbollah.

PTI reports:

Israel may not confirm the appointment of a senior Indian Army officer as Commander of UNIFIL, the Hebrew daily *Maariv* reported today.

The appointee, on whom the U.N. has decided, requires the agreement of both Israel and Lebanon, and it seems Tel Aviv will oppose him in protest against the alleged involvement of Indian soldiers in the abduction incident, the report claimed quoting sources in the security establishment.

THE TIMES

Palestine accuses Sharon of hindering Arafat-Peres meet

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
CAIRO, SEPTEMBER 10

A PALESTINIAN official accused Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and his generals of hindering proposed meetings between leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.

"When Peres is freed from the grasp of the Israeli generals then maybe we will see what will happen," the Palestinian permanent representative to the Arab League, Mohammed Sobeih, told reporters in Cairo. "Unfortunately Peres is

controlled by Sharon who has a group (of generals) like (Israeli Chief of Staff General Shaul) Mofaz standing behind him," Sobeih said at the Arab League.

The Palestinian official said the Army "doesn't want peace, and believes it can dominate the Palestinian people and the Arab states with arms." The Palestinians are demanding that Peres has a clear mandate from Sharon before arranging any meeting with Arafat.

"Arafat heard that Peres has a mandate on some matters but the Army has made conditions such as

forbidding pictures and sending a monitor (from the Army to attend the meeting)," Sobeih said. "The generals who lead Israel don't know any politics but the politics of artillery," he said, adding that Arafat had agreed to the meeting in principle. Sobeih was reacting to an Israeli decision to reject a Palestinian proposal for an Arafat-Peres meeting on Monday in Taba, Egypt.

Meanwhile, former Israeli premier Benjamin Netanyahu has said a meeting between Peres and Arafat would be a "serious mistake" and only lead to more violence.

INDIAN EXPRESS

11 SEP 2001

10/9 HD-16

Minister held for entering Jerusalem

JERUSALEM, SEPT. 9. Israeli police detained the Palestinian Cabinet Minister, Mr. Ziad Abu Zayyad, on Sunday for entering Arab east Jerusalem in violation of Israeli travel restrictions on Palestinians.

The Israeli police spokesman, Mr. Shmulik Ben-ruby, said Mr. Zayyad "has no Israeli identity card and should not be in Jerusalem". Mr. Ben-ruby said police would escort Mr. Zayyad out of the city. The Minister lives in a West Bank town on the edge of Jerusalem. Mr. Hanan Ashrawi, a Palestinian legislator, called Mr. Zayyad's detention a political move aimed at cutting off east Jerusalem — captured by Israel in the 1967 war and later annexed — from the rest of the West Bank. Under Israeli regulations, only Palestinians holding Israeli-issued Jerusalem residency cards are allowed into the city. Israel has tightened the restrictions during the nearly year-long Palestinian uprising against occupation. Palestinians want east Jerusalem as the capital of a future state. Israel regards all of Jerusalem as its eternal and indivisible capital, a claim that is not recognised internationally. — Reuters

4 killed in blast

By Kesava Menon

W. Adm
W

MANAMA, SEPT. 9. Three Israelis were killed and over 20 injured when a Palestinian suicide bomber blew himself up outside the Nahariya train station in northern Israel.

In retaliation, Israeli helicopter gunships blasted Palestinian targets in Jericho, Nablus and Ramallah.

Today's violence, which represents a sudden spurt in the violence after a relative and very brief lull, could delay but probably not derail the holding of a meeting between the Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, and the Israel Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres.

The suicide bomb attack took place early this morning at a train station that is usually crowded with Israeli soldiers returning to their posts after the week-end. The explosion was reported to have occurred at a shop just outside the train station.

As has become usual in the recent period spokesmen for Israel's Prime Minister, Mr.



The Egyptian Foreign Minister, Mr. Ahmed Maher (left), talks with the Palestinian Planning Minister, Mr. Nabil Shaath, at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo on Sunday. The proposed talks between the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, and the Israeli Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, are expected to dominate the meeting of the Arab League. — AP

Ariel Sharon, immediately held Mr. Arafat personally responsible for the attack. The Palestinian Authority, they said, was not fulfilling their obligations under the various accords. While the Palestinian Authority has condemned violence against the innocent they also point out that the root cause for the violence lies in Israel's illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories.

With passions once again inflamed the prospects for a meeting between Mr. Peres and Mr. Arafat have received a set-back. However the patterns of violence have become so rou-

tine after nearly a year of confrontation between the two sides that the prospects for a meeting have not probably been totally obliterated unless there are more such incidents in the near future.

Both sides appear to have recognised that they have no alternative but to talk to each other and preparations have been under way for a dialogue. Mr. Arafat was expected to take a decision on the time and venue for a meeting with Mr. Peres after the conclusion of Arab League Foreign Ministers meeting being held today.

W ASIA CONFLICT AT DANGEROUS EDGE

W.A.M. (W) By VLADIMIR ISAYEV SIB

THE situation in the Middle East is running out of control, with frequent acts of violence escalating tensions still more. In addition, an Israeli missile raid killed Abu Ali Mustafa, leader of the People's Front for the Liberation of Palestine, which can provoke a new wave of Palestinian terror. Palestinians have stated they would not leave the murder unpunished.

It should be said that the liquidation of a Palestinian leader created an extremely dangerous precedent. Mustafa, even if he was involved in the organisation of terrorist acts in Israel, as Tel Aviv claims he was, was a political figure. And the hunt for political leaders of Palestine and their liquidation is clearly despicable. By entering this highly dangerous road, the Israeli leaders have not just clashed with legal and ethical norms, but will also endanger the life of Israelis, who will surely become the prey of terrorists.

It is indicative that the Israeli army has been delivering strikes at the posts of Palestinian police, who are suspected of supporting terrorists. This amounts to a direct confrontation of the Israeli army and Palestinian police, which makes the conflict even more dangerous.

The principle by which the current Israeli leadership is acting — to reply to the terrorist acts of the radical Islamic organisations with army "acts of retaliation" — has not improved, and cannot improve the situation. Muscle flexing and an attempt to scare Palestinians is only fanning their hatred. If both sides continue to act by the "eye for an eye" principle, violence will never be stopped.

GHETTO

Many people in Israel are talking now about the need to occupy the territories that currently belong to the Palestinian authority. This entails a review of the decisions made after drawn-out negotiations, which would throw the cause of the Middle East settlement many years back. The main thing is that the actual liquidation of the Palestinian authority,

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which the Israeli advocates of the use of force demand, would not make the country safer or protect Israelis from new terrorist acts.

And the creation of a Palestinian "ghetto", or complete separation of Palestinians from Israelis, which some quarters in Israel are advocating, will be completely impossible. Besides, it reminds one of sad historic examples, when Jews had been driven into ghettos.

COMPLICATED

It is more important now than ever since the beginning of the conflict to encourage the sides to sit down at the negotiating table. But how can this be done? The planned Berlin meeting of Yasser Arafat and Shimon Peres, the most moderate politicians in the Israeli leadership who protested against many army operations against Palestinians, may be called off in view of the dramatic aggravation of the situation. Yet it should be held, as it can bring down tensions, bring about agreements and prepare the ground for the Arafat-Sharon talks.

Feeling US support, Israel is categorically rejecting all proposals on deploying an international peacekeeping group in the conflict zone. Had the USA and NATO acted more constructively, Israel would have agreed to the presence of peacekeepers, who would disengage the warring sides and create an atmosphere of truce vital for beginning talks.

The situation is extremely complicated and many powers are worried by it. The statement made by the official spokesmen of the Russian Foreign Ministry calls on Israel and Palestine to immediately come to an agreement on resuming direct contacts in order "to launch the practical implementation of the George Mitchell Plan". "Armed confrontation, terror and extrajudicial reprisals can only promote bloodshed", says the statement.

The spokesman stressed that the situation around Palestinian territories can reach a line beyond which a political solution would become impossible. Yet, Moscow hopes that this will not happen and political reason will take the upper hand over dangerous ambitions and emotions.

THE STATE

Arafat orders crackdown on militants

JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon arrived home from Washington on Monday to decide whether Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat has done enough to arrest militants responsible for one of the bloodiest weekends in Israel in years, or whether he will unleash his forces in revenge.

Across the Palestinian territories, Mr Arafat scrambled his police to arrest at least 100 Islamic militants after declaring a state of emergency and granting himself sweeping powers to detain anyone opposed to a ceasefire with Israel.

Palestinian security services netted 77 members of Hamas — which claimed the devastating weekend suicide bombings in Jerusalem and Haifa — and its smaller rival Islamic Jihad in the West Bank alone. Another 35 militants were behind bars in the Gaza Strip.

Mr Arafat finally began the crackdown as the United States, a key player in the West Asia peace process, sent a clear message to arrest those intent on derailing the peace process or find himself increasingly isolated against a furious and well-armed Israel.

“Chairman Arafat must do everything in his power to find those who murdered innocent Israelis and bring them to justice,” U.S. President George W. Bush said after bumping up to Sunday a planned meeting with Mr Sharon, so the former general could fly back early and take the security crisis in hand.

A senior Israeli official said that during the two leaders’ meeting, “not the slightest disagreement” emerged between Mr Sharon and Mr Bush and the United States had not tried to prevent Israel from responding to the attacks.

U.S. secretary of State Colin Powell said now was a “moment of truth” for Mr Arafat to rein in the violence.

And UN Secretary General Kofi Annan likewise demanded immediate and decisive action from Mr Arafat to bring the bombers to book. As soon as he touched down in Tel Aviv, Mr Sharon went into meetings with security officials to weigh his options.

One official said he might give a televised address to the nation before meeting for a special security session with his government late on Monday.

Israel was still reeling from the blitz of suicide bombings that Hamas launched in the heart of two of its main cities, slaughtering two dozen Israelis in a carnage that shocked the world.

The final death toll of a double suicide bombing in a crowded pedestrian mall in downtown Jerusalem late on Saturday, a kamikaze blast on a bus in the northern city of Haifa and a shooting attack on settlers in the Gaza Strip was 26 dead and some 200 wounded.

The Israel press said the Israeli security talks on Monday would decide the fate of Mr Arafat. “Time to give Arafat an ultimatum,” said *Haaretz*, “The target: Arafat”, said the *Yediot Ahronoth*, while *Maariv* called it “A last Chance” for Mr Arafat.

Haaretz said if Mr Arafat “doesn’t impose his authority, he could soon find himself in unpleasant regions far away from his country.”

Division were however evident in Israel’s broad-based but right-leaning coalition government, headed by Mr Sharon for eight months. Minister without portfolio Dan

Meridor said Israel should use new methods to hit Palestinian militants.

“We must have new security measures, stricter than in the past,” Mr Meridor said. “We must determine how to strike more effectively in order to reduce the number of attacks, and we must apply methods we have not used before.”

“Mr Arafat is not doing even the minimum required. He thinks that he can carry on his own sweet way as if nothing had happened,” he said.

But Transport Minister Ephraim Sneh rejected any move to smash the Palestinian Authority, saying it was the only entity with which Israel could negotiate peace.

“We can combat terrorism and its infrastructures without destroying the Palestinian Authority,” he said. “Terrorism exists not because of it, but because there is a conflict.”

Meanwhile Hamas — two of whose top officials were sitting in jail on Monday — was unrepentant. In a statement issued from its offices in Syria on Monday, the Islamic Resistance Movement vehemently condemned the arrests and accused Mr Arafat’s Palestinian Authority of “trying to become Israel’s protector.”

The head of the movement’s political wing, Khaled Meshaal, had warned on Sunday from Damascus: “We have the means to resist and to offer up martyrs for another 20 years.”

Jordan’s King Abdullah II and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, heads of the only two Arab states to have made peace with Israel, were to hold urgent talks in Cairo to discuss the spiralling violence, Jordanian officials said. (AFP)

100-17
29

A thaw in the pipeline W. Amin

SYRIA AND Iraq, embittered rivals for over two decades, are currently embarked on a serious effort at rapprochement. This is a reflection of their mutual acknowledgement of the need for cooperation, of changed geo-political circumstances and an upsurge of nationalist sentiment in the Arab street. Although an exchange of visits by high-powered Syrian and Iraqi officials in mid-August sparked optimistic speculation, it would appear that the mutual benefits of enhanced cooperation will accrue slowly.

While both the Syrian and the Iraqi regimes subscribe to the Baath ideology, bilateral relations have been strained since the early 1970s on account of doctrinal differences. The rupture became severe following the Iranian revolution of 1979 when Damascus became friendly to the Ayatollahs while Baghdad was hostile. It worsened when Syria became a part of the U.S.-led coalition that ousted Iraq from Kuwait. An end to this hostility has now come about, though the era of friendship and brotherhood that the Arabs constantly talk about is still quite distant.

Trade and economics have been a primary factor in pushing the two countries together. Iraq has very cleverly and effectively used its imports permitted under the oil-for-food programme to win friends. Contracts for food and medicines have been allocated to those countries that are tired of the U.S. policies and methods for the "containment" of Iraq. Baghdad has also not hesitated to use the import contracts to punish countries that do not deliver on their promises of support. For example, till last year France used to be awarded a disproportionately large number of contracts. But after France signalled its readiness to support the U.S. administration's "smart sanctions scheme", contracts have reportedly been allotted elsewhere.

Trade between Syria and Iraq is currently estimated at about \$ 500 millions a year. The oil-for-food programme has been significantly relaxed in that Iraq is no longer restricted to the export of only \$ 2 billions worth of oil every six months. It can now sell as much oil as it wants to pay for imports of



Saddam Hussein with Syria's Prime Minister, Mustafa Mero... clearing the way.

Syria and Iraq have made major moves to consolidate the revival of their relations, writes Kesava Menon.

food, medicines and other humanitarian goods. So Syria's share is relatively marginal and the two countries hope to double their trade within a short period. They signed a free trade agreement this February.

Iraq has conferred another huge benefit on Syria. An estimated 150,000 barrels a day of Iraqi crude is being pumped through the old existing pipeline between Kirkuk (Iraq) and Banias. The availability of this virtually free oil enables Syria to export almost all of its own oil production. Now the two countries are exploring the possibility of laying down a new oil pipeline. Under these circumstances, Syria has very little incentive to participate in the smart sanctions programme under which the U.S. is proposing that Iraq's

neighbours will be compensated for trade losses if they agree to cooperate in closely monitoring Iraqi imports. This compensation is proposed to be paid out of the U.N. escrow account into which Iraq's legal oil revenues are deposited. There is hardly any incentive for Syria to go through the complicated procedures for obtaining compensation from the escrow fund when it is already enjoying the benefits of direct trade with Iraq.

Theoretically, the U.S. could apply a lot of strategic and political pressures on Damascus to make it comply with the smart sanctions scheme. The times are, however, not such that the U.S. has too much leeway to use its muscle against potentially-

friendly Arab states. With its partiality for Israel having become ever more blatant as the Palestinian uprising intensifies, the U.S. cannot afford to add fuel to the animosity that the Arab world currently feels towards it.

The Syrian Government might exercise strict control over its people but it is not in a position to join the U.S. in pressuring Iraq at a time when Washington is (through its refusal to rein in Israel) indirectly pressuring the Palestinians.

Syria and Iraq recently made major moves to consolidate the revival of their relations when the former's Prime Minister, Mr. Mohammed Mustafa Mero, visited Baghdad on August 13. Besides discussions on the proposed new pipeline, the two countries also signed a series of economic cooperation agreements and a memorandum of understanding between their respective Foreign Ministries.

The two countries have decided to set up seven new joint pharmaceutical and industrial companies. However, evidence of how the rapprochement between Syria and Iraq was being viewed in the Arab world occurred soon after Mr. Mero's return to Damascus.

Iraq's Vice-President, Taha Yassin Ramadhan, virtually followed Mr. Mero to Damascus for discussions with Syria's President, Mr. Bashar al-Assad. Since Mr. Bashar had been in Kuwait till the day before, his meeting with Mr. Ramadhan immediately set off speculation. The belief was that Syria was not just acting as a mediator between Iraq and Kuwait but that it might have actually been on the verge of pulling off a miraculous reconciliation between the two.

Kuwait immediately squelched the rumours by explaining that any discussions on the Iraq issue that might have come up during Mr. Bashar's visit were routine in nature and Baghdad too dampened expectations by stating that Mr. Ramadhan's visit had been merely a followup to Mr. Mero's. Routine it might be for the moment but the path that Syria has decided to follow is heading in a direction quite different from that in which a recent ally would have liked it to go.

West Asia threatens to sink racism meet

FROM RICHARD WADDINGTON

Durban, Sept. 1 (Reuters): West Asia tensions threatened to sink a UN conference against racism today despite pleas by Nelson Mandela to seize the chance to end the contagion of discrimination.

Mandela, the father of South Africa's multi-racial democracy, made an impassioned call for delegates to put aside differences and act to rid the world of a disease that was an "ailment of the mind and the soul."

"It kills many more than any contagion. It dehumanises anyone it touches," the 83-year-old former South African President said in a recorded speech to the second day of the UN Conference Against Racism. Despite Mandela's words, attention focused on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat again branding Israel as racist.

Reparations to Africans for centuries of slavery also remained a stumbling block.

Arafat, who yesterday had accused Israel of ethnic cleansing by driving Palestinians from their homes in the occupied territories,

repeated the charge today.

"The ugliness of these Israeli racist policies and practices against the Palestinian people has become manifest and obvious during the Intifada," he said.

He was referring to the 11-month-old Palestinian uprising against Israeli military occupation in which at least 548 Palestinians and 157 Israelis have been killed. Today the Palestinians accused Israel of assassinating a senior official in a car blast in Gaza. Israel denied responsibility.

Annan concern

UN secretary general Kofi Annan warned rows over West Asia — Arab states want a condemnation of Israel included in the final declaration — and controversy over how to handle the historic issue of slavery threatened the conference.

African and Caribbean states want a formal apology and some countries are pressing for financial reparations.

"The conference has given the world an opportunity to face the issue of racism squarely. But two issues threaten consensus — the

West Asia and slavery," Annan told a news conference shortly before he left Durban for Kinshasa.

German foreign minister Joschka Fischer, the most senior representative of the G8 states in Durban said it risked failure because of "singularising Israel" and "one-sided condemnations".

The draft declaration does not equate the Israeli doctrine of Zionism with racism but it says: "Foreign occupation founded on settlements... (is) a new kind of apartheid, a crime against humanity."

The United States, Canada and Israel have only junior level delegations at the meeting, attended by some 6,000 delegates from 153 countries, in protest at what they see as anti-Israeli bias.

Veteran Cuban leader Fidel Castro told the conference nobody had the right to dictate to a UN gathering. The 75-year-old President charged Israel with "genocide" over the number of Palestinian deaths since the uprising began last October. Castro also said rich states ought to pay compensation for slavery and exploitation of the Third World.

- 2 SEP 2001

Sharon in Moscow for W Asia talks

REUTERS *W* *S-5*

MOSCOW, Sept. 2. — Mr Ariel Sharon is scheduled to arrive in Moscow today for talks on the West Asia crisis. The Iranian defence minister will be there with a shopping list topped by state-of-the-art Russian arms.

The Israeli Prime Minister has announced no plans to meet Iran's Admiral Ali Shamkhani during their extended stays here. Analysts say the timing of the trips highlights the contradictions in Moscow's foreign policy.

Iran shares Moscow's deep suspicion of the Taliban movement in Afghanistan and its desire to prevent Sunni fundamentalism from spreading into Central Asian republics that border Russia.

But Israel, a longstanding Iranian adversary in West Asia, is also trying to use Islamic extremism to win Russian support. It has even drawn parallels between its actions in the Palestinian territories and Russia's crackdown in rebel Chechnya, though that got short shrift in Moscow.

Izar-Tass news agency quoted Palestinian sources at the weekend as saying a high-level team would also be in Moscow during Mr Sharon's visit.

THE STATEMENT

SEP 2 2001

PLO leader dies in shelling

Ramallah, August 27

THE LEADER of a small PLO faction was killed on Monday when rocket fire from three Israeli helicopters hit his office. Israel said the shelling was an "initiated action." The man killed was Mustafa Zibri, widely known as Abu Ali Mustafa. He was the leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a radical PLO faction that opposes peace talks with Israel. Israel blames Zibri for eight bombing attacks. His assassination was the highest profile killing in Israel since violence erupted last September.

The Palestinians accused Israel of further escalation of the violence. "This is very dangerous," Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's spokesman, Nabil Aburdeneh, said of Monday's killing. "This policy of assassinations, which is being conducted with a green light from

the US, will push the area into a new cycle of violence and danger."

Zibri was in his office, near Arafat's headquarters in the West Bank town of Ramallah, when rocket fire hit the building, Palestinian security officials said. He was killed instantly, doctors said. The missiles blew out two corner windows, and smoke blackened the facade. The Israeli army said in a statement that the group's headquarters were shelled in an "initiated action." The army said the PLO faction has been responsible for dozens of attacks on Israelis, including a failed bombing in Jerusalem last week.

More than 50 Palestinians have been killed in pinpointed Israeli attacks in the last 11 months of fighting, most of them militants suspected of involvement in attacks on Israelis. However, some of the victims have been bystanders, including two children.

Earlier on Monday, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said he would arrange truce talks with Arafat, despite a violent weekend during which seven Israelis and four Palestinians were killed. However, it was not clear whether the Palestinians would attend such talks after Zibri's death.

Israel's use of US-made warplanes in the West Asia conflict brought new charges from the Palestinians that the US Government is leaning heavily in Israel's favour. In weekend airstrikes, Israel sent US-made F-15 and F-16 warplanes into action, dropping bombs on police buildings in three Palestinian towns. The weekend's events began before dawn on Saturday, when two Palestinian militants infiltrated an Israeli army base in the Gaza Strip and opened fire. They killed three Israeli soldiers and wounded seven before being shot dead

by soldiers at the base.

Later that day, an Israeli couple was killed in an ambush by Palestinian gunmen north of Jerusalem. The woman's brother was critically wounded, and later died of his injuries. The couple's infant children were lightly hurt.

In response, Israeli warplanes bombed three Palestinian police buildings. In one of the targeted towns, Gaza City, Palestinians showed a metal fragment with the name of a US-made bomb. Army bulldozers leveled a fourth police installation, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. A Palestinian policeman was killed by Israeli fire in the Israeli incursion into Rafah. On Sunday, an Israeli was killed as he made a business transaction with a Palestinian at the edge of the West Bank, near the Palestinian town of Tulkarem.

Reuters

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

28 AUG 2001

Rivals agree to discuss peace

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA, AUG. 21. Israel and the Palestinians have both agreed, albeit tentatively on the part of the former, to hold talks aimed at the drawing up of a cease-fire agreement.

The Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, and the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, gave their assent to such a meeting in separate discussions with the German Foreign Minister, Mr. Joschka Fischer, today. The breakthrough occurred through the finessing of the quite distinct positions taken by the two sides.

These talks, planned to be held soon either in Berlin or one of the regional capitals (Cairo is a possibility), will be about the ways and means of reaching a cease-fire agreement. In the very fact of giving his assent to any talks at all, Mr. Sharon has moved from his position that Israel will hold talks only after the Palestinian Authority had implemented an earlier cease-fire agreement.

At the same time, Mr. Arafat has also moved from his position that talks should be held immediately on the substantive issues in contention between the two sides even if the cease-fire was not turning out to be free of violations. Both the key phrases — "talks" and "cease-fire" — have been brought together to give Israel and the Palestinian Authority



The Israeli Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres (left), and the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat in this combo photo. — AFP

a ladder that they could use to climb down from their rigid positions.

While Mr. Fischer was the person who actually got both leaders to go public and announce their assent to the talks, the initiative for a "talk towards a cease fire" was taken by Israel's Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres. Mr. Peres, who will be Mr. Arafat's interlocutor if the talks are held, has been pressing his Prime Minister and the rest of the Cabinet to understand that they did need to offer some sort of initiative to the Palestinians and that Israel could expect no progress if it stood by its position that any kind of talks

would only begin once and if the Palestinians stopped all violence.

Mr. Peres has been talking broadly of a phased cease-fire plan whereby peace would be restored area by area. Since the forms of violence in each segment of the Palestinian territory have been different, there would be different modes of implementing a cease-fire in each of them. Several other plans have been floated by Israeli politicians.

Talking to the press after his meeting with Mr. Arafat, Mr. Fischer said that his offices were always open to the Israelis and the Palestinians if they wanted to

hold talks either directly or through intermediaries. But he also hinted that there were other places much closer, a possible allusion to Cairo since Egypt has also reactivated itself in the search for regional peace.

In any event, this development has some significance to international politics as it is played out in West Asia. Today's breakthrough, however tentative, has been achieved without U.S. efforts and indeed through the services of the European Union — a body that Israel has not been very keen about drawing into regional politics.

The million dollar question is whether today's tentative consensus will amount to anything. A bomb went off in the heart of Jerusalem, fortunately causing no casualties, even as Mr. Fischer was talking to Mr. Sharon.

If there is a major militant strike by the Palestinians, or if there is a major Israeli military action with the potential to invite retaliatory strikes, this tentative effort might collapse.

In a way, the whole situation has been left in the hands of would-be suicide bombers. On the other hand, the two sides have battered each other so much over the past 11 months that they might just be prepared to seek any way to get out of the situation.

THE HINDU
22 AUG 2001

Bloodletting in West Asia

By Chinmaya R. Gharekhan

NO ONE is talking any more of peace in West Asia. The maximum that is hoped for is a lull in the daily bloodletting. The parties most directly concerned, the Israelis and the Palestinians, are so involved in the cycle of violence and counter violence that has become their daily life that they do not have the time to reflect on any long term or even medium term strategy for even a ceasefire, let alone peace. The only external agency which can and ought to do something, namely the United States, seems to have run out of ideas and the desire to arrest the slide which is threatening to engulf the entire region.

The suicide bombing in Jerusalem on August 10 has taken the crisis to an extraordinarily high level. While the Israeli Government had to 'do something' to satisfy public opinion, its takeover of Orient House and flying of the Israeli flag over it was calculated to generate the kind of response from Palestinian extremists which the Israeli right would use to demand and justify more disproportionate reprisals against the Palestinian Authority institutions which had nothing to do with the terrorist attacks. It would make extremists of moderate Palestinians, just as the Jerusalem attack contributed to radicalising sections of the Israeli left.

The situation has become particularly alarming since responsible Israelis are openly calling for the overthrow of the Palestinian Authority and even of Mr. Yasser Arafat. The former Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, called for a change saying it was simply impossible to negotiate peace with Mr. Arafat. The present Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, has employed any number of undiplomatic adjectives to describe Mr. Arafat. Others have expressed preference for talking to a different leadership, on the stated premise that it was bound to be more moderate. They, of course, know not what they are saying. They ought to realise that if there is one Palestinian who can sell an unpopular settlement to his people — and any deal will be unpopular on both sides — it is Mr. Arafat. No one is indispensable; but even the *New York Times*, in an editorial, described Mr. Arafat as "the only realistic

Palestinian negotiating partner".

After the failed Camp David summit talks of July 2000, the media and leaders in Israel and America spoke *ad nauseum* about how Mr. Arafat missed a golden opportunity to strike a deal that he was not likely ever again to be offered. It is a repeat of that old Abba Eban song of the Palestinians never missing an opportunity of missing an opportunity. Enough revisionist writing has come out over the past few weeks about Camp David credibly challenging the accounts that Mr. Barak had

gees at Sabra and Shatilla camps in Lebanon in 1982 as well as his deliberately provocative visit to the Haram El Sharif in the Old City in September last year, about the genuineness of his declared wish for peace. At least one important moderate Arab leader has publicly said that there was no prospect of peace so long as Mr. Sharon remained in power.

On the Palestinian side, Mr. Arafat is accused of not reining in the terrorists, of not incarcerating those on Israel's wanted list, indeed of trying to win on the 'battle field'

The mistrust between the Israelis and the Palestinians has been intensified as a result of the events of the past nine months. They need external help which the U.S. alone can extend.

offered Mr. Arafat 'the moon'. What Mr. Barak had offered was three disconnected areas in the West Bank with numerous settlements to remain in place. Mr. Robert Malley, a member of the small American team at Camp David, has stated that no other Arab party — not Sadat's Egypt nor King Hussein's Jordan — came even close to the kind of compromises that Mr. Arafat was prepared to offer at Camp David. Of course, this is not to take anything away from the undoubtedly courageous package which Mr. Barak put on the table. But, as Mr. Malley says in his article in the *New York Times*, the measure of Israel's concessions was not how far it moved from its original position but how far it moved towards a fair solution. As for Camp David, Mr. Henry Kissinger aptly concludes in his new book, "Does America need a foreign policy?", it turned the Middle East from a difficult problem into an intractable one.

As things are at present, it is not easy to see how the violence can be ended. On the Israeli side, it is undeniable that a large number of innocent lives have been lost as a result of terrorist attacks for which there can be no justification. Nor can the policy of 'targeted assassinations' by official Israeli agencies be justified. One can be excused for wondering, given Mr. Sharon's background of at least indirect responsibility for the massacres of Palestinian refu-

raelis of reoccupying these territories by force and of driving the 'Tunis' leadership away, out of Palestine. There is no surer recipe for disaster.

While things cannot go on like this forever, they probably will go on for long. Some 75 per cent of the Israeli population supports targeted assassinations and a similar percentage on the Palestinians supports suicide bombings. There does not seem to be any pressure on Mr. Sharon, domestic or external, to try for a breakthrough. After all, Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu is waiting in the wings. Mr. Arafat, for his part, would dearly like to have an independent Palestinian state recognised by everyone, including the U.S. and Israel. He is certainly not young but he is not about to accept just any deal. He is realistic enough to realise that he will never get all that he wants, but he is unlikely to humiliate himself or his people. It would be unrealistic for Israelis to expect a complete change of heart among the Palestinians in their feelings towards the Israelis. Israelis and Palestinians will not be able to break the deadlock by themselves, through bilateral contacts alone. The mistrust between the two peoples has been intensified as a result of the events of the past nine months. They, particularly the Palestinians, need external help which the U.S. alone is in a position to extend. The Americans can be excused for not wanting to burn their fingers but they have no choice, they will have to come in, sooner or later. They have already embraced the concept of 'monitors'; they should work harder to make Israel agree to it. The closures will have to be ended, not just eased. Mr. Arafat will have to make a credible effort to curb violence. A package, demanding concessions from both and offering something to each, will have to be elaborated. Such a package does exist in the form of the Mitchell Commission report which both sides claim to have accepted. It or a modification of it needs to be implemented quickly. The issues are such that any so-called final settlement is bound to leave significant sections on both sides deeply unhappy. The only theoretical solution which can bring real peace is a truly, *bi-national* state, but that is a chimera.

TRENCH WAR OF ANGST IN WEST ASIA

THE ISRAELI LEADER, Mr. Ariel Sharon, has once again set a callous agenda in his trench warfare that is sustained by a strong undercurrent of emotional prejudices against the Palestinians. In the face of opposition by the United States, the Jewish nation's patron, Mr. Sharon says he will not renounce his plans for a systematic "target killing" of all suspected Palestinian purveyors of anti-Israel terror. For an ultra-nationalist hawk like him, a policy of liquidation is the amoral means to a political objective of reducing the fears of serial attacks on the Jews. Yet, it is Mr. Sharon's policy that the Palestinian extremists like the Hamas and others cite in justification of their terror campaign against the Jewish state. The latest Palestinian suicide-bombing at a pizzeria in Jerusalem has prompted Israel to launch reprisal air strikes and also seize a Palestinian political 'headquarters' in the predominantly Arab segment of the city. Israel's dastardly retaliation has been denounced by major powers. Yet, calling upon the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, to restrain the terrorists in these circumstances, the U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush, has urged both the Palestinian Authority and Israel to "demonstrate foresight and responsibility". The Jewish authorities had, in the first place, embarked upon missile strikes against the perceived chieftains of some Palestinian death squads. Mr. Arafat's nominal administration, too, made no secret of its refusal to rein in the proactive Palestinian-Hamas groups. The main thrust of the pan-Arab argument was that the presumptive squads of archetypal Palestinian anarchists had risen to resist the alleged reign of terror unleashed by the Jewish settlers living in illegal possession of enclaves that were already handed by Tel Aviv to the Authority under Mr. Arafat's control. It is against this psycho-politics of the region that the Palestinians have now stepped up their appeals to the U.S. to organise international monitors

who might be able to dampen the spirit of the merchants of terror.

The U.S., on its part, is convinced that international monitors can play a useful role only if both Mr. Sharon and Mr. Arafat, instead of just the Palestinian leader, choose to requisition peace-sentinels. However, the "Mitchell process" is being unambiguously commended by the Bush administration, which only recently decided in a measured manner to revive the U.S.' role in promoting a settlement of the basic Jewish-Palestinian political dispute. The "Mitchell process", named after a former U.S. Senator who led a team that propounded a peace formula, consists of three sequential possibilities. A definitive period of truce is to be followed by efforts from both sides to build mutual trust and resume the stalled negotiations towards a final settlement. However, the truce, brokered by the U.S. last June, has already gone up in smoke. Yet, full-scale war as an alternative is plainly stupid.

The challenges of conventional diplomacy in a volatile region like West Asia cannot also be exaggerated. Witness the futile controversy sought to be raised by some Jewish opinion-makers through their condemnation of a United Nations observer team that supposedly failed to prevent the abduction of a few Israeli soldiers by the Arabist Hizbullah guerillas in the Lebanese sector last year. Israel should know that it is pointless blaming the international monitors, in this case some Indian soldiers on a U.N. assignment, for an incident that they were not mandated or armed to prevent. Yet, the relevance of the international community as a possible catalyst of a peaceful solution in West Asia is not in doubt. Arguably, the outlines of a possible Israeli-Palestinian settlement must encompass the spirit of compromise that was evident in the Oslo process of the 1990s. The Jews as also the Palestinians are entitled to sovereign states of their own on the basis of an agreed land-sharing

THE HINDU

13 AUG 2001

World powers slam Israeli retaliation

REUTERS

JERUSALEM, Aug. 11. — Major world powers have blasted Israel for its takeover of Palestinian headquarters in Arab East Jerusalem in response to a Palestinian suicide bombing in the Jewish western part of the city.

Israeli police seized Orient House, the main East Jerusalem office of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, and re-occupied the Palestinian Governor's building in the nearby village of Abu Dis in a bloodless overnight raid yesterday.

The moves were a politically charged reply to a suicide bombing that killed 19 people and wounded about 100 at a pizza parlour on Thursday. USA criticised Israel's reassertion of control over the Palestinian areas and branded the step a "political escalation" that sabotaged a negotiated settlement.

"We are concerned about the Israeli action against Orient House and the Palestinian town of Abu Dis," a state department official said, reading from a prepared script. "These actions represent a political escalation, undermine faith and confidence in a negotiated settlement of this conflict and increase the risk of further deterioration of the political situation."

Israeli police today violently broke up a demonstration outside Orient House while Mr Yasser Arafat called for world pressure on Israel to end its occupation of the building, adds AFP from Gaza City. Some 100 protesters tried to approach the building, protected by police barricades, chanting nationalist slogans but were soon driven back. Israeli radio said 12 people were arrested in the scuffles. Meanwhile, Mr Arafat has written to Mr



A wounded Israeli policeman being tended to after clashes broke out in East Jerusalem on Saturday.
— AP/PTI

George W Bush, Mr Vladimir Putin, Mr Jiang Zemin and Mr Kofi Annan, said Mr Saeb Erakat, chief Palestinian peace negotiator.)

Orient House provocative.

While Israel buried its dead, Russian foreign minister Mr Igor Ivanov held urgent telephone talks with top Israeli and Palestinian, US and UN officials, and warned of impending catastrophe if the current cycle of bloodshed is not halted. "West Asia is crossing a dangerous line," Mr Ivanov said in an interview released by his ministry. "The most urgent thing to do is to prevent the situation from degenerating." France also slammed the Israeli takeover, noting that it violated the 1993 Oslo interim peace deal, now moribund.

"It is likely to stoke tensions between the two communities. We hope this measure will be reversed as soon as possible," a French foreign ministry spokesman said. Israel's crackdown was a direct challenge to Palestinian claims to East Jerusalem as

the capital of a future state.

Police took over other Palestinian offices in and around East Jerusalem and aircraft flattened a police post in the West Bank in a missile strike. Israel said these were "measured" steps to avoid unnecessary bloodshed.

The Palestinian leadership, called the takeover a "contemptuous expression of the arrogance of power. The Palestinian leadership regards this aggression as unacceptable and one that will not pass silently."

2 Palestinians dead: As violent repercussions continued to be felt from Thursday's Palestinian suicide bomb attack in Jerusalem, two Palestinians died from their wounds after Israeli soldiers shot them during clashes in the Gaza Strip, adds AFP.

The two were among eight wounded during violence near the Karni checkpoint yesterday evening.

Palestinian offices in Jerusalem closed

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), AUG. 10. Israel police and special forces personnel moved into Orient House, the unofficial headquarters of the Palestine Liberation Organisation in the city, and several other offices of the Palestinian Authority in East Jerusalem in the early hours of Friday. This step appears to be in retaliation for the suicide bomb attack in Jerusalem yesterday in which 18 people (including six children) were killed and nearly 90 injured, though the Israeli authorities say that their objective was to motivate the Authority to crack down on terrorism. The closure of several offices might be regarded as a relatively tame or less than expected bloody reprisal for a horrific attack but it is nevertheless a powerful political move.

Despite Israeli objections, Orient House has functioned as the unofficial headquarters of the PLO in Jerusalem and the late Faisal Hussein, who used to run it, made a habit of meeting diplomats and the media there. Israel, for all its resentment at Orient House functioning in this manner, had closed it down only once before, in 1997, after the Oslo processes got underway.

This morning, Israeli police and special forces made their way into the building and closed down several offices. A few Palestinians were reportedly detained and there are unconfirmed reports that an Uzi sub-machine gun was recovered from the premises.

Israel's security services also closed down nine offices of the Palestinian Authority in other parts of East Jerusalem. Although Israel claims that all of Jerusalem is under its exclusive control, it has in fact turned a blind eye to the functioning of several Palestinian Authority departments (including, according to some sources, the criminal investigation department) in the Arab-populated parts of East Jerusalem. Among the nine offices closed down was the "Governorate" of Abu Dis, a village adjacent to Jerusalem or a suburb of it, depending on the point of view.

Abu Dis has often found mention in the drafts of the negotiations as the place where the Palestinians would set up their Capitol once their state became a reality. In fact, work is well underway for the construction of the building that is to house the Parliament-to-be.

Abu Dis does not fall into the area that has been handed over to full Palestinian control but the PA

had nevertheless been allowed to set up a Governor's office and several guard buildings around it. Israel accuses the Palestinian security services operating out of these buildings of having assisted suicide bombers.

An hour after mid-night last night, Israeli F-16s also levelled a police station with missiles. No casualties were reported since police stations and Government buildings in most towns under Palestinian control had been evacuated on the apprehension that such attacks would take place. While the decision for all the above actions has been taken by the Cabinet of the Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, the Israeli media has reported that their military is pressing for powerful and prolonged aggressive action.

An Israeli attack aimed at the killing of Palestinians can apparently not be ruled out, especially if another suicide bomber strikes soon. There is reason to believe that such a bomber has already set out on his mission. After yesterday's bombing, both Hamas and Islamic Jihad claimed the "martyr" as their own man, only for Islamic Jihad to later clarify that they had made a mistake. The bomber was indeed a Hamas man but Islamic Jihad had initially thought that the attack had been carried out by one of its cadres who had already been sent on a mission.

While retaining the tough option, Israel is able to make political capital out of the universal condemnation of Palestinian terror tactics that followed yesterday's strike. Simultaneously, Israel is also sending out the message that it will whittle down Palestinian aspirations and even the gains they have so far made.

The Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, condemned the suicide bomb attack and asked Israel to join him in a fresh declaration of cease-fire (Israel refused to do so) that would be monitored by international observers. But Israel insists that Mr. Arafat is not taking action at anywhere near the level required to prevent acts of terrorism. For his part, Mr. Arafat seems to be caught between the demands of Israel, and now of the U.S. as well, that he take prompt action and the attitude of his people.

The Palestinians say that they are being forced into terrorist activity by Israel that keeps them under siege and offers no hope for the future.

4D-12 Israeli tanks rumble into Gaza Strip 518

JERUSALEM, AUG 4. Israeli tanks and bulldozers entered Palestinian-controlled territory in the Gaza Strip on Saturday, destroying a Palestinian police post after several mortar shells were fired a day earlier at a nearby Jewish settlement.

A car exploded outside the offices of Marwan Barghouti, a local representative of the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement in Ramallah in the West Bank. Witnesses said two tank shells hit the car, injuring at least one passerby. The Israeli army had no immediate comment.

The first tank shell missed the car, allowing its driver, Fatah activist Mohammed Abu Hanaweh, to escape before the second shell struck. The shells were fired from the nearby Jewish settlement of Psagot, which overlooks Ramallah from a hill, Palestinian security officials at the scene said. The car belonged to Ahmed Al Faransi, a bodyguard of Barghouti's, Palestinian preventive security sources said.

The police post in Gaza destroyed earlier on Saturday was the source of the mortar fire, which lightly injured a father and son living in the Kfar Darom settlement on Friday, the IDF said. A 45-minute gunbattle between Palestinian gunmen and Israeli troops ensued once the two-story building was levelled. No injuries were reported from either side.

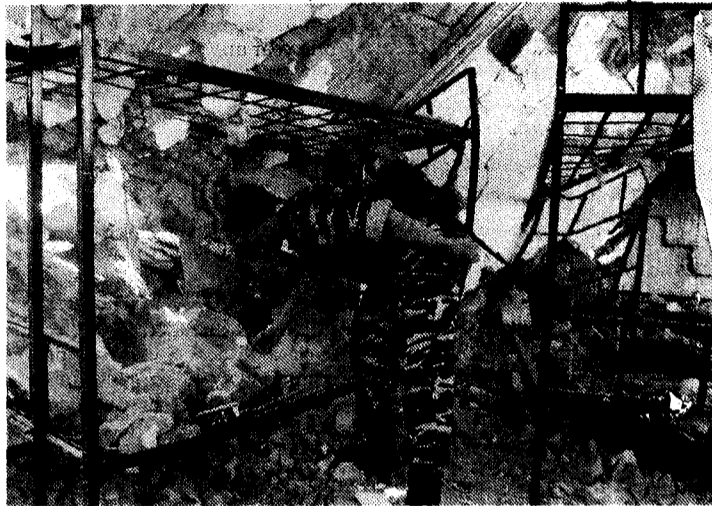
Palestinian security sources said Israeli troops entered two other areas in the Gaza Strip on

Saturday, in Rafah on the southern border with Egypt, and Beit Lahia in the north. The IDF denied the incursions took place. The trials of two suspected collaborators took place in Gaza and in Nablus on Saturday, the hearings continue.

The hunt for suspected collaborators among Palestinians heightened after an Israeli helicopter attack on Nablus last week killed eight Palestinians, including two militants and two children. On Friday a man suspected of collaborating with Israel was shot and killed, apparently by Palestinian gunmen in the outskirts of Bethlehem. Abdullah Abu Alhawa, 56, was the fourth suspected collaborator killed this week.

Palestinian officials have urged a halt to the vigilante attacks, and a statement issued on Friday said the Palestinian Authority alone was responsible for dealing with people "trying to violate the national interest of the Palestinian people." "It is a dangerous phenomenon, no one has the right to take the law into his hands, against a spy or anyone else," said the Palestinian parliamentary Speaker, Mr. Ahmed Queria. "The Palestinian Authority and its security services are the ones responsible for judging these spies according to the law."

Palestinian security courts this week sentenced four Palestinians to death for helping Israel's army carry out deadly attacks against suspected Palestinian militants. The sentences can only be carried



A Palestinian policeman searches in the rubble of his post at Deir al-Balah south of the Gaza Strip, after it was destroyed by Israeli forces on Saturday. — AP

out once Mr. Arafat has given the order. In the West Bank town of Jenin, 60 Palestinians suspected of collaborating with Israel have been arrested, according to Palestinian security officials. At the same time the official Palestinian news agency called for an end to armed attacks against Israel in a statement published on Friday, an unprecedented appeal for restraint in the past 10 months of violence.

Meeting late on Friday, the Palestinian Cabinet continued its call for international observers to be deployed in Palestinian areas. "The world's policy of remaining silent on the Israeli escalation will affect the security and stability of

the region," the Cabinet said in a statement. Israel continues to object to international observers, however, some Israeli officials have suggested that they would accept some form of monitoring by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.

Meanwhile, the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon reasserted his position that a full-fledged peace treaty with the Palestinians is not a possibility now, or at any time in the next few years. "A clear-eyed outlook of the continued state of animosity demands a different approach than the one we have tried so far with the Palestinians," Mr. Sharon said on Friday. — AP

HD-17
578

Extreme prejudice

LAST WEEK Israel pushed its policy of assassinating inimical Palestinians so far down the scale of the tolerable that it threatened to tip beyond the point where equilibrium could be restored. Till it launched a helicopter gunship attack on Tuesday Israel had, with one singular exception, targeted Palestinian militants who were directly involved in terrorist activities. By killing two Hamas political leaders in that Tuesday attack Israel threw open the question whether it would begin targetting personalities higher up in the Palestinian leadership.

On Tuesday, an Israeli Apache helicopter gunship suddenly popped up in the sky above the West Bank town of Nablus and fired missiles through two third-floor windows of a five-storey building. The room in which the missiles exploded housed a research and media outreach centre that was run by a Hamas activist but reportedly not an official branch of the Islamic movement. Jamal Mansour, the person who ran the study centre, his brother, Omar Mansour, another leading Hamas activist of Nablus, Jamal Salim, a journalist and two other Hamas members were killed in the explosion. Two young brothers, aged seven and ten, who were waiting for their parents on the pavement outside the building were also killed in the explosion.

Well over 500 people, the vast majority of them Palestinians, have died in the clashes raging for the past ten months. There have been a number of particularly horrendous incidents, including the deaths of children on both sides, in the course of the random fire-fights, suicide bomb attacks, sniper attacks, rioting, shelling and so forth that has occurred almost on a daily basis in this period. For all that, a different kind of ethical question has been raised by Israel's policy of assassinating or liquidating Palestinians who it believed had carried out, or were planning to carry out, terrorist strikes. About 40 Palestinians are believed to have killed through this type of action.

In the defence it has put up following near unanimous international condemnation of the Nablus incident, Israel has tried to show that the basic thrust of its policy remains



The funeral procession of the Nablus attack victims... Israel exceeds all limits.

Israel has pushed its policy of assassinating inimical Palestinians too far, says Kesava Menon.

unchanged. The Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, took offence at the terms 'liquidation' and 'assassination' being applied to such acts. Fine-tuning Israel's argument that such actions were measures of self-defence, Mr. Peres said it would be inappropriate to apply such terms to "interception operations" that Israel was carrying out against suicide attackers. The ethical question is whether such extra-judicial killings can be carried out especially when neither side has formally declared that it is at war with the other.

Such ethical questions remain to be answered. But so does the question whether

suicide bomb attacks on innocent civilians is justifiable on any grounds whatsoever. That leads on to the counter-question whether people living under conditions of occupation are forced into such levels of despair that they see no point in living and decide that they will take people who are on the side of the occupying force along with them when they go to the great beyond.

Easier to analyse are the political questions thrown up by such incidents, especially the operation that was carried out in Nablus. Except for the one case where it killed a Fatah-affiliated physician in the early days of the current intifada, Israel had largely

'intercepted' ('with extreme prejudice' as spy thrillers would have it) activists who were directly involved in suicide bomb attacks. The most famous of these, though his death occurred a few years ago and well before the start of the intifada, was the 'Engineer' Yahya Ayyash who was reputedly the top expert at bomb-making. Even Israel does not argue that those killed in Nablus had anything to do with the technical side of suicide missions.

What Israel does say is that Jamal Mansour had a big role in selecting would-be suicide bombers, in indoctrinating them and in choosing the time and site of suicide bomb attacks. This is tricky ground. Hamas of course makes no bones about its total rejection of Israel and the extolling of martyrdom is a very important component of its ideology. Israel's argument also appears to be that Jamal Mansour, as a rising political star of Hamas, had the capacity to calculate how to make a terrorist strike achieve the most political value. There are, however, several problems in following this chain of argument.

For one, Hamas has been quite careful about keeping those involved in its political arm in a markedly different compartment from those active in its military arm, the Izzedine al Qassam Brigade. Till Mansour was killed, there had been word from Israel that he straddled the line between the political and military wings. This is all the more peculiar since Mansour was apparently pretty well known for his political activities in the Nablus area. (In the past he has been jailed on political grounds by both Israel and the Palestinian Authority and he was among the 400 activists whom Israel had deported across the Lebanese border in 1992). The office in which the explosion took place reportedly does not function in a clandestine fashion and is under observation all the time from an Israeli military post on a hill-side near Nablus.

If Israel feels itself justified in killing a political activist who was supposedly directly involved in terrorist strikes, then where will it draw the line. At various points in time, it has accused the entire Palestinian leadership including Mr. Yasser Arafat of being connected with terrorist activity.

Defiant Israel defends missile attack

Jerusalem, Aug 7

A DEFIANT Israel on Wednesday defended a missile strike that killed eight Palestinians and which the United States condemned as "excessive."

In the Palestinian-ruled West Bank city of Nablus, where Tuesday's attack took place, thousands of people chanting "Death to Israel" marched in funeral processions. The pale and still slightly bloodied faces of the eight and 10-year-old brothers killed in the attack peeked out of the Palestinian flags used as burial shrouds. Two leaders of the militant Islamic group Hamas were also among those killed.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Defense Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres met for consultations in the face of Palestinian threats of revenge. Israel expressed regret at the deaths of the two children in the attack on a building in Nablus but said it had had no choice but to launch what it called a pre-emptive strike against militants planning attacks on Israelis.

The killing of Palestinian



Mourners demonstrate at the funeral of six Palestinian hardline Islamic activists killed on Tuesday in an Israeli attack on a Hamas office in the West Bank town of Nablus.

youths who had been walking past the office of senior Hamas official Jamal Mansour when the missiles struck, was an acute embarrassment for Israel.

"It would take a miracle, under these circumstances, not to also harm women and children — and you just can't rely on miracles," Israeli opposition leader Yossi Sarid wrote in a front-page commentary in the *Yedioth Ahronoth*.

President Bush spoke to King Abdullah of Jordan by telephone and said the United States urged the parties to reduce the violence. State Department spokesman Charles Hunter called the Israeli attack "a new and dangerous escalation of violence."

"The Israeli action today was excessive. This attack is highly provocative and makes peace efforts much more difficult," he said. The US brokered a cease-fire in mid-June that never took hold. The Palestinian Authority, which has accused Israel of waging an assassination campaign that has killed more than 40 Palestinian activists since the start of an uprising for independence last September, declared two days of mourning.

Reuters

INDUSTRIAL