

Palestine/Israel: Ariel Sharon, Rot in Peace

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Ariel Sharon died eight years ago (after a botched medical procedure put him in an irreversible coma). This past weekend, the corpse stopped breathing. Big freaking deal.

What makes it a big deal is how the media and governing elites treat it. “The tough warrior for Israel who became a pioneer for peace,” “military hero turned statesman,” and all the rest of it. Joseph Biden will head up the U.S. delegation appointed by president Obama to Sharon’s funeral – on Biden’s last visit, the Israeli government deliberately humiliated him and the United States by announcing another settlement expansion.

Give the scum his due. It’s not an easy thing for a military-political figure in a rather small country to rise to the level of a full world-class war criminal, but Sharon achieved it. His field of operations could never match the sheer global scale open to Kissinger, Nixon, the Clintons and the Bushes, but he made the most of what he had. Just consider a few high points in a mass killer’s career.

In 1953, his “elite” military Unit 101 massacred 170 or so civilians in the Arab village of Qibya. In 1971, he organized the bulldozing of a wide swath of homes in the already overcrowded Gaza strip in the process of crushing the Palestine Liberation Organization there. But his crowning moment was the invasion of Lebanon in 1982. While prime minister Begin proclaimed (and apparently believed) that Israel would occupy only a several-mile zone for border security, Sharon drove all the way to Beirut, laid siege to the city and organized Phalangist militias to massacre an unknown number of Palestinian civilians (somewhere between 800 and several thousand, probably) in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. [1]

Israel’s Lebanon debacle drove Begin (a murderous figure in his own right) into a deep depression from which he never recovered. That gave Sharon, after his own political rehabilitation, the opening to take over Begin’s rightwing Likud party. In 2000, just in time to sabotage any possibility of successful peace negotiations brokered by U.S. President Bill Clinton, Sharon marched onto the grounds of the al-Aqsa mosque accompanied by a huge military detachment, touching off the Second Palestinian Intifadah with horrific civilian casualties on all sides.

Sharon was responsible for the massacre of Palestinian civilians in refugee camps.

He is widely credited, though it is unlikely ever to be proven, with masterminding the radiation-poising assassination of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. (And while it’s been mostly forgotten, the Sabra and Shatila slaughter of 1982 was triggered by Phalangist revenge for the murder of their leader Bashir Gemayel, shortly after a reportedly angry meeting with Israeli officers over their intention to stay in Lebanon for an extended time...)

Ultimately, Sharon got his peace statesman badge with the “unilateral Israeli withdrawal” from Gaza, with the purpose freeing the army from the burden of protecting Israeli settlements and turning the place into a free-fire zone. Not long afterward, his own demise came before he could reap the peace prize he may have craved or the war crimes trials he so richly merited.

The destructive legacy of Ariel Sharon, may he rot in peace, will last for decades. He was truly a living modern Golem.

David Finkel, January 13, 2014

P.S.

* <http://www.solidarity-us.org/site/node/4083>

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Footnotes

[1] For a Palestinian memory of the 1982 massacre, see Reuters: available on ESSF (article 30828), [Palestine/Israel: No Tears for Sharon at Site of Sabra and Shatila Massacre](#).