



Dome of the Rock

Al Aqsa

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Al Aqsa Mosque

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Sheikh Yassin – Martyrdom of a Great Leader

At the age of 12, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin witnessed the 'Nakba' catastrophe of his people when he, with his family and 700, 000 other Palestinians, were forced out of their homes in 1948 when Israel was created. His family fled to Gaza seeking refuge. A tragic accident during his teens left him quadriplegic and he was wheelchair bound for the remainder of his life.

Despite his disability, Sheikh Yassin spent time studying in Cairo before returning to Gaza to work as an Islamic teacher and community worker involved in the social welfare of the Palestinians. During 1973, he founded a movement called al-Mujama al-Islami (the Islamic Charitable League) which was involved in health and educational programmes; opening mosques; hospitals; and libraries and other philanthropic work that benefited hundreds of thousands.

During the early 1980's, Sheikh Yassin began the first real struggles for freedom for Palestine. His work with Hamas began during the time of the First Intifada, when his movement took on the identity 'HAMAS' is an Arabic acronym for "Islamic Resistance Movement". Since that time, Sheikh Yassin has been the Hamas spiritual. One wing of Hamas developed in to a resistance movement against the brutal occupation of Palestine.

Sheikh Yassin earned the status of a revered leader in Palestine and the Arab world despite his weak physical condition. He was in need of assistance with all daily activities; he suffered from muscular deterioration; he had chronic breathing problems and some loss of hearing and sight. Despite this, he was blessed with a family and he was the father of 11 children.

Following the beginning of the First Intifada, Hamas' real struggle for liberation began. Sheikh Yassin never accepted the borders of Israel or Israel's right to exist as an exclusive racist Jewish State. Hamas began retaliating against Israel's brutality. In May 1989, Sheikh Yassin was arrested and sentenced to life in prison. He was eventually freed 8 years later at the request of Jordan.

Following the start of the second Intifada, the scale of the brutality, violence and aggression against the Palestinian people drew a relentless

resistance from all Palestinians and Hamas. In a bid for peace, Hamas launched a cease-fire with the Israelis and observed unilateral truce for fifty days to give peace a chance. Israel rejected the ceasefire and continued to massacre Palestinians in cold blood for the entire period until the ceasefire broke down.

Sheikh Yassin was assassinated on 22 March 2004 when Israel helicopters fired missiles directly at him as he left a mosque after Fajr prayers near his house in Gaza City. Not only the Palestinians, but the world mourns his death. Israel justified their actions by branding him a terrorist. Yet to millions who seek justice for Palestine, Sheikh Yassin remains a symbol of resistance against the most brutal and powerful army in the region.

Friends of Al-Aqsa called a vigil out side 10 Downing Street on the day of his death in silent protest at the atrocity. Programmes were organised all over England and the world on the Friday to commemorate him. Friends of Al-Aqsa also organised a national rally in Leicester to condemn the murder. Chair of Friends of Al-Aqsa, Ismail Patel, attended a session at the House of Commons intended to discuss the Middle East crisis. A one minute silence was observed at this meeting in memory of Sheikh Yassin.

Bazaar

Following last years great success, Friends of Al-Aqsa will be holding a bazaar on Sunday 23 May 2004 at St. Savioures Neighborhood Centre, Whinchat Road, Leicester.

The bazaar to start at 10 am and is only for women and children.

The Terrorist State of Israel

Israel is quick to call all Palestinians who dare to defend themselves terrorists, yet Israel continues with state terrorism. Israel has stepped its policies of murdering Palestinians, illegally confiscating land, imprisoning people without fair and independent trials, attacking unarmed and innocent civilians, opening live fire indiscriminately, demolishing houses without cause, and in general treating Palestinians in an inhumane way.

Israel's latest, while he left the mosque after Fajr prayers. Israel labelled Sheikh Yassin a terrorist, but in fact he was a beloved spiritual leader to the Palestinians, and revered world-side by the international Muslim community.

Since Israel's cowardly act of terrorism, in assassinating the 67 year old Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, who was a wheelchair bound quadriplegic, the Israeli occupying forces have killed 70 other Palestinians. Israel's terrorist actions do not stop at harming individuals but are terrorisation an entire Palestinian people.

Al-Aqsa Under Attack

Attacks on Masjid Al-Aqsa following Friday Jumm'ah prayers have become more frequent and intense over the past months. Israeli forces and police have attacked unarmed peaceful worshippers with bullets, stun grenades, and tear gas.

The attack on Friday 9 April was reported by the press a started by Palestinians throwing stones. However, eye witnesses stated that no stones were thrown and that the attacks were completely unprovoked in continuing efforts by the apartheid Israeli regime to intimidate Muslim worshippers. The Israeli forces which already stops those under 45 years of age to pray in Al-Aqsa, showed no pity at the site of elderly men and women petrified by the attacks.

Israel's desire to dominate and control the entirety of Jerusalem illegally as their capital is no secret. Israel has stepped up its campaign to gain control of vital areas by increasing the sizes of settlements surrounding the city and by moving Israeli's into Arab neighbourhoods in a bid to drive the residents away. In the Arab city of Silwan, at the beginning of April, armed Israeli settlers moved in to the midst of the Arabs as the start of a campaign to establish Jewish only area's in the city, which can then expand pushing Palestinians away.

Sharon Vows to Expel all Arabs

In a recent interview, Ariel Sharon outlined his plan to expel all Arab living 'illegally' within Israel. Sharon is waiting for the completion of the apartheid wall being built across Palestinian lands, before the Israeli forces begin to expel all Arabs whom they deem to be settled in Israel 'illegally'. He recognises that these Palestinians are refugees who are seeking to return to their rightful land, and outlines his brutal plan to evict them once more, this time making it extremely difficult for them to return at all.

In that interview, Sharon also threatened that Yasser Arafat was not immune from assassination by the Israeli government. Although the Israeli government shows no regard for Palestinian life, Sharon stated "Anyone who kills a Jew or harms an Israeli citizen, or sends people to kill Jews, is a marked man."

Jews Immigrating to Israel Hits 15 Year Low

Israel's biggest problem is the rate of growth of the Arab and Palestinian population. Recent reports suggest that as much as 40% of Israeli children are Arabs.

Israel addresses this problem by encouraging thousands of Jewish people from all over the world to immigrate to Israel. This mass migration is termed 'aliya' in Hebrew. In 2002, Israel transferred 34,000 Jewish people from around the world into its borders. Last year, they figures were down to a low of 23,000. Since the second Intifada began, immigration fell by 50%.

During the 1990s, between 70,000 and 200,000 people immigrated to Israel each year. Many were from the former Soviet Union, enticed to Israel with promises of a better life. The current violence in Israel and the territory it occupies has diminished the promise of a bright future. Still, Israel works tirelessly to attract Jewish immigrants from all over the world to move to Israel, providing for all their needs and expenses, and giving them land that rightfully belongs to the Palestinian people. Yet when the Palestinian refugees demand the right to return to their land, Israel refuses to allow it.

Intifada Death Toll

Since the beginning of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, 3,888 lives have been lost. The number of Palestinians killed is 2,922 and 897 Israelis. The number of Palestinian injured is around 50,000 a clear evidence of Israel's ceaseless aggression and disproportionate acts of violence against Palestinians, and the lack of regards for Palestinian lives by the occupying forces.

The effect of the occupation on Palestinian children has been especially great. These children are denied even the right to play without the fear of being targeted and shot or arrested. Over the course of the second Intifada, 601 Palestinian children have been killed by Israeli occupation forces.

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