

Israel's Chief of Staff Denounces Policies Against Palestinians, NY Times, October 30, 2003

IDF warns against repeating Abbas mistakes, Ha'aretz, Oct. 29, 2003

Yediot Ahronot Article with Gen. Yaalon's Comments, Oct. 29, 2003

**Israel's Chief of Staff Denounces Policies Against Palestinians
By GREG MYRE, NY Times, October 30, 2003**

JERUSALEM, Oct. 29 — Israel's top-ranking soldier said that current hard-line policies against the Palestinians were working against Israel's "strategic interest" and had contributed to the downfall of the previous Palestinian prime minister, Israeli news organizations reported on Wednesday.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was described as "furious" about the comments, attributed to Lt. Gen. Moshe Yaalon, the military's chief of staff, Israeli television stations reported later in the day.

Several leading Israeli newspapers reported the controversial comments, attributing them to a senior military official. But during the day, Israeli reporters identified the source as General Yaalon, who made the remarks to Israeli journalists at a background briefing on Tuesday.

Nahum Barnea, a leading Israeli columnist with the daily Yediot Ahronot, quoted "a military official" as saying comprehensive travel restrictions and curfews imposed on Palestinians were actually harming Israel's overall security.

"It increases hatred for Israel and strengthens the terror organizations," Mr. Barnea wrote, quoting the official.

General Yaalon also said that Israel should have eased punitive measures to bolster the fortunes of the former Palestinian prime minister, Mahmoud Abbas, who resigned on Sept. 6 after only four months on the job.

Mr. Abbas expressed frustration that Mr. Sharon never took concrete steps to convince Palestinians that the Middle East peace plan, initiated in June, would bring about any real improvements in their lives.

"There is no hope, no expectations for the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, nor in Bethlehem and Jericho," Mr. Barnea quoted the "military official" as saying. "In our tactical decisions, we are operating contrary to our strategic interest."

Mr. Sharon, a former general, has said that Palestinian violence must stop before political negotiations can begin, and he has supported tough military action since he came to power in March 2001.

In previous public statements, General Yaalon has supported strong military action.

After a Palestinian suicide bombing killed 21 people on Oct. 4 in the northern Israeli city of Haifa, the military barred all Palestinians from entering Israel and kept most Palestinians confined to their hometowns in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Israel eased the restrictions a bit on Wednesday, permitting 4,000 Palestinian businessmen and workers to enter Israel. Before the violence began three years ago, more than 100,000 from the West Bank and Gaza commuted daily to Israel to work.

Wednesday, October 29, 2003 Ha`aretz

Background / IDF warns against repeating Abbas mistakes

By Uzi Benziman, Haaretz Correspondent

<http://www.haaretzdaily.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=355186>

The high command of the Israel Defense Forces believes that Israel contributed to the collapse of former Palestinian premier Mahmoud Abbas' government by making only stingy demonstrations of support, and is warning Israel not to repeat the mistake with Palestinian premier Ahmed Qureia, who is now trying to form a permanent cabinet.

Senior military sources, who reflect the dominant feeling in the IDF General Staff, said Tuesday that Israel should have treated Abbas differently, by giving him control of every Palestinian city he asked for and by refraining from discussing the fate of Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat.

In order to prevent a similar debacle this time around, the IDF is advising the government to remove the military blockades from West Bank cities such as Bethlehem and Jericho, to differentiate between terror-free and terror-filled areas, and to allow free travel for Palestinian vehicles in the West Bank.

The army is disappointed that the government has for the most part ignored its recommendations, preferring instead the advice of the Shin Bet security service.

The senior military officers are worried by the possibility that maintaining widespread pressure on the Palestinian population will lead to a humanitarian crisis and increase Palestinian hatred of Israel. The IDF General Staff describes the ongoing pressure as "sacrificing the strategic interest for the sake of tactical considerations."

The broad assessment in the IDF is that if Qureia repeats his predecessor's failure to create a functioning cabinet, then Arafat will remain the sole ruler - leading to the collapse of the PA and anarchy in the territories.

According to the IDF, such a scenario is precisely what Arafat wants, as he is not ready for a two-state solution and is trying to bring the conflict to a deadlock. Arafat is aiming for one bi-national state in which the Palestinians' demographic edge will win out, and in this aspect his approach is not any different from that of Hamas and Islamic Jihad. On the other hand, the assessment goes, Qureia embodies some chance for compromise on the principle of a two-state solution.

The military sources said Israel and the United States are conducting unofficial talks with Qureia, in which they are discussing a proposal to establish an inclusive cease-fire, based on dismantling the terrorist infrastructure in exchange for ending all IDF activity in Palestinian territory. The components of the "terrorist infrastructure" are up for negotiation, and it appears that the Israeli position will become more flexible.

On a separate different issue, the military sources also said the costs of constructing the West Bank separation fence will run to NIS 10 billion. According to the IDF, the fence must create a smooth separation between Israel and the PA, and maintains that there is no point in building a segmented barrier.

FROM APN MIDDLE EAST PEACE REPORT: ORIGINAL ARTICLE FROM YEDIOT AHRONOT WITH GEN. YAALON'S COMMENTS

General Pandemonium, Part I: Tempers flared between Israeli Defense Minister *Shaul Mofaz* and Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. *Moshe Yaalon* last week after Yaalon gave an extensive briefing to top Israeli correspondents about the IDF's disagreements with the intelligence community and the political echelon about the need to relieve pressure in the occupied territories. *Nahum Barnea* reported that, "Top IDF officials say that during October, when the IDF repeatedly raised the question of the closure, the answer given by the political echelon was yes, but not immediately, next week, after the holidays, etc. In the past few days the explanation for the deferral was the municipal elections. The result, say IDF officials, is that 'there is no hope, no expectations for the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip nor in Bethlehem and Jericho.'..There have not been terror attacks in the past few weeks in Bethlehem, aside from one shooting attack on the tunnel road. The Palestinian Authority officers in Bethlehem do not battle the terror organizations, but are doing their best to prevent terror attacks. Terror attacks also do not issue from Jericho. The chief of staff's proposal to lift the tight blockage from these cities was not accepted. At the recommendation of the GSS director, travel restrictions were imposed in Judea and Samaria after the terror attack in Haifa. This means that there is no Palestinian traffic on the main roads—neither private vehicles nor public transportation. In a tour of the West

Bank at the present time, one can see thousands of Palestinians, including children, women, and senior citizens, walking to their destinations for kilometers on foot. Many have moved to stay near their agricultural fields. IDF officials have warned that the continued curfew could cause a humanitarian problem. IDF officials have reached the conclusion that ‘in our tactical decisions, we are operating contrary to our strategic interest.’ One of the most pained issues in the debate among senior security officials refers to the reason for the fall of *Abu Mazen*’s cabinet. IDF officials are convinced that *Arafat* is mainly to blame for causing the failure of the first Palestinian prime minister. However, Israel could have helped him stand up to Arafat. This was a window of opportunity: The Americans were at the height of their strength due to the victory in Iraq, the Palestinian street supported Abu Mazen’s cabinet and opposed terror. But Israel was ‘stingy.’ Israel, according to IDF officials, should have shown greater generosity in reversible moves, for example, in a quicker transfer of control over West Bank cities to the PA. *Sharon* and Mofaz agreed to transfer control over three cities on the eve of the cease-fire’s collapse. It was too late.” (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, 10/29/03)

General Pandemonium, Part II: *Nahum Barnea* continued, “...*Abu Mazen* first recruited the support of the U.S., then Israel’s support and then initiated talks with the terror organizations. *Abu Ala* wishes to take the reverse route: First reach an understanding with the terror organizations, then with Israel and finally with the U.S. Abu Mazen wished to take control over the Palestinian cities gradually. Abu Ala wishes to do so all at once. In return, he will demand that Israel halt all of the targeted killings and arrests in the territories. IDF officials believe that Israel’s response should be favorable... ‘Abu Ala understands the magnitude of the responsibility that rests on him,’ say IDF officials. ‘Without him, it is doubtful whether the Palestinian Authority would exist. It is doubtful whether Fatah would exist. Abu Ala’s fate is, to a large degree, in our hands, and depends on the pressure that we apply to *Arafat* and our policy towards the population. It should be recalled than when it rains on us, it hails on the Palestinians.’ Some of the positive actions taken by Abu Mazen’s cabinet continue even now. The Hamas bank accounts that were closed then have remained closed. The PA is working to prevent the transfer of funds to the Islamic terror organizations. Furthermore, it was reported...that since the IDF operation in Rafah, the transfer of weapons through the tunnels there has stopped. The IDF believes that Israel must continue to apply pressure on the Palestinians with regard to the war on terror—but at the same time, it must ease matters for the population that is not engaged in terror and create an opening for a political process.” (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, 10/29/03)

General Pandemonium, Part III: “Another problem that is troubling the IDF,” writes *Nahum Barnea*, “is the fence. The updated estimates in the army are that the fence will ultimately cost NIS 10 billion—over three times as much as the Finance Ministry estimated. The IDF, at the government’s instructions, proposed a shorter route for the fence that was closer to the Green Line. The route was changed by *Sharon* and *Mofaz* under pressure from the settlers, and put tens of thousands of additional Palestinians inside the fence. The result is that in many locations a double fence will be necessary. In the section that Israel has finished building between Elkana and Salem alone, there are 18 gates in the fence for the passage of farmers. The gates are supposed to be opened three

times a day. This arrangement is a great burden on the IDF, requires many soldiers and makes the farmers' lives unbearable. In the opinion of senior IDF officials, the construction of the eastern fence, between the West Bank and the Jordan Valley, could exacerbate the sense of pressure in the West Bank and cause difficulties for Israel on an international level. The defense minister is pushing for the construction of the fence.” (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, 10/29/03)

Mishlav's Misgivings: In another article along the same lines, this time in *Ma'ariv*, it was reported that at a recent security meeting, the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories, Maj. Gen. **Yosef Mishlav**, delivered a harsh assessment of the situation in the occupied territories. “The degree of despair within Palestinian society has reached a peak since the fighting began in September 2000; the Palestinians feel they are facing their fate alone...the sense in the street is of a prison, of a pressure cooker, unlike previous times when there were ups and downs. From a social aspect, a fundamental hatred for Israel now exists that is not based on propaganda and incitement. It is our assessment that Hamas will gain strength despite its momentary weakness, because there is a vacuum, which it has already begun to fill. This hatred is on the rise and increases fanaticism. When there are no solutions, Islam is the solution. Already now in Gaza, Hamas is the only organization that provides welfare and sustenance to the population, in light of the distress created by the security restraints that Israel has imposed.” Maj. Gen. Mishlav said at the meeting that the population feels a sense of deep frustration. “The process of the regime's destabilization and of mounting anarchy in the street is continuing. There have been a number of cases recently of people taking the law into their own hands; mounting extremism is evident in Palestinian society with regard to Israel and to its military policy.” Mishlav has drawn a number of conclusions and recommendations, primarily to relieve Israeli pressure on the Palestinian population. He also urged a decision to seek possible allies within the Palestinian Authority. “The middle generation of Fatah should be examined and we should think about which of them is worth strengthening and what is the best way to do that. We have to weigh how we should handle the Fatah Central Committee, which has become, from Israel's perspective, a ‘hornets nest,’” he said. Other participants noted that, “a process of radicalization is underway in Palestinian society; there is a rise in support for *Arafat* and there was sweeping support for the terror attack in Maxim's Restaurant in Haifa. The closures raise the level of anger and help increase extremism. There is fear among the population that the olive picking will be affected this year and that the Ramadan fast will not take place properly. Unlike previous years, there are no real signs that the people [are] preparing for the fast.” (*Ma'ariv*, 10/28/03)

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See also Boston Globe Editorial, General Ya'alon's warning, 11/3/2003, at
<http://www.peacenow.org/nia/news/globe1103.html>

