

How important was Ariel Sharon in causing escalation of violence in 2001?



On 28th January 2003, Ariel Sharon became the 30th Prime Minister of Israel. Would this change in Israel's politics change the relationship between Israel and Palestine? We can clearly remember on 28th September 2000, Sharon visited to Jerusalem's Dome of the Rock, which people called 'Holy Mount'. Somebody said this let the second Intifada. I'm going to find out how important that was Ariel Sharon in causing the escalation of violence in 2001.

At first, some Jews lived in Jerusalem and the area around it. After many years, these Jews went to travel to other countries. During the Second World War, Jews attacked by the German, so they decided to move back to their 'own plant' in their mind which was Jerusalem and the area around it. But at that time, Arabs lived on these areas and built their own country – Palestine. Jerusalem was the Holy City for both Jews and Arabs and both of them think that Palestine should belong to them. Jews built their own country – Israel. After Turkey, Great Britain, United Nations got the controlling power of Palestine at the end of 1947. In November of 1947, United Nation voted to divide Palestine and set up both a Jewish and an Arab state. But this didn't bring the peace. Because Jerusalem - the Holy City for both Jews and Arab, there were still lots of was that happened between Jews and Arabs. On 14th Many 1948, Arab States of Egypt, Syria, Transjordan, Lebanon Iraq and Palestine invaded the state of Israel. Israeli survived its first great test by using their experience of war. Because the war of 1948 – 1949, Israelis decided to attack the Arab State before they did it to Israel. Israelis attacked the Arab planes on the ground. It had destroyed the air force of Egypt, Syria and Jordan. Because it lasts six days, people called it Six-Day war. In 1987, the Israeli response to the Intifada, Palestinians and Israelis speak out. The Intifada made both Israel and Palestine had suffered especially Palestine. By 1991, over 1000 Palestinians had been killed in the Intifada. Over 2000 homes destroyed and 15,000 people imprisoned.



One very important reason why there always are wars that between Israel and Palestine is that they all want to own their 'Holy City' – Jerusalem. The Temple Mount, in the old city in East Jerusalem. It is the Holy Mount to both Jews and Arabs. For Jews, the Temple Mount is the most sacred site in the world, it is where King David erected and altar to God and his son Solomon built the temple, which became the centre of Jewish worship. For religious Jews, the Mount is where redemption will take place when the Messiah arrives. Giving up the Temple Mount would be, for religious Jews; the Temple Mount is a profound national symbol. Since the Diaspora, Jews have been praying for the rebuilding of the temple on what they regard as their Holy Mountain. For Jew the Temple Mount remains the holiest spot on Earth. So Israeli wants to have partial sovereignty or some kind of rights to the area below the Temple Mount, where Jews believe that the remains of the temple may be buried. Muslims know the same thing as

the Haram al-Sharif, or the Noble Sanctuary. The plot contains the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque – Islam’s third holiest site. After Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia Muslims have made it clear that they would go to war if anyone tried to dispossess them of the compound. The Noble Sanctuary for Muslims is the Haram al-Sharif, the compound of the al-Aqsa mosque and the Dome of the Rock from where the Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven. Equally, the Haram al-Sharif is of deep religious and political significance to Palestinians and to Muslims around the world. From all of these, we can see that it is easy to cause violence if someone from Palestine or Israel visit the Holy Mount. But Ariel Sharon did it.



Ariel Sharon was born in 1928 in Kfar Malal. At the age of 14, he joined the Haganah. In the war of Independence of 1948-9, he was a platoon commander in the Alexand – roni Brigade and proved himself a first – rate fighter. The battle for the village of Latrun laid the foundation of his military and political approach. In 1953, he found and led the “101” special commando unit, which carried out retaliatory operations. Sharon was appointed commander of a paratroops brigade in 1956 and fought in the Sinai Campaign. In 1957 he attended the Camberley Staff College in Great Britain. He was appointed head of the IDF Northern Command in 1964 and head of the Army Training Branch in 1966. He participated in the 1967 Six-Day war as Commander of an armoured division. Ariel Sharon was elected to the Knesset in December 1973, but resigned a year later, serving as security adviser to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (1975-76). Between 1977 and 1981, he became the Minister of Agriculture. In 1981, Sharon was appointed Defence Minister, serving in this post during the Lebanon War, which brought about the Destruction of the PLO terrorist infrastructure in Lebanon. He permitted soldiers to enter the refugee camps. They massacred some 800 Palestinians, including children, women and elderly people. Because of this, he was forced to resign by the government. For many that would have been the end. Sharon is, however, nothing if not persistent, rebuilding his political career to challenge for the leadership of the Likud Party in 1999 and finally winning the prize with the resignation of Binyamin Netanyahu.

Sharon must know it is a dangerous thing to visit the Temple Mount. According to the history of Israel and Palestine and their relationship, it would upset Muslims and cause the war. But he still visited on 28 September 2000 with six members of Likud Knesset delegation. Sharon said to people that his visit didn’t cause the violence. Newsweek contributing editor and Washington Post columnist Lally Weymouth talked with Sharon. Sharon said, ‘ the Temple Mount is the holiest place for the Jewish people – the remains of the Temple are there. It is not only my right but also my duty to go there.’ ‘ We are sorry for all those casualties [an Israeli policeman had been killed and that Arafat was thinking of using violence] – whether they are Arabs or Jews. But there is no connection between the two things [casualties and visit]. Does everything go as same as what Sharon said? Before he visited the Temple, not only Palestinian, even many Israelis were blaming opposition leader Ariel Sharon for the violent clash that have engulfed their

country in recent days, it perhaps would dashed hopes for peach. After Sharon left the mount, fierce dashes broke out between the police and the hundreds of Palestinian protesters, and in September 2000, the second Intifada broke out.

Was it true that Sharon's visit was the reason of the second Intifada? From the background which I wrote at the beginning of the essay we can see that the history of Israel and Palestine full of the wars which broke out between these two countries. As same as these wars broke out before, Sharon's visit definitely not the only one reason of the second Intifada. It caused by the dispute of land (Jerusalem), the dispute between Jews and Muslim, even the dignity of the country. They all want to have their 'Holy City', so they need using war to get, and also, they must make sure they won't lose their own land, so the war can't be avoided. This is a 'long term', Sharon's visit is only a 'short term', so it couldn't be the only one reason of Second Intifada. But it is one of the reasons. If people want to break out wars, there must be an excuse. Sharon's visit just right for this excuse. For example, if the second Intifada is a bomb, Sharon's visit is the fire, which burns the wick, but it's not the material of the bomb. And also, we can't get rid of the possibility that the visit is a movement in politics. The visit didn't look as simple as a visit of a 'Holy Mount', which Sharon said. It's more like that he want to tell the Israel pubic that they should prepared to negotiate of the Jerusalem. Sharon should know that the visit would upset Muslims and he knows that Arafat is ex-terrorists as he is. There is no reason that this visit can't cause war. Again, all these truths which people can easily find out show that Sharon's visit is a politic movement but not a simple visit.

The dispute of land, the dispute of different religious and all the real reason of war, by using Sharon's visit on 28th September 2000 as an excuse, ignite the Second Intifada.