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## Ariel Sharon and the Horrors of the Sabra and Shatilla Massacre

By Dr Ang Swee Chai

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*The passing of Ariel Sharon brought back the memories of the horrors of the Sabra Shatilla massacre of September, '82.*

*I arrived in August that year as a volunteer surgeon to help the war victims of Lebanon. The people in Lebanon were wounded, made homeless and lost precious friends and families as the result of ten weeks of ruthless bombardment. That was the Operation Peace for Galilee launched by Sharon who was then the Defence Minister of Israel in June 1982.*

No one knew how many were killed as the result of that offensive – the London newspapers estimated a thirty thousand with many times more made homeless. When a ceasefire was agreed with the evacuation of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, Sharon broke that ceasefire and drove tanks under air-cover launching a land invasion into Lebanon's capitol Beirut. Part of the tanks sealed Sabra Shatilla and prevented the helpless civilian victims from escaping, while sending in Israel's allies into the camps to carry out the most brutal massacre of defenceless women, children and old people under Israel's watch. The blame was quickly and deliberately shifted to the Lebanese as perpetrators of the massacres, so that today no one can mention that massacre without blaming the Lebanese Phalange, yet forgetting the Israeli organisers of that event.

I worked in Gaza Hospital in Sabra Shatilla during the massacre trying to save the lives of a few dozen people, but outside the hospital hundreds were killed. My patients and I knew that Sharon and his officers were in control, and without them the massacre would not be possible. The residents of Sabra Shatilla could at least have escaped. Now more than 30 years later, we know that the killers were brought in by Israeli armoured cars and tanks, obeyed Israeli commands, their paths lit by Israeli military flares, and some of them also wore Israeli uniforms. The mutilated bodies of the victims were thrown into mass graves by Israeli bulldozers.

This Sharon continued on to be Israeli Prime Minister, and built the Wall which imprisoned the Palestinians in the West Bank. Sharon's Wall cut through their lands, separating people from their homes, children from their schools, farmers from their orchards, patients from hospitals, husbands from wives, and children from parents. He marched into the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem 2000 with fully armed Israeli soldiers and tried to have the West believe that his intention was for peace.

He was responsible for other massacres such as in Jenin, Qibya and Khan Yunis just to name a few. The older generation in Khan Yunis in Gaza remembers that he killed all the grown men in the massacre of 1956 and left only the women and children to bury the dead..

I thought these facts should be publicised. Those who eulogise Sharon in his role of building Israel should also remember that he built his nation over the dead bodies of the Palestinian people, and the continued dispossession of those who are still alive.