

# *Last Friday morning, the 25th of February, 1994,*

a settler from Hebron murdered dozens of Arab worshippers in the Patriarchs' Cave. He was a known supporter of the deceased Rabbi Meir Kahane, and had been given a gun by the State of Israel, like dozens of other Kahanists. Following the massacre a curfew was imposed on Hebron! "No curfew was imposed on Kiryat Arba," said the commander on the ground, "because no such orders were received." Only two days later did the government think of imposing a curfew on Kiryat Arba; it soon turned into a farce and did not prevent dozens of self-satisfied settlers from appearing on the TV in order to applaud the massacre, showing moral aberrance that would not have shamed any German skinhead.

On September 17, 1948, Count Bernadotte and one of his aides were murdered in Jerusalem by armed Jews from an unknown organisation calling itself "The Homeland Front." Although that crime was much less severe than the massacre of the worshippers at the Patriarchs' Cave, Ben Gurion did not

hesitate for a moment: within two days the provisional Israeli government issued severe regulations which imposed heavy penalties not only on active terrorists, but on any member of a terrorist organisation. The Stern Gang and the fictitious "Homeland Front" were declared terrorist organisations and banned. During a still very difficult time of war, Ben Gurion allocated a large armed force to fight Jewish terrorism. About two hundred people were arrested immediately following the murder. Widespread searches were conducted. The Stern Gang leaders were arrested and brought to trial.

The government should have banned the Kahanists and their ilk right away, arrested and brought to trial known inciters, conducted house-to-house searches in Kiryat Arba and in settlements that serve as enclaves of Jewish terror, and announced unilaterally that, because of the massacre at the Patriarchs' Cave, it would consider increasing the numbers and arms of the Palestinian police force to be located at trouble spots outside Gaza and Jericho.

I do not know if anyone assisted the murderer. Although we have known for some time about Jews who incite to violence, they, in contrast to Arabs who call for violence, have never and will never be expelled from the country. Their homes will never be demolished or sealed. Contrary to the authorities, however, I see no difference between Jewish murderers and inciters and the murderers and inciters from Hamas and the Islamic Jihad. In addition to murdering and inciting violence both of them do everything they can so that the Israeli-Arab war will never end in compromise, but rather become a religious war between Judaism and Islam, between the Almighty and Allah, waged to the last drop of blood.

The Jewish murderer and the fomentors around him did exactly what Hamas and the Jihad hoped that they would do. Murderers and fomentors from Hamas do exactly what the Jewish fanatics expect them to do. It is as if there is some sort of flipside Oslo conference at which the two sides have no difficulty in agreeing about their common aim: to drown peace in blood and vengeance.

Dozens of Arab families will never again see fathers, brothers,

sons. They will have to explain to their children that the victims were murdered in revenge for the death of other victims, who were also murdered in revenge for a murder that avenged yet another murder. Or perhaps they will be told that it happened so that there would be no peace, because peace is worse than death. People must arise from among both sides, and choose life. Quickly and determinedly.

On the morning of the murders, Israeli radio broadcasted various reactions. The Prime Minister, political figures and leaders of right wing parties did express all kinds of horror at the murder. But Aharon Domb, the spokesman of the religious settlers, referred to it only as "a serious event." Though he did not praise it, he expressed an understanding of it. Even the Chief Rabbi, Rabbi La'u, denounced the "bloodshed," avoiding the word "murder," perhaps because the victims were not Jews. Among the commentators I counted five or six religious Jews, all of whom denounced the "event," some even using harsh words, but not one of them saw fit to call murder by its name. It is difficult not to pose a series of questions to these commentators, questions which are neither Israeli-Palestinian, nor hawkish-dovish in essence, but moral questions between Jews and other Jews. (...) Why did the Chief Rabbi and other religious Jews content themselves with denouncing "bloodshed"? Why didn't they call murder "murder" and the murderer, "a murderer"? What should the Purim massacre in Hebron be called? Is it a Jew "venting his rage on Gentiles"? Is it "a rash act carried out by a beloved person"? An incident? An aberration? Does "Thou shall not kill" apply only in cases in which the victim was born to a Jewish mother or was converted to Judaism by an orthodox ceremony? The replies these Jews give to these questions will not decide the fate of the region, of peace, of the Territories. Nor will they decide who is a murderer or what is murder. At most, they might have the power to finally decide who is a Jew, and who is a terrorist with a skullcap on his head.

*Tel Aviv, 27 February 1994*