

Kaitlin Ugolik

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- [Print](#)
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- [DoubleClick Any Word](#)
- Page 1 of 2 [next >](#)

As the Israeli prime minister remains in critical condition after his second stroke, the world looks back on Ariel Sharon's past and debates his self-proclaimed role as peacemaker.

Recently, George W. Bush praised Sharon for being just that, causing shock amongst many Palestinians and Jews alike.

"I about swallowed my eye teeth when Bush said that," said Max Carter, Campus Ministry Coordinator. "He's a peacemaker only in the way of bludgeoning the opposition into destruction."

Carter has been traveling to Israel for 35 years. Having seen Sharon's rule throughout this time, Carter believes Sharon is more an obstacle to peace.

In 2000, Sharon visited the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, the most coveted and holy place in the Israel-Palestine conflict. He went with backup of 1000 soldiers, resulting in the death of 35 Palestinian civilians. This move instigated the second Intifada uprising.

"He's a brilliant strategist," says Carter. "He knew he would ignite Palestinian anger and protest."

As Agriculture Minister, Sharon built defensive Jewish settlements in Gaza, separating the Palestinians from each other with a literal wall 72 miles long, making isolated population centers whose citizens need Israeli permission to move throughout the country.

"This was his plan to guarantee no viable state of Palestine," said Carter, "and without that there can be no lasting peace."

Carter suggested that even the "giving back of Gaza" may have been a calculated attempt to get support.

"Gaza isn't an historical Jewish territory in the first place, so giving it up was not the great sacrifice Sharon wanted it to seem," said Carter. "Both sides saw through this."

Aside from the massacre at the Temple Mount, Sharon has been involved in others, such as the Sabra and Shatila massacres where hundreds of Palestinian civilians were killed under his orders.

"He has little concern for collateral damage," said Carter. "It's a 'two eyes for an eye' sort of strategy."

"He [Sharon] is well known as one of the worst people we've ever experienced," said Shadi Abdallah, a Guilford student who recently returned from Palestine. "The Israelis are scared, they worshipped him, regardless of what he did. They respect him."

They aren't the only ones. Charles Krauthammer of the Washington Post described Sharon as "the

emergence of a rational, farsighted national idea that seemed poised in the coming elections to create a stable governing political center for the first time in decades."

Hillel Goldberg of Intermountain Jewish News Online, suggests that Pat Robertson's remark that Sharon's stroke was something of an "act of God" is not surprising, but is also unfounded. Goldberg references the Holy Bible in an article published on Jan. 13, expressing to the Jewish community that there is no way for Robertson to be able to make this kind of claim.

Upon hearing the comment made by Robertson, Abdallah said that his people may be thinking along the same lines as the evangelist.

"He carried out massacres. He has no mercy," said Abdallah. "In Gaza, every day civilians are killed. Right now civilians are being killed."

In light of Sharon's recent stroke and comatose state, doctors are concerned about him regaining consciousness. Abdallah said that if Sharon dies, the Palestinians will not be upset. However, he suspects that Sharon's successor will most likely continue Sharon's legacy.

This might end up in a civil war between parties within Israel, but Abdallah said, "It probably would be for the better if there was inner conflict between political groups there. It would bring the focus off of us in Palestine."