

MONDAY'S unprecedented massacre of Palestinians at the Al-Aqsa Mosque in the occupied Old City of Jerusalem — the worst daily death-toll since the beginning of the occupation in June, 1967 — should not be thought of as an isolated incident.

Furthermore, it may well symbolise the current Israeli government positioning itself for mass expulsions of Palestinians into Jordan if a major conflict should erupt in the Gulf.

The carnage that resulted in at least 22 deaths and hundreds of serious injuries is tragically indicative of the dangerously deteriorating relations between Jews and Palestinians.

Consider this eye-witness report from an Arab-American who lives in Washington and was visiting Jerusalem on Monday morning:

"I was a witness to a large group of Jews dancing in front of the Wailing Wall chanting in Hebrew and English: 'Let us in! We want to kill more! Death to the Arabs!' This was immediately following the massacre of some 22 innocent people! After leaving the [Dome of the Rock] I began to walk through the Old City to return home. On my way a group of five or six Jewish settlers pointed towards me and shouted in Hebrew 'Arabs!' They then fired a burst of machinegun fire in my direction. The bullets hit the wall behind me, mere inches away from my head. I began to run when an elderly Palestinian man grabbed me by the shirt and pulled me into his home. He hid me in his bathroom and locked the door. After about five minutes the old man let me out and said that the coast was clear. I thanked him and left in shock."

Furthermore the US is perhaps a party to these developments.

Occasional rhetorical protestations of concern and sorrow from Washington are hardly sufficient to mask this complicity. Simply said American actions and American money belie such soothing American words.

When the Palestinian Intifada erupted nearly three years ago it was already an explosion of deeply pent-up emotions.

From



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Killings prelude to expulsions?

The young generation of Palestinians has known little else but Israeli military rule for the past 23 years. They simply decided they were going to have to fight for their freedom: and they have done so with great courage and considerable resourcefulness.

For a great variety of historical and political reasons the US has not only accepted Israel's occupation of the Palestinians but funded and nurtured it even though, year after year, the United Nations has repeatedly condemned Israeli policies.

Indeed, not a single nation has recognised either the occupation of the West Bank or Gaza Strip nor Israel's illegal annexation of Jerusalem and the Golan Heights.

Monday's massacre was pre-faced by considerable Israeli taunting of the Palestinians. The immediate provocation was the plan by Israeli zealots, with covert support from some members of the Israeli government, to pursue plans for rebuilding the Jewish temple of Bilical days on the site of one of Islam's holiest shrines.

But during the nearly three years of the Intifada, there has been a steady pattern of killings, house demolitions, and sometimes, as on Monday what can only be called massacres. In Palestinian towns, cities and refugee camps — with names such as Nablus, Za'atra, Nahalin, Deheisha and Beit Sahur — monuments to such past crimes are today evident.

Each time the Israelis have made up various excuses to deflect world public opinion. And occasionally, when the pressure became too great, there have been mock Commissions of Inquiry sometimes leading to a few wrist slaps to those Army or Border Police officials then said to be responsible for using "excessive force."

For a very long time now the ongoing Palestinian quest for their own dignified self-determination has been met only with Israeli violence and intransigence.

In recent days Prime Minister Shamir and Foreign Minister David Levy have gloated about the increase of American aid because of the Gulf crisis as well as the new commitment of another \$400 million in US funds for settlement of more tens of thousands of Soviet Jews throughout Israel.

Indeed, just a few days ago, clearly thumbing his nose at

Jerusalem massacre part of Israeli pattern

both the Palestinians and Washington, Shamir personally announced a new Jewish development area within the boundaries of the occupied Arab East Jerusalem — even though supposedly Israel had guaranteed Washington that the American funds were not to be used beyond the old 1967 boundaries, the so-called "Green Line."

True to the past, there will be much said in coming days attempting to justify Israel's actions. And there are likely to be future explosions of Palestinian outrage and further Israeli brutality. But ask this simple question: How would Israel react, and how would the world react, if dozens of Syrian Jews were shot dead on the streets of Damascus, hundreds injured, and ambulances were prevented from coming to get the wounded?

The time has come to once and for all, come to grips with the basic issue. Both the

Israelis and the Palestinians have their own very different but no less legitimate national movements — and the US should be supporting both, rather than simply siding with Israel.

This has become all the more true now that US forces are for the first time involved in the Mid-east.

With Washington now having taken such a powerful position against occupation and in favour of UN legitimacy, the opportunity is at hand for American finally to apply consistent principles and standards to our involvement in the Mid-east.

The idea of an international peace conference to resolve Mid-east problems that have their roots in past colonial years and previous steps taken by both the League of Nations and the United Nations is not Saddam Hussein's. Rather it is a long-standing United Na-

tions position and in fact it was the US position back in 1973, at the end of the October War, and again in 1977 when both Washington and Moscow issued a joint statement which was to lead to just such a development.

It's not too late for Washington to decide that diplomacy is far less risky to war, that the Palestinians no less than the Kuwaitis or the Israelis for that matter are entitled to their own self-determination, and that the US should finally stand for real justice and democracy rather than short term self-interest.

Palestinian leaders in the occupied Jerusalem have issued an urgent impassioned statement:

"We repeat our earlier plea for international intervention. We do not understand how oil in the Gulf can be valued more highly than Palestinian blood and Muslim rights and shrines. We do not understand how the Security Council can ignore our plea for protection when it is prepared to send troops to fight in a war in the Gulf region.

"Once again we issue a plea to the civilised world: Come to our protection before it is too late. Put an end to this process of annihilation. Protect us against Israeli soldiers, settlers, and armed religious zealots."

There may be other crucial issues at the moment. But if continually left untreated the Palestinian problem may eventually engulf us all.



Occupied Jerusalem: An Israeli border policeman points his rifle at a Palestinian