

A DAY OF TERROR: THE ISRAELIS; Spilled Blood Is Seen as Bond That Draws 2 Nations Closer

By JAMES BENNET
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Israeli officials and most Palestinian leaders condemned the attack on the United States today. But Israelis also took cold comfort in concluding that Americans would now share more of their fears, while some Palestinians rejoiced at the same thought.

There were declarations of sympathy for the victims from both Israelis and Palestinians, as well as anxious telephone calls to friends and relatives in the United States. But politics is never far behind any human reaction here. And each side in this conflict saw in today's attack confirmation of its view of the bond of the United States and Israel -- that the two nations fought, and now suffered, together.

Most West Bank towns were quiet today. But in Nablus, big crowds of Palestinians marched in celebration, chanting "Beloved bin Laden, strike Tel Aviv!" Some waved the flag of the terrorist organization Hamas. "Let the Americans know the meaning of death," one marcher said.

Some Palestinians expressed the hope that the assault would prompt the United States to change its policies toward the Mideast conflict -- though pictures of Palestinians rejoicing were not likely to create sympathy for their cause.

Yasir Arafat, leader of the Palestinian Authority, looked shaken as he appeared before reporters in Gaza to deplore "this terrible act."

"We are completely shocked," Mr. Arafat said. "Completely shocked."

The Palestinian Authority tried to prevent pictures from being taken of the marchers celebrating in Nablus, evidently very wary of the potential effect on world opinion.

Israeli leaders, who have chafed at occasional American criticism of their measures against Palestinians, said the day's attacks would awaken the United States to the threat of global terrorism.

Asked tonight what the attack meant for relations between the United States and Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, the former prime minister, replied, "It's very good." Then he edited himself: "Well, not very good, but it will generate immediate sympathy." He predicted that the attack would "strengthen the bond between our two peoples, because we've experienced terror over so many decades, but the United States has now experienced a massive hemorrhaging of terror."

In an appearance late tonight, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon repeatedly placed Israel on the same ground as the United States, calling the assault an attack on "our common values" and declaring, "I believe together we can defeat these forces of evil." He declared Wednesday a day of mourning.

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Uzi Landau, Israel's minister for public security, said that the government had never imagined an assault of this size, let alone had its intelligence network gleaned any warning of its approach. He sounded astounded. "We had a number of different scenarios for large terrorist attack," he said in a telephone interview tonight. "But this particular concerted offensive against the United States, targeting the World Trade buildings, at the same time hitting Washington -- this we didn't consider."

Mr. Sharon met for hours, late into the night, with his top ministers. Israel increased its already high state of alert, closed its international borders, and shut its airspace to all flights except Israeli planes with armed guards aboard.

Asked if he thought Israel's conflict with the Palestinians was connected to the attack, Mr. Landau said he did not know. He accused Mr. Arafat of having laid "the foundation for modern terrorism, for blowing planes up in the air, for doing atrocities without blinking."

In the streets of East Jerusalem, some drivers honked their horns in triumph, and Suleiman Qassem, 20, a plumber, passed out sweets to passerby when he heard the news. "The Americans give the Israelis Apache helicopters to bomb our houses," he said. "They give them diplomatic support and intelligence help on how to kill us."

But Shadi Jaber, 25, said he was more ambivalent. "I really don't know if I'm happy or not," he said. "I don't know if it helps us or not. We don't hate the American people, we just want to solve the problem." He said that he had applied to the United States for a visa, but now feared he would not get it. "Now they'll say, 'You're an Arab, you're a terrorist,' " he said.

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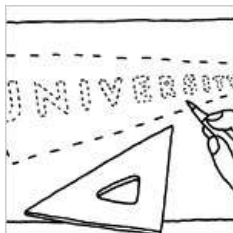


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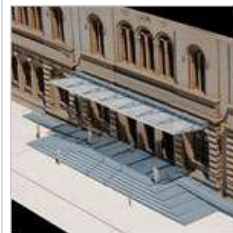
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