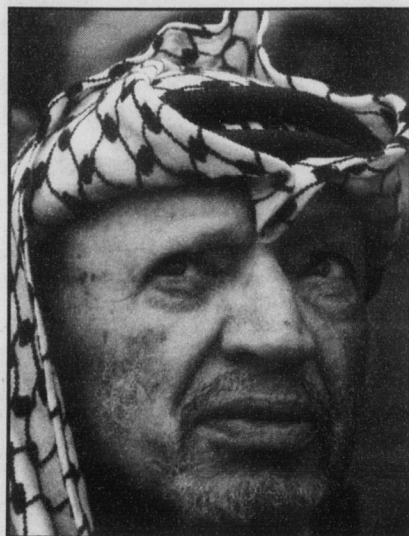


Palestinian leader Arafat dies; Sharon brings change

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As Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat lay in a coma in a military hospital outside Paris, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon pushed ahead with a historical decision to pull Jewish settlers out of Gaza and the West Bank. Uncertainty



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Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat died early in the morning, Nov. 11

about the future is on the minds of both Israelis and Palestinians.

The BBC reported that Arafat, 75, was suffering from brain hemorrhaging, according to Tayeb Abdel Rahim, his senior aide.

Conflicting reports about Arafat's health had been circulating. Citing French sources, Israeli's Channel Two television reported Nov. 4 that Arafat was brain dead. Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qurie denied that report.

"I have just spoken to the officials in Paris and they say the situation is still as it was," he said. "He is still in the intensive care unit."

Arafat was taken to France for medical tests two weeks ago after complaining of stomach pains, Palestinian Foreign Minister Nabil Shaath said. According to the BBC, Arafat's physicians have ruled out cancer as a possible diagnosis.

Shaath had told reporters that despite Arafat's worsening condition, taking him off life-support machines was not an option.

"People talk as if his life can be plugged in or plugged out," Shaath said. "This is ridiculous. We Muslims do not allow euthanasia. He will live or die depending on his body's ability to resist and on the will of God."

The *Washington Post* also reported that Palestinian officials and analysts have said Arafat's death will divide Palestinians even more. Local leaders in the West Bank and Gaza, nationalist and Islamic leaders, and residents in the Palestinian territories have all expressed their desire to govern.

"No one else can do it the way Arafat did," Ziad

Abu Amr, an independent, reformist legislator from Gaza City, said. "Any new leader will have to work on power-sharing."

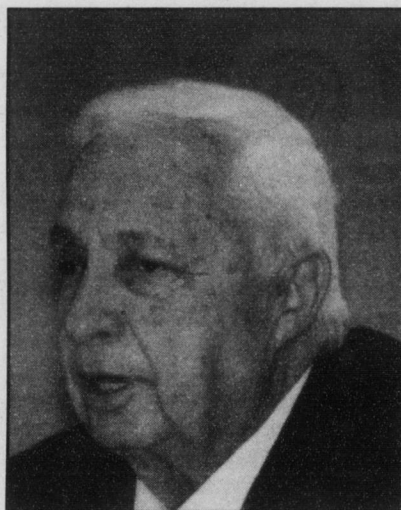
According to *The New York Times*, Qurie and former Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas are handling Palestinian affairs until an election can be held, and are contenders to lead the Palestinians after Arafat's death.

"Conducting timely and credible elections is crucial," Mouin Rabbani, a Middle East analyst for the International Crisis Group, said. "Arafat did not need Palestinian elections to become the legitimate Palestinian leader - he had other sources of legitimacy because of his unique historical role. Anyone who replaces him is going to need clear popular mandates."

The controversy over the influence of militant Islamic groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad, who have also been responsible for providing social services like health care and education for Palestinians, is likely to reach new heights following Arafat's death, according to the *Post*.

Sharon had told his Cabinet that he would not allow Arafat to be buried in Jerusalem, the *Post* reported Oct. 31. "As long as I am prime minister, Arafat won't be buried in Jerusalem," he said.

On Nov. 10, the *Post* reported that Palestinian, Israeli, and Egyptian officials had decided Arafat will be buried in the West Bank city of Ramallah north of Jerusalem after a state funeral in Cairo.



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Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon

Ariel Sharon splits from his party over Gaza pullout

Sharon won enough votes from lawmakers in the Israeli parliament to authorize the evacuation of 8,150 Jewish settlers from Gaza and approximately 450 settlers from the northern part of the West Bank. Sharon split from his own party, the Likud Party, to pass the bill. Seventeen out of 40 Likud Party members did not back the bill.

Israeli families would be given \$100,000 - 500,000 to relocate. the *Times* reported that any

settler refusing to relocate could be subjected to a penalty, including three years imprisonment.

Reuters reported that Israel's finance minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, will not follow through with his threat to resign over the compensation bill. Netanyahu had threatened to resign if Sharon did not hold a national referendum on the bill.

With regard to the possibility of new Palestinian leadership, Netanyahu said, "A Palestinian leadership could be created that we can negotiate with and in that case we must have a dialogue with them."

Instead of issuing a referendum, Likud Party members referred the issue to a parliamentary committee. The committee is planning to draft legislation for a referendum, but, according to Reuters, Sharon's aides have predicted the legislation will not pass. All members of the moderate Labor Party backed the compensation bill.

Guilford perspectives

Max Carter, the director of Campus Ministry at the college, offered his view of Sharon's plan.

"It's calculated," he said. "What Sharon has figured is that he can appear to be this great peacemaker, this great appeaser, by making this historic sacrifice - (pulling) out of Gaza, which isn't Israel's anyway - by dismantling these settlements, which should have never been there in the first place."

"(These settlements are) illegal, they're in contravention of international law in the Geneva Accord," he added. "Israel pulls out, winning the accolades of the world - especially the United States, who sees this as a great peacemaking gesture - turns it over to the Palestinian Authority, which has no hope of success there. The Palestinian Authority has very little power. Many people in fact moved into these settlements knowing this would be happening - there's thousands of dollars to be made."

Senior Ariel Brandt, the president of Hillel, the Jewish student organization on campus, believes the pullout is a start towards peace.

"I think it's a step in the right direction, but now they're being criticized for pulling out, and that's the best they can do," Brandt said. "I feel as though it's not Israel's fault Palestinians can't function."

Brandt, who spent five months studying abroad in Israel so she could gain a deeper understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, also has strong opinions about the violence committed by Palestinian militants.

"There's a desperation that exists on that side," she said. "It's a horrible situation - they don't know how to make it better. It seems like something is broken. The Israelis I spoke to want peace, and they will do whatever it takes. They just don't want to put their children on a bus with the fear it may blow up."

Brandt concluded, "Both sides want peace, and no one is ultimately right or wrong."%