

Israeli Leaders - Literally Criminals

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This article by Israeli dissident Reuven Schossen demonstrates his continuing courage and willingness to put himself on the front lines of the ongoing effort to prevent Israeli criminal policies from increasing their reach. We need this type of courage and I hope you will do what you can to publicize his efforts to gain political asylum in the US. Please see www.schossen.com for details. - Leland Lehrman

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By Reuven Schossen

Schossen.com

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The first thing people think whenever I tell them that the government of Israel is criminal, is that I am referring to its violations of Human Rights. In a sense they are correct, the Israeli government is proud to ignore basic rights - it has even passed legislation specifically enabling it to do so. In my writings and talks, it's true, I am usually referring to that aspect of Israeli institutionalized corruption.

However, another - and darker side - exists. The governments of Israel are criminal because criminals rule it, literally. It's not I alone who makes this claim; it's not even some antisemitic, conspirational, radical, fanatical, underground website. The Israeli justice system itself keeps finding its politicians guilty.

Omri Sharon - Ariel Sharon's son and a former nepotistic member of parliament - became the first Israeli politician to be sentenced to jail due to his methods of getting donations for his father's campaign. Ariel Sharon claimed he knew nothing about it. Ariel Sharon himself was found guilty by the Lebanon War Investigating Committee in Israel; guilty of not preventing the Sabra and Shatila atrocities in Lebanon and was banned for life from serving as the Minister of Defense. Shalom Hanoach - a popular Israeli rock star - sang a prophetic song in the early 80s entitled "He Doesn't Stop at the Red Lights," where he claimed that those who did not want Sharon as minister of defense would unfortunately end up with him as prime minister.

The Israeli newspaper world is run by three families. An extensive analysis of their priorities would be fascinating, but here I'll mention only that the owners of Maariv are the Nimrodi family. Of Iranian origin, they made their fortune selling weapons. The son held the position of editor-in-chief while still in jail for having contracted a murder.

With these two examples it is possible to understand the problematic relationship between politicians and the media in Israel. In Hebrew there is a saying "keep for me and I'll keep for you," and its subtext clearly hints at an infinity of corruption when these two establishments work together in an organized fashion.

There are more examples. Recently, the Minister of Justice - Haim Ramon - was obliged to resign after being charged with sexually harassing a government employee. Ehud Olmert - the Prime Minister - is currently being investigated for an illegal real estate transaction, an especially sensitive topic in Israel. The Israeli President - Moshe Katsav (his last name means Butcher) - who refused to meet Reform Jewish leaders on his last visit to the USA - also faces charges of sexually harassing an employee. The list of criminal acts by Israeli leaders from most parties is incredibly long and varied.

Some things seem to be legal only if you look at the fine print of the law with dark glasses. Dan Halutz, the Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defense Forces, called his broker and told him to sell his whole portfolio minutes after he gave the instruction to invade Lebanon, avoiding the 8% fall of the Israeli Stock Market.

The biggest bank in the country, Bank Hapoalim, was privatized in the late nineties. All Israeli banks were nationalized in the early eighties after the collapse of the inflated stock market, which especially involved the banks' shares. Their price increase was caused by the bankers' policy of pushing their own shares to their customers under the false promise of steady, constant growth. Bank Hapoalim and Bank Leumi were so successful at this strategy that both entered, for a short period, the list of the one hundred biggest companies in the world. But when they couldn't demonstrate the promised growth, they collapsed. Many people lost their savings and were never compensated by the new bank owner: the state.

Governments aren't natural bank owners and many problems inherent to the situation arose. Under state ownership, one bank's general manager was earning around fifty thousand dollars a month, while the minimum Israeli wages were just eight hundred a month. In fact, most Israelis earned approximately that amount. Even the Prime Minister earned less than his loyal banker. More than a decade later the

government decided to begin a slow re-privatization process, in part to avoid the need to explain such injustice.

The first bank chosen for privatisation was Bank Hapoalim. However, the bidding wasn't open to the general public who were the original shareholders; the bank was offered to just a few people. The winning bidder was Ted Arison, an American dual-national multimillionaire invited to take part for unknown reasons, purportedly as thanks for his services to the Mossad, Israel's foreign intelligence agency. He designed an outrageous circular deal, which was approved by the state. He took a loan from the second biggest bank, Bank Leumi to buy Bank Hapoalim, promising to return the loan with the help of dividends he would pay himself after taking control of Bank Hapoalim. Despite the fact that he was already a multimillionaire investor, the state loaned him the money to buy the bank from itself and cannot claim innocence in such an organized criminal act. Every citizen should ask why he wasn't given such a fantastic offer, because Arison used state money exclusively for the purchase.

Years later, in 2005, the same bank, Bank Hapoalim was discovered to be involved in the massive laundering of Russian-Israeli mafia money. The case is still in the Israeli courts. It seems that in the eyes of the Israeli oligarchy, the best solution for covering up a crime is to perpetrate a new one as a coverup.

In the next few days, I need to decide regarding the course of my US political asylum case. I still lack the funds needed to pay for an American lawyer. If you like what you have read here and want to help me reach the general public, please visit the Donations page on my website www.schossen.com. Thank you.

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