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*Prepared by MM/AFP*

### Sabra and Shatila

## Providing a Voice

#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

*Press Release No 9 – 16 September 2007*

Today commemorates the 25th anniversary of the Sabra & Shatila massacres.

Sabra & Shatila were Palestinian refugee camps just outside of Beirut. Today, only Shatila camp remains; the Sabra camp no longer exists.

During the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, these 2 refugee camps were the scene of a horrific example of human annihilation. Lebanese Christian militia men known as Phalangists - under the protection of the invading Israeli military - massacred between 700 & 3500a innocent men, women and children in just 36 hours.

Israeli forces sealed off the two refugee camps from the rest of the world, allowing the Phalangists to cut a swathe through the camps barely leaving a single being alive – even the camps' pets were slaughtered. Only the very few that successfully managed to hide from the marauders, survived.

Ariel Sharon, the then Defence Minister, was the man whom most thought was responsible for orchestrating the massacre. The Kahan Commission found that Sharon bore “personal responsibility” for “not ordering appropriate measures for preventing or reducing the danger of massacre”. The Commission recommended that he be relieved of his office and Sharon subsequently resigned, but remained as Minister without portfolio.

Sharon was later elected Prime Minister of Israel in 2001.

Charges of war crimes were leveled against Sharon, but they were never completely investigated or heard due to legal technicalities.

Widely acknowledged as one of the most defining events of the 59 year conflict, none of the victims or their relatives has ever been given a reason as to why such an atrocity was allowed to happen.

Twenty-five years on, justice seems as distant as ever. The Palestinians have suffered long enough. Next month in November, the power brokers will gather again for yet another Middle East Peace Summit.

Let us hope for the sake of those from Sabra and Shatila who have been all but forgotten, that something resembling justice will emerge by the time the summit ends.

In Melbourne, a vigil will take place from 12 noon to 2.00pm in the Bourke Street Mall.

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