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Legitimising assassination

THE United Nations could not stop a war, which looks more and more unjustified by the day. Now, it cannot stop the threatened assassination of the elected Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat by the Sharon regime. What, then, can the UN do if it cannot secure the safety of either nations or individual leaders?

It was scary, indeed, when the United States vetoed a UN Security Council resolution demanding that Israel not harm or expel Arafat, who has been, this last week, offering a truce that was summarily rejected by the Jewish authorities. As Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad remarked, the veto is synonymous with "legitimising assassination", which must surely make the world a very unsafe place.

Though Arafat himself is unfazed by the threat, the world cannot afford to pretend that this act of the Bush administration is of little significance. There is no doubting that the intent to remove the Palestinian president is insupportable. Arafat may be its leader but his ability to rule the Palestine autonomous region has long been compromised by Tel Aviv. Ariel Sharon and his cohorts have unleashed the terror of the Jewish State against a defenceless people with impunity, backed by the world's sole superpower. They have dismantled the Palestinian security forces, the only means by which Arafat might have some chance at controlling a population incensed by years of brutality. They have humiliated Arafat by highlighting his impotence.

Therefore, Israel cannot charge Arafat with obstructing peace. He can do little either way. The truth is that Sharon is grasping at straws to justify Israeli state terror, knowing full well that the Palestinians have little re-course to justice in the land of their forefathers. With or without Arafat, Israeli military occupation will continue to reproduce the cycle of violence.

The US veto is encouraging a regime already running amok to be even less restrained. Obviously, George W. Bush's agenda is not primed for his ultimate world statesmanship. Rather, the indication is that under his stewardship there will be established an imperialism that brooks no opposition.