

Posters in Arab Nations Depict Sirhan as Hero

Above Picture Are Words 'A Commando,
Not Assassin'; Many in English, French

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BEIRUT—The Palestine Liberation Organization has begun distributing posters depicting Sirhan B. Sirhan—who is undergoing trial for the murder of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy—as a heroic Arab commando.

Several hundred thousand posters are reportedly being distributed in Arab countries, according to the PLO, while others have been printed in English and French for use in Europe.

A sample poster was recently carried on Page 1 in a Beirut Arabic-language newspaper. It carries a large picture of Sirhan, and in front of him is a drawing of a Palestinian guerrilla with a rifle.

Above the picture are the words: "Sirhan Bishara Sirhan: A commando not an assassin."

The poster adds that "Zionist quarters in America" were trying to distort the motive for Sirhan's action in slaying Sen. Kennedy.

Significant Development

The circulation of the posters—adopting Sirhan as a member of the Palestinian cause—is the most significant development in Arab reaction to the Sirhan trial, sources here say.

The trial has been widely reported in the Arab press and followed closely.

However, because of a decision by Arab governments to adopt a hands-off

policy on the Sirhan case, very little editorial comment has been made about the trial.

One of the few occasions when Arab editorialists complained came when psychiatric testimony at the trial suggested that Sirhan had killed Kennedy while mentally deranged.

"Sirhan is not a madman," argued one editor.

Indeed, the latest move by the PLO to establish Sirhan as a commando hero suggests that the Arabs consider that Sirhan is sane, and merely is behaving like a Palestinian patriot.

Position on Sanity

"There has been an awful lot of testimony at the trial in Los Angeles about Sirhan's sanity," says one veteran Arab affairs specialist here, "but if you go into one of those Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan, you will find a lot of people with the same mental makeup as Sirhan."

The commandos hope, in their widely distributed posters, to capitalize on the extremist view that Sirhan was acting rationally on behalf of the Palestinian guerrillas—to wipe out a hated enemy.

One Cairo paper suggested bringing Sirhan's defense lawyers to the Middle East so that "they can know what the Palestinian question really is."