

Palestine Chronology

1999

January:

Jan. 1: Kurdish rebel leader Abdallah Ocalan warns that his followers may return to full-scale war if their cause continues to be ignored.

Jan. 4: Israel imposes a complete curfew on the Old City of Hebron after unknown assailants attack two settlers.

- Israeli authorities order the deportation of 11 members of the US-based Concerned Christians, suspected of plotting millennium violence against Arabs to hasten the Second Coming of Christ.

Jan. 7: In a snub to the Palestinian legislature, the PA Justice Min. Freih Abu Middein ignores an invitation to answer deputies' questions about political prisoners held in Palestinian jails.

- US State Dept. spokesman James Rubin, responding to Israeli accusations of Palestinian failure to comply with the Wye Accord, says "it is the Israelis who have not fulfilled their...obligations."

- The Syrian Ba'ath Party unanimously nominates Pres. Hafez Al-Assad for a fifth term.

Jan. 8: *Ha'aretz* reports that more than 20% of all land to be marketed by the Housing Min. during 1999 is located in the WBGS (3,729 dwelling units, plus 1,320 units at Har Homa in East Jerusalem). Nationally, land for only 19,800 units is to be marketed.

Jan. 9: The Palestinian Cabinet calls on the international community to put pressure on Israel to force it to respect the US-brokered Wye River Accord in the run-up to May's elections.

Jan. 11: Pres. Clinton's top security advisers recommend that Israeli spy Jonathan Jay Pollard not be released.

- Becoming the first Israeli to address the PLC, former Israeli PM Shimon Peres says, "It is in our common interest to see a Palestinian state."

Jan. 13: The PLC demands an end to political arrests and gives Pres. Arafat a two-week deadline to either charge or release some 450 political prisoners.

- In a formal break with the US and Britain, France submitted a proposal to the UNSC calling for the lifting of the oil embargo on Iraq.

Jan. 17: Lebanon decides to lift travel restrictions for Palestinians who possess Lebanese travel documents, and now exempt them from visa requirements.

- The Palestinian Preventive Security releases 14-year-old Wahidi, from Jabaliya RC, after 53 days of detention.

- Israel protests Pres. Arafat's release of 54 prisoners, including members of Hamas and other opposition groups, to mark the end of Ramadan.

Jan. 19: A coalition of Orthodox Jewish spiritual leaders publishes a peace plan that offers a Palestinian state with its capital in East Jerusalem in return for the settlement of 600,000 Jews in the West Bank.

- Jordan's King Hussein receives a huge welcome upon his return to Amman following six months of cancer treatment in the US.

Jan. 23: The Palestinian Territories have officially been given their own telephone country code, 970, reserved for the PA since November by the International Telecommunications Union.

- PM Benjamin Netanyahu fires Defense Min. Yitzhak Mordechai, who in recent days had taken steps to quit the ruling Likud Party and join a new centrist party.

- Dozens of Palestinian prisoners belonging to Hamas and Islamic Jihad begin a hunger strike in Nablus to protest against the PA's decision not to release them in line with a PLC recommendation.

Jan. 24: In Jordan, ailing King Hussein signs a royal decree shifting succession of the Hashemite throne from his brother, Prince Hassan, crown prince for the last 34 years, to his eldest son Abdallah.

Jan. 25: EU FMs slam Israel for its failure to implement the Wye River Accords.

- Israel and the Palestinians agree to extend the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH) for another six months to monitor and report on tensions in the divided city of Hebron.

- Ousted Israeli Defense Min. Mordechai accepts the leadership of a new centrist party, with former army chief of staff Lt. Gen. Amnon Lipkin-Shahak as number two.

Jan. 26: The Knesset passes a bill requiring a national referendum on any government decision to withdraw from the Golan Heights.

- King Hussein of Jordan is rushed back to the US for further cancer treatments.

- The Israeli parliament adopts a draft bill annexing Jewish colonies in the OPT to Israel.

Jan. 28: US Sec. of State Albright completes a tour of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan to build support for US efforts to oust Iraqi Pres. Saddam Hussein.

Jan. 30: The Israeli Civil Administration uncovers plans to create a new by-pass road in Salfit, threatening to damage 25% of the olive trees in the area.

Jan. 31: In Gaza, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, spiritual leader of Hamas, calls on all Palestinians to fast for 12 hours and pray for the release of Islamic opposition prisoners.

- EU Representative in Jerusalem, Thierry Bechet, issues a press release denying reports published in *Ha'aretz* saying that the EU is planning to freeze financial assistance to the PA.

February

Feb. 1: Col. Rifa'at Judeh of the Preventive Security Services (PPS) is killed in Rafah, when the PPS chases the car in which Ra'ed Attar, Mohammed Abu Shamalah, and Osama Abu Taha, (former) Hamas members working in the Force 17, flee to avoid arrest. In the chase two children, Du'aa Jerwana, 7, and Mamdouh Al-Yazji, 11, are run over and killed.

Feb. 5: At the close of a meeting in Frankfurt hosted by the World Bank, donor countries commit \$770 million in aid to Palestine in 1999

Feb. 7: King Hussein of Jordan dies; his son Abdallah is crowned the new monarch. World leaders converge for the funeral the next day.

Feb. 8: *Ha'aretz* reports that Israeli settlers are establishing new sites in the West Bank and are hastily beefing up existing ones.

- Sec.-Gen. of the DFLP, Nayef Hawatmeh, and Israeli Pres. Ezer Weizman exchange a historical handshake during the funeral of King Hussein.

Feb. 9: *Yediot Aharonot* reports that thousands of dwelling units have been authorized in settlements in recent months.

Feb. 9: Ignoring Israeli and US objections, the UNGA approves a resolution calling for an international conference on Israeli settlements with a vote of 115-2 and five abstentions.

Feb. 12: Some 600 Palestinians brandishing the green flag of Hamas occupy the police headquarters in Jericho demanding the release of Islamic militants who have gone on a hunger strike.

- PA Gen. Intelligence Services arrests 15-year-old Bilal Yehya Al-Ghoul, in relation to the escape of his father from a Palestinian prison in **Dec. 1998**.

- PA police arrest Dr. Mahmoud Zahhar, after summoning him for interrogation, on grounds that he provided medical treatment to a Palestinian wanted by the Palestinian police for involvement in the killing of Palestinian Col. Joudeh last month in a shootout between the PA police and members of Hamas.

Feb. 13: Jordanian Information Min. Nasser Judeh says Jordan is welcoming discussion on a possible confederation with the Palestinian territories, but only after the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Feb. 15: The Israeli army demolishes three Palestinian houses under construction in villages near Nablus for lacking building permits.

- The Israeli army uproots more than 400 olive trees belonging to Palestinians from Beit Dajan village under the pretext that it is a 'state-land'.

Feb. 16: According to a study by Peace Now, the population in the 10 largest West Bank settlements has increased by 5.9% in the first nine months of 1998.

Feb. 16: Turkish commandos capture PKK leader Abdallah Ocalan, who had been searching for asylum since he left Italian custody on **Jan. 16**, in Kenya after the Greek embassy in Nairobi denies him refuge. Kurdish people across the globe stage protests and demonstrations.

Feb. 17: In Berlin, Israeli security guards fire on Kurdish protesters outside the Israeli consulate, killing three, wounding 16.

Feb. 18: Israel seizes a village in southern Lebanon overnight to expand its self-styled 'security zone'.

Feb. 19: Pres. Arafat is received by Pope John Paul II in a private audience at the Vatican to discuss, among other things, the preparations for celebrations of Year 2000, especially in the city of Bethlehem.

Feb. 18-19: The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (at the UN) organizes a successful Bethlehem 2000 International Conference at the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) headquarters in Rome.

Feb. 22: Palestine participates in a UNSC debate, on the issue of 'Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict'.

Feb. 23: Turkey charges PKK leader Ocalan with treason and rejects the EU request to send observers to the trial.

- Some 1,200 Palestinian doctors, nurses, and health administrators strike to protest PA's failure to implement a civil service law passed (**May 1998**), which would increase their salaries.

Feb. 24: The US Supreme Court issues a decision that allows for the deportation of seven Palestinians and one Kenyan charged with involvement in a 'terrorist network' affiliated with the PFLP.

Feb. 25: A special PA Military Court sentences Col. Ahmed Abu Mustafa for raping a six-year-old boy in Khan Younis six days before to 15 years with hard labor for abduction and sexual assault. He is also convicted of inciting the public against the PA for which he receives the death sentence. The execution by a firing squad follows a few hours later.

Feb. 26: Iran holds its first local elections since 1979, with over 280,000 candidates running for the 200,000 seats.

Feb. 27: Samiha Khalil, 76, founder and president of the Ina'sh Al-Usra Society dies in Al-Bireh.

- During the Jewish holiday of Purim Israeli authorities impose a week-long total closure on the WBGS.

Feb. 28: PM Netanyahu and FM Sharon hold their first meeting with King Abdallah in Amman.

March

March 1: A US court sentences Ghazi Abu Meizar, 25, from Hebron to life imprisonment for planning to blow up a subway station in New York city in 1997.

- Iran's local election results show a sweeping victory for reform candidates allied with Pres. Khatami.

March 2: 15-year-old Bilal Yehya Al-Ghoul is released after 20 days of detention; he was arrested by the PA Gen. Intelligence after his father escaped from the central prison in Gaza on **11 Dec. 1998**.

- Labor chairman Ehud Barak pledges to withdraw from Lebanon and resume negotiations with Syria within one year if he wins May 17 elections.

March 4: Palestinian police detain members of Al-Khalas (Islamic National Party) during a meeting of the political bureau, due to the PA's dissatisfaction with a press release that the party had issued, criticizing the State Security Court's charge of three young people.

March 6: Abdil Fattah Shannan from Kobar, near Ramallah, is shot and killed by a family member who works for the PA Gen. Intelligence Service.

March 7: The PLC reelects their current Speaker Ahmad Qrei'a (Abu 'Ala) for a third consecutive term since the council's formation three years ago. Qrei'a receives 57 of the votes in comparison to three votes received by his opponent Sheikh Suleiman 'Abu Rumi'.

- The PLC declares March 7 Democracy Day in Palestine, initiating a campaign to reinforce Palestinian awareness of the importance of democracy.

- Jewish settlers set up seven mobile homes on a hilltop near the Palestinian town Dahariya in the southern West Bank.

March 9: Israeli bulldozers demolish without warning four Palestinian homes and six livestock sheds in Jaba' village, near Ramallah, and Um al-Dali, near Jiftlik.

- Rana Raslan, 21, of Haifa, is named Miss Israel for 1999, becoming the first Israeli-Arab to win the title. 'Miss Israel' was chosen as the Arab sector's beauty queen in Israel three years ago.

March 11: The State Security Court in Gaza issues a death sentence against Ra'ed Attar, 24, in a less than 10-minute trial for a violation of Article 378 of the 1979 Palestinian Revolutionary Code. The trial arose from the **Feb. 1** incident, leading to the death of PSS Col. Rifa'at Judeh, who had been in hot pursuit of 'Attar and two others. PA security forces open fire on demonstrators in Rafah, protesting the death sentence, killing Ala Hams and Khamis Salameh, both 17, and injuring over 80 others. Pres. Arafat orders the formation of a commission to investigate the riots and deaths in Gaza.

- The US Senate resolves 98-1 to oppose the unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state. The House of Representatives approves the resolution by a vote of 385 -25 on **March 16**.

- The Israeli army reopens a Palestinians road leading from central Hebron to the Jewish enclave of Tel Rumeida. The road had been closed since an anti-Israeli attack in **Sept. 1998**.

March 13: US envoy Dennis Ross states that the US views settlement activity "as very destructive to the pursuit of peace precisely because it predetermines and prejudices what ought to be negotiated."

March 14: Sa'ed Abdel Mahdi Alawi, 20, from Deir Jrir, near Ramallah, is shot dead by a member of the Force 17, following a fight between two groups in the village.

- A school and a clinic become the first buildings in Arab Al-Ka'abneh, southeast of Hebron, that have ever been hooked up to electricity.

March 15: Ayman Zayed, from Beit Iksa, is shot dead by a fellow villager who belongs to the Palestinian security forces. His is the eighth death in eight months as a result of weapon misuse.

- Pres. Yasser Arafat is awarded the Italian Republic Medal for his peace efforts in the Middle East.

March 16: The PA warns of an acute water shortage caused by the current drought, which will leave the Palestinians more dependent than ever on Israeli water supplies.

- Palestinian taxi drivers in the Nablus region refuse to pick up fares for several hours, to protest attempts by the PA Transportation Min. to regulate the industry.

- The US House of Representatives approves a resolution by a vote of 385-25 warning PA Chairman Arafat not to declare a Palestinian state unilaterally, or else to have US financial support for the PA halted.

- Five pre-fabricated houses are brought to Tel Rumeida in Hebron.

March 18: The PA drafts plans to establish an electricity grid for the southern West Bank to become independent from Israeli power.

March 20: Yasser Hamad, 23, from Naqura village, near Nablus, is shot dead by a member of the Palestinian security forces, marking the 20th death as a result of weapon misuse since the establishment of the PA.

- The Arab-Israeli National Democratic Alliance, or Bilad, launches a campaign to have Azmi Bishara, a deputy in the outgoing Knesset, run for the office of PM as the first ever Arab candidate.

- Jordan and Egypt announce their support for the Palestinians' right to declare an independent state on **May 4**.

March 21: PM Netanyahu warns of tough action if Palestinians declare a state.

March 23: Peace Now releases a study, which reveals that settlement-building starts in the WGBS jumped 105% in 1998, while building starts within the Green Line declined 20%.

- Pres. Arafat visits the White House.

March 24: Israel closes for the third day Muntar (Karni) crossing, the largest joint commercial crossing within the self-ruled Gaza Strip, after Gaza merchants refuse to pay fees doubled by Israel.

March 26: At the close of the Berlin European Council, the Heads of State and Government of the EU issue a landmark declaration on the Middle East peace process, reaffirming their "support for a negotiated settlement in the Middle East. In order to reflect the principles of 'land for peace' and ensure the security both collective and individual of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples." It further calls for an early resumption of final status negotiations and reaffirms the "continuing and unqualified Palestinian right to self-determination including the option of a state". The Palestinians, Jordan, Egypt, Syria and the Arab League hail the EU's declaration, while Israel rejects it as an unacceptable 'dictate'. An enraged PM Netanyahu says it was "regretful that Europe, where a third of the Jewish people perished, would see fit to impose a solution that endangers the state of Israel and its interests".

March 29: The Knesset Finance Committee allocates a \$14 million subsidy for the construction of 600 units in WB settlements and \$75 million for settlement infrastructure and new construction.

March 30: Palestinians inside the Green Line hold a general strike marking the anniversary of Land Day.

March 31: 520 Israeli intellectuals and peace activists sign a petition calling on Israel to permit the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the WGBS.

April

April 4: Tens of thousands of Israelis attend a cornerstone-laying ceremony in Hebron for a new building next to Hadassah House.

- Tensions between Muslims and Christians erupt into violence in Nazareth - a town with 70,000 inhabitants, 70% of them Muslims and 30% Christians - in what started as a dispute over a piece of land near the Church of the Annunciation. The Municipality had planned to build a square and a parking lot on

it in preparation for the year 2000; the Muslims, who locate the grave of a holy man there, want to build a sizeable mosque.

April 7: Violence erupts again in Nazareth between Christians and Muslims over a downtown plot of land near the Church of the Annunciation. The Christian mayor, backed by the Israeli Govt., wants to build a Venetian-style plaza in time for the millennium celebrations, while Muslims say the land belongs to the Islamic Waqf and want to build a large mosque at the site.

April 8: During a visit to Japan, Yasser Arafat hints that he will not declare an independent Palestinian state before Israel's general election on **May 17**.

April 10: Pres. Arafat returns the ratified 'NGO Law' (see **Dec. 27, 1998**) unsigned to the PLC, proposing an amendment.

April 11: In a TV interview, Ehud Barak announces four 'red lines' for any future final status agreement: Jerusalem undivided as Israel's capital; no withdrawal to the June 1967 borders; no foreign army west of the Jordan River; most settlers to remain in large territorial blocs under Israeli sovereignty.

April 12: Pinhas Wallerstein, chairman of YESHA, states that the settler population of the WB has increased by 30%, to 200,000, during Netanyahu's tenure.

April 14: *Ha'aretz* reports that US satellite pictures show the establishment of 12 new hilltop settlements and access roads in the WB since the signing of the Wye Accord.

- The Vatican issues a statement warning that it will close the doors of its churches in Israel if the building of a mosque on disputed land in Nazareth is approved. The head of the Islamic movement in Israel, Ibrahim Sarsour, says the Vatican threat is a blatant interference in Islamic-Christian relations.

April 15-16: The participants of the 3rd Euro-Mediterranean conference of FM (in Stuttgart) emphasize the importance of intra- and sub-regional cooperation. They reiterate their firm commitment to the realization of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East based on faithful implementation of UNSC Res. 242 and 338 and the terms of reference of the Madrid Peace Conference, including the principle of land for peace. The EU is encouraged to increase its role in support of the MEPP.

April 17: A child, Mohammed Duha, from Deir As-Soudan near Ramallah, is shot dead by a relative while celebrating the return of another family member from Mecca.

April 19: According to the Israeli CBS, the settler population in the WBGS grew by 7% in 1998 to 172,000.

April 19-22: On its 51st anniversary of independence, Israel imposes a total security closure on the WBGS.

April 23: The UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva adopts - with 31-1 (US) and 21 abstentions - a resolution condemning Israeli activities in the occupied territories and accusing Israel's Govt. of contempt for the principles of the Middle East peace process.

- At least 81 representative offices – the majority of foreign diplomats – including the US and EU countries, reject an invitations by Ariel Sharon to tour the Palestinian lands to get a "close look at Israel's security needs" before final status negotiations.

- Russian FM Igor Ivanov delivers a letter from Pres. Boris Yeltsin to Yasser Arafat urging him to put off proclaiming a state on **May 4**.

- *Yerushalayim* reports that the Housing Min. has added 20 WB settlements to the list of “A” development areas (in which home-buyers are eligible for a \$10,000 ‘loan’).

April 25: All eight PLO factions – incl. Fateh - join together in calling on Pres. Arafat to resist international pressure to put off the declaration of an independent Palestinian state. A statement released reads “The PLO factions insist the transitional period of autonomy should not be extended in any way”.

- Likud warns that it would cancel the Oslo Accords in the event of a unilateral proclamation of a Palestinian state.

April 26: In a letter to Pres. Arafat, Pres. Clinton writes that the US “knows how destructive settlement activities, land confiscation, and house demolitions are to the pursuit of Palestinian-Israeli peace”.

April 27: The PLO Central Council convenes in the Palestinian presidential headquarters in Gaza to discuss the expiry of the DoP and the issue of Palestinian statehood proposed for May 4.

- The UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva adopts a resolution acknowledging the right of Palestinian self-determination based on UN Res. 181 (Partition) of 1947 and reaffirming the right of return for Palestinian refugees based on UN Res. 194 of 1948. Out of 53 members, only the US opposes the resolution (Israel is not a member).

April 29: Palestinian leaders decide to delay a decision on unilaterally declaring independence until after the Israeli elections. Russia, the US, Egypt and the Arab League welcome the move.

April 30: The PLO Central Council decides to postpone a Palestinian declaration of statehood until after a second round of Israeli elections on **June 1**.

May

May 3: Ireland and seven Latin American countries agree to the upgrading of Palestinian representations in their countries to embassies, according to PA Min. Nabil Shaath.

- A Peace Now survey of settlement expansion shows that 6,500 housing units are under construction in the WBGS, a 14% increase over a year ago.

May 4: On the day that the Oslo interim period expires, a new study conducted by Peace Now's Settlement Watch project shows a dramatic expansion of settlement construction in the WBGS under PM Netanyahu, with 6,608 housing units under construction, marking a 12% increase since August 1998. The number of empty housing units in the WBGS has risen to 3,714, a 25% increase in the settlement vacancy rate over the same time.

- The PA postpones its decision on whether to declare an independent state.

May 6: The European Parliament Resolution on the Middle East Peace Process and the May 4, 1999 deadline reiterates the “Palestinians' unconditional right to self-determination. These include, the right to create a state, which the EU is prepared to consider recognizing in due course”, and “that the final outcome of the current process must be the establishment of an independent Palestinian state and recognition of the State of Israel's existence and its right to security”.

May 7: Peace Now reports 3,712 empty units in West Bank settlements.

May 9: The patriarchs and bishops of all the Catholic churches of the Middle East convene in Beirut for a meeting that is the first of its kind and aims at reinforcing the communion within the Church in the region as they approach the year 2000. The key questions on the agenda include relations with Jews and Muslims, the Christian exodus from the Holy Land, the status of Jerusalem, and the preparations for the Jubilee Year.

May 11: The Knesset Finance Committee approves \$3 million for the "creation of 32 new neighborhoods in settlements".

May 13: The PA and Israel have embarked on a wave of arrests of Islamic militants to prevent attacks on the eve of Israel's elections.

- Palestinians clash with the Israeli army in various West Bank locations amid Palestinian protests of Israeli expropriation of agricultural land.

- Egypt becomes the first country to use the Palestinian telephone code. Algeria, Sudan and Tunisia have also agreed to use the new PA code - 970.

May 17: Shadi Saqr Abu Dahruj, 21, from Jabalya, Gaza, dies in Beersheva prison due to lack of medical care.

May 25: The PLC votes 38-12 to reject the proposed amendment to the 'NGO Law' recommended by Pres. Arafat.

May 30: Israeli forces prevent Gazan journalists from traveling to the West Bank to cover a national conference against settlements being held in the Casablanca Hotel in Ramallah.

- B'Tselem reports that since 1993 Israel has established 33 new settlements in the OPT, 17 in the period just prior to and after the signing of the Wye memorandum in **Oct. 1998**.

June

June 1: Anwar Shihada, from Orif village near Nablus, is killed due to weapons abuse, raising the number of victims since the beginning of the year to nine people.

June 2: The five-year plan of the Israeli Housing Min. calls for the construction of 12,000 new dwelling units in WB settlements (incl. 3,000 in Ma'ale Adumim, 2,000 in Kiryat Sefer, and 1,500 in Ariel).

June 3: The 'Day of Rage' against Israeli settlements and land confiscation called for by the PA sees thousands of Palestinian demonstrators; turns violent when Israeli forces begin firing on demonstrators, causing widespread injuries and one death.

June 4: An Israeli soldier-settler shoots and kills Ala' Abu Sharkh, from Athahiriye near Hebron, while Sharkh is in a car with a friend on their way to work in Beersheva. The two had taken a bypass road close to Susiya settlement to avoid the checkpoint, as neither of them had a permit to enter Israel. The Israeli soldier claimed Sharkh wanted to run him over. A few days later, the soldier is sentenced to 30 days (!) in a military jail for irresponsible shooting, after an army investigation found that the car had not attempted to strike him.

June 5: An opinion poll conducted by the CPRS in Nablus shows that 63% of the Palestinian respondents do not trust the intentions of the Israeli public in the peace process, and 54% believe that Barak will not implement the Wye River Agreement.

June 11: Pres. Yasser Arafat appoints Radwan Agha as the Chief Justice and head of the High Court of Justice – a position that had been vacant since **Feb. 1998** after the dismissal of Qusai Abadleh.

June 12: The "*Independent*" reports that the Palestinian security forces have distributed leaflets denouncing Pres. Arafat as corrupt and as a collaborator with Israel.

June 13: PNC and Fateh Revolutionary Council member Mohammed Daoud Odeh (Abu Daoud) is banned from entering into Israel after Germany issues a warrant for his arrest on grounds of his involvement in the 1972 killing of 11 athletes in Munich.

June 16: Palestinian political prisoners in Israel's Ashkelon prison end a ten-day hunger strike protesting against solitary confinement and bad prison conditions.

June 17: The Israeli army demolishes two houses in the village of Beit Liqya, near Ramallah, for being built without a permit.

June 19: During a visit to Allenby Bridge, King Abdallah confirms the need to achieve equality between Jordanians and Jordanians of Palestinian origin.

June 20: In a statement at the end of their meeting in Cologne, G8 leaders call on Israel and the Palestinians to immediately and fully implement the Wye Agreement. They ask for a stop to any unilateral activities that may preempt the results of final status negotiations, which they urge to be ended within one year.

- Pres. Arafat appoints Zuheir Sourani as the Attorney Gen. for the PA (a position that had been vacant since the **May 1998** resignation of Fayez Abu Rahmeh).

June 21: Pres. Yasser Arafat officially launches a new international dialing code for Palestine (970) – agreed upon by the international telecommunications union in 1998 - and unveils the first cellular telephone service dedicated to the Palestinian territories (known as Al-Jawal).

- Addressing a conference at Birzeit University, speaker of the PNC, Salim Zanoun, attacks the Palestinian justice system, saying that its quality is worse than it had been 40 years ago.

June 28: Ramadan Abu Shahin, 18, member of the PA security force from Balata RC, is shot and killed by the head of the police center in Anata after a fight erupted between them.

Late June: An independent international task force sponsored by the US Council on Foreign Relations and including prominent European and US officials, releases a report. The report calls on the PA to reform "unchecked executive power, a weak judiciary, secretive budgets, a bloated public sector, unaccountable administration and competing security agencies".

July

July 4: Bahrain Telecommunications Co. (Batelco) announces the introduction of direct telephone dialing with self-ruled Palestinian areas.

July 6: The new Israeli PM Ehud Barak takes office.

- In Nablus, PA Military Intelligence violently disperses a peaceful demonstration organized by the families of political detainees.

July 7: In an interview with Israel radio, new Israeli Justice Min. Yossi Beilin states his intention to abolish the administrative detention law while in office.

July 11: At his first public meeting with PM Barak, Pres. Arafat stresses that settlement activity is "contrary to the spirit of peace" and calls for a freeze; Barak replies that no new settlements will be built and none will be dismantled.

July 12: Benny Kashriel, mayor of Ma'ale Adumim, is chosen to succeed Pinchas Wallerstein as YESHA Council chairman. Aharon Domb remains Sec.-Gen.

July 13: *Ha'aretz* reports that all Israeli Govt. investments for factories in the WBGS are frozen until the government makes a new map of national priority areas. Industry and Trade Min. Ran Cohen says there is no reason to invest millions of shekels beyond the Green Line when there are over 200,000 unemployed citizens within Israel.

July 17: Hundreds of Palestinians demonstrate in Dheisheh RC against the water shortage caused by Israel's scant water allocations to the Palestinians.

July 19: Israeli Min. of Education Yossi Sarid declares that WB settlements are no longer eligible for free education for three-year-old children.

July 20: Israeli soldiers open fire against a group of Palestinian youth, demonstrating against settler activities near Netzarim. At least 13 receive injuries from rubber bullets.

July 22: Peace Now has revealed the recent approval of three new bypass roads in the WB by the Barak Govt., incl. a section of road from the settlement of Kfar Tappuah, and two sections of the Ramallah-Nablus road (Route 60).

July 23: Moroccan King Hassan II dies at the age of 70. His son Mohammed succeeds him. Pres. Arafat declares a three-day mourning period to mark the passing of the King, with flags in the Palestinian territories flown at half-mast.

July 26: PLC Speaker Ahmad Qrei'a (Abu 'Ala) visits the Knesset invited by Knesset Speaker Avraham Burg.

July 27: PM Ehud Barak and Pres. Yasser Arafat meet at the Eretz Crossing in Gaza, agree to set up a panel – headed by Israeli attorney Gilad Sher and chief Palestinian negotiator Sa'eb Erekat - to discuss the 'implementation' of Wye.

August

Aug. 4: Israeli troops seal Hebron a day after gun attacks by Palestinians that injured two Jewish settlers. The siege is lifted on **Aug. 8**.

Aug. 5: Dr. Eyad Sarraj, human rights activist from Gaza, is called in for questioning by the PA Civilian Police.

Aug. 6: PM Barak has appointed Israel's first Arab deputy FM, lawmaker and politician, Nawaf Massalha.

Aug.6/7: In Gaza, the PA arrests top Hamas leaders Dr. Abdel Aziz Rantisi, Ahmad Nimr and Ismail Abu Shanab after Hamas claims responsibility for the shooting of two settlers in Hebron on **Aug. 3**.

Aug. 7: Some 10,000 Palestinians march through Gaza protesting Syrian Defense Min. Mustafa Tlass's attack on Pres. Arafat that he has betrayed the Palestinian dream of a state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Aug. 8: Qatar's Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Ath-Thani becomes the first Gulf monarch to visit the Palestinian territories. Pres. Yasser Arafat meets him at Gaza Airport.

- Pres. Arafat agrees to new Israeli PM Ehud Barak's proposal to start implementing the long overdue Wye River Accord on **Sept. 1**.

- According to an Israeli map obtained from the Palestinian District Coordinating Liaison Office (DCO) in Bethlehem, Israel plans to construct a new 'Eretz Style'-checkpoint for Jerusalem in Bethlehem, apparently to facilitate the influx of tourists expected for the year 2000 celebrations. Palestinians reject the map as a unilateral Israeli attempt to consolidate claims on Jerusalem.

Aug. 11: PA Health Min. Riad Zanon declares a state of emergency for the day of the solar eclipse with all schools and public institutions having the day off.

- A Palestinian from Bethlehem rams his bus twice into a group of Israelis at a bus stop near Ramleh, injuring 12 Israelis, before being shot dead.

Aug. 12: The PLC passes the 1999 PA budget with a deficit of NIS 188 million (\$47 million).

- The Israeli Judge Advocate Gen. has drafted a legal opinion stating that only 12 of the 42 hilltop settlements recently erected in the WB can definitely be defended before the High Court.

Aug. 15: Senior Hizbullah commander Ali Hassan Salame, 38, is killed when the car he was driving in Sidon blows up. Hizbullah blames Israel, which refrained from commenting on the incident.

- After an explosion in a shop in Hebron, Palestinian security forces launch an arrest campaign among members of the Islamic movements.

Aug. 15-31: At the Pan-Arab Games in Amman, the Palestinian national team wins 9 bronze medals and 1 silver. Among others, the football team is successful.

Aug. 16: An Israeli District Court in Jerusalem acquits Israeli settler Nahum Korman from Betar Illit of the murder of 11-year-old Hilmi Shusheh, who he beat to death on **Oct. 27, 1996**.

Aug. 17: Israeli authorities have decided to try children 12 years and over in military courts for throwing stones, etc. and charge them as adults.

- The Israeli-Palestinian Joint Security Committee (JSC) has resumed its role after three years of relative inactivity.

Aug. 17: Earthquake hits Turkey.

Aug. 19: The Israeli army opens a segment of Shuhada Street – passing through the center of Hebron - for the first time since it was closed following the Hebron massacre.

- Israeli authorities release the longest held Palestinian detainee Khalil Sa'di Ahmad Ar-Rai' (Abu Sa'ad), after being held for 25 years for participating in military operations against Israel. Ar-Rai, from Gaza, was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1974 for leading a Fateh cell and killing an Israeli policeman in 1973.

- At a press conference in Damascus, Sec.-Gen. of the DFLP, Nayef Hawatmeh says he is ready to participate in final status negotiations with Israel, which must be based on UN resolutions and the land-for-peace principle.

- The PA and Israel sign an agreement on the exchange of postal services between the two sides. It allows Palestinians to send/receive mail directly to/from Egypt and Jordan, without routing it through Israel.

Aug. 22: Israeli bulldozers begin paving a new road connecting the Gaza settlements of Gush Qatif, Gan Or, Gadid and Pedolah.

Aug. 23: Israeli authorities hand evacuation notices to Palestinians residing in Khan Younis RC in an area east of Neve Dekalim settlement.

- Hundreds of Palestinian prisoners begin a hunger strike to protest their continued detention and the exclusion of some of them from consideration for release.

Aug. 24: PA security forces release Sami Nofal, politburo member of the Islamic National Salvation Party, after seven days of arrest during which he was tortured.

- Haim Habibi and his family of five, Kurdish Jews from Jerusalem, asks PLC member Hatem Abdel Qader for "protection and political asylum" from the PA after having been harassed by the Israeli authorities.

Aug. 25: Col. Hani Abu Zeina from Rafah dies in Beersheva Hospital after being shot in the head two days earlier, while intervening to stop a confrontation between two families.

Aug. 26: The PA State Security Court issues a death sentence by firing squad against Ayman Abu Sa'ada, 27, from Rafah, convicted of killing Col. Hani Abu Zeina on **Aug. 24**, when the latter intervened in a family feud.

Aug. 27: Israeli settlers level a five dunum piece of land to establish a bypass road as a preparatory measure to annex this land to an Israeli military post in Tel Jinan, between Khan Younis and Rafah.

Aug. 28: Israeli soldiers and settlers enclose the settlements of Gadid, Gan Or and Pedolah, putting barbed wire fence around hundreds of dunums of Palestinian land between them.

Aug. 30: Jordanian authorities continue their crack down on Hamas, close four Hamas offices in Amman and arrest several Hamas members, saying that the group was preparing to attack Israel.

Aug. 31: Ahmad Taher, 31, from Al-Bireh is shot and killed by a stray bullet during a wedding celebration in Qaddura RC, marking the 12th such victim in 1999.

September

Sept. 1: Pres. Yasser Arafat is awarded an honorary Ph.D. degree from the Dutch Maastricht University.

Sept. 4: Israeli PM Ehud Barak and PA Pres. Yasser Arafat sign the revised Wye Accord at Sharm Esh-Sheikh, paving the way for talks on a permanent peace settlement, witnessed by Pres. Mubarak, US Sec.

of State Albright and King Abdallah II. The deal is approved the next day by the Israeli cabinet by a vote of 21-2 (Interior Min. Natan Sharansky and Construction Min. Yitzhak Levy).

Sept. 5: Two car bombs explode within 20 minutes of each other in northern Israel – in Tiberias and Haifa – killing the three men who apparently were to detonate them. Fearing further attacks, Israeli police put up roadblocks around towns and cities in the north.

- In accordance with the Sharm Esh-Sheikh Memorandum, Israeli authorities release 199 Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails, 98 from Gaza and 101 from the West Bank.

Sept. 5: The EU welcomes the agreement between Israel and the Palestinians on restarting the peace process.

Sept. 6: In a landmark decision, the Israeli High Court outlaws interrogation methods used by the internal security service Shin Bet, which have been denounced by human rights groups as torture for years.

Sept. 6: An assassination attempt on Egypt's Pres. Mubarak fails in Port Said. The assailant is shot and killed by bodyguards.

Sept. 7: Israeli right-wing legislators introduce legislation to soften a landmark High Court ruling that bars the use of physical force in interrogations by the GSS (Shin Bet) security service.

Sept. 9: In the wake of the High Court of Justice ruling that many of the interrogation techniques used by the GSS are illegal, Human Rights Watch calls on Israeli Justice Min. Yossi Beilin to take steps to prosecute GSS members who are responsible for torture.

- Five Palestinian workers are shot and injured by Israeli soldiers at a military checkpoint north of Bethlehem.

Sept. 10: According to the Sharm Esh-Sheikh Memorandum, Israel transfers 7% of the West Bank (Area C) to Palestinian civil control (Area B).

Sept. 13: With a handshake and ceremonial speeches, FM David Levy and Palestinian negotiator Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) formally launch the final status talks at Eretz checkpoint. PA Min. of Culture and Information Yasser Abed Rabbo is named new chief negotiator, leading to the withdrawal from the negotiating team of Mohammed Dahlan, Head of Security in Gaza.

Sept. 14: During a tour of Ma'ale Adumim, Israeli PM Barak pledges to strengthen the largest Jewish settlement in the West Bank -- a day after the launch of final status talks.

- Settlers in Hebron call on PM Barak to declare the 'Machpela Cave' a national holy site belonging to the people of Israel and not to allow a Palestinian Police presence to be established there, as to be discussed under the provisions of the Sharm Esh-Sheikh Memorandum.

Sept. 15: Ramallah Preventive Security forces raid the library of the Arab Cultural House and arrest Maher Adisouki, a journalist from Al-Bireh, for allegedly possessing material inciting against the PA.

Sept. 16: Israeli settlers protected by Israeli soldiers level 20 dunums of land in the east of Rafah Mawasi to annex it to the Gush Qatif bloc.

- The PA has complied with its commitment to provide Israel with a list of names of its 30,000 police officers.

Sept. 19: Pres. Arafat issues Presidential Decree 28/99, reaffirming the jurisdiction and mandate of the Chief Justice, whose jurisdiction has been subjected to intervention and interference in the last four years. The decree enables the Gaza Chief Justice to grant judicial vacations to judges and to arrange the conditions of the judiciary, thus, holding the power of the West Bank Supreme Judicial Coun.

Sept. 19-20: Israeli authorities announce 14 military orders to seal off large areas of fertile agricultural land in the West Bank. The orders (approved back on **15 May 1999**) are distributed to DCOs and Israeli army posts, and appear in *Al-Quds*. According to LAW, some 79 villages and thousands of dunums of Palestinian farmland are affected.

Sept. 21: The UN Sec.-Gen. appoints Amb. Terje Roed-Larsen of Norway to be the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and his Personal Representative to the PLO/PA.

Sept. 22: The Palestinian 'Museum of Memory' is inaugurated in an old renovated house in Ein Sinia village near Ramallah, which has served as a slick for storing weapons by Abdel Qader Al-Husseini in 1948.

Sept. 27: The Board of Al-Azhar University in Gaza decides to close the University indefinitely after student protests about the increase in tuition fees accelerated.

Sept. 29: Deputy-Sec. of the PFLP, Abu Ali Mustapha, returns to Palestine after over 32 years in exile.

Sept. 30: The London-based *Foreign Report* says the Shin Bet has advised PM Barak to allow for a demilitarized Palestinian state.

- In yet another case of weapons abuse, a PA Intelligence officer, Ahmed Jamil from Burqin, opens fire at prosecutor, Usama Kilani, after the latter refused to release his brother.

October

Oct. 3: Ayman Sami Ahmad Shuqiyeh, 20, a policeman from Ramallah, is shot and seriously injured by drunk members of the Force 17, during a chase of the latter who had assaulted and beat police in Ramallah.

Oct. 4: Mohammed Ahmed Shriete, 33, from Yatta, dies in Hebron Hospital after being transferred from the police station where he was held and tortured since his arrest on **28 Sept.**

Oct. 5: Israeli and Palestinian negotiators reach a compromise agreement on the southern safe passage route: Palestinians will apply to a Palestinian office for magnetic cards, Israeli officials will security-check each applicant, and PA security will be present when the cards are issued. Israel has promised not to use the passage as a 'trap' to arrest travelling Palestinians.

- At a meeting, the representatives of refugee camps in the WBGS state they would not accept any deal reached in the final status talks between Israel and the PLO/PA short of granting them the full right of return.

Oct. 7: After ten days of worldwide campaigns, the Italian fashion giant Benetton backs down, announcing the cancellation of plans to have their sportswear subsidiary, Kappa, produce at a factory in the WB settlement of Barkan.

Oct. 8: *Yediot Ahoronot* reports Israel, Jordan, Egypt and the PA have recently signed a security agreement to combat Islamic resistance movements in the region.

- The US removes the DFLP from its list of terrorist groups.

Oct. 9: A Jordanian delegation headed by speaker of the Parliament, Abdul Hadi Majali, confronts Jewish settlers and the Israeli army outside Al-Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron.

Oct. 10: Chief Justice Radwan Al-Agha (Gaza) orders Judge Abdallah Guzlan, head of the Ramallah Court, to be transferred to Bethlehem, Judge Tal'at At-Tawil, head of the Ramallah Magistrate Court, to move to Jericho, and Judge Mazen Ash-Sha'ar, a Jericho magistrate judge, to be transferred to Ramallah.

- Palestinian police arrest three Israeli soldiers in civilian clothing in PA territory; after being interrogated, they are handed over to the Israeli authorities.

Oct. 11: Palestine gets its own independent internet code, ending url addresses with 'ps'.

- In a press conference at the headquarters of the Ramallah Court of Appeals, a group of West Bank judges announce the beginning of an open strike, in protest of Chief Justice Radwan Al-Agha's (Gaza) decision to transfer some judges from their current positions to other towns, and demanding fundamental reforms in the judiciary.

Oct. 12: In a press conference at Bethlehem Municipality, Mayor Hanna Nasser and other Palestinian leaders strongly denounce the construction of an Eretz-like checkpoint in Bethlehem.

Oct. 14: PM Barak reaches a deal with the YESHA Settler Council to dismantle 'illegal' civilian outposts in the West Bank.

- The Vatican indicates that Pope John Paul II's visit to the Holy Land in March 2000 may be cancelled in protest of the Shihab Eddin mosque to be constructed near Nazareth's Church of the Annunciation.

Oct. 15: Israel releases 151 Palestinian prisoners in accordance with the Sharm Esh-Sheikh Agreement, 83 sent to Gaza while 68 arrived in the West Bank. Among the released are 37 foreign Arabs.

Oct. 16: US Commerce Sec. William Daley, heading a delegation of businessmen, meets with Pres. Yasser Arafat to discuss economic and trade matters.

Oct. 17: The Israel Lands Authority has issued a tender for the construction of 22 housing units in the Neveh Dekalim settlement in Gaza.

- The opening of the safe passage slated for today is again delayed due to 'technical problems'.

Oct. 18: The southern safe passage from Eretz checkpoint to Tarkumiya near Hebron finally opens.

Oct. 19: The YESHA Settler Council dismantles 'Hill 827' - the first outpost slated for evacuation in their agreement with PM Barak.

- Former South African Pres. Nelson Mandela, on a private visit to Israel and the PA, urges Israel to withdraw from the Arab territories occupied since 1967.

Oct. 21: Some 100 Bethlehem University students demonstrate against the new 'Eretz 2' checkpoint in Bethlehem.

- A fire in an unlicensed factory that manufactures gas lighters in Hebron leaves 14 people dead and over 20 injured, mostly women. Most of the victims were burned beyond recognition and buried in a mass grave.

Oct. 22: A day after the blaze in Hebron, the city's population riots in rage against the municipality, hurling stones at City Hall and demanding the resignation of mayor Natsheh.

Oct. 26: PM Barak announces the long-delayed appointment of a chief negotiator: Ambassador to Jordan, Oded Eran.

- An Israeli soldier guarding Rachel's Tomb shoots and kills Musa Abu-Hallel, as he was reaching for his papers to present to the soldier.

- The cornerstone for the first independent Palestinian power plant, which eventually will have a 140 MW capacity, is laid in Gaza.

- According to Peace Now, the Israeli budget for 2000 allocates NIS 27 million for the opening of bypass roads, NIS 120 million for settlement expansion, and NIS 216 million for the confiscation of Palestinian lands.

Oct. 27: US envoy Dennis Ross holds talks with Israeli leaders to prepare for a Middle East summit next month to kickstart negotiations on a final peace deal with the Palestinians.

- A military court sentences the Fateh commander in Lebanon, Sultan Abul Aynan, to death in absentia for 'armed rebellion' and "damaging the property of the Lebanese state".

- Shas leader Rabbi Ovadia Yousef speaks out in favor of territorial compromise with the Palestinians, saying that "Human life is more sacred than land" and that "it is legitimate to restore parts of Eretz Israel if this can save human lives".

- 13 Palestinians are wounded in the third day of violent clashes in Bethlehem, which come to a peak after the funeral of Musa Khalil Abu-Hallel.

Oct. 28: In a low-key ceremony in the US State Dept. hosted by US Sec. of State Albright, the FM's of Israel and Mauritania sign an agreement establishing full diplomatic ties between the two countries, a move condemned by Syria and other Arab States.

Oct. 31: Hebron's Shuhada Street opens to Palestinians in its entirety - vehicles included - for the first time since the Al-Ibrahimi Mosque massacre in **Feb. 1994**.

Oct.: PMA head Fuad Bseiso heads a Palestinian delegation to Cairo to discuss possibilities of issuing a Palestinian currency.

November

Nov. 1: An Oslo summit convenes on the occasion of the commemorative anniversary of Rabin's death.

Nov. 6: A statement signed by the Izz Edin Al-Qassam Brigades warns that Hamas was preparing to launch a wave of armed attacks against Israel, because Israel failed to stop Jewish settlement expansion.

- After meeting with Pres. Arafat, FIFA Pres. Sepp Blatter promises a \$1 million boost to the Palestinian Football Federation to improve facilities in Gaza and the West Bank over the next four years.

Nov. 7: Three pipe bomb explosions go off in the center of Netanya in what Israelis believe is an act of Hamas activists, while Hamas spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin denies the groups involvement.

- According to a study by the American University in Beirut (which included 1,600 residents of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and the Palestinians territories), 75% of the participants do not believe Israeli gestures regarding peace are sincere. Also it states 80% said they believe Israel would continue its path until the shift of power rests in the hands of the Arab states.

Nov. 8: The Israeli and PLO/PA negotiating teams - headed by Oded Eran and Yasser Abed Rabbo – meet in Ramallah to start final status talks with the goal to forge a final peace agreement by **Sept. 2000**.

Nov. 9: Hamas and Islamic Jihad win the student general assembly elections at An-Najah University in Nablus with 42 out of a total of 81 seats (Fateh wins 34 seats).

- Pres. Arafat creates a new post in the PA and appoints an Attorney Gen. for the State Security Courts, a move widely considered to undermine the role of the Attorney Gen.

Nov. 10: Israel soldiers complete the evacuation of the Maon Farm outpost with the help of anti-terror units.

- The Israeli Govt approves an additional 5% withdrawal from West Bank territory due to take place on **Nov. 15** in accordance with the Sharm Esh-Sheikh Agreement.

- Egyptian FM Amr Moussa publicly rejects the view of PM Barak concerning UN Res. 242.

- In an address to the UNGA, PLO UN observer Nasser al-Kidwa says that he is confident that Christmas 2000 would be celebrated in Bethlehem, in an independent Palestinian state.

Nov. 11: Suha Arafat, wife of Pres. Arafat, says that the "Israeli occupational forces have poisoned our air with gases that have resulted in cancer and the outbreak of other horrible diseases", causing much diplomatic uproar with the remark.

Nov. 15: The scheduled Israeli transfer of 2% of West Bank territory from Area B to Area A, and 3% from Area C to B in accordance with the Sharm Esh-Sheikh Agreement is put on hold due to a dispute over the territory to be handed over.

- Thousands of the Palestinians throughout the WBGS celebrate the 11th anniversary of Palestinian Independence Day.

Nov. 16: Pres. Yasser Arafat receives UAE Min. of Information and Culture Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed An-Nahyan – the first official UAE visitor to the PA areas.

Nov. 17: The Palestinian Bar Association holds a sit-in in front of the PLC building to protest the implementation of the Bar Association Law # 3 of 1999, which restricts the work of the lawyers who are now required to have much of their work approved by a public notary.

Nov. 18: German Bundestag speaker Wolfgang Thierse's visit to Hebron is disrupted by a group of settlers who shouted at him to "show his Nazi face" at Shuhada Street.

- Talks at Neve Ilan between Israeli and PA negotiators do not reach an agreement regarding the 5% withdrawal from WBGS land.

Nov. 19: The PA cabinet releases statement, insisting that “There won't be an agreement if Jerusalem is not accepted as the capital of an independent state.”

- Pres. Arafat meets with church representatives in an effort to get them to call off a two-day closure of churches - slated for Nov. 22-23 - to protest the plan to build a mosque close to the Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth.

Nov. 21: By royal decree, Jordan deports four senior Hamas members in Amman accused of harming the kingdom's stability, to Doha, the capital of Qatar. The four are Khaled Mashal, Ibrahim Ghosheh, Izzat Roshuk and Sami Khatter.

- Palestinian police close for the second day the passes to Gush Katif in order to prevent Palestinian laborers from working in the settlements there. The IDF, in response, also closed the passes.

- *Yedioth Ahronoth* reports a dramatic change in the Yesha Settlers Council: for the first time since Oslo, senior officials in the council have decided to recognize “reality on the ground,” and to stop objecting to the peace process with the Palestinians and to act in cooperation with PM Barak “in order to succeed in the struggle over the future of the settlements.”

Nov. 22: Christian churches close the sites holy to Christianity in Israel and the WBGS, protesting the decision to build a mosque next to Nazareth's Church of the Annunciation.