

Palestine Chronology

2004

JANUARY

Jan. 1: Palestinian and foreign demonstrators protesting against the building of the separation fence in Budrus village clash with Israeli forces trying to disperse them.

Jan. 5: Israeli troops pull out of Nablus after a three-week operation, which left 12 Palestinians dead.
- Israeli PM Sharon, addressing the Likud Central Committee, says that Israel would agree to the formation of a Palestinian state in negotiations dictated by the 'road map' peace plan and that Israel would withdraw from some Jewish settlements in a peace agreement with the Palestinians.

Jan. 8: PM Qrei'a states that Palestinians would seek to forge a single binational state with Israel if Israel carried out its West Bank separation plans, saying "This is an apartheid solution to put the Palestinians in cantons ... Who can accept this? We will go for a one-state solution... There's no other solution," adding "The wall is to unilaterally mark the borders ... It will kill the road map and kill the two-state vision." Israel condemns the comments as a direct threat to its very existence.

- The Israel army approves two major changes to the route of the separation barrier, moving the fence west of Hirbat Jabar and Azzoun, both currently closed off by the fence.

- Sheikh Ahmed Yassin says that Hamas would agree to a "temporary peace" with Israel in exchange for the establishment of a Palestinian state "on the basis of the 1967 borders," the evacuation of settlements and resettlement of Palestinian refugees inside Israel.

Jan. 9: Claire Smith, Pres. of the World Archaeological Congress (WAC), accuses Israel of systematically destroying world heritage sites in the West Bank and urges the international community to insist that Israel observe The Hague treaty protecting cultural assets in armed conflicts.

Jan. 11: Some 120,000 people gathered at a rally at Tel Aviv's Rabin Square, organized by the Yesha Council, to demonstrate against PM Sharon's recently unveiled disengagement plan.

- Palestinian NGOs in the WBGS have announced their intention to refuse aid from USAID due to the agency's requirement that they sign a declaration that they do not receive funds from, or grant funds to, terror organizations, nor assist families of prisoners or the widows and orphans of activists killed during the Intifada.

- PM Sharon says establishing settlements in the territories "was the right thing to do" at the time, but "many things have changed since then" and some will have to be evacuated now.

Jan. 12: PM Sharon presents his unilateral disengagement plan to the Knesset.

Jan. 13: After a two-day raid into Tulkarem and the arrest of some 14 wanted Palestinians, the Israeli army withdraws.

Jan. 14: Female suicide bomber, Reem Salah Riashi, 22, from Gaza City, blows herself up at Erez checkpoint, killing four Israelis and wounding nine. Hamas claims responsibility.

Jan. 16: In the aftermath of the Erez suicide bombing, Israel vows to resume targeted killings of Hamas members.

- At the opening of an art exhibition in Stockholm's Historical Museum, Israeli Amb. to Sweden, Zvi Mazel, damages a piece by an Israeli artist, entitled 'Snow White and the Madness of the Truth', which depicts a Palestinian suicide bomber.

Jan. 20: In Rafah RC, Israeli army bulldozers flatten 30 houses and a mosque.

Jan. 22: In Washington, Chief of Staff of the PMO, Dov Weisglass, presents National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice with PM Sharon's disengagement plan.

Jan. 23: In an interview with *The Guardian*, Pres. Arafat expresses fears that "time is running out for a two-state solution," due to Israel's construction of the separation barrier and its settlement policy.

- The US Senate has approved its foreign aid bill, incl. the annual \$2.68 billion grant to Israel, which is, because of the across-the-board 0.59% cut, \$15 million less than expected. In addition, Israel will receive \$3 billion in loan guarantees.

Jan. 26: Pres. Arafat and PM Qrei'a announce a series of reforms designed to improve the coordination and effectiveness of the security services in the WBGS.

Jan. 28: Israeli soldiers shoot dead at least eight Palestinians in Gaza City.

- Israel releases 23 Lebanese prisoners – incl. Mustafa Dirani and Abdul Karim Obeid – as well as 12 other Arabs and a German citizen, as part of the German-mediated prisoner swap deal between Israel and Hizbullah.

Jan. 29: Israel frees 400 Palestinians as part of the German-mediated Israeli-Hizbullah prisoner swap. In return, Hizbullah hands over kidnapped Israeli businessman Elhanan Tannenbaum and the bodies of three soldiers ambushed in 2000.

Jan. 30: Israel formally challenges the ICJ's right to rule on the legality of its controversial separation barrier, while 15 EU members and 10 members-in-waiting, as well as the US, Canada, Australia, Russia, South Africa and Cameroon, have joined Israel in submitting affidavits to the ICJ against the authority of the court to rule on the barrier.

Jan. 31: The PA has submitted a formal affidavit to the ICJ supporting its right to rule on Israel's separation barrier.

FEBRUARY

Feb. 2: PM Sharon addresses the Likud faction, saying the Gaza settlements must be removed "because of security problems and the demographic situation," adding "it would be wrong to maintain a Jewish presence in Gaza over the years."

- Israeli troops kill four Palestinians during a raid on Rafah RC, incl. an Islamic Jihad leader and his brother.

Feb. 5: In what PA police calls an assassination attempt against their chief Maj.-Gen. Ghazi Jabali by armed Palestinians storming Gaza City's Police HQ, a Palestinian man, Khaled Eshhato, is killed, and at least 13 others are injured.

Feb. 7: In Gaza City, Israeli forces assassinate Islamic Jihad's Aziz Ash-Shami.
- Four Palestinians are charged by a hastily convened military court in Gaza City with planting explosives that killed three US security guards in a convoy in Gaza in Oct. 2003.

Feb. 10: French prosecutors say they have opened an inquiry into transfers totaling Euro 9 million into bank accounts held in France by Pres. Arafat's wife Suha.

Feb. 11: In a raid on Gaza City, Israeli troops kill at least 14 Palestinians.

Feb. 15: Hundreds of Gush Katif settlers begin a march to Jerusalem to protest PM Sharon's settlement evacuation plan.

Feb. 16: The Knesset Finance Committee approves loans of over \$11 million for the construction of 200 housing units in the West Bank, \$8 million for the Rural Construction Administration and \$1 million for settlement security in East Jerusalem.

Feb. 18: A new Peace Now report states that there are 102 outposts in the OPT.
- The ICRC states the separation barrier was contrary to international humanitarian law.

Feb. 22: After intense pressure, Israeli workers dismantle a small part of an 8-km stretch east of Baqa Ash-Sharqiyya to ease the conditions for local Palestinians.

- Following the bus bombing in Jerusalem, Israel decides to step up its activities in Gaza, incl. assassinations of Hamas and Islamic Jihad officials.

Feb. 23: As Palestinians observe a 'Day of Rage' protesting against the separation barrier and people across the Arab World demonstrate against it, the ICJ begins three days of hearings in The Hague concerning the legal consequences of its construction, marking the first time that Israel's policies are brought before an international tribunal. Israel boycotts the hearings, while the US and members of the EU declined to attend, saying the court did not have authority to rule on an issue that should be settled by negotiations between the two sides.

Feb. 24: In the aftermath of the Jerusalem suicide attack, PM Sharon verbally attacks PM Qre'i'a, saying he heads a "government of murder and lies," and that Israel could not negotiate a peace deal with him.

Feb. 25: During an army operation in Ramallah, Israeli troops raid Pres. Arafat's HQ as well as four Palestinian banks to search for money transfers from abroad to local 'militant' groups. Documents and millions of shekels are confiscated.

Feb. 26: Three Palestinians are killed and over 70 injured in day-long clashes with Israeli forces along a section of the separation barrier passing through Biddu, Beit Ijza, Beit Deko and Beit Surik.
- Visiting Danish FM Per Stig Moeller proposes an international force be posted in the WBGS after Israel's disengagement.

Feb. 28: At the end of four-day deliberations of the Fateh-RC at the Muqata'a in Ramallah, a statement calls for a general ceasefire, the road map and the Saudi initiative as well as for attacks against Jewish targets within the WBGS.

MARCH

March 2: Unknown gunmen shoot dead journalist and Arafat media and human rights advisor Khalil Az-Zaban, 59, as he is leaving his office in Gaza City, in what is seen as part of an internal Fateh battle aimed at undermining Arafat's standing.

March 5: Palestinian runner Sana' Abu Bkheet, 19, from Deir Al-Balah has qualified for the 800-m discipline, making her one of five athletes who will represent Palestine at the Olympic Games in Athens in Aug..

March 6: A foiled twin attack on Erez crossing, involving four armed Palestinian gunmen and explosives-laden jeeps, leaves two Palestinian policemen and the four assailants dead as well as 20 other people wounded. Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claim responsibility.

- The Israeli army surrounds Arafat's Ramallah HQ for the second day, blocking all the entrances with military vehicles.

March 7: In Gaza, Israeli troops raid Nusseirat and Bureij RCs, sparking clashes, which leave 15 Palestinians dead.

March 8: Palestinian political factions, incl. Hamas and Islamic Jihad, gather at the PLC in Gaza City to discuss how to reinforce the law and security of the Palestinians.

- Protests of hundreds of Palestinians and foreign peace activists at the construction site of Israel's separation barrier near Beit Dukku continue for the second day.

- PLF leader Mohammed Abbas (Abul Abbas), mastermind of the 1985 Achille Lauro hijacking, dies while under US custody in Baghdad.

March 10: The PLC elects Rawhi Fatouh, PLC member from Gaza City, to be its new speaker.

March 14: In a double suicide bombing at Ashdod port, 10 people are killed and 16 injured. Fateh and Hamas claim responsibility. The PA condemns the attack; PM Sharon cancels tomorrow's planned meeting with PM Qre'i'a.

March 15: In response to the Ashdod attack, Israel vows to "step up the offensive against Hamas," incl. assassinations and raids. At an emergency cabinet meeting in the Muqata'a PA officials call for action against Hamas and Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, incl. arrests, collection of illegal arms, and restoring control of the Palestinian street to the security forces.

March 17: In operation "Continuing Story," aimed at Rafah RC, Israeli forces kill five Palestinians, wound at least 15 others, and demolish six homes. Pres. Arafat comments "Before leaving Gaza they want to destroy Gaza. This is a big crime."

March 18: Jordan's King Abdullah secretly visits PM Sharon on his Sycamore Ranch in the Negev in what is widely believed to be aimed at discussing the disengagement plan, which Jordan fears will encourage Palestinians to come to Jordan.

March 22: Israeli forces assassinate Hamas founder and leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin as he is leaving morning prayers at the Omari Mosque in Gaza City, striking three missiles at him and his entourage, killing also seven bodyguards and other Hamas operatives and wounding 15 other people. Hamas vows revenge in Israel and overseas. Hundreds of thousands attend Yassin's funeral later the day and throughout the WBGS clashes between Palestinians and Israeli forces erupt. Arab states and Europe condemn the assassination as "unlawful".

March 23: Abdel Aziz Rantisi is named the new "general commander" of Hamas in the Gaza Strip, replacing assassinated Sheikh Yassin, while Khaled Masha'al is named Hamas' overall leader.

March 25: Some 60 prominent Palestinian officials and intellectuals – incl. Hanan Ashrawi, Mahmoud Aloul, Yasser Abed Rabbo, and Abbas Zaki - issue an ad, urging the public to refrain from retaliation for Israel's assassination of Sheikh Yassin, saying it would ignite a new round of bloodshed that would only hurt Palestinian aspirations for independence.

- The US vetoes a UNSC resolution introduced by Arab nations to condemn Israel for assassinating Sheikh Yassin.

March 29: Egypt has mediated a deal to divide responsibilities and authorities between Arafat's National Security Advisor Jibril Rajoub and former Gazan Preventive Security head Mohammed Dahlan.

March 31: The US Admin. has drafted a letter of guarantees assuring Israel that it will not have to withdraw to the Green Line in a future permanent settlement with the Palestinians in exchange for PM Sharon's disengagement plan.

APRIL

April 1: In Jericho, PM Qrei'a and Min.s Erekat and Sha'ath meet with US envoys Stephen Hadley, Elliott Abrams and William Burns on the Gaza pullback plan, requesting US assurances that it would not prejudice future talks on a permanent settlement.

April 2: PM Sharon reiterates on Israeli radio and TV that Chairman Arafat was 'not immune' from assassination.

April 7: The Hamas, Fateh and Islamic Jihad leaderships in Gaza have prepared a draft "National Plan" that "emphasizes the right to use violence to oppose the occupation and the settlements, while avoiding turning civilians from either side into targets for attack." The document sums up recent meetings between faction leaders, contains a commitment to ceasefire and states: "The national and Islamic forces regard the withdrawal of the occupation forces and the settlers from any part of occupied Palestinian land as an achievement for our people's struggle and its Intifada," adding that "Any unilateral withdrawal won't bring about stability so long as it is not part of an overall process of ending the occupation and evacuating the settlements."

- Pres. Arafat tells *Yedioth Ahronoth* Arafat that he did not fear PM Sharon's assassination threats, saying, "Do you know me as a person who is afraid? I fear only Allah."

April 14: During a meeting with PM Sharon in Washington, Pres. Bush endorses the Gaza pullout plan and hands him a letter calling the plan "brave and courageous." The letter further states that "new realities on the ground" [i.e., settlers in the WBGs] would have to be taken into consideration during final status negotiations, that Israel would not have to fully withdraw to the Green Line, and that Palestinian refugees would return to the Palestinian state, but not Israel. The letter breaks with decades of US Middle East policy and is angrily rejected by Palestinians, who call on the UN to denounce it.

- Palestinians reject Bush's assurance to Israel that it could keep some West Bank settlement blocs and would not have to absorb Palestinian refugees, with PM Qrei'a calling this "unacceptable" and Sa'eb Erekat saying "This is like someone giving a part of Texas land to China." Pres. Arafat says the US statement would signal the end of the peace process.

April 15: The Israeli disengagement plan is published stating "there will no longer be a basis for the claim that the Gaza Strip is occupied territory (Article 2.A.3). Thus Israel releases itself from legal-political, moral, and economic responsibility for the Strip and transforms it into an independent entity. However the plan removes only the responsibility, together with its few citizens and its many soldiers. Other than that, control of the Gaza Strip stays in its hands. Israel will continue to control all international passages (Article 2.A.1, and Article 12). The "independent" entity will not be allowed to invite international forces to exercise control unless Israel - which will no longer be responsible for 1.3 million Gazans - agrees. Basic services (water, electricity, fuel, etc.) will remain the same. With regard to the evacuation of the northern West Bank enclave, the plan allows "transportation contiguity" (2.B.4) for Palestinians.

April 17: Israeli forces assassinate Hamas leader Abdul Aziz Rantisi along with his driver and a bodyguard.

April 20: During raids in Gaza, Israeli forces shoot dead five Palestinian teenagers in Beit Lahia and Beit Hanoun.

April 21: Israeli troops kill nine Palestinians during raids into Beit Lahia and Beit Hanoun and destroy a number of buildings.

April 23: PM Sharon tells Israel's Channel Two that he was no longer bound by a pledge he gave Pres. Bush not to harm Arafat, stating: "I said during our first meeting about three years ago that I accepted his request not to harm Arafat physically... But I am released from this commitment. I release myself from this commitment regarding Arafat."

- UN envoy Terje Roed-Larsen addresses the UNSC, warning that the credibility of Arafat's PA was dwindling and that its state of 'near paralysis' was a threat to the faltering peace process.

April 25: Israel backs off its latest threat against Pres. Arafat, saying no action was imminent but that the he could eventually be expelled to the Gaza Strip.

- Press reports name Mahmoud Zahar as new political leader of Hamas in the Gaza Strip and Ismail

Haniyeh as his deputy.

April 27: In Gaza's Gush Katif bloc, some 60,000 Israelis attend a Yesha Council rally against the disengagement plan.

M A Y

May 1: Pres. Arafat appeals to the Quartet to prevent PM Sharon from taking unilateral steps, saying this would contradict the road map plan.

- In the referendum on Sharon's disengagement plan the Likud Party rejects it by a vote of 61.7% against 37.5%.

May 2: Palestinian gunmen attack a settler car near Nezer Hazani settlement in the Gush Katif bloc, Gaza, killing a pregnant woman and her four daughters. Islamic Jihad and the Popular Resistance Committees jointly claim responsibility.

May 3: Israel's High Court issues an order effectively stopping construction of a 60 km portion of the separation barrier between Elkana settlement and Jerusalem in response to petitions arguing for changes in the barrier's intended route.

May 5: Israel's annual State Comptroller's Report shows that the Israeli Housing Min. has funneled nearly \$6.5 million to settlement construction in the West Bank in the past three years, more than half of it to outposts Israel pledged to remove.

May 8: Pres. Bush states that the establishment of a Palestinian state by 2005 was "not realistic" due to increased violence and the replacement of Mahmoud Abbas as PM.

May 11: After Hamas activists blow up six Israeli soldiers with a bomb placed under their armored personnel carrier in Gaza City's Zeitoun neighborhood and withhold their remains, the Israeli army partitions Gaza into three sections and raids the area, killing eight Palestinians and injuring over 120; troops also destroy 20 workshops.

May 12: Five Israeli troops are killed in an ambush on the Philadelphi Route near Rafah. Islamic Jihad claims responsibility.

- At least six Palestinians are killed in continuous fighting in Gaza and over 100 are wounded.

- The PA and Egypt urge Palestinian militants to hand over missing body parts from the six soldiers killed the day before.

May 13: Israeli troops kill 12 Palestinians in two separate missile strikes on Rafah RC; two houses are also destroyed.

- Palestinian officials hand over the remains of Israeli soldiers killed in Gaza City to Israeli officials.

May 14: In Rafah RC, Israeli forces demolish 88 houses and shops in the area where five Israeli soldiers were killed when two days earlier, rendering over 1,000 residents homeless. During heavy fighting in the camp, two Israeli soldiers are killed.

May 16: After an Israeli High Court of Justice ruling that permits the army to demolish Palestinian homes without granting residents a right of appeal if this is dictated by "immediate operational necessity" or the need to protect soldiers' lives, the Israeli army destroys over 100 homes in Rafah. Sec. of State Powell denounces the destruction of houses.

May 17: Hundreds of Palestinian families flee Rafah RC in panic expecting a major military offensive.

- Hamas leader Khaled Masha'al rejects the PA's calls for a cease fire, saying Palestinians were suffering a war of annihilation by Israel: "It is not reasonable that there is a talk about a cease-fire in the shadow of a sweeping aggression."

May 18: As part of the army's continued "Operation Rainbow" in Rafah, Israeli helicopter gunships fire missiles at a group of Palestinians, killing at least 20, incl. three children, and wounding over 40 others.

- In a new report, Amnesty International accuses Israel of war crimes and grave breaches of the Geneva Convention.

May 19: During army operations in Rafah at least 13 Palestinians are killed, incl. four children under 14.

- US Amb. James Cunningham votes to abstain at a UNSC resolution, passed by a vote of 14-0, demanding that Israel halt the demolition of Palestinian homes and condemning the killing of Palestinian civilians in Rafah RC.

May 21: After three days of operations in Rafah RC, that left 42 Palestinians dead and many homes demolished, Israeli troops pull partially out of the camp.

May 23: Israeli Justice Min. Yosef Lapid causes an uproar, saying he was reminded of the suffering of his

family under Nazi rule when he saw TV images of Israel's offensive in Rafah RC and that the picture of an elderly woman searching for medication in the rubble of a home reminded him of his grandmother.

May 24: Pres. Arafat and PM Qrei'a meet with Egyptian intelligence chief Omar Suleiman in Ramallah to discuss security arrangements after a possible Gaza withdrawal. Egypt expresses readiness in getting involved in security matters in Gaza.

May 27: PM Sharon and Pres. Mubarak exchange messages regarding the future of Gaza, the proposed disengagement plan and Egypt's role after an Israeli withdrawal.

May 31: After the weekly cabinet meeting in Ramallah, PM Qrei'a says he is willing to hold talks with PM Sharon but only if such a summit "would lead to results."

JUNE

June 1: Pres. Arafat welcomes an Egyptian proposal to bring Israelis and Palestinians back to the negotiating table and secure the Gaza Strip after an Israeli pullout, but says he wants to see Israel's reaction first.

June 3: Hundreds of Palestinian police serving with the National Security Organization barricade themselves inside their HQ in Deir Al-Balah, demanding the dismissal of its commander, General Abdel-Razeq Majaida, fight against corruption, and security reforms in advance of Israel's disengagement from Gaza.

June 4: The Israeli Army destroys at least 18 houses in a raid on Rafah.

- In Gaza, members of the PA security forces have gone on an unprecedented strike to protest corruption among senior officers, taking over a Force 17 post and calling on Pres. Arafat to take action.

- PM Sharon sacks two far-right ministers - Binyamin Elon and Avigdor Lieberman (National Union) – in what is seen a move to ensure a cabinet majority for his Gaza pullout plan at the risk of a political crisis that could bring down his government.

June 6: The Tel Aviv District Court sentences Marwan Barghouthi to five consecutive life sentences and 40 additional years in prison. Barghouthi rejects the court's authority to try him as a PLC member and warns that as long as Palestinians have no state of their own, there can be no peace.

- The Israeli cabinet passes Sharon's revised disengagement plan by a vote of 14-7, but the decision does not allow for the dismantling of settlements and the PM will have to go back to the cabinet when he actually wants to begin the evacuation. The plan foresees a four-stage evacuation by the end of 2005 of all 21 settlements and military installations in the Gaza Strip, plus four settlements in the northern West Bank as well as compensation for concerned settlers.

June 7: Week-long demonstrations against the separation barrier begin at Az-Zawiya village near Salfit.

June 8: Palestinian factions issue a statement attacking the Israeli cabinet's approval of the disengagement plan and Egypt's role in its implementation, saying the plan was "part of a policy of deception and fraud whose goal is to imprison the Palestinian people in a giant jail in Gaza while controlling the sea, the air and the borders and simultaneously widening the occupation in the West Bank with settlements and the separation fence."

- Following the cabinet vote on disengagement Industry and Trade Min. Ehud Olmert has decided to permanently close the Erez industrial zone located along the border between Israel and the Gaza Strip.

June 15: In an interview with *Ha'aretz* Pres. Arafat says he "definitely" understands that Israel must preserve its character as a Jewish state, but that a just and agreed solution to the Palestinian refugee problem based on UN Res. 194 was essential, stressing especially the difficult situation of refugees in Lebanon, saying: "why the Christians from Russia have the right to come and the Palestinian Christian has not the right to come?" Regarding borders, Arafat states he would be willing to sign an agreement under which Israel would withdraw from 97 to 98% of the West Bank and give the Palestinians territory of equal size and quality to the 2 to 3% that would be annexed to Israel. On Jerusalem, he says Israel would retain sovereignty over the Western Wall and the Old City's Jewish Quarter and have free access to holy sites under Palestinian control, while Palestinians would require sovereignty over the rest of East Jerusalem, incl. the Al-Aqsa compound.

June 18: In Rafah, Israeli troops shoot at a delegation of British parliamentarians from their position near the Philadelphi Road. Baroness Northover, the Liberal Democrat party's House of Lords spokeswoman on international development issues says "This incident has shown me first hand the indiscriminate violence faced by Palestinians on a daily basis," adding "If the Israeli Defense Forces are prepared to

shoot at a delegation of parliamentarians under the supervision of the UN, one wonders what treatment ordinary Palestinians are given."

- During a meeting with PM Qre'i'a in Cairo, Pres. Mubarak presents Egypt's conditions for involvement in the disengagement plan and security matters in Gaza, incl. a halt to all Israeli military activity in the Strip, US and Quartet backing for the disengagement plan and Egyptian involvement, and a "clear and decisive" request by the PA to take part in implementing the plan and to send Egyptian security advisers.

June 21: Fateh, Hamas, PFLP, DFLP and other Palestinian factions issue a joint statement strongly opposing the "security role" proposed for Egypt and Jordan in the WBGS.

June 22: US Amb. to Israel, Dan Kurtzer, says Israel is failing to honor its commitments to dismantle outposts and freeze settlement construction in the WBGS.

June 23: Egyptian Intelligence Chief Omar Suleiman meets with Pres. Arafat and PM Qre'i'a in Ramallah, seeking pledges from Arafat to reform Palestinian security organizations and stressing that no Egyptian security advisers will enter Gaza unless Egypt received an official invitation from the PA, PLO, and various military wings, including Fateh and Hamas.

June 24: The US House of Representatives passes a resolution that "strongly endorses" the principles laid down by US Pres. Bush in his 14 April letter to Sharon, backing Israel's demand to retain some of the West Bank and keep out Palestinian refugees. PM Sharon welcomes the vote as "a great day in the history of Israel," while PM Qre'i'a condemns it as a reversal of 30 years of US foreign policy and a contradiction to the terms of the road map.

June 26: In the third day of an Israeli raid in Nablus, code-named "Full Court Press," Israeli troops kill seven Palestinians.

June 27: An Israeli soldier is killed and five others are wounded in a bomb explosion in a tunnel under an army outpost near Gush Katif, Gaza. Hamas and Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades claim responsibility.

June 28: After two Israelis are killed in a Qassam rockets attack in Sderot, Israeli gunships fire at least 10 missiles on Gaza.

June 29: In response to the attack on Sderot a day earlier, the Israeli army deploys in northern Gaza, launching "Operation Front Shield," aimed at preventing future Qassam attacks by damaging its production infrastructure.

JULY

July 1: PM Sharon gives orders to reroute the 30-km stretch of the separation fence that the High Court of Justice declared illegal and to examine whether other parts of the fence also should be rerouted in light of the ruling.

- The Israeli army kills nine Palestinians in separate incidents Gaza.

- In a position paper outlining his stance on Israel, Democratic candidate for the US presidency John Kerry promises not to negotiate with Yasser Arafat and expresses support for Israel's right to defend itself by attacking 'terrorist' organizations.

July 5: According to new CBS figures, the growth rate of Israel's population has slowed from 2.6% in 2000, to 2.2% in 2001 and 1.9% in 2002, mainly due to a decline in the number of immigrants (only 26,100 in 2003). At the end of 2003, Israel's population stood at 6.748 million.

July 9: - The ICJ in The Hague determines the legal consequences of the construction of Israel's separation barrier in the West Bank, ruling that it contravenes international law, that it must be dismantled, and that compensation must be paid to the Palestinian owners of property confiscated for its construction.

July 11: A female soldier is killed and 30 people are wounded in a bomb explosion at a bus stop in Tel Aviv.

July 13: After UN Middle East envoy Terje Larsen criticizes Arafat and the PA's failure to take action to end violence and combat terror and to reform and reorganize the PA, the PA declares him a *persona non grata*.

July 16: Fateh activists from Al-Burj RC kidnap Gaza's police chief Ghazi Jabali, after ambushing his convoy, accusing him of corruption and demanding his removal. He is released after a few hours.

- A group from Khan Younis, calling itself the 'Battalions of the Martyr Ahmed Abu Ar-Rish', kidnaps four French aid workers and liaison officer Khaled Abu Ala, demanding sweeping reforms by Pres. Arafat. They are released unharmed later the day.

July 17: PM Qrei'a tells a cabinet meeting in Ramallah that he submitted his resignation to Pres. Arafat, who, however, refuses to accept it. Qrei'a later retracts his resignation.

- Pres. Arafat appoints senior security official Saeb Al-Ajez as new police chief, replacing Ghazi Jabali, and Musa Arafat as chief of public security to replace Abdel Razzeq Al-Majaideh. Thousands march in Gaza to protest the appointments.

- Arafat loyalists take over the official TV and radio stations in Gaza in anticipation that they may be further targets for hijackings by critics calling for reform in the Palestinian leadership.

July 18: In Khan Younis, a group of armed Palestinians set fire to the HQ of the Military Intelligence.

- PM Sharon urges French Jews to flee the country to escape a rising tide of anti-Semitism, causing a diplomatic crisis between France and Israel, with the French FM demanding "explanations about these unacceptable statements."

July 19: Pres. Arafat reinstates Abdel Razzeq Al-Majaideh in a newly established position called "Commander of General Security for Gaza and the West Bank," after his replacement as General Security chief with Arafat's controversial relative Musa Arafat touched off turmoil in the Gaza Strip.

- In New York, UNGA holds an emergency special session on the ICJ ruling demanding Israel tear down its separation barrier, but delays a vote on a resolution to allow EU members work out language to ensure passage by a wide vote.

July 20: Former PA Information Min. Nabil Amr is shot and wounded by a sniper in his house in Ramallah in what is believed to be related to the clashes between Arafat's old guard and the pro-reform forces in Fateh's younger generation. (A few days later Amr is transferred from his Amman hospital to Germany, where one of his legs is being amputated).

- At the end of a two-day visit to Cairo PA National Security Adviser Jibril Rajoub says Egypt wants Fateh to remain unified and not split apart in internal struggles, as is the picture emerging in Gaza.

- The UNGA votes overwhelmingly with 150 to 6 and 10 abstentions to demand that Israel obey the ICJ ruling and tear down its separation barrier. The US vetoes while all 25 EU countries vote in support of the resolution.

July 21: The PLC urges Pres. Arafat to accept PM Qrei'a's resignation and appoint a new cabinet to carry out reforms and stop the current unrest.

- The Knesset decides to extend the Citizenship Law by six months, undermining family unification between Arab Israelis and Palestinians from the territories.

- According to figures released by the Interior Min., the settler population in the WBGS grew in the past year by 5.32% or 12,306 people to a total of 245,000 settlers.

- At a meeting between World Bank representative Nigel Roberts and Israel's National Security Council head Giora Eiland on Gaza's future development, the Israeli side states that by 2008, no more Gazan workers would be allowed into Israel.

July 24: In Gaza, armed Palestinians torch a police station near Deir Al-Balah, and in Khan Younis, Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades activists take over the Governorate building, demanding that their dismissals from security jobs be rescinded.

July 25: Thousand of settlers participate in a 'human chain' from Gaza's Nisanit settlement to the Western Wall in Jerusalem.

July 28: PM Qrei'a begins asserting authority over the security forces, a concession he won from Pres. Arafat after a 10-day standoff in the Palestinian leadership.

July 30: In Nablus, five gunmen briefly kidnap an American, a Briton and an Irishman.

- In Jenin, Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades activists set on fire the Governorate building to demand financial help from the PA since they cannot work and must remain underground to avoid capture by Israeli forces.

July 31: The Palestinian Atty.-Gen. is looking into claims local firms sold cement to Israelis used in the construction of the separation barrier and settlements.

AUGUST

Aug. 1: In Nablus, masked Arafat loyalists break up a conference of Fateh reformists who were calling for a 'revolution.'

Aug. 2: Seven prisoners accused of being collaborators are wounded in an explosion at a Gaza City prison. Later in the day Palestinian gunmen burst in and shoot dead two in their hospital beds.

- Israel approves the construction of 600 new homes in Ma'ale Adumim. Britain calls on Israel to abandon the plan.

Aug. 3: Jordan's King Abdullah says that the PA needed to take a clearer stand to enlist the support of Arab states, saying "We wish the Palestinian leadership would clearly specify what it wants and not surprise us every now and then with some decisions and the acceptance of what it refused in the past," adding that "At the start, talks were about regaining 98% of occupied Palestinian land and are now about regaining less than 50%, and we don't know what it will be in a year or two" and "As for refugees, discussions were first about their return and compensation, and now talks are on the return of a small number."

Aug. 5: In Beit Hanoun, Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades activists break up a news conference, forcing three Cabinet Min.s to stop speaking and leave the area, saying "Where have you been in the last 37 days while we were under invasion?."

- In response to US pressure Israel is taking steps to ease local tensions in the territories, incl. opening the Rafah border crossing, approving for PA policemen to carry weapons in West Bank towns, and reducing military activity in northern Gaza.

Aug. 6: Israel reopens the Gaza-Egypt border crossing at Rafah, allowing some 1,500 Palestinians to head home after being stranded on the Egyptian side for three weeks.

Aug. 7: PA Min. of Planning Nabil Kassis resigns to take the post of Pres. of Birzeit University. Justice Min. Nahed Ar-Rayyes also resigns in protest over the spread of chaos in the territories and in the PA.

Aug. 9: In Hebron, the Israeli army destroys seven houses located between Al-Ibrahimi Mosque and Kiryat Arba settlement.

Aug. 10: The EU's anti-fraud office announces that its investigation, opened in Feb. 2003, has found no evidence that EU aid to the PA has been used to finance illegal activities such as terrorism.

Aug. 11: A car bomb explodes at Qalandia checkpoint, killing two Palestinian bystanders. Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades claim responsibility. After the attack, the Israeli army imposes a curfew on Jenin, from where the perpetrator was dispatched.

Aug. 15: Thousands of Palestinian prisoners begin a hunger strike for better conditions. Israel's Public Security Min. Tzachi Hanegbi says he will not give in to their demands and he didn't care if they starved to death.

- In Gaza, dozens of Fateh activists take control of the Rafah border crossing on the Palestinian side, announcing new procedures "under the supervision of the Tanzim" to stop corruption there.

Aug. 18: Five Palestinians are killed in an Israeli missile attack on Gaza City.

- Pres. Arafat, under pressure to enact anti-corruption reforms, admits that some officials misused their posts and urges efforts to correct "all the mistakes" the Palestinian leadership has made.

Aug. 19: PLC members cancel a session in protest over Pres. Arafat's hesitance to signing a decree to implement a package of anti-corruption reforms demanded by parliament.

Aug. 22: The number of hunger-striking Palestinians in Israeli jails has reached 2,900 since the protest was launched on 15 Aug.; daily protest rallies in support of the strikers take place in various locations throughout the WBGS.

- The NAM adopts measures to boycott Israeli settlers and firms building the separation barrier.

Aug. 23: Under pressure from Egypt, Pres. Arafat meets with Mohammed Dahlan and offers him to return to the PA govt..

- An Israeli Justice Min. team appointed by Atty.-Gen. Menachem Mazuz to examine the implications of the ICJ ruling on the separation barrier recommends that the government should "thoroughly examine" the possibility of formally applying the Fourth Geneva Convention to the WBGS in a way that maintains Israel's right to assume security responsibility in those areas, as well as change its approach to UN rapporteurs in the territories, and to the ICJ. It further suggests to reconsider the fence's route and the way Israel operates in the territories.

Aug. 24: The special UN rapporteur for on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories, South African Law Professor John Dugard, has written in a report to the UNGA that there is "an apartheid regime" in the WBGS "worse than the one that existed in South Africa," citing settler-only roads as one example.

- Israel declares its hospitals off-limits to the over 2,800 Palestinians on hunger strike in Israeli prisons, saying they could be treated in makeshift facilities behind bars if taken ill.

Aug. 25: In Gaza City, gunmen ambush Commander of the PA General Intelligence Service Tareq Abu Rajab, wounding him and killing two bodyguards.

- PLC members vote 31-12 for an anti-corruption reform package, but there is fear that nothing would come of it as Pres. Arafat was withholding his approval. The plan calls for an end to the "security chaos" by rearranging security services and making them accountable to the cabinet, as well as for elections.

Aug. 26: Visiting Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, urges Palestinians to rise up peacefully to demand an end to occupation, saying freedom was close and that Israel and the Palestinians have no alternative other than to partition the land.

Aug. 29: Libyan singer Ayman Al-Atar wins the second competition for Arab "Superstar" defeating Palestinian singer Ammar Hassan in the final.

Aug. 30: The Israeli army opens a tunnel passing beneath the separation barrier to connect Qalqilya with eight nearby villages.

Aug. 31: In Beersheba, a double suicide attack on two buses leaves 16 people killed and over 100 wounded. Hamas claims responsibility. Israel raids the bombers' homes and in Hebron.

SEPTEMBER

Sept. 1: PLC speaker Rawhi Fattouh announces that parliament will put on hold its sessions from 7 Sept. to 7 Oct. in a bid work to press Pres. Arafat into ratifying an anti-corruption reform package, incl. measures to put corruption suspects on trial and consolidate the security forces into three, and restore law and order.

Sept. 2: Israeli forces blow up two large apartment blocks in Khan Younis, rendering hundreds of Palestinians homeless.

- Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails end their 18-day hunger strike, saying that Israel had agreed to meet key demands.

Sept. 4: In a first step toward long-overdue elections, Palestinians launch a voter registration drive, and Pres. Arafat promises that voting for parliament and Pres. would take place this winter.

Sept. 5: Palestinian gunmen seize the local government offices in Khan Younis for several hours, demanding that the PA do more to help families left homeless by Israeli operations.

Sept. 6: Israeli forces pound a Hamas training camp on a field area in Gaza City, killing 14 activists.

Sept. 9: Israeli FM Silvan Shalom warns that Arafat's expulsion is "closer than ever."

Sept. 11: After four days, the Israeli army leaves the northern Gaza Strip, leaving behind eight killed Palestinians, over 50 wounded and much damage, incl. 10 destroyed buildings.

Sept. 14: With regard to the disengagement plan, Israel's security cabinet approves the creation of a special evacuation authority, a draft compensation scheme, and advance payments to settlers choosing to evacuate before the expected passage of enabling legislation by the Knesset later this year. A budget of \$550-\$670 million is also approved.

- PM Sharon threatens to expel Arafat "at a convenient time," saying that he saw no difference between him and top Hamas militants killed by Israel in recent months.

Sept. 15: During raids Israeli forces kill six Palestinians in Nablus and four in Jenin.

Sept. 22: On *Israel Radio* PM Sharon renews his threats against Arafat, saying he "would get what he deserves" and that his govt. would take action at a time of its choosing as it did in assassinating Hamas leaders on Gaza.

Sept. 23: US Sec. of State Powell urges Pres. Arafat to step aside for the sake of achieving his lifetime goal of a Palestinian state and cede control of his security forces, warning that international aid could be jeopardized soon if he did not.

Sept. 25: Israeli troops demolish some 35 houses in Khan Younis RC.

Sept. 26: Data from the Civil Admin. shows that Israel is continuing its expropriation policy, saying since the beginning of 2004, some 2,200 dunums of land in the West Bank have been declared 'state lands' in order to expand settlements.

- In Damascus, a car bomb kills Hamas leader Izz Eddin Subhi Sheikh Khalil – one of the over 400 expellees of Marj Az-Zuhur, South Lebanon, in 1992 - and wounds three others in what is widely believed to be an Israeli assassination.

Sept. 28: Throughout the WBGS, Palestinians mark the fourth anniversary of the Intifada.

Sept. 29: A Qassam rocket fired from Gaza lands in Sderot, killing two Israeli children and wounding 25 other people.

- PLC members angered by the leadership's failure to make reforms plan to force a parliamentary no-confidence vote.

Sept. 30: The Israeli security cabinet approves plans for a major operation in Gaza, code-named "Days of Penitence," to take control of northern Gaza, search for workshops and demolish houses used to launch rockets. During battles in the area, especially in Jabalia, 25 Palestinians - at least eight of them children - are killed and over 100 Palestinians are injured. The PA calls on the UNSC and the Quartet to stop Israeli "massacres."