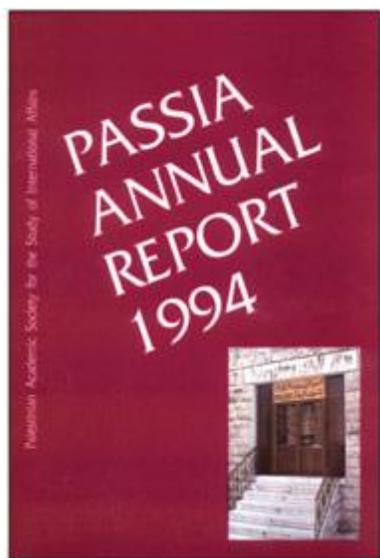


THE YEAR THAT WAS 1994



1994 has been an eventful but frustrating year, the first major event of which was the signing of the Jordan-PLO economic accord in January. Attention was also focussed on the continuing negotiations which took place in Taba and elsewhere. Palestinian concerns however, were little reduced by these meetings as things remained very much the same in Gaza and the West Bank. Of particular concern was the fact that Israeli settlement continued unabated, mainly in Jerusalem, and that the settlers themselves were becoming increasingly volatile, the culmination of which came on February 25th 1994, when 29 Muslim worshippers at prayer in the Ibrahimi mosque in Hebron, were gunned down by Baruch Goldstein, a settler from nearby Kiryat Arba. This

incident prompted the passing of UN Security Council Resolution 904, condemning the massacre and gave rise to the March agreement on a Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH) which stipulated that 160 European observers armed with pistols for self-defense were to be deployed in Hebron for 3 months although they did not begin this term until May. In addition to that, the mosque was closed for worshippers for 8 months.

Revenge attacks were soon carried out. In April, a car bomb exploded at a bus stop in Afula, killing 8 Israelis and wounding 44, followed by another bus bombing in Hadera, which killed 6 and wounded 28, including 18 IDF soldiers. Hamas announced in a leaflet that the bomb was the second in a series of 5 attacks in response to the Hebron Massacre.

Nevertheless, negotiations continued and at the end of April, the Palestinian-Israeli Protocol on Economic Relations was signed in Paris, followed, on May 4th, by the Gaza-Jericho Self-Rule or Cairo Agreement. Soon after that, the first Palestinian police forces entered the autonomous areas of Gaza and Jericho and began to set up a national, preventive, public, and presidential security system. On July 1st, Chairman Yasser Arafat returned home via the Rafah border after 25 years of exile. He swore in PNA ministers in Jericho and set up permanent residency in Gaza.

Since the deadline for Palestinian elections passed (July 13th), the next major event was the July signing of the Jordan-Israel "Washington Declaration" which formally ended the state of war between the two countries and was the forerunner for the coming peace treaty.

In August, the Early Empowerment Agreement on the transfer of five civilian authorities (education, health, social affairs, tourism and taxation) from the Israeli military/civil administration to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) was signed.

In September, Jordan surrendered to the PNA the Waqf and religious courts in the West Bank, and the Gulf Cooperation Council ended its economic boycott of Israel.

Hamas kept themselves constantly in the news throughout October, firstly for a shooting incident in a pedestrian area in West Jerusalem, then for the abduction of Israeli soldier Nahshon Wachsman who was taken from inside Israel on October 9th and for whose safe return Hamas demanded the release of Palestinian prisoners. During an Israeli attempt to free the soldier by storming the hiding place in Bir Nabala, Wachsman, another Israeli soldier and three Hamas members were killed. This incident led to the suspension of the peace negotiations in Cairo and the Israeli closure of the Gaza Strip. The PNA reacted by launching a large-scale search and arresting hundreds of Hamas supporters. Thirdly, there was a Hamas suicide bus bombing in the heart of Tel Aviv on October 19th which claimed the lives of 22 people and injured many more.

Also in October, Arafat, Rabin and Peres were announced the winners of the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize and Israel and Jordan signed a peace treaty in Wadi Araba on October 25th. The much publicized visit of US President Bill Clinton ran into diplomatic difficulties owing to a proposed tour of the Old City accompanied by Israeli Mayor Ehud Olmert. The visit was cancelled, but Mrs. Clinton and Mrs. Olmert did go to the Western Wall. Clinton's speeches in the Knesset as well as at other functions focused on terrorism and gave no cause for Palestinians to celebrate his presence.

Other diplomatic arguments occurred over plans for Pakistan's Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto to pay an official visit to Yasser Arafat which ultimately had to be cancelled on Israel's insistence that she had not applied for permission through the proper Israeli channels. Later in the year, a visit to the Orient House by Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller, provoked much discussion in the Israeli media as to the political status of Orient House and demands for its closure. As a consequence, Israeli soldiers were posted outside Orient House in November. Although it otherwise functioned as before, this created much

tension.

More trouble occurred in the Gaza Strip in November following the assassination of Islamic Jihad leader, Sheikh Hani A'bed. Laying the blame for his death on Israel, a revenge attack was carried out by an Islamic Jihad suicide bomber who rode a bicycle into a group of Israeli soldiers at the Netzarim junction killing three. Tension has been evident between the National Authority in Gaza and Islamic groups culminating on November 18th in a clash between Palestinian police and Hamas/Islamic Jihad activists which left 12 dead and hundreds injured. This issue is becoming of increasing concern to all moderate Palestinians and it is hoped that the new year will see dialogue and cooperation between the opposition groups in Gaza for the sake of achieving the wider aims of security and internal peace.

Although the DOP calls for the Jerusalem question to be discussed in the final phase and stipulates that nothing shall be done to change the status quo of the city in the meanwhile, Israel continuously confiscated land and expanded the settlements in East Jerusalem throughout the year. Further tension occurred, when, on December 26, the Knesset passed the final reading of the "Gaza-Jericho Agreement Implementation Law (Limiting of Activities)" which prohibits Palestinian political activities in East Jerusalem and contradicts the letter of assurances sent by Peres to the Norwegian Foreign Minister Hoist confirming the "great importance" of Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem saying "we will not hamper their activity." Finally, 1994 witnessed the second year in a row in which Jerusalem was cut off the rest of the OPT denying thousands of Palestinians access to the city, thus depriving them of their income, medical, educational and economic services as well as denying their right to the freedom of worship.

The year ended with demonstrations by residents of El-Khader near Bethlehem as attempts were made to expand the Israeli settlement of-Efrat on land belonging to the villagers. Israeli peace groups came out in support of the villagers and the issue sparked debate in the Knesset leading to the construction site being moved elsewhere, although still on disputed land.