

PALESTINE CHRONOLOGY

2016

January

Jan. 2: The Holy See announces that Vatican's recognition of Palestine in 2012 has come into effect.

Jan. 4: The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories, Makarim Wibisono, submits his resignation to the President of the Human Rights Council, effective as of 31 March 2016, expressing deep regret that, throughout his mandate, Israel failed to grant him access to the OPT.

Jan. 10: Palestinian Minister of Religious Affairs Yousef Ide'as said that Israeli authorities and settlers had committed over 1,336 violations against Muslim and Christian holy sites in the OPT in 2015.

Jan. 13: Following statements by Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallstrom calling for Israel's investigation for extrajudicial executions of Palestinians, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs summons Sweden's Ambassador to Israel Carl Magnus Nesser and states that officials from Sweden are currently unwelcome in Israel.

Jan. 18: In its conclusions on the Middle East peace process adopted the Council of the EU reiterates the EU's "strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and actions taken in this context" and its commitment "to ensure that - in line with international law - all agreements between the State of Israel and the EU must unequivocally and explicitly indicate their inapplicability to the territories occupied by Israel in 1967", adding that this "does not constitute a boycott of Israel which the EU strongly opposes."

Jan. 24: After almost two years Israel approves 153 new settlement homes in the West Bank and Jerusalem, marking end of informal building freeze.

Jan. 26: During a UNSC open debate on the situation in the Middle East, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon says that settlement activities raised questions about Israel's commitment to a two-State solution.

Jan. 29: France's Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius says France would recognize a Palestinian state if its efforts to revive Israeli-Palestinian peace talks at an international conference "to make happen a two-state solution" fail.

February

Feb. 2: Israel passes a law allowing police to stop and frisk suspects without probable cause, which is obviously aimed at minorities and Arabs.

Feb. 8: National reconciliation talks between Fatah and Hamas in Doha reach an agreement, for which both leaderships must now give their final approvals.

Feb. 10: Prime Minister Netanyahu tells a special Knesset debate on the two-State solution that Israel has no choice in the current political reality but to continue its control of the West Bank. Opposition leader Isaac Herzog responds that what was possible at the moment was separation from Palestinians.

Feb. 14: Peace Now reports that Israel has authorized 350 new housing units and broke ground on around 1,800 in 2015.

- Israeli Education Minister Naftali Bennett calls for the annexation of Area C in the West Bank, while giving the Palestinians "autonomy on steroids" in Areas A and B.

Feb. 26: Palestinian prisoner Muhammad Al-Qiq ends his 94-day hunger strike after his lawyer reached a deal with Israeli authorities, according to which he would be released on 21 May.

March

March 1: World Bank statistics indicate that Gaza has the highest rate of unemployment in the world.

March 2: Addressing the 16th session of the Fatah Revolutionary Council in Ramallah, President Abbas reaffirms support for the French initiative to convene an international peace conference.

- Israel's High Court rules that Israel has to return 1,700 dunums of land to private Palestinian landowners in Area C of the West Bank, which had been taken through military seizure orders between 1978 and 1984, but was never used (except for two small army bases that were abandoned in the 1990s).

March 8: A bill is formally submitted to the Israeli Knesset by Israeli Transportation and Intelligence Minister Yisrael Katz (Likud) to deport the family members of Palestinian assailants who were killed by Israel since October 2015.

March 9: President Abbas reportedly has turned down a peace initiative put forward by US Vice-President Joe Biden in Ramallah. The deal offered a settlement construction freeze and a Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem in exchange for recognition of Israel as a Jewish state and the relinquishment of Palestinian rights to return to live in Israel.

March 13: US Secretary of State Kerry says the US was discussing ways to help preserve the two-State solution.

March 14: Palestine is awarded a full membership in the Permanent Court of Arbitration by a vote of 57:9 and 24 abstentions.

March 16: COGAT confirms that Israel has expropriated a large stretch of land near Jericho, declaring some 2,342 dunums of Palestinian land in the Jordan Valley state land.

March 23: In response to Israel's decision to stop admitting Palestinian-made produce from the West Bank to East Jerusalem, the PA orders a boycott of five Israeli food-makers, barring Palestinian vendors from buying from Tnuva, Strauss Group Ltd., Tara, Soglowek and Tapuzina.

March 24: After allegedly stabbing an Israeli soldier in the Tel Rumeida area of Hebron's Old City, Abdel Fattah Al-Sharif and Ramzi Aziz Al-Qasrawi, both 21, are killed "execution-style" with shots to their heads after lying already injured on the ground.

- During a visit to Argentina, US President Obama says he did not expect a breakthrough on an Israeli-Palestinian deal while he is in office.

- UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, unveils a plan by the Quartet to produce a report that would help create a political environment for the two sides to resume peace negotiations.

- In a landmark victory for the Palestinian leadership, the UN Human Rights Council passed four resolutions, reaffirming the inalienable, permanent and unqualified right of the Palestinian people to self-determination [Res. A/HRC/31/L.36], demanding that Israel cease all practices and actions that violated the human rights of the Palestinian people or the character, status and demographic composition of the OPT [Res. A/HRC/31/L.37], requesting the High Commissioner to review the implementation of recommendations on ensuring accountability and justice for all violations of international law in the OPT [A/HRC/31/L.38], and demanding that Israel immediately cease and reverse all settlement activities as well as requesting the High Commissioner to investigate the implications of settlements on the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people [A/HRC/31/L.39].

March 30: Saudi Arabia reiterates its call on the UNSC to implement a special international protection system for Palestine, including the Holy Al-Quds, in line with the Fourth Geneva Convention; other pertinent resolutions to develop a timetable for ending the Israeli occupation; and achieving just and comprehensive peace, and the Arab peace initiative.

- An official 15-member PA delegation offers their condolences to the family of Munir Ammar, the head of the Israeli forces' Civil Administration in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, who died in a plane crash. The move is condemned by many Palestinians.

April

April 5: The UN Human Rights Council has voted to establish a database that will name companies doing business in Israel's settlements in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, in a symbolic victory for the Palestinians and a blow to the Israeli government and its allies.

April 11: A new HRW report states that detained Palestinian children are being abused by Israeli forces, "routinely" interrogated without the presence of their parents, subjected to unnecessary force in the arrest and detention, and held them in unsafe conditions.

April 13: Peace Now reports that the Israeli government has given the green light to another 267 settlement homes, bringing the total number of new units approved this year to 941, almost tripling the number compared to the same period of the previous year.

April 14: The new US Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 accuses Israel of an "excessive use of force" against Palestinians, amounting to a violation of human rights, and highlights numerous allegations of Israeli rights abuses, including the arbitrary arrest and torture of Palestinians, as well as restrictions on their freedom of movement and speech.

April 15: After a one month freeze by the Israeli authorities visits of Gazans above the age of 60 to Al-Aqsa Mosque resume with some 200 attending Friday prayers.

- The 13th OIC summit in Istanbul ends with a joint resolution, reaffirming Palestinians' rights to self determination, the right of return for Palestinian refugees abroad, and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

April 21: Foreign Minister Riad Malki says that a push for a UNSC Resolution demanding an end to Israeli settlement expansion will be put on hold to focus on the French initiative.

April 23: Israeli authorities deliver confiscation notices for 5,000 dunums of private land to the Palestinian village of Jalud.

April 25: Leaders of the Knesset "Land of Israel" caucus submit 10 separate bills calling to annex different settlement blocs, making up most of Area C of the West Bank, and apply Israeli law, judiciary and administration to them.

April 28: The UN release figures revealing a four-fold increase from last year in the rate of Israeli demolitions of Palestinian homes and structures, that have left a record-high 808 Palestinians displaced since the start of 2016.

- Prime Minister Netanyahu officially rejects the French initiative to convene an international peace conference, ahead of a summit planned for May 30 in Paris, saying he did not see any benefits and insisting on direct talks instead.

May

May 19: Prime Minister Netanyahu appoints ultra-nationalist rightwing politician Avigdor Lieberman as Foreign Minister. Palestinians say the move confirms Israel's favoring extremism.

May 23: After rejecting the French peace initiative, Prime Minister Netanyahu offers instead to hold direct talks with President Abbas in Paris.

May 28: The Arab League says it backs France's Middle East peace initiative and all international efforts to clinch an Israeli-Palestinian peace accord.

- President Abbas calls for NATO forces to replace Israeli soldiers in the West Bank as part of any peace deal that leads to the creation of a two-state solution.

June

June 3: France hosts an international meeting to forge a strategy for restarting Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. Representatives from 26 nations, including U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry but excluding Israelis, participate and warn time is running out on two-state solution. Summit ends with vague call to work on a package of economic and security incentives and a international call by year's end.

June 6: EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs Federica Mogherini tells a UNSC briefing that the "possibility of a secure state of Israel and a viable state of Palestine living side by side is fading away," adding that "together with the perspective of the two states, peace would also get beyond reach."

June 8: A shooting attack in the Sarona Market in Tel Aviv leaves four Israelis killed and 10 wounded. The suspected attackers - cousins Mohammad Ahmad Makhamreh and Khalid Mohammad Makhamreh from Yatta - are injured and detained. Israel suspends all permits given to Palestinian for Ramadan. Later that night, Israeli forces close off and raid their hometown.

June 17: The Israeli government announces plans to build a concrete wall along the border with the Gaza Strip.

June 20: The EU's 28 Foreign Ministers endorse the French initiative.

June 26: Israel and Turkey reached a reconciliation agreement that ends the bilateral crisis.

June 27: The State of Palestine has ratified the 2010 Kampala amendments to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which criminalize the use of certain kinds of weapons in non-international conflicts, whose use was already forbidden in international conflicts, as well as defining the crime of 'aggression (e.g., invading or bombing another state, blockading its ports or coastlines; using armed bands, groups, irregulars or mercenaries against it, violating a status of forces agreement).

- The Palestinian Central Elections Commission (CEC) has started preparing for local council elections in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip to be held on Oct. 8

July

July 1: The Quartet issues a report on the situation on the ground focusing on major threats to achieving a negotiated peace and offering recommendations to advance the two-state solution. UN Sec.-Gen. Ban Ki-moon underscores the report stating “there is a strong need for affirmative steps to reverse negative trends on the ground.”

July 10: Egypt's Foreign Minister Shoukry meets Israeli PM Netanyahu in Israel to discuss reviving peace efforts with Palestine.

July 11: The Knesset passes the controversial “NGO” or “transparency bill” into law with a vote of 57:48, following a contentious six-hour plenary debate. Human rights groups and opposition members condemn the legislation.

July 25: Palestinian Foreign Minister Al-Malki urges the Arab League to help the PA to sue the UK over the Balfour Declaration of 1917.

August

Aug. 1: The “Youth Bill,” which will allow Israeli authorities to imprison minors convicted of serious crimes such as murder, attempted murder or manslaughter even if they are under the age of 14, passes its second and third readings in the Knesset plenum.

Aug. 14: President Abbas appeals to Israeli Arab leaders to help broker a new reconciliation deal between Fatah and Hamas.

Aug. 17: Palestinian political parties begin registering candidates for municipal elections.

Aug. 24: After reaching an agreement with Israeli authorities to end his administrative detention at a specific date Palestinian prisoner Bilal Kayid suspends his hunger strike after 71 days of protest against being placed in administrative detention on the day he was scheduled to be released from prison after serving over 14 years.

Aug. 31: Israel's Civil Administration approves the advancement of plans for 463 new housing units in West Bank settlements.

September

Sept. 1: The annual “Report on UNCTAD assistance to the Palestinian people” finds that the Palestinian economy would double if freed from Israeli control.

Sept. 4: The PA and Israel sign a memorandum of understanding, allowing the PA to exclusively handle its international postal services with the rest of the world from now on through the Allenby Bridge crossing.

Sept. 8: Israel begins working on a massive concrete wall along the border with the Gaza Strip.

- A Palestinian court postpones municipal elections set for 8 October.

Sept. 22: At the UN, President Abbas calls on Israel to completely and unequivocally accept the Arab Peace Initiative and on the UN to provide protection to the Palestinian people from Israeli acts of aggression.

Sept. 28: Former Israeli President Shimon Peres passes away at age 93.

October

Oct. 2: The electrical grid in the State of Palestine will be under Palestinian responsibility.

Oct. 3: The Palestinian Supreme Court in Ramallah rules that municipal elections scheduled for 8 October would be held in the West Bank, but not in Gaza because its courts are “illegal”.

Oct. 5: The Palestinian election committee cancels the upcoming local elections and all ongoing preparations.
- The “Women's Boat to Gaza”, carrying 13 civil society activists with the goal to break the Israeli blockade, is intercepted by the Israeli Navy and towed to Ashdod port.

Oct. 14: The UN Security Council holds special session on Israeli settlements as 'obstacle to peace'; the US representative to the session stated that the US is “deeply concerned and strongly opposes settlements which are corrosive to peace”, adding that Israeli activities in the West Bank, primarily settlement construction, “creates a one state reality on the ground.” Russia's envoy warned that without two-state solution, threat to Israel will grow.

November

Nov. 16: The Knesset approves a preliminary reading of a controversial “formalization bill” which would notably retroactively legalize an Israeli outpost slated for evacuation.

Nov. 30: At the Fatah party’s 7th Congress in Ramallah, attended by some 1,322 members, President Abbas delivers a lengthy speech on the future of Palestine after being reappointed as Chairman.

December

Dec. 1: The Israeli Ministry of Transportation has ordered that Israeli Dan bus company stop broadcasting announcements in Arabic in its new bus line in Beersheba, many Jews had complained to the municipality.

Dec. 5: The so-called ‘formalization’ bill passes a preliminary reading in the Knesset with a vote of 60:49. It would see thousands of dunums of private Palestinian land seized and dozens of illegal Israeli outposts retroactively legalized, and is seen as paving the way to annexing the West Bank.

Dec. 23: The UNSC passes by a vote of 14 in favor with one abstention (US) Resolution 2334, condemning Israel’s settlement policies, defining the settlements as illegal, making a distinction between the settlements and Israel, and signaling that the international community has not changed its expectations that any future peace agreement will involve an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank. The US abstention breaks a long-standing American tradition of vetoing resolutions critical of Israel.

Dec. 23: In a speech on Israel and Palestine, US Secretary of State John Kerry uses unusually harsh words to emphatically denounce Israel’s settlement policy for eroding the path to a two-state solution, warning also of a one-state reality and “perpetual occupation.”

Dec. 30: UN OCHA reports that Israel has demolished more Palestinian homes in 2016 than in any year since it began documenting demolitions in 2009, and has also increased restrictions on the movement of Palestinians.

Dec. 31: According to Ma’an, 2016 saw 111 Palestinians killed (12 of them females, 33 minors, and 34 from the Hebron area) and hundreds injured (on the Israeli side, 15 were killed).