

## CHRONOLOGY 2019

### January:

**Jan. 1:** The US and Israel officially quit UNESCO at the stroke of midnight, the culmination of a process triggered over a year ago amid claims that the organization allegedly fosters anti-Israel bias.

**Jan. 15:** President Mahmoud Abbas takes over presidency from Egypt of the Group of 77 (G77) and China during a ceremony to be held at the UN General Assembly in New York City.

**Jan. 22:** Press reports reveal that PA Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah, at the request of President Abbas, has delivered a letter to the US administration informing it to stop sending security aid, the only remaining US aid to the Palestinians if the anti-terrorism act goes into force cutting all other aid.

**Jan. 27:** The International Paralympic Committee confirms that Malaysia has been stripped of hosting the 2019 World Para Swimming Championships (scheduled to take place in Kuching in July) for denying to issue entry visas for two Israeli para-swimmers earlier this month. Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad refusal comes as a form of support for Palestine and that it would be against national laws to issue visas for Israelis, as the country does not recognize the state of Israel.

**Jan. 28:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says he will not renew the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH), the observer mission which was established in the city following a massacre of Palestinians in 1994, accusing it of bias, saying "We will not allow the continuation of an international force that acts against us."

**Jan. 29:** The government of PA Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah submits its resignation to President Mahmoud Abbas.

### February

**Feb. 4:** During the 5<sup>th</sup> Arab-European ministerial meeting in Brussels the Arab League calls on European countries to recognize the State of Palestine with-in the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

- The Netherlands recognizes Gaza and the West Bank as official birthplaces for Palestinian born after 1948.

**Feb. 5:** Israeli Minister of Agriculture Uri Ariel tours the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound along with a group of Israeli settlers and under armed security by Israeli forces.

**Feb. 17:** The Israeli defense cabinet decides to put into effect a law passed in July 2018, calling to freeze funds transferred to the PA and to deduct NIS 500 million from the total sum that is due to be delivered because it was transferred to Palestinian prisoners and their families.

**Feb. 24-25:** After their two-day Arab-European Union Summit in Sharm El-Sheikh, leaders from 28 European and 21 Arab countries stressed their positions on the illegality under international law of Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories and release a declaration, stating, "We reiterated our commitment to reaching a two-state solution on the basis of all relevant UN resolutions, as the only realistic way to end the occupation that began in 1967, including of East Jerusalem, and to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace between Israelis and Palestinians through direct negotiations between the parties that addresses all final status issues."

In February 2019, the Governments of Poland and the United States convened a Conference on Peace and Security in the Middle East in Warsaw. Representatives from 62 countries attended. The Palestinian side rejected the invitation and emphasized through its Chief Negotiator that it "ha[d] not mandated anyone to talk on behalf of Palestine"

### March

**March 6:** Israel's Central Election Committee disqualifies the Arab joint slate Balad-United Arab List and Ofer Cassif, a member of political alliance Hadash-Ta'al, from running in the April 9 election while allowing far-right Kahanist leader Michael Ben Ari to run.

**March 10:** Palestinian President Abbas assigns Fatah Central Committee member Mohammed Shtayyeh as new Prime Minister and asks him to form a new Palestinian government.

**March 17:** Israel's Supreme Court bans Kahanist leader Michael Ben Ari from running in the April 9 election and reverses the Central Election Committee's March 6 disqualification of Arab joint slate Balad-

United Arab List and Ofer Cassif, a member of political alliance Hadash-Ta'al. The decision is welcomed as a "victory of democracy."

**March 25:** A *Haaretz* poll shows that 42% of Israelis back West Bank Annexation, including two-state supporters and 34% support a two-state solution.

**March 26:** Meet Prime Minister Netanyahu in Washington, US President Trump signs a presidential proclamation officially recognizing the Golan Heights as Israeli territory.

## April

**April 9:** Early Israeli elections for the 120-seat Knesset take place.

**April 11:** The Israeli Central Elections Committee publishes the final results of the Israeli election as follows: Likud – 36, Kahol Lavan – 35, , Shas – 8, United Torah Judaism – 7, Hadash-Ta'al – 6, Labor – 6, Yisrael Beiteinu – 5, Union of Right-Wing Parties – 5, Meretz – 4, Balad-United Arab List – 4, Kulanu – 4.

- Palestine is granted full membership in the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, under the Vienna Convention.

**April 13:** Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas swears in a new government headed by Mohammad Shtayyeh, a loyalist from Fatah. Hamas calls the appointment of the new cabinet a blow to unity efforts.

**April 14:** In Ramallah, the newly formed government of PM Mohammad Shtayyeh repeats its swearing-in as the text had a typing error.

**April 10:** Israeli authorities confiscate 51,000 dunums, isolate 5 villages and seize control over water springs, agricultural machinery and solar cells in the Jordan Valley area near Tubas.

**April 16:** Israeli authorities continue to enforce a strict crackdown on Issawiya for the fifth consecutive day in what Palestinians see as "collective punishment" through road closures, arbitrary searches, and mass detentions.

## May

**May 3:** US Congresswoman Betty McCollum reintroduces a historic bill - the Promoting Human Rights for Palestinian Children Living Under Israeli Military Occupation Act, also known as H.R. 2407 - to promote the human rights of Palestinian children, who face detention, interrogation, abuse, and violence by Israel through its military court system in the occupied West Bank.

**May 13:** *Haaretz* reports that Israel has approved the paving of two roads in the West Bank, involving the confiscation of large tracts of Palestinian land for the benefit of two relatively isolated Israeli settlements: Yitzhar, south of Nablus, and smaller settlements north of the Tapuach Junction.

## June

**June 16:** Prime Minister Netanyahu declares the establishment of the new "Ramat Trump" (Trump Heights) settlement named after US President Donald Trump in the Golan Heights, although it cannot be officially established until the next government takes office.

**June 18:** The Israeli High Court of Justice has given the green light to demolish 13 large buildings with a total of 100 apartments, of which 80 are still under construction, in the Wadi Hummus neighborhood of Sur Baher. The buildings are located on the PA-controlled side it, i.e., in Area A of the West Bank, but too near to the separation barrier. Palestinians say the ruling sets a precedent that will enable the demolition of thousands of buildings in the West Bank.

**June 25-26:** US-organized workshop on the economic part of President Trump's claimed Israel-Palestine peace plan is held in Manama, Bahrain, encouraging capital investment upwards of \$50 billion in the Palestinian territories and neighboring Arab states over the course of 10 years, the creation of more than 1 million Palestinian jobs, and reducing the unemployment rates in the OPT. Palestinians boycotted the workshop due to its attempt to decouple economics from politics.

## July

**July 11:** A PCBS press release on the occasion of International Population Day states that there are now an estimated 4,9 million Palestinians living in the West Bank (2,99 million) and Gaza (1,99 million).

**July 22:** Israeli forces begin demolishing buildings in the PA-controlled East Jerusalem neighborhood of Wadi Al-Hummus in Sur Baher deemed too close to the West Bank separation barrier. Palestinians and other activists are concerned that this sets a precedent that will enable the demolition of thousands of buildings across the West Bank, effectively annulling the legal protection residents of other PA-controlled areas have.

**July 25:** President Abbas states that the Palestinian leadership would suspend compliance with agreements signed with Israel and start putting in place mechanisms to implement this decision.

**July 31:** Prime Minister Shtayyeh states that the Oslo Accords' classification of land into Areas A, B and C was no longer valid due to Israel's violations of the Accords.

## August

**Aug. 25:** Nabil Abu Rudeineh, spokesman of the Palestinian presidency, slams in an official press statement the US for deleting the PA from the US State Department website's list of countries and areas. The move is seen as a further devaluation of the Palestinian status on the US side, with the State Department also ordering to remove any reference that included the word 'occupied territories' in reference to the Palestinians.

- Israel's Supreme Court bars Bentzi Gupstein and Baruch Marzel, leaders of the right-wing Kahanist Otzma Yehudit Party, from running for the upcoming Knesset elections.

**Aug. 27:** A letter signed by 25 former Israeli senior security and defense officials thanks the US Congress for passing legislation that endorses a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and warns against Israel unilaterally annexing all or part of the West Bank. It also rejects efforts to boycott the Jewish state.

- In Gaza, three Hamas policemen are killed and several people injured in two explosions on police checkpoints which turned out to be suicide attacks by a Salafi group linked to Islamic State.

**Aug. 29:** At a press conference with visiting President Mahmoud Abbas in Berlin, German Chancellor Angela Merkel insists on a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict even if this goal is "increasingly difficult to achieve."

**Aug. 31:** The PA announces that it will cease to recognize the division of the West Bank into three areas – A, B, C - of differing Israeli and Palestinian control, originally intended to last for five years, and will lay claim to the entire territory. This is in line with an earlier statement by Prime Minister Shtayyeh, who argued that since Israel no longer respects any of the signed agreements and deals with all places as if they are part of Area C, it was time for Palestinians to deal with all places as if they are part of Area A.

## September

**Sept. 1:** At a speech given in Elkana settlement, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu reiterates an election promise made five months, saying he intends to annex Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

**Sept. 2:** Hundreds of Palestinian women demonstrate in the West Bank to demand an investigation into the death of a 21-year-old Israa Ghrayeb, a makeup artist from a village near Bethlehem woman who died on 22 August after being hospitalized with severe injuries in what many suspect was a so-called honor killing.

**Sept. 10:** Speaking to the press a week before the Israeli election, Prime Minister Netanyahu says he would extend Israeli sovereignty over the Jordan Valley and the northern Dead Sea if reelected.

**Sept. 11:** Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammed Ath-Thani calls the Palestinian cause "the mother and foundation of all Arab issues" and says that without a just and lasting solution to its there won't be peace in the region.

**Sept. 12:** Joining widespread international criticism, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK issue a joint statement condemning Prime Minister Netanyahu's pledge to extend Israeli sovereignty to the Jordan Valley, saying it would be "a serious breach of international law."

- Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu says that continued rocket fire from Gaza is making another war against Palestinian militants there inevitable.

**Sept. 13:** Citing, *inter alia*, Israeli restrictions, mass unemployment and environmental degradation, a new UNCTAD report warns that the Palestinian economy is on the verge of collapse.

- Saudi Foreign Minister Ibrahim bin Abdulaziz Al-Assaf affirms at an OIC meeting that the Palestinian cause was and is still the core issue of the Islamic world.

**Sept. 16:** Speaking on Army Radio, Prime Minister Netanyahu says for the first time that if re-elected the next day, he would annex Kiryat Arba and the Jewish areas of Hebron.

- The PLO Executive Committee affirms the position of President Abbas that all agreements signed with Israeli will end as Palestinians will not remain the only party committed to these agreements.
- Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh says his government is going to prosecute Israel at international courts for exploiting Palestinian land in the Jordan Valley.

**Sept. 17:** Israelis vote in an unprecedented repeat election after the April 2019 election failed to form a government.

**Sept. 24:** Speaking before the UN General Assembly, US President Trump urges Middle Eastern nations to fully normalize diplomatic relations with Israel.

- Electricity is cut off in large areas of the West Bank, after the Israeli electricity company began to ration the supply to the Palestinians because of the accumulation of debts.

**Sept. 26:** Addressing the UN General Assembly President Abbas says that Palestinians completely reject Prime Minister Netanyahu's statement earlier this month to annex the Jordan Valley, adding that if the Israeli government goes through with it, the PA will cancel all commitments to previous agreements. Abbas also vows to hold elections **soon**

## October

**Oct. 3:** Israel's 22<sup>nd</sup> Knesset is inaugurated without a new government formed.

**Oct. 10:** The Civil Administration's Higher Planning Council approves plans for 2,342 new settlement housing units, 59% of them in rather remote settlements.

**Oct. 18:** In its concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Israel, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights calls on Israel to amend or cancel its Jewish Nation-State Law due to its discrimination of Israel's non-Jewish population and in order to comply with an international human rights convention that it ratified in 1991.

**Oct.:** The Israeli Electricity Company (IEC) begins cutting power supply to Palestinian households served by JEDCO (in Jerusalem, Ramallah, Bethlehem and Jericho) for two hours every two or three weeks due to an alleged \$500 million unpaid debt.

## November

**Nov. 2:** On the anniversary of the 1917 Balfour Declaration, the PLO calls on the UK to apologize for the document, which stated Britain's support for a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine and laid the foundation for Israel's creation.

**Nov. 12:** The European Court of Justice rules that EU states must identify products from Israeli settlements with special labels.

**Nov. 18:** Reversing four decades of American policy and removing what has been an important barrier to annexation of Palestinian territory, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announces that the US does not consider Israeli settlements in the West Bank a violation of international law. While Israel welcomes the move, it is internationally criticized, with the EU stating its believe that Israeli settlement activity in occupied Palestinian territory was illegal under international law and eroded prospects for lasting peace.

**Nov. 19:** The UN General Assembly votes with 165:5 and nine abstentions in favor of a resolution in support of the Palestinian people's right of self-determination.

**Nov. 20:** Blue and White leader Benny Gantz announces that he has failed to form a government, making it increasingly likely that Israel is headed for a third election in March 2020.

**Nov. 28:** Likud MK Nir Barkat proposes a new legislation to outlaw UNRWA, saying it was destroying chances for peace in the region. The law would terminate all UNRWA activities in areas under Israeli control by 1 January 2020, including the agency's offices in East Jerusalem.

## December

**Dec. 3:** The French parliament determines that Anti-Zionism is a form of Anti-Semitism.

- The 18<sup>th</sup> session of the Assembly of States Parties (ASP) to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) held in The Hague unanimously elected the State of Palestine as a member of its Bureau, which supervises the work of the ASP and works to ensure that the ICC performs its functions under the Rome Statute.

- A UNCTAD report entitled *Economic Cost of the Israeli Occupation for the Palestinian People: Fiscal Aspects* estimates the fiscal cost of Israeli occupation for the Palestinian people in 2000-2017 period at \$47.7 billion, or three times the size of the Palestinian economy in 2017, comprising lost public revenues and interest payments. This includes \$28.2 billion in estimated accrued interest and \$6.6 billion of leaked Palestinian fiscal revenues to Israel, which not only exceeds the Palestinian budget deficit estimated at US\$ 17.7 billion US dollars during the same period but would have generated a surplus nearly twice the size of the deficit.

- The UN General Assembly in New York approves a resolution entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine" with 147:7 and 13 abstentions, which called on the international community not to "render aid or assistance to illegal settlement activities, including not to provide Israel with any assistance to be used specifically in connection with settlements in the occupied territories." The resolution also disavows Israeli sovereignty over east Jerusalem.

**Dec. 5:** The UN General Assembly has adopted a resolution with a vote of 91:9 and 65 abstentions, demanding Israel to withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan Heights.

- Malaysia has opened an "Embassy to Palestine" in Amman, Jordan, after Israeli authorities purportedly refused to grant it access to Ramallah due to "anti-Semitic" and anti-Israel statements made by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad.

**Dec. 6:** The US House of Representatives passes a resolution opposing Israeli annexation of the West Bank.

**Dec. 13:** The UN General Assembly overwhelmingly renews the mandate for UNRWA for another three years amid misconduct allegations and a cash shortfall triggered by a halt in US funding.

- Turkey has added exiled Palestinian politician Mohammed Dahlan to its "red list" of most-wanted terrorist suspects on accusations of playing a role in the 2016 attempted coup in Turkey, offering a reward of up to 10 million lira (\$1.75 million) for information leading to his capture.

**Dec. 15:** Likud MK Gideon Sa'ar declares that "there will be no additional independent state between Jordan and the sea", saying that "all over the world they say that the two-state solution remains a path for agreement. This solution is not truly a solution. It is a two-state illusion - an illusion that has already failed for 81 years." He adds his own solution as a "form of autonomy with ties to the Kingdom of Jordan and economic alliances with the Palestinian Authority, Israel and Jordan."

**Dec. 18:** UN Mideast envoy Nickolay Mladenov says that Israel advanced or approved plans for over 22,000 settlements housing units in the West Bank and East Jerusalem in the three years since UN Security Council Resolution 2334 called settlements a "flagrant violation" of international law and demanded that Israel stop such activity.

- Donald Trump becomes the third US President to be impeached as the House of Representatives formally charged him with abuse of power and obstruction of Congress.

- A bill titled "Peace and Tolerance in Palestinian Education Act" that would commit the US State Department to annually review the PA's educational materials for encouraging violence or intolerance is marked up by the House Foreign Affairs Committee, putting it on track for a vote by the House of Representatives.

- President Mahmoud Abbas says that he won't go ahead with planned elections unless Israel allows Palestinians living in East Jerusalem to vote.

- Israel's electric company announces more power cuts to several cities in the West Bank to press for payment of what it claims was \$519 million owed by a Palestinian electricity company.

- Approving by 160-6, with 15 abstentions an annual resolution called "Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including east Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources" the UN General Assembly states that Palestinians have a right to claim restitution for their loss of natural resources due to the Israeli occupation. Opposed were Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru and the US.

**Dec. 20:** Ending years of preliminary investigations, the ICC announces that it found there is sufficient evidence to investigate war crimes that have been or are being committed in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, and that it sees "no substantial reasons to believe that an investigation would not serve the interests of justice". Chief prosecutor Fatou Bensouda says her office "has concluded with the determination that all the statutory criteria under the Rome statute for the opening of an investigation have been met". While **Palestinians welcome** the ICC **probe**, Prime Minister Netanyahu calls it "scandalous and baseless" and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo decries it stating "We firmly oppose this and any other action that seeks to target Israel unfairly."

**Dec. 21:** In response to the ICC announcement to investigate war crimes against the Palestinians, Israeli Transportation Minister MK Bezalel Smotrich calls to dismantle the PA if it does not pull its petition within 48 hours and calls the ICC "a political, anti-Semitic institution."

**Dec. 27:** Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu remains the leader of the Likud after winning 72.5% of the votes in the party ballot, against 27.5% for challenger Gideon Saar.

**Dec. 29:** Israel's security cabinet approves Defense Minister Naftali Bennett's proposal to deduct NIS 150 million from the money Israel transfers to the PA, allegedly equaling the sum the PA pays to "terror" convicts in Israeli jails and their families.

**Dec. 30:** OCHA says that Israeli authorities in 2019 have demolished or seized 617 Palestinian structures in the West Bank, displacing 898 Palestinians.

- Palestinian civil society organizations announce their absolute rejection of politically conditioned funding, even if this leads to the collapse of institutions and stops them from performing their work. They call on the EU and other donor institutions to abolish a clause from their contracts that lists several Palestinian groups as terror organizations (e.g., Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Al-Aqsa Brigades, PFLP, and PFLP-GC).