

# Palestine Chronology

## 1996

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**Jan. 5:** Hamas activist Yahya Ayash, "The Engineer", dies when his booby-trapped mobile phone goes off in the house in Beit Lahia, Gaza, where he was hiding.

**Jan. 9:** In Paris, the donor countries pledge \$1.365 billion in support of Palestinian self-rule (til March 1997).

**Jan. 11:** Palestinian women prisoners go on hunger strike to protest that they are not being released.

**Jan. 16:** Oslo 2 bill passes Knesset by vote of 48 to 44 (1 abstention).

- 2 Israeli soldiers killed near Beit Umar where their car get fired at.

- Arafat meets US Vice-President Al Gore in Jericho to discuss Israeli obstacles on the election and peace process.

**Jan. 17:** Israel redeploys from Abu Dis. Ahmed Qrei'a raises the Palestinian flag, declares the city freed.

**Jan. 19:** In Jenin, Israeli soldiers kill 3 alleged Hamas supporters who attacked an army post.

**Jan. 20:** First Palestinian elections take place.

**Jan. 23:** Bassam Abu Sharif returns to Jerusalem, first time since 1967.

**Jan. 1996:** Fatah abolishes the strikes on the 9th of each month.

**Feb. 3:** PA Security forces kill 2 Islamic Jihad activists during a shoot-out in Gaza.

**Feb. 12:** Yasser Arafat sworn in as first elected President of Palestine.

- Israel imposes a security closure across Palestinian territory until the end of *Eid al-Fitr* (22 Feb.).

**Feb. 16:** Pres. Arafat meets members of the newly elected Legislative Council for the first time in an unofficial session.

**Feb. 25:** 2 suicide bomb attacks - one on a bus in Jerusalem, one at a bus stop near Ashqelon - leave 25 people dead and dozens injured. "Yahya Ayyash Unit" claim responsibility. Israel imposes a total closure on the territories.

**Feb. 26:** A Palestinian-American gunned down by settlers after running into a Israeli-used bus stop at French Hill, killing 1, injuring 20.

**Feb. 29:** Izz-Eddin al-Qassem units propose Israel a cease-fire on the condition that Israel announce - by March 8th - its willingness to end terror acts against Palestinians and to free all Hamas prisoners.

**Feb. 1996:** A census of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics says by the end of 1995 Gaza's population reached 934,000 and the West Bank 1,333,000, i.e. a total of 2,267,000 Palestinians, of which 46% are under 15 years of age.

**March 3:** A suicide bomber on a West Jerusalem bus leaves 20 people dead and many more injured.

Israeli PM Peres announces a halt in the peace talks with the PLO and declares war on Hamas.

**March 4:** A pedestrian blows himself up at Tel Aviv's Dizengoff Center, killing 12. Yahya Ayyash Unit claims responsibility.

- The IDF seals and slates for demolition the home of the Azam family in Karyut, Nablus, as son Labib is attributed the bombing of bus no. 20 in Ramat Gan in July 1995.

**March 5:** Israel seals off the Palestinian territories, separates areas A and B from each other, imposes an internal closure and puts 465 cities and villages under town arrest. Palestinian institutes and PA offices are raided in the West Bank. Al-Fawwar Camp, Hebron, and Burqa village, Nablus are put under a ten-day curfew.

-IDF Commander Ilan Biran orders to close Hebron University and Polytechnic, the Islamic Charity Society and Muslim Youth Association.

**March 6:** IDF Central Command Ilan Biran orders to close the Colleges of Islamic Da'wa and Religious Affairs and of Science and Technology in Abu Dis.

**March 7:** The PLC holds its inaugurating session in Gaza city. The 88 members elect Ahmed Qrei'a as the Council's speaker.

- In Beit Hanina, Israeli police close the Science & Islamic Education Congress.

**March 8:** In Burqa, Nablus, the IDF destroys the family house of Ra'ed Shanubey, accused to be behind the Jerusalem March-3-bus bombing.

**March 9:** Izz Eddin al-Qassem units issue statement, declaring an all-out war on Israel.

**March 13:** International summit on combatting terrorism hold in Sharm al-Sheikh.

**March 15:** IDF blows up the house of Yahya Ayyash's family in Rafat, Nablus area.

**March 17:** In Beit Hanina, IDF closes the Holy Land Assistance Fund.

**March 20:** IDF destroys the Beit Hanina house of Muheddin Sharif, suspected of involvement in recent bus bomb attacks.

-The IDF cement the Abu Dis home of imprisoned Ayman Abdel Majid Sidr's family, allegedly involved in the Aug. (Nahalat Shiva) and Dec. 1994 (Binyaney Ha'uma) bombing attacks in Jerusalem.

-The IDF blow up the family homes of Ibrahim Sarahneh, attributed the Feb. 25th suicide bombing in Ashqelon, in Al-Fawar Refugee Camp, and of Muhammad Ali Dudin, accused of involvement in the Aug. 1995 bus bombing in Jerusalem, in Hirbat al-Bireh, Hebron, area.

**March 21:** First regular PLC meeting held in Gaza City.

- The IDF destroys the family house of Sufian Jabarin Sbeih, accused for the Jerusalem suicide bombing of Aug. 1995, in Dahariyya, Hebron.

-The National Islamic Salvation Party declares its official establishment; (head is Ismail Abu Shanab).

**March 22:** PA Labour Min. Samir Ghosheh states that due to the clo-sure, unemployment among Palestinians has reached 78%.

**March 23:** IDF blows up the family home of Majdi Moh. Abu-Wardah, attributed the Feb. 25th suicide bombing in Jerusalem, in Al-Fawar Refugee Camp, Hebron.

**March 28:** IDF raids the town of Bir Zeit and surrounding villages, arrest 376 residents, incl. 280 students.

- Deadline for Israeli withdrawal from Hebron passes without any redeployment taking place.

**March 30:** During a press conference protesting the imprisonment of some 70 fellow students in PA and Israeli prisons, PA security raid An-Najah University, shoot in the air and throw tear gas at students and journalists, wounding 12.

**March 1996:** Some 600 Palestinians have been arrested by Israeli army, about half of them are being held in administrative detention.

**April 1:** Palestinian security open fire on a Palestinian car in Ramallah, killing Taysir Lowzi and wounding another passenger.

**April 3:** PLC meets for the first time in Ramallah; during the session, 1,500 student march from Bir Zeit to Ramallah protesting PA's crack-down on the opposition and the recent raid at an-Najah University.

**April 4:** Mass demonstration of West Bank students takes place in Ramallah in protest of the performance of PA and its security apparatus, particularly the events at An-Najah University, March 30th.

**April 11:** Israeli forces demolished 11 houses in the Bani Naim neigh-bourhood in Hebron for being built without permit.

**April 12:** Donor country conference convenes in Brussels.

**April 18:** Pres. Arafat and Israeli PM Peres meet at Erez for the first time since the suicide bombings in February/March, confirm that final status talks will begin as scheduled on May 4th.

**April 22:** PNC meets for the first time since 1964 on Palestinian soil in Gaza ((21st PNC: "Building and Reconstructing the Homeland").

**April 24:** PNC votes to amend the PLO Covenant by 504 votes to 54, with 14 abstentions.

**April 25:** Israel's Labour Party votes to annul the clause in its program that excludes the possibility of a Palestinian state.

**April 26:** 21st PNC session concludes in Gaza with election of a new 18-member Executive Committee.

**May 5:** Final status talks between Israel and the PA begin in Taba.

**May 8:** The Islamic Bloc wins the Student Council elections at Birzeit University.

**May 9:** Pres.Arafat announces the members of his new cabinet, comprising of 20 ministers and 5 with ministerial rank.

**May 17:** 2nd PA government sworn in Ramallah after Pres. Arafat announced the cabinet.  
- IDF arrest Hassan Salameh, deputy leader of Izz al-Din al-Qassem unit.  
**May 18:** PA security arrest the head of the Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights, Dr. Iyad Sarraj for questioning about an interview he had given to the New York Times.  
**May 23:** First meeting of the new PLO Executive Committee. Mahmoud Abbas appointed Sec.-Gen.  
**May 26:** Following heavy local and international protest, PA security r-lease Dr. Iyad Sarraj from prison.  
**May 29:** Israeli elections (14th Knesset) take place.

**June 1/2:** Final results of Israeli elections are published. Netanyahu wins PM election with 29,000 votes ahead of Peres.

**June 2:** Pres. Arafat's plane inaugurates Gaza International Airport, coming from Sinai.

**June 5:** Trilateral (Jordanian-Egyptian-Palestinian) summit concluded in Aqaba, endorsing peace and stressing the inevitability of the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

**June 7-8:** Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Syrian President Hafez al-Assad and Saudi Crown Prince Abdul Abd al-Aziz meet in Damascus, recommend to convene a pan-Arab summit in Cairo to discuss the continuation of the peace process in light of the Israeli election results.

**June 9:** Dr. Eyad Sarraj arrested for the third time; detained without charge.

**June 12:** 2nd deadline for redeployment from Hebron passes; postponed to an uncertain date.

**June 16:** A Moroccan plane loaded with medical equipment and food supplies was the first plane to land on Gaza airport after its inauguration.

**June 21:** Three-day Arab League summit in Cairo convenes following a call by Arafat, Mubarak, and Assad and King Hussein to redefine Arab peace strategy following the Israeli elections.

**June 24:** Fathi Balawi, one of the 1st Fatah/PLO leaders dies in Amman.

**June 26:** Dr. Eyad Sarraj released from PA police's custody.

**June 27:** The PLC approves by majority vote (50, with 24 against and 6 abstentions) the proposed cabinet of President Arafat.

- Arafat meets Israeli PM Netanyahu's advisor Dore Gold in Gaza, marking the first official dialogue with the new Israeli government.

**June 28-29:** During their meeting in Lyon, the G7 and Russia called for the continuation of the Middle East peace process and that all parties fulfill their obligations, based on the 'land-for-peace' principle and UN resolutions. They also called on Israel to completely lift the closure.

**June 1996:** Two leaflets issued by the "Strike Forces of the Popular Committees for Palestinian National Solidarity" appear in Hebron, calling for a renewal of the Intifada in order to speed up Israeli withdrawal from the city.

- PA Ministry of Interior announces the issuing of so far 160,000 Palestinian passports.

**July 5:** Israeli PM Netanyahu begins his visit to the US.

**July 19:** 37 Palestinians held without charge in the PA Nablus prison begin an open-ended hunger strike.

**July 20:** Runner Majdi Abu Mraheel carries the Palestinian flag into the stadium of Atlanta, marking the first ever appearance of Palestinians at the Olympic Games.

**July 23:** Israeli FM David Levy meets with Arafat at Erez check-point- first official meeting between PNA and Likud.

- Speaker of the PLC Ahmed Qrei'a and the entire Executive Committee resigned over the dispute with Arafat regarding the Draft Basic Laws to become the new Palestinian constitution. Arafat insisted that a law drawn by the PLO Executive Committee be debated and not the draft of the PLC Legal Committee. However, both sides reconciled soon and the resignations were withdrawn.

**July 25:** Arafat meets Syrian PM Hafez al-Assad for the first time since 1993, reaffirming the Arab united stand to confront the extremist policy of Netanyahu. Assad reaffirmed Syria's support for a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital while Arafat affirmed Palestinian support for Syria's position that Israel must withdraw completely and unconditionally from the Golan Heights.

**July 30:** Mahmoud Jamal Jamayyel from Nablus declared brain dead as a result of torture by the PA who had kept him in detention for months without being charged.

**Aug. 1:** PA police shoots dead Ibrahim Hadayeh from Tulkarem when firing on a group of demonstrators

protesting outside the Tulkarem prison against the PA's treatment of prisoners in PA jails following the previous day's announcement of Jamayyel's death.

- The PA Military court sentences 3 Coastal Guard officer, found guilty of causing the death of Jummayyel, to 10 and 15 years with hard labor.
- A Hamas leaflet appears in the Palestinian territories hours after the Tulkarem incident calling for a new Intifada against both the PNA and Israel.

**Aug. 2:** The Israeli cabinet voted unanimously to cancel restrictions on settlement development in the West Bank and Gaza, lifting the Labour government's partial freeze of settlement expansion.

**Aug. 10:** Khaled Habal from Kharbata dies in PA custody, marking the 10th death of a prisoner in PA jails.

**Aug. 18:** Ramallah High Court issues decision that the 10 Birzeit students held since the April demonstrations in Ramallah be released.

**Aug. 29:** Palestinians throughout the territories observe a 4-hour general strike called by Arafat in protest of Israeli house demolition and settlement policies.

**Sept. 4:** Arafat, Netanyahu meet for the first time at Erez Checkpoint.

**Sept. 9:** Palestinian-Israeli talks resume with meeting between Sa'eb Erekat and Dan Shomron in Jericho.

**Sept. 14-15:** Called for by Egyptian Pres. Mubarak, Arab League holds extraordinary meeting in Cairo to discuss Israel's announcement to build more settlements.

**Sept. 17:** First Palestinian Refugees Conference hold in Gaza to formulate strategies on refugee issue and focus international attention to it.

**Sept. 24:** At dawn, the Israeli government inaugurates a tunnel under Haram al-Sharif compound (linking Via Dolorosa with the Wailing Wall). 30 Palestinian protestors.

**Sept. 25:** In the wake of the news of the tunnel opening, clashes between Palestinians and Israeli forces break out in Jerusalem; civil unrest spreads throughout the Palestinian Territories, leaving 7 Palestinians, incl. 3 policemen, dead; some 400 are injured, mostly in Al-Bireh and around Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem. Israeli army enters area A (Ramallah and Bethlehem).

**Sept. 26:** During the ongoing clashes, Israeli army, using Cobra he-licopters and heavy automatic weapons, kill 44 Palestinians, 25 of them in Gaza, and injure more than 700. Israel also moves tanks into the West Bank, the first time since 1967. 7 Israeli soldiers are killed, tens more captured at a battle at Joseph's Tomb in Nablus.

**Sept. 27:** Israeli soldiers invade Al-Aqsa compound and fire at the worshippers, killing three and injuring some 125. Subsequent protests were answered by tear gas and rubber bullets.

**Sept. 28:** In the wake of the upcoming summit in Washington, the situation calms down. Over the past days, 62 Palestinians were martyred, more than 1,600 injured; 14 Israeli soldiers were killed, 50 wounded.

**Oct. 3:** Israel cuts off Palestinian Internet channels to block information to be send.

**Oct. 3/4:** Summit in Washington between Arafat, Netanyahu, Clinton, King Hussein (Mubarak refused to attend) ends with no results.

**Oct. 6:** Netanyahu and Arafat meet at Erez; talks end with no progress.

- Irish FM visits Arafat in Gaza.

**Oct. 10:** PLO Executive Committee and PNA Cabinet form a "National Dialogue Committee" involving all factions.

**Oct. 15:** King Hussein comes to Jericho - first Arab leader to visit the autonomous areas - and announces his opposition to the Israeli stand on the peace talks.

- Israel lifts the internal closure on Nablus after 3 weeks.

**Oct. 16:** Israel and the PLO resume interim-period talks in Taba.

**Oct. 21:** Settlers near Ofra Settlement shoot and kill Fathi Ali Assahouri in a drive-by shooting.

**Oct. 21:** Settlers shoot and kill Abdullah Karakara.

**Oct. 23:** Chirac in Ramallah.

**Oct. 1996:** West Bank and Gaza get free trade status from the US.

**Nov. 10:** Israeli soldiers kill one Palestinian and injure 12 when firing at demonstrators protesting land

confiscation outside Ramallah.

**Nov. 12:** Cairo Economic Conference begins; many Arab countries, including Palestine, Syria and Lebanon boycott due to the strained political atmosphere in the region.

**Nov. 1996:** Knesset passes first reading of the 1997 budget plan, appropriating \$300 mill for settlement activity.