

## Chronology 2020

### January

**Jan. 8:** Peace Now reports that Israel has approved the construction of 1,936 new settler homes, 89% of which in "settlements that Israel may have to evacuate under a future peace agreement with the Palestinians".

- Defense Minister Naftali Bennett announces that he had established a task force to develop plans for the future of Area C, which are widely believed to be effectively equivalent to annexing parts of the West Bank.

**Jan. 9:** The EU criticizes Israeli plans to expand illegal settlements built and calls on Israel to comply with international law that deems these settlements illegal.

**Jan. 13:** Ahead of the March 2 elections Labor-Gesher announces political merger with the Meretz party, to be headed by Labor leader Amir Peretz.

**Jan. 15:** Stating "Today we provide a big boost for the Land of Israel and continue to develop the Jewish communities in Area C, with actions, not with words," Israeli Defense Minister Naftali Bennett approves seven new nature reserves in the West Bank - the Ariel Cave, Wadi Og, Wadi Malha, the Southern Jordan River, Bitronot Creek, Nahal Tirza, and Rotem-Maskiot in the Arvot Hayarden area - and the expansion of 12 existing reserves, ordering the Civil Administration to advance the move and calling on "all the citizens of Israel to tour and walk the land, to come to Judea and Samaria, sight-see, discover and continue the Zionist enterprise."

**Jan. 21:** A group of British MPs calls for the UK to recognize the state of Palestine.

- Between 2016 and 2018, the Israeli Civil Administration in the West Bank has approved only 21 of 1,485 applications from Palestinians for construction permits in Area C, while issuing 2,147 demolition orders for violations by Palestinians of planning and construction regulations, of which 90 were carried out.

**Jan. 28:** The American so-called "deal of the century" is revealed in Washington, according to which Israel will retain 20% of the West Bank and will lose a small amount of land in the Negev near the Gaza-Egypt border while retaining the Jordan Valley and all settlements. It will further maintain control of all borders and of security from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea and get undivided Jerusalem as its capital, while Palestinians will have a capital in East Jerusalem based on northern and eastern neighborhoods that are outside the Israeli security barrier (Kufr Aqab, Abu Dis and part of Shu'fat). Only a limited number of Palestinian refugees and their descendants will be allowed into the Palestinian state, which will only come into existence in four years if the Palestinians accept the plan, stop inciting terrorism, have Hamas and Islamic Jihad put down their weapons, respect human rights, freedom of religions and press etc. The plan, which also hints at the option to swap the "Triangle" area in the Galilee into the future Palestinian state, is rejected by the Palestinians as nothing but a proposal for an apartheid regime which legitimizes Israel's colonial project in the West Bank and provide Israel with the diplomatic cover necessary to unilaterally annex its settlements. The publication of the plan triggers clashes throughout the OPT.

**Jan. 30:** The PA says that it is in dissolution of the agreements with the Israeli side emanating from the Oslo agreement and that Israel was informed that the PA is no longer bound by bilateral agreements.

### February

**Feb. 1:** Meeting in Cairo, the Arab League rejects Trump's Israeli-Palestinian peace plan, saying it would not cooperate with the US to execute the plan because it "does not meet the minimum rights and aspirations of Palestinian people" and warning Israel not to implement the initiative by force. At the same meeting, President Mahmoud Abbas says that the PA has cut all ties with Israel and the US.

**Feb. 2:** During a meeting with King Abdullah and Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi in Amman, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell slams the US's so-called peace plan and urges the two-state solution.

- Israel bars the entry of Palestinian agricultural produce from the West Bank in retaliation for a months-long PA ban on importing Israeli calves, which is part of Prime Minister Shtayyeh's campaign to disengage economically from Israel.

**Feb. 3:** At a gathering in Jeddah the 57-nation Organization of Islamic Cooperation, denounces Trump's plan as "biased", saying it adopts the Israeli narrative, endorses the annexation of vast areas of occupied Palestinian land under the pretext of security for Israel, and "lacks the minimum requirements of justice."

**Feb. 6:** The PA Ministry of Economy announces that the government's decision to ban Israeli vegetables, fruits, juices, mineral water and carbonated drinks into the Palestinian markets comes into effect today.

**Feb. 10:** The Trump administration excludes funding for the PA Security Services in its budget request for the 2021 fiscal year.

**Feb. 12:** The UNHCR releases the so-called blacklist, which had been in the making since March 2016, when a resolution called for a database of companies promoting or maintaining Israeli settlements, listing 112 companies, of which 94 are Israeli, including all major banks, state-owned transportation companies Egged and Israel Railways Corporation, telecom giants Bezeq, HOT and Cellcom, and Angel Bakeries. Of the 18 foreign companies, six are based in the US (e.g., Motorola, Airbnb, Trip Advisor, Expedia and General Mills), four in the Netherlands, three in the UK (e.g., Greenkote), three in France (e.g., Alstom), and one each in Luxembourg and Thailand.

- In reaction to the release of a list of companies doing business in settlements, Israel's Foreign Ministry announce it is suspending its ties with the UNCHR.

**Feb. 24:** In its first statement following the unveiling of the Trump plan, the UN Security Council reiterates its support for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

**Feb. 17:** Palestinians take to the street to protest what they consider "normalization meetings" and demand their suspension, saying, *inter alia*, that they run counter to the efforts of the boycott movements. They refer to a meeting on 14 February of former MKs, Israeli political figures, and Palestinian representatives in Tel Aviv, the visit of an Israeli delegation of 100 people to meet with top-level Palestinian political and religious officials in Ramallah on 16 February, and that of another Israeli delegation, a day later, involved columnists, analysts and political correspondents in the Israeli media. The meetings sparked great anger in the Palestinian public. Palestinian factions condemned the gatherings and demanded they be halted, while dozens of Palestinians took to the streets of Ramallah on Feb. 17 demanding the suspension of "normalization meetings."

**Feb. 27:** In a letter published today in the *Guardian*, 50 former European foreign ministers, presidents, party leaders, NATO officials and others express grave concern about US President Trump's so-called "Peace to Prosperity" plan for the Middle East, saying it envisages an outcome with characteristics similar to apartheid.

- The Universal Postal Union (UPU) has recognized Palestine's right to have direct postal exchange with the world via Jordan without restrictions.

## March

**March 3:** Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu leads in Israel's third national election in less than a year but is short of a governing majority. Palestinians call the elections a victory for annexation, occupation and apartheid.

**March 4:** At a press conference in Moscow, Hamas politburo head Ismail Haniyeh announces that Hamas has presented four proposals for internal Palestinian reconciliation: forming a national unity government, holding comprehensive Palestinian elections, holding a PNC meeting outside of Ramallah so that all Palestinian factions can participate, and holding a meeting for the factions' secretaries-general. He added that Hamas will agree to any option Fatah chooses.

**March 5:** The first four Corona cases are reported in Bethlehem. The PA orders the closure of Bethlehem and bars foreign tourists from visiting the West Bank for two weeks. In the evening, after 3 more cases are confirmed in Bethlehem, Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayyeh declares a 'state of emergency' in the Palestinian territories and orders schools and universities as well as all tourist and religious areas closed for 30 days, all hotel reservations for foreign tourists and national or international conferences to be cancelled. Movement between the Palestinian cities is only allowed "in cases of extreme necessity" and all gatherings, celebrations, demonstrations and strikes are prohibited.

- In a rare move, Israeli and PA officials meet to coordinate joint efforts to curb the spread of the novel Corona virus.

- A gas tank explosion at a bakery in Gaza's Nuseirat camp causes a big fire that engulfed the entire area, damaged many buildings and destroyed several vehicles. Ten people are killed immediately and at least six others in the following days, while over 56 others are injured.

**March 10:** Ramallah Governor Leila Ghannam issues an order closing all of the city's restaurants and cafes in an effort to fend off the spread of the deadly Corona Virus outbreak.

**March 16:** Israeli President Reuven Rivlin formally designates opposition leader Benny Gantz to form a new government after an inconclusive third national election earlier this month.

**March 17:** Palestine submits its Observations to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in relation to the Prosecutor's Request for a determination on the scope of the Court's territorial jurisdiction in the Situation in the State of Palestine, (and pursuant to the Order of the Pre-Trial Chamber of 28 January 2020), stating, *inter alia*, that "The State of Palestine affirms that it is the sole sovereign over the territory of the State of Palestine occupied in 1967, which is comprised of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, and which is also recognized by the international community. This is the territory over which Palestine gave jurisdictional competence to the Court upon its accession to the Rome Statute."

**March 18:** UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres appoints Swiss humanitarian expert Philippe Lazzarini to head UNRWA.

**March 22:** Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh declares a complete lockdown for an initial 14 days in all of the West Bank in a bid to stop the spread of the coronavirus.

- The Hamas-run Health Ministry announced the **first two cases** of the **coronavirus** in the **Gaza Strip** diagnosed in Palestinians that had returned from Pakistan.

**March 24:** The Arab League calls on the international community to exert more pressure on Israel to release Palestinian prisoners in its jails and provide them with the necessary protection amid the spread of coronavirus.

**March 26:** Palestinians report their first death from the coronavirus: a woman in her 60s who lived in Biddu, north of Jerusalem.

## **April**

**April 5:** The PA bans the entry of all types of Israeli goods and used items into Palestinian markets in its effort to curb the spread of coronavirus.

**April 8:** Amid the COVID-19 spread, President Abbas instructs Prime Minister Shtayyeh to start taking the emergency budget measure.

**April 13:** Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Abul Gheit sends letters to world leaders warning of the spread of COVID-19 in Palestine and the Israeli occupation trying to consolidate its control of Al-Quds.

**April 14:** US President Trump announces suspension of US funding to the World Health Organization because he says it had covered up the seriousness of the COVID-19 outbreak in China before it spread around the world.

**April 16:** The Trump administration announces it will provide \$5 million to the Palestinians to help them combat the coronavirus pandemic, but stresses this did not imply a policy change on aid cuts.

**April 18:** During a telephone call with Russia's deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov, Chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat says the PA is ready to hold direct dialogue with Israel, under international sponsorship.

**April 20:** The World Bank warns that direct donor funding to the PA could drop to as low as \$266 million this year, the lowest it has been in a decade, adding that it estimated a \$1 billion PA deficit in 2020.

- Palestinians decry the Israeli consensus over annexation of the West Bank, with Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh saying "Forming an annexation cabinet would literally mean blocking a two-state solution and dismembering the Palestinian people. This comes in violation of international law and other relevant international resolutions".

**April 24:** The PNC calls on all world parliaments and governments to immediately intervene to prevent the implementation of the Israeli annexation and settlement plans that will prevent the establishment of the sovereign State of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital, on the 1967 borders. PNC speaker Salim Al-Za'noun sends identical letters to this end to the heads of Arab, Islamic, African, and Asian parliamentary, the Arab Parliament, the European Parliament, the International Parliamentary Union, European and Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Associations.

**April 26:** The PLO calls for collective international action against Israeli plans to annex parts of the occupied West Bank.

- In an economic forecast for the year 2020 in light of the current coronavirus pandemic, the PCBS predicts losses of about \$2.5 billion to the Palestinian economy and a 14%-decline of GDP.

**April 27:** Following a lawsuit brought by the Shurat Hadin advocacy group on behalf of relatives of victims from a number of militant attacks, an Israeli court has reportedly ordered the PA to pay nearly \$150 million in damages to the families.

**April 30:** Access for Israeli farmers to the agricultural Naharayim and Tzofar **enclaves** on Jordan's border comes to an end as an extension of Israel's 25-year lease that was part of the 1994 peace treaty expires and Jordan refuses to renew it.

- Dismissing the legal opinions of several states and dozens of international law scholars, ICC chief prosecutor Fatou Bensouda reiterates her position that Palestine is a state for the purposes of transferring criminal jurisdiction over its territory to The Hague, thus paving the way for an investigation of alleged war crimes committed in the OPT. It is now up to a pre-trial chamber to rule on the matter. PLO Secretary-General Saeb Erekat praises the move.

- Palestinian legal experts have criticized President Mahmoud Abbas signing of a new law that gives his office administrative and financial authorities similar to those of the PA government. The Office of the Palestinian Presidency is defined by the new law as a state institution tasked to "organize communication and cooperation with all official and informal state institutions, locally and internationally, and oversee the implementation of the PA president's decisions and instructions."

## May

**May 1:** UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967 Michael Lynk warns that the new Israeli coalition government's plan to proceed with annexing significant parts of the occupied West Bank, will be a blow to the international order and undermine prospects for a negotiated settlement, saying this would "crystalize a 21st-century apartheid, leaving in its wake the demise of the Palestinians' right to self-determination. Legally, morally, politically, this is entirely unacceptable."

**May 3:** MK May Golan (Likud) submits a bill calling for imposing Israel's sovereignty on the occupied territories of the Jordan Valley, the northern Dead Sea area, and the West Bank, saying "The bill is intended to rectify the existing situation and end all historical injustice."

- The PA extends by another month the two-month long state of emergency imposed to fight coronavirus pandemic.

- Israel seized municipal power from the PA in Hebron, when the Defense Ministry issued the final approval for construction of an elevator that would make the Tomb of the Patriarchs wheelchair accessible. Under the terms of the 1997 Hebron agreement, the PA run Hebron Municipality would typically approve such construction.

**May 4:** Speaking before the special online Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit via videoconference, President Abbas reiterates his threat to nullify all agreements with Israel and the US if Israel annexes any part of the occupied West Bank.

**May 5:** US Ambassador to Israel David Friedman tells *Israel Hayom* that the US is ready to recognize Israeli sovereignty over the Jordan Valley and Israeli settlement in Judea and Samaria in the coming weeks.

**May 6:** Israeli Defense Minister Naftali Bennett approves the construction of some 7,000 new settler units in Efrat settlement near Bethlehem, on some 1,000 km<sup>2</sup> of West Bank land.

**May 7:** After the High Court of Justice struck down petitions against the coalition agreement as well as petitions to bar a lawmaker with criminal charges from forming a government, the Knesset approves amendments to two basic laws which allow Prime Minister Netanyahu's Likud and Gantz's Kahol Lavan to fulfill their coalition agreement and enshrine in law the rotation between the two men as prime minister.

**May 7:** PA Envoy to the UN Riyad Mansour asks the UN Secretary-General António Guterres to halt Israel's annexation plan.

**May 8:** In a statement, the Patriarchs and Heads of the Holy Land Churches say that Israel's unilateral annexation plans raise serious and catastrophic questions about the feasibility of any peaceful agreement.

- Palestinians decry Israel's forcing banks in the West Bank to close accounts held by the families of security prisoners in Israeli jails to prevent the PA from providing stipends to them.

**May 11:** Israel and the PA sign an agreement according to which Israel will set aside NIS 800 million for potential loans to Ramallah, in order to offset expected losses due to the coronavirus crisis.

- In a letter to the EU foreign ministers, the World Council of Churches is asking Europe to punish Israel with sanctions if it annexes West Bank lands.

**May 12:** PA Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh has called on the international community to recognize an independent Palestinian state if Israel goes on with its annexation plan.

**May 13:** After talks with Prime Minister Netanyahu in Israel, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo says that the annexation plan must be done in accordance with the Trump "peace plan".

**May 14:** The European Parliament passes by a vote of 402-263, with 13 abstentions three resolutions that condemn the PA for using school textbooks that promote hate and violence and call on the European Commission to make sure that "no Union funds are used to finance textbooks and educational material which incite religious radicalization, intolerance, ethnic violence and martyrdom among children."

**May 15:** Palestinians mark the 72<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the Nakba by vowing to thwart Israel's annexation plan and US President Trump's "Deal of the Century".

- In an interview with *Der Spiegel* King Abdullah of Jordan warns that if Israel were to follow through with its pledge to annex Palestinian territories, it would leave to a "massive" conflict with Jordan.

**May 17:** At a virtual Hebrew University conference, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov warns that Israel's plan to annex settlements will reduce the prospects for peace in the region, stating that "It is prohibited under international law, and will undermine the rules-based international order" and "will have legal, political and security implications that will be difficult to deal with."

- The Knesset approves by a vote of 73 to 46 Prime Minister Netanyahu's new unity government, ending more than a year of political deadlock. Netanyahu will remain prime minister for 18 months before handing over to his new partner Benny Gantz, who for now will be Defense Minister.

**May 18:** EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell says the EU won't recognize unilateral Israeli annexation in West Bank saying, "International law is a fundamental pillar of the international rules-based order. In this respect, the EU and its member states recall that they will not recognize any changes to the 1967 borders unless agreed by Israelis and Palestinians," adding that "the two-state solution, with Jerusalem as the future capital for both states, is the only way to ensure sustainable peace and stability in the region."

**May 19:** After a virtual meeting chaired by Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh and German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, the two sides release a joint statement, expressing "grave concern" over Israel's declared intention to begin annexing parts of the West Bank and the Jordan Valley, stating "Annexation of any part of occupied Palestinian territories including East Jerusalem constitutes a clear violation of international law and seriously undermines the chances for the two-state solution within a final status agreement."

**May 20:** At an emergency meeting on Israeli annexation plans, President Abbas declares an end to the agreements and understandings signed with Israel and the US and turns over responsibility over the occupied territories back to Israel. Abbas reportedly has also instructed the commanders of the Palestinian security organizations to halt security coordination with Israel immediately.

**May 21:** After announcing an end to security coordination with Israel and the US, the PA also suspends contacts with the CIA.

- Jordan threatens to review its relationship with Israel if it goes ahead with the planned annexation.

- The PA declines a shipment of medical supplies sent by the UAE because it was not coordinated with the PA and the plane landed on Israel's Ben Gurion Airport, which Palestinians refuse as a sign of normalization.

**May 22:** Prime Minister Shtayyeh calls upon the EU to recognize the State of Palestine as an independent country and pressure Israel to stop its West Bank annexation plan.

- PA security forces begin withdrawing from Abu Dis.

**May 28:** Ivy League Brown University in Rhode Island is reported to have become the first US university to establish a "Mahmoud Darwish chair" in Palestinian studies. Professor Beshara Doumani is the first holder of the chair.

## **June:**

**June 4:** The PA tells the ICC at The Hague that it considers itself exempt from any agreement with Israel and the US, including the Oslo Accords, due to Israel's annexation plan.

- President Abbas issues a decree extending the coronavirus state of emergency for 30 more days.

- Norway's foreign ministry announces that funds earmarked for the PA's education sector would be withheld until changes are made to schoolbooks that promoted antisemitism and terrorist violence against Israelis.

**June 8:** A new poll by the Geneva Initiative finds that 41.7% of Israeli citizens oppose the annexation while 32.2% support it. Some 48% believe that it would harm the chances of achieving peace with the Palestinians, and only 3.5% considered it a priority for the country.

**June 6:** Ramadan Shalah, who headed the Palestinian Islamic Jihad for over two decades, dies at the age of 62 after a 2-year coma following a stroke.

**June 9:** The ICC says Palestine's decision to absolve itself of the agreements with Israel does not have a bearing on the exercise of the Court's jurisdiction in the situation of Palestine.

**June 9:** In a news conference with foreign journalists, Prime Minister Shtayyeh says that the PA has sent the Quartet a counterproposal to US President Trump's Middle East plan, proposing the establishment of a demilitarized and sovereign Palestinian state in the occupied West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza.

- Angering the right-wing, the Israel High Court rules that a contentious February 2017 law that sought to retroactively legalize thousands of West Bank settlement homes built unlawfully on private Palestinian land was illegal, saying it "retroactively authorized illegal actions done by a particular population in the area while harming the rights of another population."

- State prosecutors ask the Lod District Court to hand down three life sentences and 40 additional years behind bars to Amiram Ben-Uliel, 26, a religious right-wing extremist from an outpost near Shiloh settlement, who perpetrated the 2015 terrorist firebombing of a home in the village of Duma that resulted in the deaths of three members of the Dawabsheh family sleeping inside.

**June 10:** Visiting German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas restates his country's opposition to unilateral Israeli annexation, but stopped short of announcing possible punitive measures.

**June 13:** On the 13<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hamas's takeover of the Gaza Strip, several Palestinian factions and officials calls for an end to the continued inner-Palestinian dispute.

**June 14:** Speaking to German weekly *Der Spiegel*, Luxembourg's foreign minister Jean Asselborn calls for a tougher EU stance against Israel's plan to annex parts of the West Bank, including the recognition of the Palestinian state.

**June 15:** Settlements Minister Tzipi Hotovely says that Israel approved plans to build the new "Trump Heights" settlement on the occupied Golan named after President Donald Trump.

**June 22:** The UN Human Rights Council in Geneva condemns Israeli annexation plans.

## July

**July 2:** The PA announces a renewed total lockdown throughout the West Bank due to the recent sharp rise in the number of coronavirus cases.

- Fatah and Hamas pledge unity against Israel's West Bank annexation plans in a rare joint conference, with senior Fatah official Jibril Rajoub stating "We call on all Palestinian factions to see cooperation between Hamas and Fatah as a historic opportunity for a joint fight to establish a Palestinian state and oppose the Israeli occupation," adding that "We have no enemy except for Israel."

- Israel's Rafael Advanced Defense Systems and Israel Aerospace Industries sign a "historic" memorandum of understanding with Group 42, an Abu Dhabi-based technology company to join forces to research and development technology in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic.

**July 6:** President Mahmoud Abbas declares for the third time since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic the state of emergency in the State of Palestine.

- The PLO and PA Foreign Minister Riyad Malki welcome UNESCO's Executive Committee's adoption of two resolutions, one on occupied Palestine and the second on cultural and educational institutions, calling for their protection as well as that of heritage sites in occupied Jerusalem, Hebron and other Palestinian cities.

**July 14:** In a telephone conversation with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, President Mahmoud Abbas reportedly announced that the Palestinians are ready to resume the stalled peace talks if Israel stops its plan to annex parts of the West Bank.

- Michael Lynk, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, publishes his annual report addressing Israel's illegal policies of collective punishment as a "prominent instrument in its coercive toolbox of population control," calling on Israel to stop "the closure of Gaza, all

restrictions on freedom of movement across the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the punitive demolitions of homes, the punitive residency revocations, the cutting of benefits, the punitive closures of towns and all delays in returning bodies for burial.”

**July 16:** *Haaretz* reports that Israel is drawing up a secret list of 200-300 military and intelligence officials, including Prime Minister Netanyahu and Benny Gantz, who might be subject to arrest abroad if the ICC in the Hague opens an investigation into alleged Israeli war crimes in the Palestinian territories.

**July 21:** In an interview with *The Guardian*, Jordanian Prime Minister Omar Razzaz says Jordan would look “positively” on a one-state democratic solution, i.e., the creation of binational state that guarantees equal rights to Israelis and Palestinians if Israel’s proposed annexation closes the door on a two-state solution.

**July 24:** During the annual conference of the World Free Zones Organization (WFZO) the State of Palestine, participating with the Palestinian Industrial Zones Authority, officially accesses the WFZO.

**July 26:** A popular movement to unite Palestinians “using creative ideas”, Qadreen (“We Are Able To”), is launched in Gaza with the hope to lift the blockade on the strip and following the vision of former PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad.

**July 28:** The UN Palestinian Rights Committee, in collaboration with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), launches the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem on “Annexation in Practice – Palestinian Lives in Jerusalem” with a series of events.

**July 29:** British MP Stephen Kinnock conveys a statement by a group of European MPs from the UK, France, Ireland, and Belgium rejecting the “illegal plan” of Israel’s annexation and seeking to deter it.

- An amendment that would add equality for minorities to the controversial Nation-State Law defining Israel’s Jewish character was voted down in the Knesset, with opponents calling it political posturing.

## August

**Aug. 4:** A huge explosion apparently caused by 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate stored unsafely in a warehouse at the port of Beirut leaves over 180 people dead and over 6,000 injured and devastates large parts of the city.

**Aug. 13:** US President Donald Trump announces the so-called “Abraham Agreement” between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, making it the first Gulf country to normalize diplomatic ties with Israel. While the move is traded by the UAE as ‘death blow’ for West Bank annexation, it is harshly denounced by Palestinians.

**Aug. 17:** Israeli forces bomb Hamas targets in Gaza for the sixth night in a row in response to incendiary balloons launched from the strip.

**Aug. 22:** Turkish President Erdogan receives Ismail Haniyeh, head of the Hamas Political Bureau, and an accompanying delegation.

**Aug. 24:** As Gaza reports its first cases of COVID-19 in the general population, security forces declare a full lockdown for 48 hours.

**Aug. 25:** US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo departs Israel, where he held talks on the Israel-UAE normalization deal, taking off on the first official direct flight from Israel to Sudan.

**Aug. 27:** The High Court of Justice orders the demolition of over 30 outpost homes in the West Bank as they were built on private Palestinian land.

**Aug. 29:** The ruler of the UAE issues a decree formally ending the country’s boycott of Israel, thus making way for trade and commerce between the two countries.

**Aug. 31:** El Al Boeing 737-900 becomes the first-ever direct commercial flight from Tel Aviv to Abu Dhabi with senior US and Israeli officials. In another historic milestone, Flight 971 receives approval to cross Saudi Arabia’s airspace, in a first for an Israeli aircraft.

- Hamas and Israel reach a Qatari-brokered deal to end the latest round of violence.

## September

**Sept. 3:** Ahead of the intra-Palestinian meeting later the day, some 25 Palestinian civil society and rights groups hand a letter to Hanna Nasser, chairman of the Central Elections Commission, calling for presidential and parliamentary elections.

**Sept. 9:** Addressing an Arab League meeting, UAE Foreign Minister Anwar Gargash says the peace treaty with Israel will not be at the expense of the Palestinian cause and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, reiterating that it included Israeli commitment to stop the annexation of Palestinian land.

Saudi Arabia says it supports all efforts to reach a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict with the establishment of a Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

**Sept. 11:** In a joint statement along with the US, Bahrain and Israel announce that they have agreed to normalize ties and establish full diplomatic relations.

**Sept. 14:** Israel approves the construction of 980 new units in Efrat settlement south of Bethlehem.

- Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul-Gheit stresses that recent regional developments would not impact the Arab consensus over the inevitability of ending the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories as an essential condition for achieving comprehensive justice and peace in the Middle East.

- Jewish settler Amiram Ben-Uliel is sentenced to three life sentences for murdering Riham and Saed Dawabsha and their son Ali (1 ½) as well as severely injuring Ahmed, 4, in a 2015 "hate crime" arson attack on their home in the village of Duma.

**Sept. 15:** At a White House event, the UAE and Bahrain sign the "Abraham Accord" to normalize ties with Israel.

**Sept. 17:** One million people have signed a document known as the Palestine Charter and launched by activists from the Emirati League for Resisting Normalization who oppose the UAE's accord with Israel.

**Sept. 22:** In protest at the weak reaction to the UAE-Bahrain-Israel deal, Palestine relinquishes its right to preside over the Arab League Council at its current session.

- In a virtual ceremony hosted by Cairo, Egypt, Israel, Greece, Cyprus, Italy and Jordan establish the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, of which the PA is also part and which seeks to promote natural gas exports from the eastern Mediterranean.

**Sept. 23:** The first known direct commercial flight (Israir Airlines Airbus A320) from Israel lands in Bahrain.

- In Istanbul, Fatah-Hamas talks agree to gradual hold elections according to proportional representation.

**Sept. 24:** The UK Parliament calls on its government to immediately recognize the State of Palestine on the basis of 1967 borders and reiterates its rejection of Israel's illegal annexation move.

**Sept. 29:** UN Security Council members push back at US President Trump's "peace plan" by calling for a resumption of Israeli-Palestinian talks based on the pre-1967 lines and "in line with international law and relevant UN resolutions", with a statement issued by council members Belgium, Estonia, France and Germany and supported by incoming council members Norway and Ireland saying "The two-state solution, with Jerusalem as the future capital for both states, is the only way to ensure sustainable peace and stability in the region."

## October

**Oct. 15:** Israel advances and approves plans for 3,122 settler homes, including 962 homes in 15 enclaves that, under US President Donald Trump's Vision for Peace, would be situated within a future Palestinian state.

**Oct. 19:** The first Etihad Airways commercial flight arrived at Ben-Gurion Airport.

**Oct. 20:** The first-ever official UAE delegation to Israel arrives at Ben Gurion Airport.

## November

**Nov. 2:** On the occasion of the 103<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, the Arab League has renewed its call for the UK to recognize the independent Palestinian State and correct the 'historical British mistake' by backing the two-state solution and pushing Israel to stop its crimes and violations against the Palestinian people.

- Also marking the 103<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation reiterates its unswerving commitment to the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative and relevant UN resolutions, and for the establishment of the State of Palestine on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

**Nov. 4:** Israeli forces demolish an entire Bedouin village with over 70 residential, livelihood and sanitation structures, belonging to 11 Palestinian families with 41 children in Khirbet Hamsa Al-Foqa, near Tubas in the northern Jordan Valley.

- A UN General Assembly committee passes with overwhelming majorities a series of resolutions critical of Israel for, among other things, human rights violations against Palestinians and “repressive measures” against Syrians in the Golan Heights.

**Nov. 8:** The first flight carrying Israeli tourists to the United Arab Emirates lands in Dubai.

**Nov. 10:** Chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat, 65, passes away due to complications from the COVID-19 after receiving treatment at Hadassah-Ein Kerem since his medical condition deteriorated in mid-October.

- The Palestinian Motor Sport and Motorcycle Federation gains full membership in the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI).

- The Knesset approves the agreement between Israel and Bahrain to normalize bilateral ties by 62-14 votes.

**Nov. 17:** The PA announces it will resume security and civil coordination with Israel, after having suspended it in May over Israel's annexation plans.

- Germany's Deputy Ambassador to the UN Günter Sautter tells the UN Security Council that Jewish building over the pre-1967 line, such as in Givat Hamatos in East Jerusalem, as well as continued demolitions of Palestinian structures are leading to a one-state reality.

**Nov. 18** The UN General Assembly's Second Committee approve a draft resolution by 156-6 (Canada, Israel, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru and the US) that recognizes Palestinians' sovereign rights to the natural resources of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, condemns Israel's demolitions of structures, and calls on nations to ensure that they do not treat the West Bank settlements and East Jerusalem as a part of sovereign Israel.

- Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid Alzayani pays a historic first official visit to Israel.

**Nov. 19:** US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo becomes the first top US diplomat to visit an Israeli settlement in the occupied West Bank, also announcing that products from the settlements can be labeled “Made in Israel” and that the US would brand the international BDS movement against Israel as “anti-Semitic.”

**Nov. 21:** Speaking on the sidelines in a virtual interview with Reuters during the G20 Summit, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud says that the kingdom supports full normalization with Israel, but such an agreement would only come after a comprehensive peace agreement between the Palestinians and the Israelis including the establishment of a Palestinian state on 1967 borders

**Nov. 26:** After a 103-day long hunger strike protesting his imprisonment without trial, Israel frees administrative detainee Maher Al-Akhras.

## **December:**

**Dec. 1:** Senior Hamas leader Khalil Al-Hayya says that his movement is ready to take part in the parliamentary and legislative elections at any time.

**Dec. 2:** During a virtual meeting with over 40 donor countries and international organizations, Prime Minister Shtayyeh calls on them to take serious measures towards boycotting Israeli settlements and to not only settle for labeling settlement products.

**Dec. 7:** In a 153-6 vote, with 25 abstentions, the UN General Assembly calls on Israel to “renounce possession of nuclear weapons” and “not to develop, produce, test or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons.”

- Hanan Ashrawi has reportedly resigned from her role as member of the PLO Executive Committee in protest of the Palestinian leadership's decision last month to resume coordination with Israel.

**Dec. 10:** In return for US recognition of the kingdom's sovereignty over the long-disputed Western Sahara region, Washington announces a deal according to which Morocco joins list of Arab nations to begin normalizing relations with Israel.

- During a meeting with Spanish Foreign Minister Arancha González in Ramallah, President Abbas says that the Palestinians are ready to return to the negotiating table with Israel under the auspices of the Quartet.

**Dec. 19:** In a joint press statement issued following a consultative meeting in Cairo, the foreign ministers of Palestine, Egypt, and Jordan affirm that international legitimacy resolutions, including Resolution 2334, and the Arab Peace Initiative represent the approved terms of reference for negotiations.

**Dec. 21:** The US Senate passes bipartisan legislation to provide \$250 million in funding for peacebuilding measures between Israel and the Palestinians.

**Dec. 23:** US Customs and Border Protection say an order announced by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in November requiring goods made in settlements in the West Bank to be labeled as “Made in Israel” has come into effect.

**Dec. 29:** The Palestinian Ministry of Transport and Communications announces its decision to close and end operations of the Palestinian Airlines and sell its two airliners (parked in Amman and Cairo), based on the high maintenance costs.

**Dec. 31:** The Israel army releases statistics on its 2020 activities, including: about 50 targets struck in Syria, 1,400 fighter jet sorties flown, 2,227 West Bank arrests, 176 Gaza rockets fired at Israel, 60 “terror” attacks in the West Bank (up from 51 in 2019, down from 76 in 2018), two Israeli civilians and one soldier killed in attacks.