

Palestine Chronology

2005

JANUARY

Jan. 1: PM Qreia says Palestinians should halt armed violence only if there was a credible peace process with Israel leading toward a viable Palestinian state.

Jan. 3: Addressing a rally in Gaza City, Mahmoud Abbas endorses the Palestinian refugees's right to return to their original homes, saying "We will never forget the rights of the refugees, and we will never forget their suffering ... They will eventually gain their rights, and the day will come when the refugees return home."

Jan. 4: Seven Palestinians are killed, incl. six members of the Raban family (five of them aged 10-16), when Israeli forces shell Beit Lahia. In response to the deaths, Mahmoud Abbas calls Israel the "Zionist enemy."

- MK Aryeh Eldad (National Union) submits a bill to the Knesset proposing to cancel Arabic as an official language in Israel.

Jan. 5: The Fateh Central Committee calls on Hamas to stop firing rockets into Israel, which provide an excuse for Israel's army activity in Gaza, and also demand that the incitement against Fateh and Mahmoud Abbas be stopped.

Jan. 9: Palestinians head to the polling stations to vote for the new PA Pres.; later the day, PLO Chairman Mahmoud Abbas declares victory.

Jan. 12: The CEC announces the final results of the 2005 Presidential elections as follows: Mahmoud Abbas 62.52%, Mustafa Barghouthi 19.48%, Taysir Khaled 3.35 %, Abdul Halim Ashqar 2.76%, Bassam As-Salhi 2.67%, As-Sayed Barakeh: 1.30%, Abdul Karim Shbair 0.71% (Invalid Ballots: 3.82%, Blank Ballots: 3.39%).

Jan. 13: Three Israelis are killed and five others injured in a double suicide bombing at the Karni crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip. Fateh, Hamas and the Popular Resistance Committees claim joint responsibility.

Jan. 15: Mahmoud Abbas is sworn in as Pres.; in his inaugural speech in Ramallah, he calls for a ceasefire and implementation of the road map as well as of the ICJ ruling on the separation barrier.

- Israeli troops kill seven Palestinians in separate incidents in Gaza.

Jan. 17: Pres. Abbas orders security forces to deploy in areas from which rockets and mortars are launched at Israeli targets.

- Chief Rabbis Yonah Metzger and Shlomo Moshe Amar and several other Rabbis issue a halakhic ruling reiterating that it is forbidden for Jews to enter any part of the "Temple Mount" in our times.

Jan. 18: A Shin Bet officer is killed and seven others are wounded in a suicide bombing at the Gush Katif junction, which is claimed by Hamas and interpreted as a challenge to Pres. Abbas.

Jan. 20: UN Sec.-Gen. Kofi Annan announces that UNRWA head Peter Hansen will not be reappointed at the end of March.

Jan. 21: Israel reopens the Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt – closed since 12 Dec. 2004 and leaving thousands of Palestinians stranded on the Egyptian side - in one direction: Palestinians can return to their Gaza homes but not leave.

Jan. 22: Palestinian factions meet in Gaza City with Pres. Abbas; Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades say they are ready to back Abbas's bid to end armed conflict with Israel "but the Israeli government has to announce a comprehensive cessation to all military operations in our land."

Jan. 25: In Gaza, Pres. Abbas reaches an agreement in principle with Hamas leaders on Hamas' participation in PA decision-making and a future government, incl. running candidates in the PLC elections. They also agree that a ceasefire with Israel must include international guarantees that Israel halts its military operations in the WBGs.

Jan. 26: PM Sharon says the army will stop its targeted killings of Palestinians in areas where PA forces operate effectively.

- Katif bloc settlers attack Palestinian police who are coordinating with Israeli officers for the transfer of security responsibility in southern Gaza to Palestinian control. Later they also clash with Israeli forces

trying to disperse their demonstrations.

Jan. 27: Municipal elections are held in 10 local councils in Gaza; Fateh wins in three, while Hamas wins in seven authorities.

- On his first trip abroad after his election, Pres. Abbas meets Jordan's King Abdullah I in Amman to discuss the ongoing efforts to resume stalled Middle East peace talks.

- Israeli DM official Amos Gilad meets Egyptian Intelligence chief Omar Suleiman in Cairo to discuss plans for an Egyptian deployment along the Philadelphi route.

Jan. 30: Israel's High Court issues a temporary injunction prohibiting the demolition of homes in the village of Wadi al-Rasha, near Qalqilya, to make way for construction of the separation barrier.

Jan. 31: US Sec. of State Condoleezza Rice says that there cannot be peace in the Middle East unless the Palestinians attain a state that satisfies their aspirations, i.e., that must be viable and contiguous with enough land to function well.

FEBRUARY

Feb. 3: In preparation of a planned summit with the Palestinians in Egypt, Israel approves a troop pullback from West Bank cities and a plan to release Palestinian prisoners. The Palestinians reject the Israeli offer to release 900 prisoners, calling the proposal "insulting."

Feb. 7: Sec. of State Rice, meeting with DM Shaul Mofaz and later with the new Palestinian leadership, says that the US intends to appoint a security coordinator to help the two sides protect a nascent peace process.

Feb. 8: Following their summit in Sharm Esh-Sheikh - the highest-level meeting between the sides since Sept. 2000 - Israeli PM Sharon and Pres. Abbas announce a cessation of hostilities and agreement on more security coordination and a coordinated effort on the disengagement from Gaza and the northern West Bank. The international community welcomes the announcement, with US Sec. Rice saying this was the "best chance for peace" that the two sides will see for years. Hamas and Islamic Jihad criticize the pledges made at the summit, but say they will wait to see what comes next.

Feb. 9: Pres. Abbas secures promises from the armed groups that they will observe a truce as the Israeli and Palestinian leaders declared an end to hostilities at the Sharm Esh-Sheikh summit.

Feb. 12: Hamas and Islamic Jihad agree to maintain an informal truce with Israel while considering whether to accept the ceasefire Pres. Abbas has reached with Israel.

- Israel agrees to transfer security control of Jericho to the PA, with details yet to be discussed.

- At a conference in Munich, NATO Sec.-Gen. Jaap de Hoop Scheffer says that NATO should prepare for a role in supporting any future agreement to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and should not rule out a possible peacekeeping role.

Feb. 16: The Knesset approves the Evacuation and Compensation Law by a margin of 59:40, with 16 abstentions.

Feb. 17: Israeli DM Mofaz orders an end to the policy of home demolitions of Palestinian suicide bombers and gunmen after an army review concludes that it has not deterred attackers but has inflamed hatred.

Feb. 20: The Israeli cabinet votes 17-5 in favor of evacuating all the Gaza settlements and four in the northern West Bank beginning 20 July. Furthermore, the cabinet also votes 20-1, with 1 abstention, to approve a revised route for the separation barrier in the West Bank.

- PM Qrei'a presents his new Cabinet to the PLC, causing a stormy session which postponed the vote for two days.

- Jordan's new Amb. to Israel Marouf Al-Bakhit takes up his post in Israel, which was vacant for over four years.

Feb. 21: 500 Palestinian prisoners are released from Israeli jails, mostly from Ketziot prison in the Negev.

- Israel and the PA are negotiating on an agreement on transferring Tulkarem to the PA.

Feb. 22: PM Qrei'a agrees to revamp his proposed cabinet with more reform-minded Min.s and to present it to the PLC.

Feb. 24: The PLC approves the new 24-member cabinet by a vote of 54:10 and four abstentions.

- The World Council of Churches in Geneva encourages members to sell off investments in companies profiting from Israeli control of the WBGS, praises the US Presbyterian Church for examining the possibility of divestment in Israel.

Feb. 25: A Palestinian suicide bomber - Abdallah Badran, from Deir Al-Ghusun, near Tulkarem - kills at least four people and wounds some 50 outside a Tel Aviv night club. Islamic Jihad claims responsibility. Pres. Abbas harshly condemns the attack, accusing "third parties" of "trying to sabotage the ceasefire and the political process and to harm the national goals of the Palestinian people."

Feb. 27: The Israeli cabinet launches a major diplomatic and PR offensive against both Syria and the PA in response to the suicide bombing two days earlier.

MARCH

March 1: The London Meeting on *Supporting the Palestinian Authority* convenes, attended by FMs and senior representatives from the US, Europe and Arab countries, to help the PA build its institutions. PM Blair and US Sec. Rice repeat Pres. Bush's recent call for the creation of a Palestinian state with territorial "contiguity." Pres. Abbas states that he hopes the meeting would lead to an international conference envisaged by the road map that would discuss "the resolution of all permanent status issues including refugees, Jerusalem, borders, water and settlements." In a final statement the PA commits to a security strategy that "creates conditions conducive to the peace process."

March 2: Israel criticizes the London conference of world leaders for failing to demand that Palestinians dismantle militant groups in the aftermath of the recent suicide bombing.

- At a meeting to discuss a temporary amendment to the law that denies citizenship to Palestinians married to Israelis Israeli National Security Council head Maj.-Gen. (Res.) Giora Eiland proposes restrictions on granting citizenship to foreign residents on the basis of marriage to Israel Arabs - similar to the harsh immigration laws in Denmark and the Netherlands, saying "The Citizenship Law is the way to overcome the demographic demon."

March 3: In another setback for PM Sharon, the Likud Central Committee overwhelmingly approves a resolution urging its MKs to work for the enactment of legislation to enable a referendum on the disengagement plan.

March 4: Fifteen senior Fateh members in the West Bank resign from their responsibility as liaisons between the organization and the grassroots leadership in protest against what they say is the lethargic pace of reforms in Fateh.

March 6: Spanish representatives meet in Lebanon and Damascus with Hamas operatives to discuss the possibility of removing the group from the EU's list of terrorist organization.

March 8: Hamas decides that it will take part in the upcoming PLC elections in July.

March 9: At a news conference after submitting her report on the outposts commissioned by PM Sharon, Attorney Talia Sasson says many of the outposts were established on lands that are not state-owned, incl. 15 on private Palestinian land, and 46 on lands of unknown ownership. The report accuses numerous governmental bodies of committing blatant offenses to establish outposts, particularly the Construction and Housing Min. which planned and funded illegal outposts without any cabinet decision.

March 12: Hamas leader Mohammed Ghazzal says in a news conference in Nablus that his group would participate in PLC elections scheduled for July, ending a decade-old boycott.

March 16: Israeli forces pull back from Jericho.

March 17: At the closing session of their two-day meeting in Cairo, Palestinian factions declare an open-ended but conditional truce with Israel – maintaining calm in exchange for Israel's commitment to stop all forms of attacks and release prisoners - in efforts to persuade Israel to hand back more West Bank towns. - Egypt returns an Amb., Mohammed Assem Ibrahim, to Israel, four years after having recalled its envoy at the outset of the Intifada.

March 18: Israel bans its citizens from moving into Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip in a bid to prevent more opponents of a planned pullout from flocking to the area as new settlers.

March 21: PA police are deployed to Tulkarem for the first time in over four years after Israel hands security of the city to the PA.

March 22-23: At an Arab League summit in Algiers, leaders state that peace is the "strategic option" of Arab countries to settle the conflict with Israel. A communiqué "affirms in this context the Arab peace initiative approved by the Arab summit in Beirut in 2002," which offered Israel normal relations in return for withdrawal to 1967 borders.

March 27: Israeli PM Sharon clears a major hurdle to a planned Gaza pullout, winning the support of a key opposition party for the state budget and avoiding an election that could have delayed the withdrawal.

- Hundreds of unemployed Palestinians demonstrate outside the PLC building in Gaza demanding new jobs. Palestinian riot police prevent them from storming the building.
 - US Sec. of State Rice says the US will stick to its support for Israel's intention to retain large West Bank settlement blocs in a final peace deal with the Palestinians.
- March 30:** At a Fateh Revolutionary Council meeting in Gaza, Pres. Abbas threatens to resign unless Fateh helps him to accelerate PA reforms.
- Gunmen identifying themselves as breakaway Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades members who reject a PA call to lay down their arms, fire at the Muqata'a and vandalize several high-class restaurants in Ramallah that are patronized by senior PA officials.

APRIL

- April 1:** Pres. Abbas fires several security chiefs for failing to halt lawlessness in the WBGS and in an attempt to show that the PA is moving ahead with its plan to unify its security apparatus.
- April 4:** Some 1,000 Palestinian security officials over the age of 60 are forced into retirement as part of Pres. Abbas' security reforms.
- Israel decides to dump some 10,000 tons of garbage every month in the West Bank for the first time since 1967, violating international law prohibiting an occupying state from making use of occupied territory unless it benefits the local population.
- April 5:** Israel's CBS reports that Israel's population will reach 9.3 million in 2025, of which 70%, or 6.5 million, will be Jewish and 25% or 2.3 million Arab (today's they make up 19% of the population).
- April 6:** PM Sharon's disengagement plan includes to bar all Palestinian laborers from Israel by 2008, a plan that Palestinian officials warn will spell disaster for their already battered economy.
- April 11:** After their meeting at the Pres.'s ranch in Crawford, Texas, PM Sharon and Pres. Bush remain at odds over the issue of construction in settlements and about Pres. Abbas' role in improving security.
- April 14:** Fateh seriously considers a move to delay the elections to the PLC that are scheduled for mid-July out of concern about the possibility of a solid defeat at the hands of Hamas.
- World Bank Pres. James Wolfensohn is chosen as international "special envoy" to help coordinate Palestinian political and economic reforms and reconstruction efforts in Gaza.
- April 18:** Israel halts the construction of the separation barrier in the area of Ariel after the High Court of Justice issued injunctions in response to petitions against the route of the barrier.
- April 20:** The Israeli army begins evacuating logistical and administrative materials from its bases in Gaza in a first step towards evacuating Jewish settlers from the strip it has occupied for 38 years.
- April 22:** The Association of University Teachers - the leading union of British lecturers with some 48,000 members - decide to impose an academic boycott on Haifa and Bar-Ilan universities on the grounds that they "collaborate with the crimes of occupation."
- April 25:** Pres. Abbas pledges to restore the rule of law on the streets of the WBGS after appointing a new team at the helm of the security services.
- April 26:** The Syrians complete their withdrawal from Lebanon.
- April 27:** Thousands of Jewish settlers and their supporters pour into Gaza to join a protest against Israeli PM Sharon's withdrawal plan.
- The Rand Corporation proposes a landmark rail and highway link between the WBGS which would lay the groundwork for long-term development of a Palestinian state. The new corridor, called the ARC for its arc-like route, would support a high-speed 225 km rail line, highway, aqueduct, energy network and fiber optic cable linking the major towns and cities of the new state. Among the communities connected would be Nablus, Ramallah, Hebron, Gaza City and Jerusalem.

MAY

- May 5:** Palestinians vote in more than 80 municipalities across the WBGS. Fateh comes out on top in municipal polls in the occupied territories, but Hamas beats Fateh in four out of five major cities.
- May 7:** The Palestinian central elections commission begins registering all voters whose names were not previously included on the electoral lists, ahead of legislative elections in July.
- May 15:** The Israeli cabinet discusses extending the temporary law limiting naturalization of Palestinians

from the territories married to Arab citizens of Israel. The cabinet also discusses amendments to the citizenship law that will turn severe restrictions on "family unification" into a permanent law. The cabinet votes 16-2 to approve an emergency amendment to the Citizenship and Entry to Israel Law that limits family unifications for Palestinians from the territories married to Israeli Arabs. Atty. Gen. Menachem Mazuz says there is no guarantee that the High Court of Justice would approve the government decision.

May 16: The Israeli High Court of Justice lifts a temporary injunction on the construction of three parts of the separation barrier south, east and north of Ariel, allowing the army to continue construction.

- Several thousand Israeli ultra-nationalist opponents of Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip block traffic throughout Israel. Israeli police arrest over 290 demonstrators.

May 17: The Israeli government approves abatements in the amendment to emergency regulations for family unification which does not allow Palestinian spouses of Israeli citizens to receive citizenship or permanent residency. However, it does allow for the submission of a new family unification request, which eventually could lead to a permit for staying in Israel.

May 18: The PLC approves the third reading of a new Election Law, enlarging the parliament to 132 members, a third of whom will be elected on national lists and two-thirds in district races.

May 19: A Palestinian court annuls some municipal election results in the Gaza Strip, questioning Hamas' victory in seven of 13 council races in the town of Beit Lahia and its capture of 12 of 13 seats on the Bureij RC's council.

May 22: DFLP leader Nayef Hawatmeh, Ramadan Shalah, head of the Islamic Jihad, Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal, Fateh head Farouk Qaddoumi, Ahmed Jibril, of the PFLP-GC, and former PNC head Khaled Al-Fahoum meet in Damascus to discuss inter-Palestinian issues and the latest developments in the WBGS.

- Israeli Deputy PM Ehud Olmert says that Israel is willing to gradually give up control of the Rafah crossing between Egypt and the Gaza Strip, eventually handing the area over to Egypt a few months after completion of the disengagement plan.

May 25: An amendment to the Citizenship Law, designed to make it easier for Palestinians who are married to Israelis to acquire citizenship, passes its first reading in the Knesset by a vote of 41 to 23.

- Amnesty International accuses Israeli soldiers operating of committing war crimes, incl. unlawful killings, torture, destruction of property and targeting medical personnel.

- On his visit to the US, Abbas meets with Pres. Bush, Sec. of State Condoleezza Rice, Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, Jewish and Arab-American leaders, and the Pres. of the World Bank, James Wolfensohn. Bush calls on Israel to end the development of settlements on the occupied West Bank and dismantle illegal settlements. He also announces officially \$50 million in direct aid to the Palestinians.

May 26: Members of the Union of Palestinian University Professors and Employees call on the board of trustees of Al-Quds University to dismiss university Pres. Sari Nusseibeh after he acted against a boycott of Israeli universities.

- Britain's largest union of university teachers votes to end its boycott of two Israeli universities. The decision to cancel the boycott passes by a two-thirds majority. The union says it would now base its policy on "providing practical solidarity for Palestinian and Israeli trade unionists and academics by agreeing on a motion committing the union to a full review of international policy."

JUNE

June 3: Pres. Abbas issues a decree which postpones the PLC elections that were scheduled for 17 July 2005 to an yet undecided later date.

June 9: By a majority of 10 justices to one, the Israeli High Court rules that the pullout decision is constitutional, as is the compensation.

June 12: A final document on the disengagement plan drafted by the PA's donor countries, the World Bank and the IMF announces that Israel must transfer control over the Rafah crossing to the PA and allow regular passage of people and goods between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

June 16: The EU informs the US administration of a substantial shift in its contacts with Hamas. The EU decision, which surprised the Americans, allows low-level European diplomats - below the rank of ambassador - to conduct talks with Hamas representatives who are running in the elections for the PLC.

June 18: The PLC approves amendments to the 1996 Election Law by a vote of 43 to 13. According to the new law, 66 of the 132 parliament seats will be elected in regional polls and the other 66 seats will be

voted in as party representatives in general polls.

June 19: Egyptian FM Ahmed Aboul Gheit warns Vice PM Peres that if the disengagement plan is not backed up by progress toward an agreement in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip will "explode." Peres agreed that "Gaza first" must not be allowed to become "Gaza last."

June 21: PM Sharon hosts Pres. Abbas at his Jerusalem residence for their first working meeting since the Sharm el-Sheikh summit. Sharon demands that the PA act against terrorist organizations. Abbas demands that Israel "strengthen his hand" so that he could act.

June 27: Israeli Sergeant Taysir al-Heib is convicted of manslaughter by a military court in the death of British peace activist Thomas Hurndall, who was shot in the head in Rafah RC in April 2003.

- Lebanese Labour Min. Trad Hamadeh exempts Lebanese-born Palestinians who are registered refugees from a more than two-decade-old ban on non-Lebanese practising some 50 trades in the private sector.

June 28: PM Qrei'a says he wants to establish a national unity cabinet of different factions to ensure the planned Israeli withdrawal from Gaza goes smoothly.

June 29: PA Chairman Pres. Mahmoud Abbas and PM Ahmed Qrei'a travel to Amman for the first meeting of the Fateh Central Committee attended by all 16 members since 1993. The meeting ends on 2 July without resolving any of the major issues, such as adding new members to the committee, when to convene the 6th Fateh convention, or how convention delegates should be chosen.

June 30: Egypt and Israel sign a long-delayed \$2.5 billion agreement on sales of Egyptian natural gas to Israel, underscoring improved ties between the two countries.

JULY

July 2: Pres. Abbas invites militant factions, including the Islamic group Hamas, to join a proposed national unity government before the Israeli pullout from the Gaza Strip and northern West Bank. Islamic Jihad rejects the offer outright, Hamas after two days.

July 8: The Group of Eight (G8) pledges to provide the PA with up to three billion dollars in the next few years to boost Middle East peace prospects.

July 10: Israeli Pres. Moshe Katsav calls on the government to proceed towards permanent status negotiations with the Palestinians and stop making what he called unilateral gestures.

July 12: A Palestinian suicide bomber, Ahmed Abu Khalil, 18, kills at least three people and wounds 90 at an Israeli shopping mall in the city of Netanya. A unit of the Islamic Jihad claims responsibility. The Israeli army seals off the WBGS. Pres. Abbas condemns the bombing as a 'terrorist attack,' accusing the perpetrators of trying to wreck the Gaza Strip pullout.

July 13: PM Sharon orders the Gaza Strip a "closed area" in preparation for the Aug. withdrawal, making it off limits to Israeli citizens who do not reside in the strip. Some 2,000 forces are deployed to its borders.

July 14: The PA declares a state of emergency in the Gaza Strip, hours after an Israeli woman is killed when a Qassam rocket fired by Hamas slammed into her home on Moshav Netiv Ha'asara north of the Strip.

July 15: Israeli forces kill seven gunmen, alleged Hamas militants, in air strikes and a shooting in Gaza. - A gun battle erupts between Hamas members and PA police in Gaza City. Two Palestinian bystanders are killed and more than 25 people are wounded.

July 17: PM Sharon says that he ordered the security establishment to put down a recent round of Palestinian violence, saying there are no restrictions on the army's operations. Thousands of Israeli troops mass along the Gaza border in preparation for a possible ground offensive.

July 19: London Mayor Ken Livingstone tells *Sky News* that he does not distinguish between members of Likud and Hamas, branding them as "two sides of the same coin...Each side emphasizes the extremism of the other in order to attract sympathy."

July 20: Israel confiscates 93 dunums of Palestinian agricultural land adjacent to Kiryat Arba and Kharsina settlements near Hebron to be used for a security buffer zone and road.

July 22: Egypt and the PA sign an agreement to study building a pipeline to supply Palestinians with natural gas.

July 23: Multiple coordinated bomb blasts explode in the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh, killing at least 88 and injuring some 200 others.

July 24: Israeli Vice PM Shimon Peres says there is no chance of reaching a "conclusive agreement" with

the Palestinians unless Israel partitions Jerusalem and cedes Hebron.

- Most of the 450 farmers of Gush Katif sign an agreement with the World Bank to leave their greenhouses to the Palestinians for a payment of \$4,000 per dunum.

July 26: The Washington-based Strategic Assessment Initiative argues that the Palestinian security services must undergo reforms, with the help of a third party, before the internationally brokered road map can be implemented.

July 27: The Knesset votes 59-12 to grant citizenship to Palestinians married to Israeli citizens only if the Palestinian men are 35 and older and if the women are 25 and older.

July 30: *Al-Quds* reports that the Israeli govt. has decided to designate some NIS 85 million to develop agriculture in the Jordan Valley during 2006-08 and the infrastructure of the settlements in the area during 2005-06.

July 31: PA Information Min. Nabil Sha'ath says that Palestinian parliamentary elections will be postponed until late Jan. 2006.

AUGUST

Aug. 3: Egyptian security officers arrive to supervise the training of 5,000 Palestinian police officers who will ensure order in the Gaza Strip after the Israeli disengagement.

Aug. 4: A Jewish soldier and opponent of the disengagement plan, Eden Natan-Zada, opens fire in a bus in the Arab town of Shafar Amr and kills four people. During an emergency meeting the Higher Arab Monitoring Committee declares a general strike for the next day as well as a protest campaign.

Aug. 5: The *Christian Science Monitor* reports that the Presbyterian Church USA charges five US companies – incl. ITT Industries, United Technologies, Caterpillar, Motorola - with contributing to the ongoing Israeli occupation and barrier construction by supplying communications equipment, bulldozers and helicopters.

Aug. 6: The PA's chief justice, Zuheir As-Sourani, resigns over the lawlessness in the courts and the lack of safety of jurists.

Aug. 10: James Wolfensohn, representing the Quartet, finalizes a deal between the Israelis and Palestinians for the evacuated buildings in the Gaza settlements, according to which Israel will demolish the buildings, remove asbestos and other hazardous materials, and pay \$25 million to the World Bank to hire Egyptian and Palestinian firms to clear the rubble.

Aug. 11: Some 300,000 anti-disengagement activists gather for a mass rally in the main Rabin Square in Tel Aviv.

Aug. 16: Israeli forces begin with the evacuation of the biggest settlement in Gaza, Neve Dekalim, clashing with protesters who are defying orders to leave by midnight or face forcible evacuation.

- Thousands of Palestinians attend rallies in Gaza to celebrate the pullout.

Aug. 17: In an apparent attempt to complicate Israel's disengagement from Gaza, a settler, Asher Weisgan, kills four Palestinians – incl. two workers he had just driven to Shiloh settlement - and seriously wounds three others. PM Sharon brands the shooting an act of "Jewish terror."

- In Gaza, about half of the families of Neve Dekalim are evacuated as are the settlements of Bedolah, Gani Tal, Kerem Atzmona, Morag, and Tel Katifa.

- Talking to the press in Beirut, Hamas leader Khaled Masha'al says the Gaza pullout was a first step toward the liberation of all occupied land through armed struggle.

Aug. 22: Israeli security forces remove settlers from the last remaining Jewish settlement in Gaza, Netzarim, concluding the withdrawal from Gaza after nearly four decades of occupation.

Aug. 23: Israel completes its evacuation of parts of occupied West Bank territory by removing settlers from Homesh, Sanur, and Kadim.

Aug. 25: Pres. Abbas accuses Israel of wrecking prospects for peace after five Palestinians are killed in Tulkarem and plans to expand Ma'ale Adumim settlement are unveiled.

Aug. 28: A Palestinian suicide bomber, from Beit Umar near Hebron, blows himself up at a bus stop in Beersheba, leaving over 20 people wounded. Islamic Jihad and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claim responsibility, saying it was revenge for the killing of five Palestinian in Tulkarem three days earlier.

Aug. 30: Islamic Jihad leaders Nafiz Azzam, Mohammed Al-Hindi and Khaled Al-Batsh meet Egyptian intelligence chief Omar Suleiman in Gaza in his bid to coordinate security and border issues in Gaza Strip.

SEPTEMBER

Sept. 4: In Khan Younis, PA riot police clash with demonstrators during a protest against unemployment.
- An Israeli military court convicts PLC member Husam Khader - arrested in March 2003 - of working for an illegal organization, providing the means to carry out crimes and of failing to prevent criminal acts.

Sept. 7: Musa Arafat, a security advisor to Pres. Abbas and nephew of former Pres. Yasser Arafat, is assassinated in Gaza. The Popular Resistance Committees claim responsibility, saying the killing was designed to "clean out the PA's stables of corruption."

- Israel reaches an agreement with Egypt on control of the Philadelphi corridor along the Gaza-Egypt border as the last Israeli civilians leave the Gaza Strip after completing the transfer of greenhouses to communities in the Negev.

Sept. 8: *Ha'aretz* reports that an analysis of the confidential medical report on Yasser Arafat's death reveals poisoning, AIDS or an infection as the three possible causes, though Israeli and foreign doctors who have seen the report say the details do not lead to a conclusive determination on what caused the death.

- Jordan's King Abdullah II tells Israel's Channel 1 that Al-Qa'ida is sure to have set up terror cells in Israel.

Sept. 10: An Italian journalist, Lorenzo Cremonesi, correspondent for the daily *Corriere della Sera*, is abducted from the cab in which he was riding by armed Palestinians near the former Kfar Darom settlement. He is freed a few hours later.

Sept. 11: At a ceremony at the Israeli army's Gaza HQ, the Israeli flag was lowered to half-mast as the withdrawal of the remaining soldiers began.

- Deployment of 750 Egyptian border guards on the southern side of the Philadelphi route begins; the soldiers are supposed to prevent the smuggling of weapons and ammunition into the Strip

- Doron Almog, former head of the Israeli army's Southern Command, escapes arrest by Britain's anti-terrorist and war crimes unit for perpetrating war crimes during the Intifada, when he remained on an El-Al aircraft that had landed in Heathrow Airport and returned with it to Israel several hours later.

- The Israeli cabinet approves the termination of Israeli presence at the Philadelphi route along the border with Egypt as well as handing over the border crossing at Rafah to PA security forces.

Sept. 12: The last Israeli soldiers leave the Gaza Strip, as GOC Southern Command Maj.-Gen. Dan Harel signs a proclamation revoking the Israeli military rule imposed in the Gaza Strip in 1967, thus bringing to an end the 38-year military occupation of the area. Thousands of Palestinians celebrate the liberation of the Gaza Strip.

Sept. 15: A report by the PA Min. of Agriculture estimates the losses of the agricultural sector in the period from 30 Sept. 2004 until the end of Aug. 2005 at \$344,606.

- Israel's High Court, in a unanimous decision of nine justices, orders the government to reroute part of its separation barrier - a 13-km segment near Alfei Menashe settlement - to reduce Palestinian hardship.

- The PLC submits a request for a no-confidence vote against PM Ahmed Qrei'a and his cabinet in protest at the failure of security forces to control lawlessness in Gaza after 38 years of Israeli occupation.

- Addressing the UNGA in New York, PM Sharon says that he "reaches out today to our Palestinian neighbors in a call for reconciliation and compromise to end the bloody conflict, and embark on the path which leads to peace and understanding between our peoples" adding that this was "my calling and my primary mission for the coming years." He also calls for the establishment of a Palestinian state, saying that "The right of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel does not mean disregarding the rights of others in the land. The Palestinians will always be our neighbors. We respect them, and have no aspirations to rule over them. They are also entitled to freedom and to a national, sovereign existence in a state of their own." He adds, however, that it was now the "Palestinians' turn to prove their desire for peace ... and build a peace-seeking society, which is developed, free, law-abiding, transparent and which adheres to democratic principles."

Sept. 16: The US Admin. expresses reservations about PM Sharon's announcement that Israel will not allow PLC elections if Hamas candidates participate in the ballot.

Sept. 17: Hundreds of Palestinian policemen are sent to Gaza's border with Egypt in a bid to impose order after a week of unchecked crossings by thousands of people.

- Hundreds of Palestinians from villages near the evacuated settlement of Homesh in the northern West Bank celebrate the withdrawal of the Israeli army.

Sept. 18: Palestinians react with anger to comments by outgoing US Amb. to Israel Daniel Kurtzer, who

stated in an interview that Pres. Bush would back a request by Israel to keep larger West Bank settlement areas under its control in a permanent peace agreement with the Palestinians.

- Israel's Justice Min.'s Police Investigations Unit announces that all investigations into the actions of police during the Oct. 2000 riots that left 13 Arab citizens dead have been closed as it had not found sufficient evidence to indict any of the police officers. The families of the riot victims respond angrily, with their spokesman, Hassan Asala, saying "For each of the 13 people killed there is a murderer who shot at him, and there are those who gave the orders, and there are those who helped to conceal evidence and bury the truth. All of them are accomplices to the crime, and we demand that they be brought up on charges."

Sept. 21: Israel declares its border with Gaza an international boundary. The residents of Gaza must present passports to enter Israel. Internal Affairs Min. Ofir Pines-Paz signs orders transferring responsibility for the movement of people between Gaza and Israel from the security forces to the Office of Internal Affairs.

Sept. 22: A large explosion at a Hamas rally in Jabalia RC kills at least 16 Palestinians and wounds dozens more. Israel army officials deny involvement in the incident.

Sept. 26: UNCHR special rapporteur for the Palestinian territories John Dugard says the Gaza disengagement has allowed Israel to divert attention from its further expansionist policies in East Jerusalem, West Bank settlements and with regard to the separation barrier.

- It is reported that a Hamas cell from Ramallah has abducted and murdered a settler from Pisgat Ze'ev, Sasson Nuriel, 55, whose body was discovered in a garbage dump in Betunia, near Ramallah.

Sept. 29: Palestinians cast their ballots in over 100 West Bank municipalities in the third of four rounds of municipal elections, in which 2,478 candidates, incl. 558 women, compete over 1,018 seats of 82 municipal and village councils. The next day, final results show Fateh winning 54% of the vote (a total of 51 councils), compared to 26% for Hamas (13 councils).

OCTOBER

Oct. 2: A Gaza police commander, Ali Makawi, and two civilians are killed and at least 50 people wounded in gunbattles between Palestinian police and Hamas members in the worst outbreak of Palestinian infighting in nearly a decade. During the clashes, which erupt when police stopped a car in which four armed Hamas operatives were driving and tried to confiscate their weapons, Hamas members also torched the Shati police station and several cars belonging to the Palestinian police.

Oct. 3: The PLC convening simultaneously in Gaza and Ramallah orders Pres. Abbas to dissolve the current government appoint a new government because of the regime's failure to impose order on spiraling lawlessness and chaos in the WBGS. Over 30 Palestinian police officers break into the PLC building in Gaza City as part of a demonstration to protest insecurity and a lack of equipment in what they said was demonstrated in the humiliating confrontation with Hamas a day earlier.

Oct. 8: In response to petitions by seven human rights organizations, the Israeli High Court of Justice rules that the army's use of Palestinians as human shields - e.g., forcing them to search houses believed to be booby-trapped and to enter houses where wanted men are hiding - violates international law and is thus illegal.

Oct. 18: After an UN-sponsored meeting between PA Pres. Abbas, FM Nasser Al-Qudwa and Lebanese PM Fuad Siniora in Paris - in the presence of French PM Dominique de Villepin - to discuss the presence of armed Palestinian militias, Siniora says that more negotiations on how to contain weapons within the camps are needed.

Oct. 19: Peace Now has launched a new peace initiative calling for the evacuation of 43 West Bank settlements in a two-stage plan - 26 of them immediately - along with the removal of illegal outposts and the renewal of negotiations with the Palestinians. The settlements marked for evacuation are situated mostly east of the separation barrier and are relatively isolated within large concentrations of Palestinians.

- Israel security sources say there are considering a permanent ban on Palestinians using major roads in the West Bank.

Oct. 20: Pres. Abbas meets with Pres. Bush in Washington. At a press conference afterwards, Abbas says that the correct strategy was to maintain quiet on the security front and move forward on the road map and that only a new, democratically elected legislature will have the legitimacy needed to finally

disarm the militias. He complains that Israel has not fulfilled its responsibilities under the road map - no freeze to settlements construction, no end to building the separation barrier, no removal of roadblocks. Pres. Bush agrees that Israel "must remove unauthorized [out]posts and stop settlement expansion" and states that the PA must "earn the confidence of its neighbors by rejecting and fighting terrorism", adding, that he was more confident than ever before there would be peace with Israel and establishment of a Palestinian state.

Oct. 24: The international envoy James Wolfensohn has criticized Israel for delaying agreements to open Gaza Strip border crossings following its withdrawal, saying Israel is acting as if it never withdrew from the Gaza Strip and that this could hinder Palestinian economic revival essential to peace.

Oct. 26: At a conference on 'The World without Zionism' in Tehran, Iran's Pres. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad calls for Israel to be "wiped off the map" and says that a new wave of Palestinian attacks will destroy the Jewish state.

Oct. 30: Pres. Abbas issues a Presidential decree forbidding members of the PA security and other officials, incl. those from the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, from participating in the Fateh primaries unless they first resign from their security posts. With this, Fateh activists are forced to choose between involvement in politics and membership in the security services.

NOVEMBER

Nov. 2: The Israeli cabinet approves the deployment of European inspectors at the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt.

Nov. 7: Speaking to the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, PM Sharon says that Israel would restrict the movement of Hamas officials during voting for the upcoming PLC elections, making it difficult for Hamas members to campaign freely. Commenting on the remarks and the recent arrests of Hamas members, Hamas spokesman Mushir Al-Masri says in Gaza: "It seems that Sharon wants a [Palestinian] democracy that he creates through dictation and intimidation. Hamas will take part in the upcoming election despite the arrests and raids."

- The EU agrees to monitor Rafah border, with foreign and security policy chief Javier Solana, saying "We are going to take responsibility as a third party." In addition, the EU vows to advise and train PA police forces.

Nov. 8: The Fateh Revolutionary Council decides to hold its first-ever primary on 20 Nov., whereby the vote would be only a recommendation while a committee headed by Pres. Abbas and veteran Fateh members would be the final arbiter to determine the list of Fateh candidates for the upcoming PLC elections.

Nov. 9: Three simultaneous suicide bombs go off in the Grand Hyatt, Radisson SAS and Days Inn Hotels in Amman at night, killing at least 57 people and wounding over 115. Police suspects Al-Qa'ida behind the plots.

Nov. 12: Tens of thousands of Palestinians attend memorial ceremonies marking the first anniversary of Yasser Arafat's death. Addressing the crowds, Pres. Abbas reiterates Arafat's goals - to achieve a state in accordance with the 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as its capital, and a just solution to the refugee problem, repeating Arafat's declaration that the Palestinians "will not rest until Palestinian children raise the Palestinian flag over the walls and mosque turrets of Jerusalem," adding that the day would come when Arafat's grave would be transferred to Jerusalem.

Nov. 14: In their meeting PM Sharon and Sec. Rice disagree over Hamas participation in the PLC elections, with Sharon saying: "We will not interfere with the elections, but neither will we coordinate the elections with [the Palestinians], and will not allow Hamas members to operate and move around differently from what is happening now," adding "We wholeheartedly support Pres. Bush's moves for democratization, but we will not aid Hamas. We will not aid the murderers of Jews, even if they take part in elections." Rice's position is that it would be easier to force Hamas to disarm after the election, since the pressure would then come from the international community, and that if Abbas were to fail to disarm Hamas, he would lose support of the US and the world.

Nov. 15: Sec. of State Rice, who led the marathon talks, announces - accompanied by EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana and International Mideast envoy James Wolfensohn - that Israel and the Palestinians have reached an agreement on the manning of the Gaza-Egypt border crossings, praising it as a "big step forward". Under the deal, the terminal of the Rafah border will be under the control of the PA and

Egypt, with each party patrolling its own side of the border, while EU staff will monitor the processing. In addition, construction of a Gaza seaport is to begin soon, as will travel for Palestinians between the West Bank and Gaza in bus convoys.

Nov. 21: Israeli PM Sharon, taking the biggest gamble of his political career, quits the ruling Likud Party to lead a new centrist party into early elections, slated for March 2006, saying "Life in the Likud in its present form has become unbearable. The new movement we are establishing will serve the people of Israel for many years. It will be a new home for all Israelis who want to act responsibly and faithfully on behalf of the state, and to realize the Zionist vision." Some 13 Likud MKs, incl. Ehud Olmert, Meir Sheerit, Tzipi Livni, Abraham Hirschson and Gideon Ezra, join Sharon, while Shaul Mofaz and Benjamin Netanyahu remain in the Likud.