

Israel-Palestine Timeline

Sources:

Israel in the Middle East (ed. I. Rabinovich, J. Reinharz)

Jewish Agency for Israel Timeline at <http://www.jafi.org.il/education/jafi75/>

Wasserstein, *Divided Jerusalem*.

Al Jazeera six-part documentary "PLO-History of a Revolution"

(<http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/plohistoryofrevolution/2009/07/200974133438561995.html>)

Wikipedia and other internet resources.

1947

Nov: UN Partition resolution

Hostilities between Zionist and Arab paramilitary groups, already common during the Mandate, flare up all over Palestine leading to accelerated ethnic separation.

1948-49

First Arab-Israeli War. In Israeli parlance, the "War of Independence." In Palestinian parlance: *al naqba* ("the catastrophe").

1952

Egyptian revolution.

1954

Gamal Abdel Nasser sworn in as the second president of Egypt.

1956

Suez War: Israel invades Egypt, encouraged by Britain and France, the majority stock holders in the privately held Suez Canal, after Nasser announced its nationalization.

1958

Formation of the United Arab Republic, linking Egypt and Syria. The union only lasted a few years but Egypt retained the name until 1971.

Yasser Arafat, later chairman of the PLO, and Khalil Ibrahim al-Wazir ("Abu Jihad") meet in Kuwait and found a Palestinian national liberation movement by the name of *al-Fatah*.

1964

First Arab summit convened in Cairo.

Palestine National Council convened in East Jerusalem. Establishes the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), chaired by Ahmed Shukeiri. Jordanian support for the Palestinian cause depended on the assurance that the PLO was not concerned with Jerusalem or the West Bank but with the retrieval of Israeli occupied parts of Palestine

and the return of the refugees to their homes. It was thus part of the pan-Arab struggle against the very existence of a Jewish state in Palestine.

1965

Jan: Fatah founded in Palestine. First attacks on Israeli targets. Arab nationalist movement suspects Fatah of trying to draw Egypt into a war with Israel.

1966

Baath Party seizes power in Syria.

1967

Israel attacks Egypt, Syria, and Jordan after Nasser had closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping. Jordan is cut in half and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians flee Israeli occupied territories, adding to the millions already living as refugees in UNRWA managed camps across the region, including Jordan, Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon. The number of Palestinian refugees and their descendents has grown from 914,000 in 1950 to more than 4.3 million in 2005. According to UNRWA, "One-third of the registered Palestine refugees, about 1.3 million, live in 58 recognized refugee camps in the area of operations in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the West Bank and Gaza Strip." (See <http://www.un.org/unrwa/refugees/wheredo.html>).

1967-70

War of attrition on the Sinai peninsula. Concluded by cease-fire agreement (Aug 7, 1970).

1968

March 21: Following a Fatah terror attack on a civilian bus in Israel, the IDF enters Jordanian territory at the village of Karameh. With the help of Jordanian forces Fatah successfully engages Israeli forces, a boost to the armed struggle and to the reputation of Arafat. In the wake of the battle of Karameh, Fatah and other, more radical paramilitary groups (PFLP and DFLP) become more assertive among Palestinian refugees in Jordan. Cross-border raids of the guerillas provoke Israeli reprisals on Jordanian territory, contributing to the further deterioration of the overall security situation in the country.

July: PLO meets in Cairo and adopts an amended National Charter, calling for violent struggle for the liberation of Palestine. The program of Fatah was prevailing. Ahmed Shukeiri resigned.

Several airliners are hijacked and blown up by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a Marxist revolutionary group lead by a Christian Arab, George Habash.

1969

With training camps in Egypt and Jordan as its basis of military operations, Fatah also establishes its military presence in the Lebanon ("Cairo Accord").

Arafat is elected chairman of the PLO. His image makes the cover of TIME Magazine.

1970

July: US puts forward Rogers Plan for ending the War of Attrition. The comprehensive settlement of the Middle East conflict presented in the Rogers Plan refers to Jordanian sovereignty over the West Bank and East Jerusalem (i.e., the status quo ante June 1967). Palestinians feel betrayed by Nasser and start a campaign against him. In hindsight, Palestinians feel that this cost them Nasser's protection and encouraged King Hussein to launch a violent crack-down on Palestinians in Jordan.

September 6: PFLP hijacks several airliners, forcing them to land on an airstrip in Jordan. On Sept 12, the planes are blown up.

September 15: After two weeks of Palestinian assassination attempts on the king and a series of air plane hijackings around the Middle East, King Hussein imposes martial law and begins a violent crackdown on the Palestinians in the Hashemite Kingdom ("Black September").

The Syrian government is about to intervene in the fight on behalf of the PLO but then stands down. Hafez al-Assad, about to be blamed for this and other policy setbacks within Syria, preempts the attempt of ousting him by launching an internal *coup* within the government. (Assad was to remain in power until his death in 2000. He was succeeded by his son, Bashar al-Assad.)

September 28: A day after brokering an agreement to end hostilities in Jordan, President Nasser dies of a heart attack. (Nasser's successor, former Vice President Anwar al-Sadat, begins a "corrective revolution." The imprisonment and persecution of members of the Muslim Brotherhood leads to their subsequent dispersion and the spread of their version of political Islam throughout the Middle East and beyond.)

1971

July: After various interim agreements fail to end the fighting in Jordan, the PLO is finally expelled. Some fighters prefer to surrender to the Israelis rather than to the Jordanian forces.

Nov. 28: A group of hit-men known as "Black September," assassinate Wasfi al-Tal, Jordan's prime minister, in Cairo. The group was formed by Abu Iyad with the knowledge and approval of Yasser Arafat.

1972

"Black September" terrorists force their way into quarters of the Israeli team at the Munich Olympics, kill two of them and take the rest as hostages. All remaining Israelis are killed during a botched rescue attempt.

Nayef Hawatmeh's Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine begins to move toward the idea of a two-state solution for Palestine.

1973

March: Members of “Black September” storm the Saudi Arabian embassy in Khartoum and kill the American ambassador.

October 6-26: Fourth Arab Israeli War or “Yom Kippur War,” a joint surprise attack on the Egyptian and Syrian fronts. Israel sustains heavy losses. Sadat’s goal: to reestablish Egypt as a serious military power and, hence, as a political player.

1974

January: Golda Meir forms a new government.

March: Gush Emunim (“Bloc of the Faithful”), active since 1967, is officially founded with the aim of settling Judea and Samaria (i.e., the West Bank) for the sake of a full and lasting “redemption of the land.” A first settlement is attempted at Sebaste, the site of the ancient capital of Israel, Samaria.

April: Agranat commission, charged with looking into the failure of Israeli intelligence to anticipate the coordinated attacks of Egyptian and Syrian forces, assigns blame to intelligence and military officers. The public blames prime minister Golda Meir and her defense minister, the famed Moshe Dayan. Golda Meir resigns.

May: Yitzhak Rabin, the first native born prime minister of Israel, forms a new government, replacing Dayan with Shimon Peres.

October 26-29: The PLO moves from armed struggle to political legitimacy and the Arab League recognizes the PLO as the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The PLO moves toward two-state solution.

November: The UN follows suit. Arafat addresses the UN General Assembly, where he receives a standing ovation.

Also in November: UNESCO censors Israel for continued interference with the historical and cultural heritage of Jerusalem.

1975

April: Beginning of the civil war in Lebanon. Major parties: politically conservative Maronite Christian Phalangists (pro-Western, anti-Muslim); Palestinian and Druze Marxists and socialists (supported by the Soviets).

Sept 4: Egypt-Israel disengagement agreement signed in Geneva, ending hostilities.

Nov 10: UN declares Zionism as racism.

Dec: Ma’aleh Adumim established east of Jerusalem as a strategic extension of the city, not a “settlement.”

1976

Jan: Christian Phalangists and their allies massacre Palestinians at Karantina. In revenge, Palestinians massacre Christians at Damour. Later that year and aided by the Syrians, Christian Maronites massacre Palestinians at Tel al-Zaatar.

March 30: Arab Israelis call for a general strike in protest against massive expropriations of land in the Galilee to make room for Jewish settlements. Many are killed in clashes with the police. Henceforth this day has been marked as “Land Day” among Israeli Arabs.

Israel adopts policy of settlements on both sides of the “Green Line.”

Syria intervenes in the Lebanon crisis. Its force, stabilizing the conservative Christian regime, is directed against the left-wing coalition of PLO and the Druze militias of Kamal Jumblatt. Israel as well supports the right-wing Christian Phalangists led by the Gemayel family. Palestinian refugee camps are overrun, fighters expelled and civilians massacred.

June 27: Wadie Haddad, an associate of George Habash of the PFLP, has an Air France airliner abducted to Entebbe, Uganda, where the Israelis launch a spectacular rescue operation.

Dec 11: American F15 fighters are received by the Israeli government on a Sabbath, angering religious parties who stage a vote of no confidence in the Knesset. The government of Rabin eventually falls due to this crisis.

1977

May: Menachem Begin wins Israel’s parliamentary elections by a landslide. This ends thirty years of left-wing dominance in Israeli politics.

Nov.: In a surprise move, Anwar al-Sadat visits Israel and speaks to the Knesset. Egypt had accepted the “land-for-peace” formula, the first Arab country to offer Israel recognition. Egypt is expelled from the Arab League.

1978

Jan: Abu Nidal group supported (and directed?) by Iraq’s Saddam Hussein assassinates the PLO representative in London.

March 14: Following a terror attack in Haifa where over 30 civilians were killed, the IDF enters Southern Lebanon in the Operation Litani and establishes a “security zone.”

Camp David Agreement between Egypt and Israel, brokered by President Jimmy Carter.

A note on the years 1967-1978:

Ten years after the Six-Day-War, a decade during which Egypt recovers its dignity and the PLO emancipates itself from the tutelage of the Arab states, the states of the Middle East and the PLO are beginning to move toward an acceptance of Israel within the boundaries of 1949 and toward a peaceful settlement of the Palestine conflict based on

territorial compromise and mutual recognition. Israel's formula of "land-for-peace" and UN SCR 242 were beginning to appear as reasonable foundations of a permanent settlement of the crisis in the Middle East. The Camp David Agreement and subsequent peace treaty between Israel and Egypt (1978/79) put the signature of Menachem Begin, a right-wing populist, under far-reaching principles for future negotiations. Nevertheless, ten years after the Six-Day-War, many Israelis had moved away from the idea of trading land for peace. The new religious right was beginning to embrace violent means of action. A Jewish Underground emerged that opposed any compromise on the divine mission to redeem the land. The center-right coalition was built on a shared commitment to a "Greater Israel," which meant government-sponsored settlement of Judea and Samaria. The new religious Zionist settler movement (Gush Emunim, B'nai Akiva) was beginning to be mainstreamed. According to the Jewish Agency for Israel Timeline, 186 settlements were established between 1977 and 1983 alone. Several US presidents have since called settlement expansion an obstacle to peace and called for a complete halt, including Presidents G. H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and most recently Barak Obama.

1979

Egypt-Israel peace treaty.

Iranian Revolution.

Ali Hassan Salameh, chief of Arafat's security and (likely) liaison with the CIA, is assassinated by the Israelis.

1980

June 2: The mayors of Nablus and Ramallah are severely injured by car bombs planted by Jewish terrorists, members of the radical right or "Jewish Underground."

July 30: Knesset passes "Jerusalem Law," officially annexing East Jerusalem. In response, Venezuela and Uruguay, the two states that had still maintained their missions in Jerusalem, withdraw their ambassadors from the city.

1981

Febr: President Reagan declares Jewish settlements in the West Bank "not illegal."

June: Shortly before national elections, Israeli warplanes destroy Iraqi nuclear facility near Baghdad. The act is condemned by the UN Security Council, including the US. Begin is reelected.

October 6: Anwar al-Sadat is assassinated at a military parade commemorating the Yom Kippur War.

Plans for an invasion of Lebanon are ready. The aim is to strengthen the Christian regime of President Gemayel against the PLO and other leftists, but the plans are put on hold since the US insists that such an invasion required a serious provocation in order to be legitimate.

Dec: Resisting the removal of their settlement from the Sinai, as required by the agreement with Egypt, the residents of Yamit barricade themselves.

Israeli civilian administration is extended to the Golan Heights in what is *de facto* an act of annexation.

1982

April 11: Temple Mount incident; a recent immigrant from the US randomly shoots and kills Arabs.

April 25: Yamit evacuated and the settlement bulldozed by the Israelis.

May 2: El Al no longer flies on the Sabbath.

May 10: Israeli reservists speak out against the brutalization of Palestinian civilians in the occupied territories, accusing defense minister Sharon of incitement to commit atrocities.

May 25: Karp report on settler violence against Arabs is so critical of the Israeli military occupation that it is repressed by the government and kept secret. It is finally released on Febr. 9, 1984. (Source: Jewish Agency for Israel Timeline (<http://www.jafi.org.il/education/jafi75/timeline7c.html>)).

June 3: After several high profile assassinations, usually of PLO representatives in Europe, the Abu Nidal group attempts to kill Shlomo Argov, the Israeli ambassador in London. Nidal was acting from Baghdad but the Israeli government uses this crime to act against the PLO in Lebanon, putting the more ambitious invasion plan into action that was advocated by defense minister Ariel Sharon. Israel invades the Lebanon in the Operation "Peace for Galilee." Most outside observers, including the PLO, wrongly thought that the Israeli objective was to be limited to the south of Lebanon as it had been in 1978.

June 6: Israeli land invasion begins. Palestinian resistance in the south collapses. After heavy losses in men and equipment, Syria agrees to a cease-fire. Israel launches a siege of Beirut. The Palestinians decide to stay and fight.

July 25: The right-wing Tehiya party joins Begin's government coalition.

August: After two months of heavy bombardment, a compromise is reached. The PLO fighters are allowed to leave and the IDF are not to enter Beirut. The departure of the PLO leaves the Palestinian refugees of Lebanon defenseless and the PLO weakened. President Bashir Gemayel is assassinated, Israeli troops move into West-Beirut and encircle the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatilla, claiming that hundreds of Palestinian fighters had stayed behind. Protected by Israeli forces, Christian Phalangists enter the camps and proceed to massacre eight hundred civilians.

1983

Febr 8: The Kahan Commission holds Ariel Sharon indirectly responsible for the Sabra and Shatilla massacre. Sharon resigns.

Febr 10: Emil Gruenzweig, a Peace Now activist, is killed as a hand grenade is lobbed into a demonstration outside the Prime Minister's residence.

April: Issam Sartawi, a PLO moderate, is assassinated by Iraq-supported Abu Nidal group.

June: The PLO is further weakened by factional warfare and Arafat is expelled from Damascus. Syria's Hafez al-Assad attempts to co-opt the Palestinian cause and renew Syria's claim to representing the Palestinians as part of a greater Syria. Various factions split off from Fatah, claiming the mantle of the Palestinian revolution.

July: Jewish radicals attack Muslims in a Hebron Islamic College.

August 28: Begin announces his intention to resign.

Though the US vetoes a UN Security Council resolution calling for the dismantling of all Jewish settlements in occupied territories, Reagan calls the building of further settlements an "obstacle to peace." According to the Jewish Agency Timeline, 41 new settlements were established in 1983, bringing "the number of settlers to 20,000, living near, and sometimes very close to an Arab population of more than a million: 721,700 on the West Bank and 464,300 in Gaza."

Costa Rica and El Salvador move their embassies back to Jerusalem.

Pro- and anti-Arafat Palestinian forces allied with Syria fight in the Beka'a valley and in Tripoli. Arafat secretly returns to Lebanon to join the battle of Tripoli. A cease-fire is brokered by Saudi Arabia and the UN provides ships to take Arafat and his fighters out of Tripoli. Expelled from Lebanon for the second time and widely regarded as a spent force,

In a diplomatic about-face, Arafat later travels to Cairo to meet with Hosni Mubarak as the first Arab leader to break the boycott against Egypt since its peace treaty with Israel.

1984

Jan: Attempt of Jewish right-wing radicals to commit violence on the Temple Mount is thwarted.

Febr. 9: Karp Report on settler violence is released.

April: The Jewish Underground is caught in the act of wiring five Arab buses with explosives. For the first time, the extent of organized anti-Arab violence becomes known to the Israeli public.

June: Meir Kahane's Kach party is disqualified from participating in the elections.

July: R. Meir Kahane, founder of the Jewish Defense League, is nevertheless elected to the Knesset.

September: Jordan reestablishes diplomatic relations with Egypt defying Syrian threats.

November: In a further act of rapprochement, King Hussein allows the Palestinian National Council to convene in Amman. This assembly restores Arafat's legitimacy as the chairman of the PLO.

December: Shas (Sephardi Torah Guardians) party founded with Rav Ovadia Yosef as spiritual leader.

1985

Jan: Beginning of phased withdrawal of IDF from Lebanon.

Febr: Amman Accord between Jordan and PLO declaring that the two entities were to form a confederation and conduct joint delegations in all future negotiations to settle the Arab Israeli conflict. Prime Minister Shimon Peres signals willingness to enter negotiations with a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation as long as PLO has no part in it.

May: City of David archeological park opened.

Oct.: In response to a terror attack on an Israeli yacht anchored at Larnaca (Cyprus), Israel bombs the PLO headquarters in Tunis. Soon after, a radical PLO faction (led by Abu al-Abbas) hijacks the cruise ship Achille Lauro.

In response to PLO-Jordan reconciliation Syria uses Amal militias to wage the so-called "War of the Camps" where militias would lay siege to refugee camps in south Lebanon and Beirut and indiscriminately shoot anyone venturing out to seek food or water for their families. This type of siege was conducted for several years.

1986

Dissatisfied with Arafat, King Hussein terminates his year-long consultations with Arafat on the peace process.

Prime Minister Shimon Peres visits Morocco to meet with King Hassan. Syria breaks off diplomatic relations with Morocco.

Aug. 5: Knesset passes a law prohibiting racial incitement.

First direct diplomatic contacts between Israel and Soviet Union since 1967.

September: A survey of Arab public opinion in Israel records that over 90% believe the PLO is the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and that 78% prefer the establishment of a democratic Palestinian state. (Source: Jewish Agency)
A report records 60,000 Jews living on the West Bank. Over 66% reside in suburbs of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, including 12,000 in Ma'ale Adumim, a Jerusalem suburb, on the road to Jericho. (Source: Jewish Agency)

November: Iran-Contra affair. Israel is implicated in covert American arms transfer to Iran but denies any role in the transfer of funds to the Contras in Nicaragua.

1987

Febr: President Reagan publicly recognizes Israel as a major non-NATO ally.

April 11: Agreement on outlines of a peace agreement between Jordan and Israel between Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and King Hussein after secret talks in London.

In Moscow, Mikhail Gorbachev recognizes Israel's right to peace and security while criticizing "Tel Aviv's" annexationist policies.

May: Clashes between settlers and Arab residents of Qalqiliya and Nablus (West-Bank). Riots in East Jerusalem.

June 6: Arabs riot throughout the territories on the 20th anniversary of the Six-Day-War.

Aug 26: The Jerusalem intellectual Faisal al-Husseini arrested in Jerusalem on charges of inciting civil unrest.

Oct.: Riots in Gaza, spreading to East Jerusalem and Ramallah.

Dec 9: A traffic accident in Gaza involving an Israeli truck slamming into Arab cars triggers the first sustained uprising in the occupied territories, known as the Intifada (lit. the "shaking off"). Israeli Arabs are drawn into the wave of protests.

Hamas is founded by members of the Palestinian wing of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. It quickly gains ascendancy in Gaza and the West Bank due to its charitable institutions. Israel initially supported the formation of the Islamist movement, not realizing that it was not just to act as a competition to the secular and leftist PLO but also as a formidable force in the struggle for Palestinian statehood.

Dec 15: Ariel Sharon, minister of trade, inaugurates his new home in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem.

1988

The Intifada continues. Forty years after 1948, when Palestinians lost the initiative to the surrounding Arab states, the Palestinians act as the vanguard of their national struggle in

a grass-roots uprising characterized by stone-throwing teenagers confronting the Israeli army.

April 16: Israeli commandos led by Ehud Barak assassinate Abu Jihad, Arafat's second in command, in Tunis. The funeral in Damascus turns into a popular referendum on the PLO. Arafat reemerges as a leading figure.

July 31: Jordan relinquishes all claims to the West-Bank, recognizing the Palestinian right to self-determination.

Dec: In Algiers Arafat proclaims the independence of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital. Later, in a press conference, Arafat explicitly renounces terrorism and in a further meeting recognizes UN 242 as the basis for a settlement of the Palestine conflict, belatedly legitimizing the 1949 cease-fire line ("Green Line") and recognizing Israel's right to exist. This allowed the US to enter into a dialogue with the PLO. This process did not yield any tangible results and was abandoned.

1989

Jan: G. H. W. Bush inaugurated as the 41st President of the US.

Faisal al-Husseini released from detention.

Feb: A US report criticizes Israel for human rights violations in the West Bank and deems its security forces inept in dealing with civil unrest.

May 14: Knesset approves Shamir peace plan, which calls for elections in the occupied territories but rules out any PLO participation.

May: In a speech at an American-Israel Public Affairs Committee conference, Secretary of State James A. Baker calls on Israel "to lay aside once and for all the unrealistic vision of a greater Israel" and calls on Palestinians to "reach out to Israelis and convince them of your peaceful intentions." (Source: Jewish Agency Timeline)

Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin is arrested.

June 5: Members of the Jewish Underground have their prison sentences reduced by President Chaim Herzog.

Between 1989 and 1994, around 800,000 Jews emigrate from Russia. About 500,000 immigrate to Israel. This wave of new immigration begins levels off after 2001.

1990

August: Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Arafat attempts to mediate the conflict and is courted by Saddam Hussein.

Jewish immigration from Russia peaks with 183,400 new immigrants in 1990.

1991

Jan: As scud missiles rain on Tel Aviv, Palestinians in the occupied territories can be seen dancing jubilantly on the roofs. This, along with Arafat's failure to condemn the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, diminishes the Palestinians in world opinion.

US offers hundreds of millions in loan guarantees for the settlement of Jews from the Soviet Union on the condition that they would not be used for settlements in the occupied territories.

March: At the behest of Saddam Hussein, Arafat's close associate Abu Iyad is assassinated in Tunis by Abu Nidal group.

October: Using the momentum gained from the successful conclusion of the Gulf War (Operation "Desert Storm"), the US, joined by the USSR, convenes Middle East peace talks in Madrid. (See http://www.palestinefacts.org/pf_1991to_now_madrid_desc.php). Though the PLO is not officially invited, the Palestinian representatives from West-Bank and Gaza are handpicked and they adjust their statements with Arafat in Tunis.

Dec: Following a direct appeal by President Bush, the 1975 UN Resolution 3379, equating Zionism with racism, is repealed.

1992

Jan: Extreme right-wing parties leave the government coalition in protest against Madrid talks. New elections scheduled for June.

March 9: Menachem Begin dies.

March 18: Knesset changes electoral laws. Prime Minister is to be elected by direct vote.

April: A plane with Arafat on board crashes in the Libyan desert, making it obvious that no successor for Arafat had been groomed.

June 14: Gorbachev visits Israel.

June: first suggestions of Oslo process. While Islamist resistance to negotiations with Israel increases, Arafat gives green light to secret direct negotiations with Israel in Oslo.

June 23: Labor beats Likud in the elections. Rabin forms government with a comfortable majority. Rabin is the first to float the idea of a clear demarcation between Israeli and Palestinian areas.

Dec: Gush Shalom established.

Hamas establishes its armed wing, named the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades.

1993

Jan: William Jefferson Clinton sworn in as the 42nd President of the USA.

January through March: three rounds of secret negotiations between Israel and the PLO in Oslo, Norway.

July: After months of secret negotiations, Israel's government announces openly that it is ready to negotiate with the PLO.

Aug 20: The Oslo Accords are publicized, spelling out a framework for peace ("Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements"). Hamas denounces the accords.

Sept 13: Handshake between PLO chairman Arafat and Israel PM Yitzhak Rabin on the White House lawn. The accords are widely denounced in the Arab world but cautiously welcomed among Palestinians in the occupied territories.

Nov 2: Ehud Olmert defeats the 82-year-old Kollek in the mayoral race in Jerusalem.

Nov 15: US Senate lifts sanctions on the PLO.

Dec: Shlomo Goren, Chief Rabbi of Israel and the IDF, "publishes a ruling forbidding Jews to evacuate any settlement in the biblical Land of Israel, which includes Judea, Samaria and Gaza, and declares that Israeli soldiers should disobey any such evacuation orders." (Source: Jewish Agency).

Dec 30: Vatican establishes diplomatic relations with Israel.

Note on the years 1987-1993

The Middle East, and the world at large, sees a few remarkable changes that occur toward the end of the eighties and in the early nineties. Michail Gorbachev ushers in a period of *glasnost* and *perestroika* that have ripple effects far beyond the Soviet Union. It marks the end of the Cold War. The world at large had been divided into camps: pro-US, pro-Soviet, and non-aligned. This international system underwent dramatic changes. Also in the post-Cold War era, we see the collapse of states and the reemergence of local/ethnic/religious conflict (e.g. in the Balkans) that requires new alliances and diplomatic and military interventions. As the only remaining superpower, particular responsibility devolves on the US. In 1991, President Bush and Secretary of State James Baker display consummate diplomatic skill in the Middle East. Less obviously dependent on AIPAC than Ronald Reagan and congressional politicians and well-regarded by the oil-producing Saudis and the Emirates, President Bush uses the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait to build a broad international coalition around modest goals, the notion of stability, joint conflict resolution, and-with regard to Iraq-containment rather than regime change. Immediately following the first Gulf War, Bush and Soviet President Gorbachev sponsor the first real peace talks between Israel and the PLO that also gesture toward a resolution of other regional conflicts. Ironically, this returns Yasser Arafat from the brink of

complete irrelevance and thus curtails the first grass-roots political movement in Palestine (the Intifada). After initially spectacular moments, this peace process has since run aground in a morass of violence, non-compliance, and mutual recrimination. In the early nineties, however, the Intifada succeeded to put the Palestine question back on the agenda of international diplomacy. The Palestinian uprising against forty years of military occupation gave momentum to the Madrid conference and meaning and urgency to the Oslo Accords of 1993. It was a moment of great promise to some, and a grave threat to others.

1994

Febr 25: Baruch Goldstein, a Jewish extremist, opens fire on Muslim worshipers in the Hebron mosque housing the tombs of the biblical patriarchs and matriarchs.

Two weeks later, Hamas answers with suicide bombings inside Israel. Violence is on the rise.

March: Yemenites demand inquiry into abduction of Yemenite children by the Jewish state in the early days of statehood.

May: Gaza-Jericho agreement implemented, involving Israel troop withdrawals.

July 1: Arafat arrives in Gaza in a triumphant return to Palestine. The newly formed Palestine National Authority (PNA) is charged with the administration of the territories and implementation of the Oslo Accords. Building institutions of state proved difficult for a man who had ruled a single party organization, based on total centralist control.

July 25: Washington Declaration, normalizing relations between Jordan and Israel.

Oct 26: Israel-Jordan peace agreement signed.

Dec 10: Arafat, Rabin, and Peres are jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

In 1994, the first section of a physical barrier separating West Bank and Israel is built near Tulkarm.

1995

Israel commits to a freeze on settlement building in the territories.

May 8: Israel announces land expropriation in East Jerusalem. A week later, an end to such expropriations is declared.

Nov 4: **Israeli PM Rabin is assassinated** by Yigal Amir after many ultra-orthodox rabbis condemn Rabin for trading away parts of the Holy Land.

Nov 22: Shimon Peres forms new government.

1996

In the first direct elections for Prime Minister, the widely loathed Shimon Peres loses to B. Netanyahu whose campaign slogan is “peace with security.”

Negotiations over final status issues (borders, security, the status of Jerusalem, and the return or compensation of the refugees) are bogged down because the newly elected Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu fundamentally opposes the Oslo process.

Also in 1996, Israel completes a security barrier around the Gaza Strip begun under PM Rabin. The purpose of this barrier was to curtail terrorist activity.

1998

Oct.: [Wye River Memorandum](#) on the implementation of the 1995 Oslo Accords. This document was brokered by President Clinton in the attempt to coax Netanyahu and Arafat to advance the peace process.

1999

With the election of Ehud Barak, negotiations gain new momentum. Barak offers withdrawal from most of the West Bank but not from all of East Jerusalem.

2000

Seeking productive engagement with Syria, Ehud Barak launches a withdrawal of IDF from the security zone in South Lebanon. Arafat resents the fact that foreign diplomacy between Israel and its Arab neighbors has taken priority once again over progress in the implementation of Palestinian autonomy/statehood.

Barak vows to build a separation barrier between Israel and the West Bank with the purpose of fostering Palestinian independence.

July: Under pressure from President Clinton who is nearing the end of his second term, Arafat and Barak agree to a summit at Camp David. Following up on the Wye River Memorandum, this summit was the first to address permanent status issues such as borders, the refugees, and Jerusalem. Rapport between Barak and Arafat is poor. Arafat turns down the Israeli offer and is publicly blamed by the US for the failure of the negotiations.

Sept 28: A few weeks later, Ariel Sharon, leader of the opposition, requests and receives permission to visit the Temple Mount, accompanied by hundreds of Israeli security forces. This triggers the second or Al Aqsa Intifada, which derails the peace process.

Note: While the first Intifada was characterized by stone-throwing teenagers rising up against the Israeli military occupation, the symbol of the second Intifada is the suicide bomber/martyr who is inspired by the new jihadist Islam and targets civilians inside Israel.

Dec: Israel rebuilds and fortifies the damaged security barrier around the Gaza Strip.

2001

Jan: George W. Bush sworn in as the 43rd President of the USA.

Feb 6: Ariel Sharon elected as Prime Minister of Israel.

After September 11, Sharon persuades the US that their fight against terrorism is the same Israel has long been facing on a daily basis.

Many Israelis call for a wall of separation for the protection of its citizens from suicide attacks waged through infiltration from Palestinian territories. The political version of this idea is called “unilateral disengagement.” After initially opposing it, Sharon eventually adopts this policy.

2002

Sharon decides to hold Arafat personally responsible for every act of violence against Israel. Arafat’s headquarters in Ramallah are surrounded by tanks, all PNA government offices are destroyed or vandalized. Arafat refuses to leave his compound.

Beginning of concerted effort to establish a barrier between the West Bank and Israel. In Israeli parlance, these barriers are referred to as “Security Fence.” Palestinians refer to it as the “racial segregation wall,” others speak of an “Apartheid Wall.” From the very beginning the route of the barrier was a matter of debate and the Supreme Court of Israel repeatedly ruled on questions of undue hardship imposed on Palestinians, though the court affirmed the legality of the barrier as a security measure.

June 24: In a speech, George W. Bush calls for the creation of a Palestinian State to live side by side with Israel and introduces a “Roadmap” to peace: ... *the Roadmap represents a starting point toward achieving the vision of two states, a secure State of Israel and a viable, peaceful, democratic Palestine. It is the framework for progress towards lasting peace and security in the Middle East...* The initiative is supported by a “quartet” of international entities: the US, the EU, Russia, and the UN. The framework requires Palestinians to relinquish violence and build democratic institutions of state and Israel to end settlement activity in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, as well as cooperate with and support the emerging Palestinian governmental institutions.

2003

Jan: Ariel Sharon reelected on a platform opposing “unilateral disengagement.”

June 4: Red Sea Summit in Aqaba, Jordan, presided over by US President Bush.

Dec: Release of the Geneva Accord, an extra-governmental draft peace proposal that was meant to demonstrate that even the permanent status issues that derailed the Camp David Summit in 2000 are resolvable. On the Israeli side, chief architect of this accord was Yossi Beilin, on the Palestinian side Yasser Abed Rabbo. A new, more elaborate version of this accord was released in September 2009.

2004

October: Arafat (*nom de guerre* “Abu Amar” 1929-2004) is struck with an undisclosed illness. He is evacuated to a Paris hospital where he dies of unknown causes. His successor is Mahmoud Abbas, also known as Abu Mazen.

2005

Aug 15-Sept 5: In the pursuit of unilateral disengagement, Israel withdraws its military from the Gaza Strip and evacuates all settlements. This affects 9,000 settlers who are offered resettlement and compensation. Those who refuse are removed by force. The government goes ahead with the disengagement ignoring huge protest rallies in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Some agricultural installations and synagogues are left intact but subsequently destroyed by Arab vandals as symbols of the occupation. Israel retains control of border crossings.

2006

Jan 4: Sharon suffers brain hemorrhage and has been in a coma since. Ehud Olmert, who had joined Sharon’s new Kadimah party, takes over as PM.

Jan 25: Hamas soundly defeats Fatah in the first free elections in the Palestinian territories.

May: Ehud Olmert is reelected, serving as Israel’s Prime Minister on his own merit. Kadimah’s success is based on the broadly centrist appeal of the policy of unilateral disengagement, which had *de facto* replaced the Oslo Process of negotiations with the Palestinians, despite the efforts of the “Quartet.”

July 12: Following a concurrent rocket attack of Hezbollah on Israeli cities and on a border patrol, the IDF responded with massive air- and naval strikes and a ground invasion of the Lebanon. What became known as the Second Lebanon War ended on Aug 14 when Israel lifted its naval blockade. Hezbollah and Israel were both accused for deliberately targeting civilians during this conflict. Hezbollah was widely reported to have indiscriminately bombarded the cities of northern Israel and that its war was conducted from amid civilian areas, effectively using the population as human shields. Israel, though largely exonerated by the 2008 Winograd report, had used cluster bombs and phosphorous shells, as well as retaliatory air strikes targeting civilian areas and infrastructure. In addition to civilian and military casualties on both sides, the war also caused considerable environmental and archeological damage. During the war, US President Bush defended Israel’s actions as part of the “war on terror” and the US Congress voted to support Israel’s right to self-defense. Most states around the Middle East were critical of Hezbollah for having needlessly provoked armed conflict with the Israelis.

2007

Hamas seizes Fatah headquarters in Gaza.

Nov: Annapolis Conference

2008

April: In conversation with Jimmy Carter, Khalid Meshal conveys the willingness of Hamas to come to a temporary agreement with Israel that would respect the Jewish state within the boundaries of 1967 and involve a long-term truce, conditional on Israel's recognition of the Palestinian refugee's right to return.

Dec 27: Israel military incursion into Gaza. Hundreds of Palestinian civilians are alleged to have been killed in this action.

2009

Jan: Israel ends its Gaza incursion a day before the inauguration of Barak Obama.

Feb: Benjamin Netanyahu charged with forming the next government of Israel.

March 31: Netanyahu sworn in as PM of Israel.

Sept: Release of a new version of the Geneva Accord (see 2003).

Note on the years 1995-2009

Many commentators, including Wasserstein, take the Rabin assassination as a turning point in the history of modern Israel. It may be more correct to say that an existing division within Israeli became fully evident at this point. To those on the liberal side of the political spectrum who were brought up in the belief that the legitimacy and nobility of the Jewish state was grounded in an authentic and enduring humanism of Jewish culture it was shocking to realize that there were Jews who hated liberal Jews more than they hated Arabs. At the very moment when Israelis seemed to open up to the Palestinians as a real people and a legitimate nation rather than a diffuse other and as the mere objects of Israeli military or civil administration, the death of Rabin reverted Jewish attention back toward the Jews themselves. The question of Jewish identity, long a favorite preoccupation of public intellectualism and debate, eclipsed the Palestinians, and when the Al Aqsa Intifada brought the unresolved conflict back into focus, the Palestinians seemed to have changed as well. As a changed collective confronting a radically different enemy, the Israelis responded differently from how they had responded in the early nineties. Instead of a renewed peace process, they embraced the center-right ideology of unilateral disengagement, the unfortunate symbol of which is the separation wall.