



Palestinian Authority: A Timeline of Political Events¹

Prelude: 1917-1995

Britain declared support for a national home for the Jewish people in the 1917 Balfour Declaration, which also stated “nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities.” At the time there was a small but growing Jewish population in Palestine. In 1918, the first Palestinian Arab nationalist movements formed, the beginning of a long period of protest.

In 1947, the UN proposed dividing Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state at the end of the British Mandate, with Jerusalem under international control. The Arab High Committee rejected this idea. In 1948, Israel declared its independence. Some 750,000 Palestinian Arabs became refugees, and the UN created the United National Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the Near East (UNWRA) to assist these populations. In 1964, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was founded, and it was pronounced the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people in 1974.

In 1967, the Six-Day War ended with Israel occupying East Jerusalem and the West Bank (then under Jordanian control), Egypt-administered Gaza, Syria’s Golan Heights, and Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula. The Israeli government approved Israeli settlement in these areas. Several successive efforts to resolve conflict followed.

- Under the 1978 Camp David Accords (focused on Egypt), Israel pledged to expand Palestinian self-government in the West Bank and Gaza.
- After a protracted period of conflict, in 1991 the Madrid Conference formally brought together representatives of Israel and Palestine face-to-face for the first time since 1949, with the Palestinian delegation participating as part of a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation
- In 1993 Israel and the PLO signed the first of two agreements, with the second signed in 1995, on interim self-government for the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Known as the Oslo Accords, these agreements laid out the principles and arrangements that were to guide the formation of such government, but they deferred for resolution through negotiations, which were to be concluded by 1999, important elements of the conflict, including the status of Jerusalem, the right of return of Palestinian refugees, borders, and the future of Israeli settlements. Notably, the agreements were silent on the key question of Palestinian statehood as an outcome of the negotiations.
- In 1994, the Palestinian Authority was established as an interim governing body pursuant to the 1993 Oslo Accord. With the details spelled out in the Oslo 1995 agreement, it was designated to have exclusive control over security and civilian affairs in Palestinian urban areas, full civilian and partial security purview in others, but without any purview in either domain in about 60 percent of the landmass in the West Bank.

¹ We thank the following organizations from whose timelines we have borrowed: *US Institute of Peace* <https://www.usip.org/publications/2019/06/palestinian-politics-timeline-2006-election>; *Infoplease*: <https://www.infoplease.com/history/world/timeline-israeli-palestinian-conflict-since-2000>; *Reuters* <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-palestinians-israel-peace-timeline-idUSTRE78M3RP20110923>; *Anti-Defamation League* <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/factsheets/key-dates-in-israels-history>; *BBC* <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29362505>; and <https://israelpalestinetimeline.org/charts/>

1995

Salam Fayyad becomes IMF representative to Palestine, arrived in Jerusalem December 10.

2000

June

Lisbon meeting of Ad Hoc Liaison Committee sets out an agenda for financial reform of the Palestinian Authority.

July 11-24

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat meet with U.S. President Bill Clinton at Camp David to negotiate a final settlement based on the Oslo Peace Accords. Despite progress on other issues, the two sides fail to reach an agreement on Jerusalem.

September 28

Clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinians at Al-Aqsa Mosque, kill five and injure over 160, triggering violence across the Palestinian territories and the start of the Second Intifada.

December 23

President Clinton presents a two-state solution, in which the Palestinians would get roughly 94% to 96% of the West Bank, sovereignty over their airspace, and control over Arab neighborhoods in Jerusalem, but that would allow Palestinian refugees to return to Israel only with Israeli consent. Israel would cede 1% to 3% of land in a swap to compensate Palestinians for what was to be annexed to Israel.

December 27, 31

The PLO and Israel responded to Clinton's proposal, and shortly thereafter (January 3, 2001) the White House officially stated that both sides accepted the parameters with reservations.

2001

Salam Fayyad steps down as IMF resident representative and briefly serves as regional manager of the Arab Bank in the West Bank and Gaza.

January-February

Clinton's term ends. George W. Bush becomes President of the United States. Ariel Sharon replaces Barak as Prime Minister of Israel.

May 6

The Mitchell report is published with recommendations for negotiations and peace.

September 11

Terrorists attack the World Trade Center and Pentagon. The U.S. begins its war on terror.

2002

March 27

During Passover, a Palestinian suicide bomber kills 30 Israelis and wounds about 100 others, prompting Israel to launch Operation Defensive Shield, entailing the reoccupation of Palestinian towns including Ramallah, Nablus, Jenin, and Tulkarm. Israel begins to build a barrier in the West Bank, enclosing territory previously presumed to belong to Palestine east of the pre-1967 ceasefire line.

June

Salam Fayyad appointed finance minister of the Palestinian Authority.

June 24

US President Bush outlines a vision that calls for the end of violence and a peace agreement.

September 17

The Middle East Quartet—a group that includes the U.S, the European Union, the United States, and Russia—says it will develop a roadmap to help shape international policy toward a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

2003

April 29

Mahmud Abbas is appointed prime minister of the Palestinian Authority.

April 30

The “Road Map for Peace”, a plan developed by the U.S, UN, EU, and Russia, is presented to the Israelis and Palestinians. It calls for an end to violence and the halting of Jewish settlement on occupied land.

September 6

Mahmud Abbas resigns as the prime minister of the Palestinian Authority.

September 8

New Palestinian Authority government sworn in, with a 24-member cabinet in which Fayyad retains his post. Ahmed Qurei is appointed prime minister of the Palestinian Authority.

December

Geneva Accord peace plan is officially released. It is based on the roadmap for peace.

2004

October 25

Israel's Knesset approves a disengagement plan developed by Sharon, calling for a complete withdrawal from Gaza.

November 11

Yasser Arafat dies in a Paris hospital. Mahmoud Abbas becomes chairman of the PLO and Ahmed Qurei is appointed prime minister.

2005

January 9

Mahmoud Abbas elected Palestinian Authority president.

February 8

At a summit hosted by Egypt in Sharm El Sheikh, Sharon and Abbas agree to cease violence and end the Second Intifada Israel agrees to release 900 Palestinian prisoners and to gradually withdraw from Palestinian cities.

August 15 – September 12

Israel withdraws settlers and soldiers from Gaza.

November

Salam Fayyad resigns from the government to run in the legislative elections of 2006 on a slate of political independents.

2006

January 4

Israeli Prime Minister Sharon suffers a stroke, leaving Israel leadership in the hands of Ehud Olmert.

January 26

Palestine holds parliamentary elections. Fayyad wins, but his electoral slate receives less than 3% of the vote. Hamas wins 74 of 132 seats. Israel imposes sanctions and withholds customs revenues it collected on the PA's behalf. US and European countries withdraw aid. Beginning of clashes between Hamas- and Fatah-affiliated groups. }

March 29

New Palestinian Authority government forms, with Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh prime minister of cabinet comprised mostly of Hamas members as well as four independents. Fatah refuses to join. Abbas remains president. Israel imposes sanctions and withholds customs revenues it collected on the PA's behalf. U.S. and European countries withdraw aid.

March 28

Ehud Olmert elected prime minister of Israel.

June 28

Israeli forces return to Gaza and conduct ground operations following capture of Israeli soldier by Palestinian militants; marks start of series of battles known as Operation Summer Rains.

2007

February 8

Hamas and Fatah agree to share power after talks at Mecca, brokered by Saudi Arabia.

February-March

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice meets with Abbas and Olmert in Jerusalem to affirm commitment to two-state solution and negotiate a series of confidence-building initiatives.

March 17

Salam Fayyad joins PA unity government as finance minister.

June 14

After days of fighting between Hamas and Fatah, Hamas seizes control of Gaza, and Abbas dissolves PA unity government and creates emergency government in the West Bank with Salam Fayyad as prime minister. Ismail Haniyeh does not step down and leads a Hamas-only cabinet in Gaza, leaving the PA with two competing governments.

November 17

Annapolis meeting to restart the peace process between Israel and Palestine. Abbas and Fayyad both attend. US President Bush says both sides agree to resume good faith efforts to resolve the conflict.

December 17

Paris donors conference. Fayyad presents development plan and secures a three-year commitment to provide crucial financial support.

2008

March 23

Hamas and Fatah announce Sanaa Agreement, calling for an end to hostilities and the beginning of negotiations aimed at reconciliation. Talks stall.

June 19

Hamas and Israel declare a six-month truce, though violations quickly occur.

September 21

Israeli Prime Minister Olmert, facing corruption charges and a criminal investigation, announces his plans to resign.

December 27

Hamas militants fire rockets into southern Israel, prompting tightening of Gaza blockade and Israeli military operations.

2009

January

Israel launches 22-day Operation Cast Lead in retaliation against Hamas rocket attacks. Gaza infrastructure heavily damaged.

January

U.S. President Barack Obama inaugurated, names George Mitchell, once Northern Ireland mediator, as Middle East envoy.

February-March

Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition wins election and Netanyahu becomes prime minister.

March 7

Salam Fayyad resigns as prime minister to make way for formation of a unity government.

May 19

Salam Fayyad reappointed prime minister in a new emergency government after unity government negotiations break down. The government does not include Hamas but does include representatives of PLO factions in a 20-minister cabinet.

June 4

Obama gives speech in Cairo, in which he asks Palestinians to renounce violence, Arabs to recognize Israel's right to exist, and an end to Israeli settlement construction.

August 26

Fayyad launches a plan for getting the Palestinian Authority ready for statehood in two years.

October-December

Unsuccessful reconciliation talks between Hamas and Fatah in Egypt. Fatah seeks acceptance of Quartet Roadmap to Peace, but Hamas does not agree to recognize Israel.

November 11

Netanyahu imposes partial, 10-month halt on building permits in West Bank settlements. Abbas demands similar freeze in East Jerusalem. Israel refuses. Moratorium is not enforced.

2010

February-November

Fatah and Hamas hold new rounds of reconciliation talks in Damascus.

May 31

Israeli navy intercepts a flotilla of six ships en route to Gaza, a convoy of 700 passengers carrying tons of humanitarian aid and construction materials. Several aid workers injured or killed.

September

Direct peace talks resume but they end a few weeks later when Israel refuses to extend its partial settlement freeze.

2011

February 13

Abbas calls for September elections without assent of Hamas.

February 14

Fayyad government resigns. Abbas reappoints Fayyad prime minister. Both Hamas and Fatah say they are against Fayyad's proposal to create a unity government.

March 15

Large street demonstrations in both the West Bank and Gaza calling for unity among political factions. Gaza police suppress with violence. Protests persist throughout 2011 and into 2012, inspired partly by Arab Spring demonstrations throughout the region.

April 13

At its meeting in Brussels, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee endorses the assessment of reports submitted at the meeting by the World Bank, the IMF, and the United Nations that the Palestinian Authority was ready for statehood.

April 27-May 4

Hamas and Fatah announce agreement to form a unity government. The two sides agree to create a unified security service. Four days later, Israel freezes the PA's revenues.

June 26

Abbas announces that Palestinian Authority will unilaterally seek statehood in September, in the absence of peace talks.

September 21

Palestinian street demonstrations in support of statehood.

September 23-26

Abbas officially requests a bid for statehood at the UN Security Council. Motion fails to garner requisite support.

October 31

UNESCO admits PA as 195th member after 107 countries vote to accept statehood, 14 oppose, and 52 abstain. US cuts off funding for UNESCO and freezes some of its aid to the PA. Israel freezes Palestinian customs revenues.

2012

February 6

Qatar brokers agreement to create a unity PA government. This negotiation is followed by another in Cairo in May. Neither agreement is implemented, and Abbas asks Fayyad to form a new cabinet without Hamas. Fayyad resigns his post as finance minister, yielding that position to Nabeel Kassis.

March

Renewed hostilities between Israel and Gaza in response to an Israeli airstrike.

October 20

Municipal elections in West Bank. Hamas boycotts. Fatah wins roughly 40% of the contested seats. Controls 4 out of 11 towns and cities.

October 23

PA employees go on strike to protest cutbacks in services.

November 14-21

After Hamas fires rockets at Israel, Israel launches Operation Pillar of Defense, which kills the Hamas military commander in addition to over 100 Palestinians.

November 29

Palestine granted non-member observer State status at United Nations

2013

April 13

Salam Fayyad resigns.