

Chronology of Events in Israel and Palestine

In Israel, 2019 is a year with an electoral focus, with the country holding two legislative elections. The economic slowdown, the corruption scandals involving the Prime Minister and Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu and the relentless divisions in the most conservative coalition government in Israeli history formed by Likud (Consolidation, conservative), Kulanu (All of Us, centre-right), HaBayit HaYehudi (Jewish Home, ultra-nationalist), Yahadut Hatorah (United Torah Judaism, ultra-orthodox Ashkenazi) and Shas (Worldwide Association of Torah-Observant Sephardim, ultra-Orthodox), lead to early elections being held on 9 April, seven months before the end of the government's term in office. There are two specific triggers that lead to the decision to hold elections: firstly, the resignation in November 2018 of the Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman following Netanyahu's decision not to launch a major offensive against the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) in the Gaza Strip in response to the launching of 460 missiles into southern Israel. The resignation leads to the withdrawal of Lieberman's party, the Zionist Yisrael Beiteinu (Israel Our Home, right-wing) from the government, leaving the coalition government with the support of just 61 of the 120 members of the Knesset (Parliament); and secondly, the failure, in early January 2019, to pass the law on drafting ultra-Orthodox Jews for military service, supported especially by Zionist and secular parties, as well as the Supreme Court, which, in a ruling in 2017, set 15 January 2019 as a deadline for approving the legal text. There are two major alliances in the 9 April elections. The first is led by Likud, which has the support of Yisrael Be-

iteinu. And the other is the centrist candidate Kajo Lavan (Blue and White) formed by Benny Gantz's centrist Hosen L'Israel (Resilience for Israel), Yahir Lapid's Yesh Atid (There Is a Future) and Moshe Yaalon's Telem (National Statesmanlike Movement). A draw in the elections, with both alliances taking 35 seats each, forces Netanyahu to negotiate a coalition government again with the ultra-Orthodox and extreme right-wing parties. An agreement is not forthcoming, and so on 29 May new elections are scheduled for 17 September. These second elections once again confirm the deadlock which began in April, with the Blue and White Alliance winning 33 seats and Likud 32. After Netanyahu's offer to form a national unity government comes to nothing, essentially due to Gantz's demand that the Likud leader renounces parliamentary immunity and accepts being second in an eventual rotation as head of government, Netanyahu gives up his task to form a government thereby giving the responsibility to Gantz, who obtains the backing of Israel's main Arab parties in the hope of preventing Netanyahu from serving another term in office. However, Gantz is also unable to gather together the support needed to form a government, and the country is thus set on the path to a third election, called on 12 December and scheduled for 2 March 2020. With regard to the court investigations into corruption involving Benjamin Netanyahu, known as cases 1000, 2000 and 4000, in February, Israel's Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit indicts the Prime Minister. At the beginning of October, Netanyahu becomes the first Israeli head of government to appear before the state prosecutor's office in

the hope of avoiding a possible trial and, in turn, refloating negotiations to form a government, given that the three court cases constitute one of the main stumbling blocks. However, after the hearings, in November the public prosecutor decides to officially indict Netanyahu for accepting bribes, fraud and breach of trust. At the end of December, the sitting Prime Minister announces his intention to file an appeal before the Knesset in order to safeguard his parliamentary immunity.

The successive demonstrations of the Great March of Return in the occupied territories of the West Bank and on the border between Israel and the Gaza Strip have also been one of the year's major events. Since they began, in March 2018, the demonstrations have protested against the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel by the US and claim the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes prior to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. This sustained period of tension is further aggravated by the US President Donald Trump's decision in March 2019 to officially recognize Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights, occupied by Israel since the 1967 war and annexed since 1981.

The alignment of the Trump Administration's new foreign policy with the interests of the Israeli government, and also with Benjamin Netanyahu's electoral perspectives, leads to the establishment, throughout 2019, of new settlements and the extension of existing settlements in Area C of the West Bank and the Golan Heights, as well as other measures, such as the decision not to renew the mandate of the observer mission of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH), present in

the city since the Cave of the Patriarchs massacre in 1994.

In June, the Commission of the Great March of Return and Breaking the Siege calls a general strike in all the Palestinian territories, coinciding with the US-sponsored Manama summit as part of the peace initiative set up by the US President's son-in-law and adviser Jared Kushner, dubbed by its proponents the "Deal of the Century." The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) rejects the initiative considering it a bribe to get Palestine to renounce its historical rights in exchange for money. On 25 July, the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas announces that the PNA will stop complying with the agreements with Israel, a move that particularly has an impact on security in the West Bank amid high tension in the region.

In connection with the Great March of Return protests, the tit-for-tat attacks between Israel and the Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip also continue unabated throughout 2019. In this respect, at the end of January Israel suspends a Qatari funds transfer to Palestine over the violence at the Gaza border, and in March the Palestinian missile attacks from Gaza, attributed to Islamic Jihad, target Tel Aviv, for the first time since 2014. In December, Israel announces it has killed Baha Abu Al-Ata, the leader of the al-Quds Brigades, the armed wing of Islamic Jihad, in an airstrike on Gaza City. Islamic Jihad responds with intense rocket fire into southern and central Israel.

In another of the conflict's hotspots, the Temple Mount, the arrest in February of Sheikh Abdel-Azeem Salhab, head of the Waqf Council and custodian of the holy sites of Jerusalem as appointed by the King of Jordan, increases tensions in relations between Israel and Jordan. The arrest, related with the reopening of the Golden Gate, sparks protests both in Jordan and in East Jerusalem. Other events during the year which strain relations with Amman are the arrest in September of Jordanian Hiba al-Labadi and Abdul Rahman Miri at the Allenby border crossing, and the return, in November, of Baqura and Ghamr, following on from Abdullah II's announcement in October 2018 not to

renew the lease agreement with Israel for both territories.

On a regional level, the outgoing Israeli Chief of Staff Gadi Eisenkot and the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu confirm in January 2019 the direct involvement of the Israeli army in the Syrian conflict with thousands of attacks in 2018 on Iranian and Syrian army targets. In addition, on 13 January, Israel announces the end of Operation Northern Shield, launched on 4 December 2018 to locate and destroy tunnels dug by the Lebanese Shia group Hezbollah to penetrate into Israeli territory. Iran and Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian conflict is a constant cause of tension throughout 2019, with Israel condemning Tehran's use of this territorial presence to plot actions against the security of the Israeli State from Syrian and Lebanese territory. Another noteworthy event related with Iran is the 11-year prison sentence handed down to the former Israeli Minister of Energy and Infrastructure between 1992 and 1995, Gonen Segev, for spying for the Islamic Republic.

As regards Palestine's interior politics, 2019 begins with Hamas taking control of the border between Gaza and Egypt following the withdrawal of Palestinian National Authority civil servants amid reports that hundreds of them are being harassed and detained. Since 2017, the PNA had taken back control of the border as part of the attempts of the Egyptian mediation to try and revive inter-Palestinian negotiations, which brought factions Fatah and Hamas together in Cairo in October 2017 to sign a new reconciliation agreement, which, in turn, would have allowed joint elections to be held in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem for the first time since 2006.

However, the attack on the Palestinian Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah's convoy in March 2018, during his first visit to Gaza, marked a new worsening of relations between Fatah and Hamas, suspending the application of the agreement signed in the Egyptian capital. The election, in April 2019, of Mohammad Shtayyeh to replace Rami Hamdallah as the new Prime Minister of the beleaguered unity government deepens divisions between the leaders

of Gaza and the West Bank. A close confidant of the President Mahmoud Abbas and key figure in both the negotiations with Israel and in Fatah's political apparatus, Shatyyeh represents an increase in Fatah's control within the Palestinian administration. As a consequence, the move is rejected by Hamas, which has to deal with increasing protests in Gaza over the economic situation and claims the appointment lacks national consensus and is damaging for the reconciliation process. In light of this situation, Egypt resumes its efforts to reactivate talks between the factions in July 2019, and on 1 October Mahmoud Abbas forms a committee for holding elections throughout Palestine, a pledge made by the Palestinian President during the United Nations General Assembly in September. For its part, Hamas announces it is ready to take part in a general election and even elections for the Palestinian National Council (PNC), the supreme legislative body of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), which the Islamist movement is not a member of.

January 2019

Israel

- On 1 January the Zionist Union, a party formed in 2014 from the fusion of the Israeli Labor Party and the Hatnua Party ahead of the 2015 elections, is dissolved with a view to the elections scheduled for April 2019.
- On 3 January there are clashes during the evacuation carried out by the Israeli paramilitary police of dozens of Israeli settlers, who, since December, have occupied the illegal Amona settlement, in the West Bank.
- On 6 January five far-right Israeli teenagers are arrested for the murder of a Palestinian woman in Tapuach, the West Bank, on 12 October 2018.
- On 7 January the death in Savion is reported of Moshe Arens, the former Israeli Foreign Minister and three times the Israeli Defence Minister.
- On 9 January the former Israeli Energy and Infrastructure Minister between 1992 and 1995, Gonen Segev, is found guilty of spying for Iran, for

which he is sentenced to 11 years' imprisonment.

- On 13 January after more than a month of underground and technological work carried out by the army on the Lebanese border, Israel announces the end of Operation Northern Shield, launched on 4 December with the purpose of locating and destroying tunnels dug by the Shia group Hezbollah to penetrate into Israeli territory.
- On 13 January in an interview for the New York Times, the outgoing Israeli Chief of Staff Gadi Eisenkot and the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu confirm the direct involvement of the Israeli army in the Syrian conflict with thousands of attacks on Iranian targets on Syrian soil -2,000 in 2018 alone.
- On 16 January the police arrest three people involved in a scheme of exchanging sexual favours for judicial appointments. The Justice Minister Ayelet Shajed and Supreme Court President Esther Hayut are two of the senior members of the judicial selection committee that may be required to testify in the court investigation into the case.
- On 20 January Benjamin Netanyahu travels to Yamena to announce, together with the President of Chad Idriss Deby, the renewal of diplomatic ties after a 47-year rupture. The announcement comes after the Chadian President travelled to Israel in November 2018.
- On 20 January the Russian Defence Minister confirms the shooting down of seven Israeli missiles fired at Damascus International Airport, which was not hit in the attack. Shortly after, the Israeli army attacks Iranian and Syrian targets in response to a missile fired at the Golan Heights, occupied by Israel.

Palestine

- On 7 January Hamas takes control of the border between Gaza and Egypt following the withdrawal of Palestinian National Authority employees amid reports that hundreds of them are being harassed or detained.
- On 29 January the Palestinian government, led by the Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah, resigns, although it will continue to function until a new cabinet is formed.

Peace Negotiations

- On 19 January Hamas confirms the beginning of talks with Israel to reach a prisoner-exchange agreement before the early elections scheduled for April in Israel.

Conflicts between the Parties

- On 5 January at least 15 Palestinians are injured, 12 of them by shots fired by Israeli forces, following a new Palestinian march to the fence separating Israel from the Gaza Strip. The demonstration forms part of the Great March of Return, which began in late March 2018 to claim the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and protest against the US and other countries' recognition of Jerusalem as the Israeli capital.
- On 12 January the Israeli Air Force attacks two of Hamas' underground facilities in response to a rocket fired from the Gaza Strip.
- On 18 January at least 14 Palestinians are injured after Israeli forces respond to a large protest in the Gaza Strip.
- On 23 January Israel suspends the transfer of Qatari funds to Palestine in light of the ongoing violence on the Gaza border and a day after the Israeli Air Force bombs Hamas positions in the Strip, following another border confrontation which leaves one Israeli soldier wounded.
- On 29 January the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) condemns the Israeli government's decision not to renew the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH) observer mission, which has been present in the city since the mid-nineties.

February 2019

Israel

- On 18 February the summit of the Visegrad Group in Jerusalem is cancelled after Poland announces it will not attend in protest against the words of Israel's acting Foreign Minister Israel Katz, who condemns the Polish for "cooperating with the Nazis in the Holo-

caust" in the latest chapter of mounting tensions between both countries. The crisis began in January 2018 with the approval in the *Sejm* (Polish Parliament) of the controversial Holocaust law, under which anyone using the term "Polish death camps" or accusing Poland of complicity in the Holocaust could be sentenced to up to three years in prison. The US and Israel's condemnation of the new law, describing it as an attempt to cover up the complicity of certain sectors of Polish society in crimes against Jews, led to the approval in the *Sejm* in June 2018 of a new version that removed the prison sentences.

- On 19 February Immigration Minister Yoav Gallant calls for Jews living in France to "come home" to Israel following the vandalism of 80 graves in the Quatzenheim Jewish cemetery, near Strasbourg, amid a rise in acts of anti-Semitism in France. In 2018, 541 such acts were recorded, 74% more than in 2017. The surge in anti-Semitism is also cause for concern in the United Kingdom where the number of anti-Semitic acts in 2018 rose by 16%, to above 1,650, the highest since 1984, according to Community Security Trust data, and where in February, eight members of the British Labour Party, including Luciana Berger and Joan Ryan, left the party over their differences with Jeremy Corbyn's leadership, one of the main reasons being their concern over accusations of anti-Semitic behaviour within the party. In 2018 in Germany, according to official data from the German government, 1,646 acts of anti-Semitic violence were counted, 9.4% up from 2017 and the highest figure in the last decade.
- On 20 February Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud reaches an electoral deal with Avigdor Lieberman's ultra-conservative party HaBayit HaYehudi (The Jewish Home) ahead of the election on 9 April. According to the agreement, The Jewish Home would obtain two ministries in exchange for allowing Otzma Yehudit (Jewish Force) to join its ranks, a far-right, racist party founded in 2012 by followers of the ultra-Orthodox anti-Arab rabbi Meir Kahane, assassinated in New York in 1990, and considered a successor to Kahane's outlawed Kach party.

- On 21 February Benny Gatz's Hosen L'Israel and Yahir Lapid's Yesh Atid announce that the two parties will run together as a centrist alliance called Kajol Lavan (Blue and White) in the 9 April elections. This coalition also includes the Moshe Yaalon's Telem party.
- On 24 February Sheikh Abdel-Azeem Salhab, head of the Waqf Council, the Islamic foundation that manages Temple Mount / The Noble Sanctuary in Jerusalem, is arrested by Israeli police, only to be released hours later on the condition he does not return to the holy city in the next week. Salhab is also the highest representative of the King of Jordan and custodian of Jerusalem's holy sites, according to the peace agreement undersigned by Israel and Jordan in 1994. His arrest for breaching a 2003 court order, under which access to the Golden Gate or Gate of Mercy / Bab al-Rahma is forbidden, by reopening the site under pressure from hundreds of Palestinian demonstrators, sparks tensions between both countries, and leads to protests both in Jordan and the Old City of Jerusalem.
- On 26 February the former Energy Minister Gonen Segev is sentenced to 11 years' imprisonment for spying for Iran.
- On 28 February Israel's Attorney General, Avichai Mandelblit, indicts the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for fraud, breach of trust (Case 1000 and Case 2000) and bribery (Case 4000), a little more than a month before the elections on 9 April.

Palestine

- On 20 February the PNA announces that it will no longer accept the money from taxes collected on its behalf by the Israeli government after the latter reduces the transfer amount in response to the financial support the PNA gives to families of alleged terrorists.

Conflicts between the Parties

- On 4 February Israeli soldiers shoot one Palestinian dead and wound another close to Jenin, the West Bank, who were thought to be carrying out a bomb attack.
- On 15 February at least 20 Palestinians and an Israeli soldier are injured in

another day of clashes in the Gaza Strip, as part of the Great March of Return.

- On 28 February, according to the conclusions of a UN inquiry, Israeli forces may have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity in their repression of the protests in the Gaza Strip at the end of March 2018, which left 189 Palestinians dead.

March 2019

Israel

- On 20 March the 6th trilateral summit takes place in Jerusalem between Cyprus, Greece and Israel with the participation of the US State Secretary Mike Pompeo and which primarily addresses energy security and the exploitation of oil and gas in the eastern Mediterranean.
- On 25 March the US President Donald Trump officially recognizes Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, occupied by the Israeli army since the 1967 war and annexed since 1981. Trump makes this announcement alongside the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is in Washington to participate in the annual assembly of the American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) the main organization of the pro-Israeli lobby in the US.
- On 31 March as part of the Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro's official visit to Israel, Brazil announces the opening of a trade office in Jerusalem, thereby ruling out initial plans to transfer the Brazilian embassy from Tel Aviv.

Palestine

- On 10 March the President of the Palestinian National Authority Mahmoud Abbas appoints Fatah Central Committee member Mohammad Shtayyeh as the new Prime Minister, tasked with forming a government.
- On 14 March protests begin in the Gaza Strip against the increase in the cost of living, tax hikes and the poor economic situation, called by the group We Want to Live! and which are harshly dispersed by Hamas security forces, particularly in the Jabalia and Deir al-Balah refugee camps, the movement's epicentres. Protests are also held in

al-Bureij, Nuseirat, Khan Yunis and Rafah and thousands of people are arrested and interrogated.

Conflicts between the Parties

- On 7 March officials from Israel and Jordan – custodian of the Temple Mount – hold talks to try to resolve the tensions at the Golden Gate or Gate of Mercy, near to where the offices of the Waqf, the Islamic heritage of East Jerusalem committee are located, which is overseen by Jordan. The building was closed under an Israeli court order in 2003 due to alleged political activity there, but Waqf's recent reopening of the site, contrary to the order, ratified in 2017, to undertake restoration works has allowed access to Muslims who in February began work on an additional mosque to the five the Temple Mount currently houses. This, together with the Waqf's opposition to the presence of Israeli observers at the restoration works raises tensions in the area, which on 12 March has to be evacuated after an explosive device is thrown at Israeli police, while talks continue between Israeli and Jordanian officials.
- On 7 March the Israel Defence Forces confirm attacks on several Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip, in response to incendiary balloons and a rocket launched from the Palestinian enclave.
- On 8 March around 40 Palestinians are injured by shots fired by Israeli security forces in another day of protests in the Gaza Strip.
- On 8 March the Israeli army bombs several Hamas military positions in Gaza, after a missile is fired into Israel from the Strip hours earlier.
- On 12 March a Palestinian man is killed in clashes with Israeli soldiers following a raid in Salfit, the West Bank.
- On 15 March for the first time since 2014, an armed group from the Gaza Strip fires missiles at Tel Aviv. The attack, attributed to Islamic Jihad, provokes an immediate reaction from Israel, which bombs hundreds of Hamas targets in Palestinian territory.
- On 20 March the Israeli army kills two Palestinians who threw explosive devices at soldiers posted close to Joseph's Tomb, in Nablus.
- On 25 March a missile fired from the Gaza Strip at the residential area of Sha-

ron, north of Tel Aviv, leaves seven people injured. Thought to be the work of either Hamas or Islamic Jihad, this is the furthest a missile has reached since 2014.

- On 27 March the Israel Defence Forces launch a series of attacks on Hamas targets after intercepting another rocket fired from the Gaza Strip into southern Israel.

April 2019

Israel

- On 9 April Israel holds early parliamentary elections which end in a draw between Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud and Beni Gantz's central-left Blue and White. Both parties win 35 seats in the Knesset (Parliament) with 26.46% and 26.15% of the vote respectively. Despite the 24-seat increase for the coalition parties led by Gantz, Netanyahu secures another four years in office after reaching an agreement for a new governing coalition with the two religious parties Shas and United Torah Judaism, the centrist Kulanu, the Union of Right-Wing Parties and Avigdor Lieberman's ultra-Orthodox Yisrael Beiteinu. With this right-wing bloc, Netanyahu garners the backing of 65 MPs in total.
- On 25 April the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) confirms the existence of a third tunnel that crosses the Blue Line, along the border between Lebanon and Israel, after the Israeli authorities report that Hezbollah has dug a total of six tunnels in the border area.

Palestine

- On 13 April Mohammad Shtayyeh is appointed as the new Prime Minister of the PNA to replace Rami Hamdallah, who announced his resignation in January after five years at the head of the unity government and in light of his unsuccessful efforts to reach an agreement with Hamas.

Conflicts between the Parties

- On 2 April soldiers from the Israel Defence Forces kill a young Palestinian man and injure two others during an

operation in the Qalandiya refugee camp in the West Bank.

- On 22 April the Israeli army opens an investigation after the press publishes images of a Palestinian teenager shot and wounded by Israeli soldiers while handcuffed and blindfolded. The boy was trying to run away after his arrest in Tekoa, the West Bank, under suspicion of throwing stones at the soldiers during a protest against military vehicles patrolling the area.

May 2019

Israel

- On 12 May the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announces the start of the process to set up a new Israeli settlement in occupied territory in the Golan Heights, in honour of the US President Donald Trump, who in March recognized Israeli sovereignty over the territory.
- On 25 May thousands of Israelis protest in Tel Aviv against legislative steps that could grant the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu immunity from prosecution and limit the powers of Israel's Supreme Court.
- On 29 May, 50 days after winning the elections, the acting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, calls early elections for 17 September after failing in his attempt to form a government before the end of the legal deadline and to prevent another party from doing so.

Palestine

- On 21 May Israel announces the extension of the fishing zone for the Gaza Strip from 10 to 15 nautical miles, after it was reduced during the wave of attacks between the Israeli army and Palestinian militias.

Conflicts between the Parties

- On 2 May the Israeli army bombs several Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip in response to incendiary balloons launched from the Palestinian enclave.
- On 5 May the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas for Ramadan enters into force, after the violence in Gaza of

the last two days leaves dozens dead. The ceasefire also comes ahead of the upcoming Eurovision song contest, which is to be held in Tel Aviv.

- On 31 May a Palestinian citizen stabs two Israelis in Jerusalem, after which he is shot dead by police.

June 2019

Israel

- On 2 June at least three Syrian soldiers are killed and a further seven injured in Quneitra, in the second Israeli bombing on Syrian soil in less than a week following the two rocket launches into the Golan Heights.
- On 6 June Benjamin Netanyahu appoints the openly gay Likud MP Amir Ohana as interim Justice Minister, an unprecedented milestone in the country's history.
- On 16 June the Israeli Prime Minister's wife Sara Netanyahu is ordered to pay a 2,500€ fine and return 11,250€ to the public treasury for misuse of public funds in the Catering Case.
- On 16 June the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu meets with the Council of Ministers in the Golan Heights to reinaugurate the settlement Ramat Trump (Trump Heights), renamed because of the US President's recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Syrian territory, occupied by Israel since 1967.

Palestine

- On 17 June the Israeli company Mekorot begins work on a Qatar-funded pipeline to improve the water supply in Palestine.
- On 25 June a general strike is held in the Palestinian territories, called by the Commission for the Great March of Return and Breaking the Siege, coinciding with the US-sponsored Bahrain Summit, held as part of the Trump Administration's peace plan.
- On 26 June the Sultan of Oman Qaboos bin Said Al Said announces his intention to open a diplomatic delegation in the Palestinian territories, in the middle of the Bahrain conference.
- On 28 June the European Council extends the mandate of the European

missions in Palestine: EUPOL COPPS, which assists the PNA in building the institutions of a future State of Palestine in the areas of policing and criminal justice, and EUBAM Rafah, the Rafah border crossing assistance mission, until 30 June 2020.

Peace Negotiations

- On 25 and 26 June Manama hosts a conference on the economic aspect of a peace plan that casts doubt over the idea of a future Palestinian state and in which neither Palestine nor Israel participate. The priority of the Trump Administration's new peace plan, led by the US President's son-in-law Jared Kushner, would be to create the conditions necessary for trade and the reactivation of the Palestinian economy as the first step to understanding the advantages of normalizing relations with Israel. The PNA rejects the US plan describing it as an attempt to bribe Palestine into giving up its historical rights in exchange for money. Morocco, Egypt and Jordan attend the conference, despite Palestinian requests for them not to do so.

Conflicts between the Parties

- On 13 June Israel attacks Hamas positions in the Gaza Strip after a missile fired at Israel from the Palestinian territory is intercepted by the Iron Dome Defence System.

July 2019

Israel

- On 1 July thousands of Beta Israel, Jews originally from Ethiopia, who were evacuated to Israel in 1991 during Operation Salomon, take to the streets to protest against the death in Haifa of young Solomon Teka, shot by an Israeli police officer during a brawl, and to denounce the discrimination they have suffered since their arrival in the country, despite being Jewish. Teka's death adds to that of another young Ethiopian Israeli, Yehuda Biadga, who was shot down by police in Tel Aviv in January. The unrest continues over the ensuing days leading to 130 arrests.

- On 8 July the Jerusalem District Court issues a landmark ruling blaming the PNA for acts of terrorism committed against Palestinian citizens, even those perpetrated by Islamic Jihad or Hamas.
- On 13 July the Israeli Education Minister Rafi Peretz declares he is in favour of gay conversion therapy, sparking calls for his resignation.
- On 23 July Israel accuses Iran of using civilian companies and maritime channels to supply Hezbollah with weapons-manufacturing equipment.
- On 30 July the Israeli authorities approve the construction of 6,000 new homes for Israeli settlers and 700 for Palestinians in Area C of the West Bank, despite the UN questioning the legality of such a move.

Palestine

- On 6-7 July a Jordanian-Palestine ministerial committee agrees to create a joint Palestinian-Jordanian customs administration, in coordination with the Industry, Economy and Transport Ministries of both countries, to discuss the details of the establishment of a logistics zone for bilateral trade exchange.
- On 11-12 July Egypt resumes its mediation efforts towards Palestinian reconciliation and sends a delegation to Ramallah and Gaza.
- On 12 July Israel announces plans to ban Palestinian dairy and meat exports to East Jerusalem. If the decision eventually comes into effect, the Palestinian government warns it will ban a number of Israeli companies from exporting their products to Palestinian territories.
- On 25 July, following the demolition of 70 Palestinian homes in a neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, under military occupation since 1967, the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, announces that the PNA will stop implementing its agreements with Israel, a decision that will particularly affect security in the West Bank, amid high tensions.
- On 30 July the Federation of Saint Christopher and Nevis becomes the 138th country to recognize the State of Palestine.

Peace Negotiations

- On 31 July the US President Donald Trump's advisor and son-in-law Jared Kushner begins a tour of the Middle East to promote his peace plan, called by its proponents "the deal of the century."

Conflicts between the Parties

- On 22 July tensions rise with the Israeli demolition of dozens of homes in the Palestinian neighbourhood of Wadi Hummus, East Jerusalem, on the grounds that they were too close to the separation barrier.
- On 31 July, according to Israeli military sources, a Palestinian man who had crossed the Gaza fence to shoot at Israeli troops is shot dead by soldiers, three of whom are wounded by the assailant. During the same incident, an Israeli tank attacks a Hamas military post.

August 2019

Israel

- On 21 August the Israeli army mistakenly fires on an Israeli crop-dusting plane from the Golan Heights, confusing it for an infiltrated Syrian aircraft.
- On 26 August the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu orders the construction of 300 new homes in the West Bank Dolev settlement, in response to the murder on 23 August of a young Israeli woman, killed by the blast from a homemade explosive device.
- On 29 August the Israeli Armed Forces report an alleged Iranian-Hezbollah plan to convert rockets into precision missiles in Lebanon.

Conflicts between the Parties

- On 6 August the Israeli authorities claim to have thwarted plans by Hamas to carry out an attack in Jerusalem, after finding a laboratory and explosives arsenal in Hebron, the West Bank.
- On 10 August clashes break out in the West Bank between around a hundred Palestinians and Israeli soldiers

during the arrest of two Palestinians accused of murdering the Israeli soldier Dvir Sorek at the beginning of the month.

- On 10 August four alleged Palestinian militants are shot dead by Israeli soldiers as they try to cross the border between Israel and the Gaza Strip.
- On 11 August a group of Israeli soldiers kill a Palestinian militant in the Gaza Strip after he approaches the border fence and opens fire on them.
- On 11 August at least 14 Palestinians are injured in clashes with the police at the Temple Mount, during the Muslim Eid al-Adha celebrations, the Festival of the Sacrifice.
- On 15 August two Palestinians are shot dead by the police after stabbing a police officer in the Old City of Jerusalem.
- On 18 August Jordan summons the Israeli ambassador to Amman to protest against the Israeli police action taken against Muslims at the Temple Mount on 11 August, when they dispersed protests over the access to the compound for the Muslim Eid al-Adha festival, as it coincided with the Jewish Tisha B'Av celebration, which commemorates the destruction of the First Temple of Jerusalem by the army of Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylonia.
- On 22 August the Israeli Air Force bombs several Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip in response to two rockets fired at Israel from the territory.
- On 23 August at least 127 Palestinians are injured by Israeli repression at the border between Gaza and Israel.
- On 28 August the Israeli Air Force bombs a Hamas outpost in the north of the Gaza Strip in retaliation for an attempted rocket launch into southern Israel.

September 2019

Israel

- On 9 September an Israeli Parliament committee rejects the plans of Benjamin Netanyahu's government to install surveillance cameras in polling stations.
- On 16 September Benjamin Netanyahu announces that he will annex the

Israeli settlements in Hebron if he wins the elections on 17 September.

- On 17 September Israel holds early legislative elections, the definitive results of which confirm the deadlock of the previous elections in April, with neither Benny Gantz's Blue and White Alliance, with 33 of the 120 seats in the Knesset (two fewer than in April), nor Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud, with 32 seats (six fewer than in April), likely to be able to forge an alliance with other parties to attain the 61-seat majority needed to form a government.
- On 19 September the acting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu invites his rival Benny Gantz to form a national unity government, given the similar provisional results from the elections on 17 September, to avoid third elections being called. Gantz rejects the offer.
- On 22 September Israel's main Arab parties give their backing to the former military chief Benny Gantz as Prime Minister, in the hope of removing Benjamin Netanyahu. This is the first time in 27 years that the Arab parties have broken their traditional abstentionism over the investiture of an Israeli premier.
- On 30 September the deadline established in the Spanish Parliament in 2015 allowing members of the Sephardic community expelled from Spain by the Edict of Expulsion in 1492 to apply for Spanish citizenship expires. A total of 132,226 descendants of Spanish Jews have applied.

Palestine

- On 9 September Hamas announces Saudi Arabia's arrest on 4 April of one of its most prominent leaders, the liaison officer between the movement and Riyadh, Mohammed al-Khodari.
- On 26 September the President of the PNA Mahmoud Abbas calls for Palestinian elections to be held during the annual United Nations Assembly.

Conflicts between the Parties

- On 6 September at least two Palestinians are killed and a further 70 injured in intense clashes on the border between Israel and the Gaza Strip, during one of the weekly large-scale protests by the Great March of Return.

- On 6-7 September the Israeli army bombs targets in Gaza following rocket and drone attacks launched from the Palestinian enclave.
- On 11-12 September the Israeli army bombs Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip after several missiles are fired from the Palestinian territory into southern Israel on 10 and 11 September.

October 2019

Israel

- Between 2-6 October Benjamin Netanyahu appears before Israel's Attorney General in an attempt to avoid standing trial for bribery and fraud in corruption cases 1000, 2000 and 4000. This is the first time that an Israeli Prime Minister has appeared before the state prosecutor's office.
- On 21 October after failing to reach a coalition agreement, Benjamin Netanyahu gives up on forming a government three days before the deadline set by the President Reuven Rivlin. The responsibility is handed over to the centrist leader Benny Gantz, whose Blue and White Movement was the second most voted party, very close behind Netanyahu's Likud, in the elections of 17 September, the results for which gave none of the parties the minimum of 61 of the 120 seats of the Knesset required to govern alone.
- On 27 October Benjamin Netanyahu and Benny Gantz begin a new round of talks to try to reach a coalition agreement and avoid a third election in less than a year.
- On 29 October WhatsApp files a lawsuit in a court in California against the Israeli company NSO Group for allegedly hacking its service to spy on over a hundred journalists and human rights activists.
- On 31 October the Israeli security forces arrest the prominent left-wing Palestinian politician and former member of the defunct Palestinian Legislative Council Khalida Jarrar, at her home in Ramallah. Jarrar was released on 28 February 2019 after being held without charge for 20 months.
- On 31 October according to the NGO Peace Now, on 10 October an

Israeli committee approved plans for the construction of 2,342 homes in Israeli settlements in the West Bank, 59% of which are in areas that Israel may likely evacuate under an eventual peace agreement with the Palestinians.

Palestine

- On 1 October the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas forms a committee to fulfil his promise to hold a general election in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem. The last presidential and legislative elections were held throughout Palestine in 2005 and 2006, respectively.
- On 7 October following an agreement between the PNA and the Israeli government, reached on 3 October, the Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh announces Israel's transfer to the Palestinian Finance Ministry of 428 million dollars from the clearing funds withheld since February 2019, and which amount to 1.44 billion dollars.
- On 7 October the Palestinian government approves a draft bill to protect whistleblowers, witnesses and experts, including their relatives, in corruption cases.
- On 24 October the Ramallah Court of First Instance reaffirms its decision on 17 October to block 59 websites and social networks in the West Bank and Gaza, which allegedly threaten national security, based on Article 39 of the 2018 cybercrime law.
- On 26 October Hamas appoints Anwar al-Shaer the new President of the Rafah governorate without elections taking place, a decision that sparks criticism from other Palestinian factions and civil society institutions in the Gaza Strip. Palestine's last local elections were held on 13 May 2016, only in the West Bank. Hamas refused to hold them in Gaza without Palestinian reconciliation.
- On 28 October after holding a meeting the day before with the other Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip and a delegation from Palestine's Central Elections Commission, Ismail Haniya affirms that Hamas is ready to take part in Palestinian elections assuming they meet the necessary transparency and legal requirements.

Conflicts between the Parties

- On 1 October dozens of Palestinians demonstrate in Jerusalem accusing Shabak, the Israeli intelligence and internal security service, of torturing the Palestinian prisoner Samer Arbid, arrested on 28 September together with another two people charged with taking part in an attack in August orchestrated by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).

November 2019

Israel

- On 4 November Israel announces that it will release the Jordanian citizens Hiba al-Labadi and Abdulrahman Miri, held in administrative detention since their arrest on 2 September at the Allenby Bridge crossing suspected of violating Israeli security, after Jordan recalls its ambassador in Tel Aviv for consultation on 29 October.
- On 5 November the Israeli Supreme Court rejects the appeal lodged by the director of the NGO Human Rights Watch (HRW) in Israel and Palestine Omar Shakir against the decision taken by the Interior Ministry in May 2018 not to extend his work visa. He is accused of supporting the pro-Palestine BDS movement that advocates boycotting Israel.
- On 10 November Israel returns Baqura and Ghumar to Jordan, in compliance with Abdullah II's announcement in October 2018 not to renew the lease of either territory to Israel, which was established in the annexes to the 1994 peace treaty.
- On 10 November Benjamin Netanyahu appoints his big rival from the nationalist right and leader of the HaYamin HeHadash party (New Right), Naftali Bennett, interim Defence Minister, thereby avoiding Bennett, who Netanyahu sacked in June as Education Minister, from approaching Benny Gantz's Blue and White party, which only has a few days left to form a government. Until now, Netanyahu himself had headed the Defence Ministry, alongside his post as Prime Minister.
- On 12 November the EU Court of Justice rules that food products coming

from the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel must include a label specifying their place of origin and whether this is an Israeli settlement.

- On 17 November the leader of the Yisrael Beiteinu party Avigdor Lieberman announces his support for Gantz for the formation of a minority government supported from outside of the coalition by the Joint Arab List, with the aim of pressuring Netanyahu into joining the coalition, and thereby moving away from Israel's ultra-religious parties.
- On 19 November the US changes its stance, held since 1978, with respect to the Israeli settlements in Palestinian territory, and says it no longer considers that the Israeli settlements in the West Bank violate international law.
- On 20 November, faced with the lack of an agreement to form a national unity government between Likud and Blue and White and Avigdor Lieberman's refusal to support either of these two parties, the Blue and White leader Benny Gantz gives up on forming a government hours before the deadline expires. After communicating this to the President Reuven Rivlin, the mandate is handed over to the Parliament, which has 21 days for any member to try to form an alliance that gathers together the 61 seats required to achieve a majority in the house. Failure to do this will mean Israel has to hold a third election.
- On 20 November at least 23 people – two civilians and 20 soldiers – are killed, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, in wide-scale Israeli airstrikes on positions of the Syrian army and the Iranian al-Quds Force. The bombing comes after four missiles launched from Syria reach the Golan Heights, occupied by Israel.
- On 21 November Israel's Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit announces Benjamin Netanyahu's indictment in Case 1000, for fraud and breach of trust for accepting gifts to the value of around 180,000 euros from businessmen in Hollywood, in exchange for favours; in Case 2000, for fraud and breach of trust for a deal made with the owner of the Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper, Arnon Mozes, also accused, for favourable press coverage; and in Case 4000, for bribery, fraud and

breach of trust after negotiating with the news website Walla!, owned by Shaul Elovitch, the main shareholder of Bezeq, the country's telecommunications giant, to guarantee favourable press coverage for himself and his wife. After the ruling, Netanyahu agrees to hold primary elections in Likud to decide on the party's leadership.

- On 26 November thousands of supporters of the acting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rally outside the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, called by Netanyahu himself and Likud to demand the arrest of the state prosecutors and members of the police force investigating his alleged involvement in various corruption scandals.

Palestine

- On 6 November Pierre Krähenbühl, head of the UN Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA), resigns after being accused of abuse of power and mismanagement in an internal investigation.
- On 15 November the UN General Assembly renews the mandate of UNRWA for a further three years despite opposition from the US and Israel, which considers that the agency has no reason to exist in its current state. Israel and the US oppose the fact that Palestinians are able to transfer their refugee status to their children, their aim being to reduce the number of people receiving financial assistance from the body, a position the Palestinians say is a violation of their rights.

Conflicts between the Parties

- On 12 November in a surgical strike in Gaza City, Israel kills Baha Abu al-Ata, leader of the al-Quds Brigades, the armed wing of Islamic Jihad, believed to be responsible for firing missiles at Israel in recent weeks. Islamic Jihad responds with intense rocket fire into southern and central Israel, in what may be the beginning of the most serious fighting since the war in 2014.
- On 14 November Islamic Jihad and Israel agree on a ceasefire mediated by Egypt after two days of shelling in both directions, triggered by the death of Baha Abu al-Ata.

- On 15 November the Israeli army announces it has launched new attacks on Islamic Jihad targets in Gaza, in response to a number of rockets fired at Israel, despite the ceasefire that entered into force the previous day.

- On 26 November thousands of Palestinian demonstrators take part in a day of rage in the West Bank, leading to clashes with Israeli security forces, to denounce the US' announcement that it no longer believes that the Israeli settlements violate international law.

- On 27 November the Israeli Defence Forces attack several targets in the Gaza Strip in response to two missiles fired into Israeli territory.

December 2019

Israel

- On 8 December the Likud Central Committee votes to scrap the primary elections, leaving Benjamin Netanyahu at the head of the party. However, on 11 December, after the deadline to form a government expires without an agreement, the committee decides, with Netanyahu's backing, to hold internal elections on 26 December.

- On 8 December the Israeli government authorizes the construction of an Israeli settlement in the old central market of Hebron, a city which, following the Oslo Accords, was divided into sectors H1, controlled by the PNA and which takes up 85% of the territory, and H2, which occupies the rest and is controlled by Israel, where the old market is located.

- On 9 December the two main Israeli parties – Likud and Blue and White – agree on the new general election to be scheduled for 2 March 2020 in the event that there is no agreement for a unity government before 11 December. If the deadline passes and no party is able to form a government, the Knesset will be dissolved and new elections will be called.

- On 18 December a week after the meeting between Ismail Haniya and Recep Tayyip Erdogan, *The Telegraph* reports that Turkey has allowed Hamas to organize operations against Israel from Istanbul.

- On 22 December Israel says it will allow Palestinian Christians from Gaza to visit Bethlehem and Jerusalem over Christmas, despite the Israeli blockade of the Strip.

- On 26 December Benjamin Netanyahu wins the Likud party primaries with 72.5% of the votes, against the former Minister Gideon Saar (27.5%).

- On 28 December the Defence Minister Naftali Bennett authorizes the official registration of territory located in settlements in Area C in the West Bank as Jewish-owned property.

- On 29 December the acting government approves the appointment of Yaakov Litzman, from the ultra-Orthodox United Torah Judaism party, as Health Minister, following Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's departure from the post.

Palestine

- On 6 December the US House of Representatives approves a symbolic resolution that supports the creation of two states to end the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

- On 8 December the Palestinian prisoner Musab al-Hindi puts an end to a 75-day hunger strike after reaching an agreement with the Israeli authorities to end four months of administrative detention.

- On 24 December the Commission of the Great March of Return and Breaking the Siege announces that the weekly demonstrations against Israeli occupation will now be held each month.

Conflicts between the Parties

- On 7 December Israel launches an attack against Hamas in Gaza in response to the launch of three rockets fired from the Strip but intercepted by the Iron Dome air defence system.

- On 20 December the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court opens an official investigation into the alleged war crimes committed in Palestinian territory by Israel since June 2014.

- On 26 December Israel launches a number of attacks on different Hamas targets in Gaza, hours after the army intercepts a missile fired from the Strip.

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