

Chronologies

Chronology of Events in Israel and Palestine

2012 begins with the arrest of the Palestinian Parliament Speaker, by Israeli soldiers, against the backdrop of a prolonged stalemate in peace talks, which lasts throughout the year, and with an increase in the region's instability due to the contagion effect of the Syrian conflict and tensions between Israel and Iran over Tehran's refusal to halt its nuclear programme. In Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas is elected interim President until elections are held, a solution accepted by Fatah and Hamas within a process of national reconciliation. With respect to the conflicts between the parties, in March the ceasefire in effect in Gaza since August 2011 is broken, following an increase in the violence between the Tsahal (Israeli army) and the Islamic Jihad, putting Hamas in a difficult position between supporting the Islamic Jihad but wanting to avoid armed conflict with Israel. Tensions in Gaza are further intensified after June, with cross-border attacks, as well as attacks against Israel launched from the Sinai Peninsula, which remains uncontrolled since the revolution in Egypt. In this context, the new Egyptian President, winner of the July elections, Mohamed Morsi, following a serious border incident at the beginning of August in which 16 Egyptian police officers are killed, decides to put Operation Eagle into action. This, the largest military deployment in the Sinai since peace with Israel in 1979, is aimed at recovering control of security on the Peninsula that borders Gaza and Israel. This intervention is especially significant at a time when Israel has all security alerts activated following the conflict opened in Syria, the consequent increase in tensions in Lebanon and Jordan, the trau-

matic power change in Egypt, governed by an Islamist Parliament and President, and the lack of progress to halt the Iranian nuclear programme, as well as the threats from Tehran to close the Ormuz Straits to traffic if international sanctions are upheld. Israeli policy towards the region is characterised in 2012 by constant allusions to the possibility of an armed conflict with Iran or the construction of separation fences on the Lebanese and Egyptian borders. In terms of its home policy, authorisation and construction of new settlements continue throughout the year, superseding those that were dismantled by court order and which represent one of the main reasons for the deadlock in negotiations with the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), further aggravated by the impasse in Jordanian and especially Egyptian mediation due to their respective political situations. In May, following the resignation of the opposition Kadima leader Tzipi Livni, Israel faces the constitution of a government of national unity between the Likud and Kadima, after the controversial agreement reached by the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the new opposition leader, Shaul Mofaz. However, this agreement, which avoids early elections being called, in a context of social protests against the political system and the cost of living, comes to an end in July with the departure of Kadima from the coalition due to a disagreement over the controversial Tal Law that provides for favourable treatment for ultra-orthodox Jews regarding military service. Thus, at the beginning of October Benjamin Netanyahu finally announces early elections to be held in January 2013. Coinciding with the start of the

Israeli pre-election campaign, the year ends with the worst escalation of violence between Gaza and Israel since Operation Cast Lead in 2008-2009. Eight days of Hamas attacks, countered by Israel's Operation Pillar of Defense, which causes close to 200 victims and leaves over 1,000 Palestinians injured, finally end on 21 December with an Egyptian and US-brokered truce. Another cause for contention, this time with the PNA, arises on 29 November with the recognition by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) of Palestine's observer State status.

January 2012

Israel

- On 8 January the government approves free education for children three years old and older, one of the demands of the social justice movement, which since the summer of 2011 has been protesting against the increases in the cost of living in Israel.
- On 9 January Noam Shalit, father of Gilad Shalit, the Israeli soldier released in October 2011 by Hamas after five years in captivity, announces his intention to run in the Labour Party's primary elections.
- On 12 January the Supreme Court declares the Citizenship Law, approved in 2003, constitutional. The law restricts the possibility of residing in Israel for citizens married to Palestinian nationals.

Palestine

- On 19 January the Speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council (Parlia-

ment) and member of Hamas, Aziz Duwaik, is arrested at a military checkpoint in Jaba, the West Bank, adding to the 23 MPs of the Islamist movement currently imprisoned in Israel. The Israeli army denies knowledge of the arrest, announced by the Palestinian news agency *Wafa*. Hamas calls the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to suspend all negotiation attempts with Israel, in protest against the arrest.

Peace Negotiations

- On 25 January the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas announces that the round of preliminary talks held with Israel throughout January, under Jordanian auspices, has ended without any advances. The announcement coincides with the deadline set by the International Quartet (US, EU, Russia and UN) for the parties to come to an initial agreement to resuming formal negotiations.

Conflicts between the parties

- On 18 January a Palestinian man is killed and three others injured in an attack by the Israeli army in Abu Safiyah, northern Gaza, on a militia group attempting to plant explosives near the security fence.

February 2012

Israel

- On 2 February the Defence Minister Ehud Barak declares that Israel might consider taking military action against Iran if Tehran does not meet demands made by the US and EU – which on 23 January imposed an unprecedented oil embargo on Iran – to halt its nuclear programme. Iran threatens to respond decisively to any attack and by closing the Strait of Hormuz. On 4 February Iran initiates manoeuvres in the Strait, which is a thoroughfare for a fifth of the world's oil traffic. The US steps up its naval presence in the area.
- On 5 February an explosion in el-Arish, Sinai, cuts the gas supply to Israel and Jordan. This is the twelfth act of sabotage carried out on the pipeline

that supplies Egyptian gas to both countries since the fall of Hosni Mubarak.

- On 12 February the six-day general strike called by the trade union *Histadrut* comes to an end after an agreement is reached between the Finance Minister and union representatives, in protest over the poor pay conditions of thousands of public workers contracted through recruitment agencies.

- On 12 February Israel closes the Temple Mount to tourists throughout the day allowing entry only to Muslim worshippers to avoid conflicts between these and a group of ultra-orthodox Jews calling for the “cleansing” of the Temple Mount, and the “expulsion of the enemies of Israel.”

- On 13 February two bomb attacks are carried out on Israeli diplomats, one in New Delhi, injuring eight people, and another failed attempt in Tiflis. On 14 February a further two failed attacks take place in Bangkok. Israel accuses Iran and Hezbollah for both attacks, while Tehran and the Shiite militia group accuse Mossad of planning the attacks.

- On 19 February several Iranian warships cross the Suez Canal to enter the Mediterranean with the intention of “showing the power of the Islamic Republic of Iran.” This is the second occasion since 1979 that Iranian warships have crossed the Canal, the first having taken place in February 2011. Israel and the US condemn Tehran's continual “provocation.”

- On 21 February Khader Adnan, the former spokesperson of the Islamic Jihad, ends a 66-day hunger strike, after his lawyers and the Minister of Justice reach an agreement for his release on 17 April. Hours later, the Supreme Court convenes an urgent meeting to study Adnan's appeal, who is currently being held under administrative detention without specific charges and therefore demands to either stand trial or be released.

- On 22 February the Supreme Court ruled against the government and Parliament renewing the Tal Law, which exempts young ultra-orthodox Jews from military service, describing the law as unconstitutional and discriminatory.

- On 22 February the Defence Minister approves the construction of 695

homes in Israeli settlements in Shilo and Binyamin, the West Bank.

- On 28 February the Israeli army closes two Palestinian television stations that are members of the International Telecommunication Union, *Watan TV* and *al-Quds Educational TV*, which broadcast from Ramallah, alleging that both were “pirate stations,” an accusation denied by the Palestinian Telecommunications Minister.

Palestine

- On 6 February the President of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), Mahmoud Abbas, is elected interim President in Doha until the presidential and legislative elections set for May. The decision is proposed by the Emir of Qatar, the country mediating the Palestinian reconciliation process, and agreed upon by Hamas.

- On 22 - 23 February Fatah and Hamas leaders meet in Cairo to move forwards in applying the Palestinian reconciliation agreement.

Peace Negotiations

- On 2 February the convoy of the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, is attacked during his visit to Gaza by protesters accusing him of being biased towards Israel. During his visit, Ban Ki-moon asks Israel to soften its embargo on Gaza.

March 2012

Israel

- On 6 March, after meeting with Barack Obama, Benjamin Netanyahu declares at the annual assembly of the *American Israel Public Affairs Committee* (AIPAC), the main Jewish lobby in the US, that Israel is facing a serious threat to its survival because of the Iranian nuclear programme.

- On 6 March the Indian journalist, Mohamed Qasim, is arrested in New Delhi, accused of being involved in the attack on 13 February on Israeli diplomats in the Indian capital.

- On 24 March a demonstration against an eventual Israeli attack on Iran

takes place in Tel Aviv, amid growing tensions between both countries over Tehran's refusal to halt its nuclear programme.

- On 25 March the Supreme Court rejects a state request to postpone the removal of a settlement in Migron, the West Bank, until 2015 and maintains the 31 March as the deadline for its dismantlement.
- On 27 March the former Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz wins 61.7% of the vote to become leader of the opposition Kadima party (centrist), led until now by the former Foreign Affairs Minister, Tzipi Livni.

Palestine

- On 22 March the UN Human Rights Council authorises the creation of a commission to study the impact of the illegal Israeli settlements on the Palestinian population and on the standstill in the peace talks, in a decision condemned by Israel and the US.

Peace Negotiations

- On 7 March a round of negotiations closes between the PNA and Jordan aimed at raising support to reactivate peace talks with Israel, with the PNA's reaffirmation that it will not initiate a rapprochement if Israel does not previously halt the expansion of its settlements in the West Bank.

Conflicts between the parties

- On 8 March a Palestinian minor is killed in Yatta, south of Hebron, during an Israeli military operation to arrest suspects for actions carried out against Israel.
- On 9 March in Gaza an Israeli army helicopter attacks the car carrying Sheikh Zuhair al-Qaisi, leader of the Popular Resistance Committees, killing both the Sheikh and his assistant, Mahmoud Ahmed al-Hanini. The attack according to Tsahal (Israeli army) was aimed at hampering preparations for an attack on the Egyptian border. Israel also accuses Hamas of failing to control security in Gaza. Hamas accuses Israel of violating the ceasefire in effect since August 2011. By 11 March, the ensuing

spiral of violence has killed 10 Islamic Jihad militants, six members of the Popular Resistance Committees and two Palestinian civilians. The Islamic Jihad retaliates by launching around a hundred missiles from Gaza at targets in southern Israel. On 12 March the cross-border fire continues killing five people in Gaza. On the same day, Egyptian mediation achieves a ceasefire from 01.00 hours on 13 March, although some rockets continue to be launched from Gaza. The Islamic Jihad warns that it will only respect the truce if Israel ends its attacks on Palestinian leaders in Gaza. For its part, Israel warns that if terrorist plans or actions continue against Israel in Gaza, it will take fresh measures and accuses Iran of supporting the Islamic Jihad. On 14 March a Grad missile launched from Gaza lands in Netivot, southern Israel, endangering the truce announced by Egypt on 12 March.

- On 30 March to mark "Land Day," which commemorates the death of six Palestinians on 30 March 1976 while protesting against the expropriation of Arab-Israeli land, a "Million Man March to Jerusalem" is organised that passes the borders between Israel and PNA-controlled territories and which in Ramallah ends with clashes between Palestinian demonstrators and Israeli soldiers leaving 30 injured. In Gaza, Israeli troops open fire on demonstrators trying to cross the Israeli border, leaving one dead. In Qalandia attacks by demonstrators on the Israeli army leave one of the protest organisers, MP Mustafa Barghouti, wounded. Deir Hanna, northern Israel, sees the largest of the demonstrations.

April 2012

Israel

- On 8 April following the publication of the poem, *What Must Be Said*, in which Israel is described as a danger to world peace, Israel declares its author, the Literature Nobel Laureate Günter Grass, a persona non grata. Grass, in 2006, admitted to being enlisted in his youth in the Waffen-SS, the elite body of the German Nazi regime.

- On 15 April 50 pro-Palestinian activists are arrested on their arrival at Ben Gurion international airport in Tel Aviv. Despite warnings from Israel that they would be denied entry, the activists had decided to travel there to participate in a day of protest called by 25 Palestinian NGOs from different cities in the West Bank. Hundreds of other activists from different European cities are held at their place of origin after airlines cancel their tickets in reaction to the Israeli warning.

- On 22 April the Egyptian Natural Gas Holding Company, EGAS, announces its definitive cancellation of the supply contract with Israel alleging that the country has breached its contract by failing to pay for four month's supply of gas. The accusation is denied by Jerusalem, which accuses Egypt of non-compliance with the Camp David Accords, which ensure gas supply from Egypt to Israel, and claims that the interruptions in the supply are due to Egypt's failure to prevent sabotage attempts on the Sinai pipeline.

- On 23 April the Israeli government legalises the settlements of Bruchin and Rechelim – north of the West Bank – and Sansana – near Hebron –, set up in 1990. This is the first time new settlements have been created since 1990.

- On 29 April the Council of Ministers approves the construction of new temporary homes in a settlement of Kokhav Yaakov, for 150 settlers that are to be evicted from Migron before August by order of the Supreme Court.

- On 30 April Israel begins the construction of a two-kilometre long, 10-metre high separation wall along the Lebanese border to protect the border town of Metula.

Palestine

- On 3 April the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Luis Moreno Ocampo, announces that the Court does not have the jurisdiction to investigate war crimes in the 2008-2009 Gaza conflict, because the PNA is not a State recognised by the United Nations.

- On 11 April the International Quartet meets in Washington during the G8 Summit in Washington and asks the

international community to guarantee 1.1 billion dollars in Palestinian aid in 2012.

- On 17 April 1,350 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails begin a hunger strike for Prisoners Day demanding the right to family visits for prisoners from Gaza, an end to solitary confinement and administrative arrests, and improvements in living conditions. Support protests take place in Gaza and the West Bank. On 29 April Ahmed Saadat, Secretary General for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a participant in the strike, is admitted to the medical wing of Ramle prison, as a preventative measure.
- On 27 April Hamas refuses to hold Palestinian parliamentary and presidential elections until negotiations are concluded to form a unity government with Fatah, which remain frozen despite agreements in April 2011 and February of this year.
- On 30 April the cofounder and senior member of Hamas, Mahmoud al-Zahar, declares that the Gaza Strip's governing group is in talks with the Islamic Jihad for unity between both groups.

Peace Negotiations

- On 17 April the PNA delivers a letter through its Chief Negotiator Saeb Erekat to Benjamin Netanyahu outlining Palestinian demands to resume peace negotiations, which include an immediate halt of settlement construction in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and the recognition of the 1967 borders with land swaps as the basis for the two-state solution.

May 2012

Israel

- 1 May the former Foreign Affairs Minister Tzipi Livni steps down as an MP for Kadima (centrist) in the Knesset (Parliament).
- On 8 May the two largest Israeli parties, the governing Likud and the opposition Kadima sign an historic agreement to form a government of national unity with the Kadima leader Shaul Mo-

faz as deputy Prime Minister, leading to the cancellation of the early elections approved by the Council of Ministers the previous day. The new executive will agree on the replacement of the Tal Law, which exempts ultra-orthodox Jews from compulsory military service, and the reform of the electoral system to modify the overrepresentation of small parties and "ensure the country's stability."

- On 12 May thousands of citizens demonstrate in Tel Aviv against the rise in the cost of living and social inequalities.
- On 23 May a demonstration in the south of Tel Aviv against illegal immigration ends with clashes with police and 17 arrests. According to the city Mayor Ron Huldai, up to 15% of its 400,000 inhabitants are illegal.
- On 23-24 May Baghdad hosts an international meeting between Iran, the US, UK, France, Russia, China, Germany and the EU to discuss the Iranian nuclear programme, which fails to reach an agreement of principle that satisfies the diametrically opposing stances of Tehran and Jerusalem.

Palestine

- On 2 May the historic Fatah leader and governor of Jenin Qadoura Moussa dies after being gunned down in his home the previous day. On 6 May Talal Dweikat succeeds Moussa at the head of the Jenin government. On 11 May, in the Israeli-controlled C Area of the West Bank, Palestinian police arrest Nizar Ghawadreh, suspected of murdering Governor Moussa. Ghawadreh's brother was killed in April in clashes with the Palestinian police in Bir al-Basha, Jenin. On 13 May it is reported that the former chief of the al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades Zakaria Zubeidi has been arrested in connection with the crime.
- On 14 May the Egyptian mediation between the Israeli authorities and the nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners on hunger strike since 17 April reaches an agreement in Shikma prison that puts an end to the strike that caused Hamas and Islamic Jihad representatives to threaten Israel with violent action should a single prisoner die of starvation. In exchange for a halt in terrorist activities, the Gaza prisoners are allowed family

visits and the use of solitary confinement is banned.

- On 20 May Fatah and Hamas reach an agreement in Cairo to start preparations to hold Palestinian elections in Gaza and the West Bank and to form an interim government of national unity.
- On 31 May Israel delivers the bodies of 91 Palestinians killed in attacks on Israel since 1967 to the PNA.

Peace Negotiations

- On 12 May Isaac Molho, Special Envoy of Benjamin Netanyahu, arrives in Ramallah to meet with Mahmoud Abbas and deliver a letter in response to that sent to the Israeli government by the PNA outlining Palestine's conditions for resuming the peace process on 17 April.

Conflicts between the parties

- On 15 May Palestinians demonstrate for Nakba (catastrophe) Day, which commemorates the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 and the exodus of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. The biggest demonstrations take place in Ramallah, Qalandia, the Ofer military prison and Gaza. There are very few incidents in comparison to the violent protests in 2011: in the district of Issawiya, East Jerusalem, clashes break out between Palestinian demonstrators and the Israeli army. In Gaza a missile is fired into southern Israel without causing any damages.
- On 19 May clashes erupt between settlers from the Yitzhar settlement and inhabitants of the neighbouring Palestinian village Asira Al-Qibliya, in the north of the West Bank. The Palestinian government asks Israel to arrest and try the Jewish settlers, who it accuses of starting the violence. The PNA also condemns the passive role of the Israeli soldiers in the incident, documented in a video of the clashes recorded by the Israeli NGO *B'Tselem*.

June 2012

Israel

- On 3 June a new immigration law comes into effect which punishes illegal

immigrants with up to three years' imprisonment. At the same time, the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu orders the acceleration of the deportation of nearly 25,000 irregular immigrants from Ethiopia, South Sudan, Ghana and the Ivory Coast, faced with a sharp rise in African arrivals, whose population in Israel has reached 60,000.

- On 3 June two Eritreans are injured after their home is deliberately set on fire in Jerusalem.
- On 6 June the Parliament votes down a regulation bill with 69 votes to 22, by which the extreme right intended to block a court ruling to demolish five illegal homes in the Beit El settlement. Benjamin Netanyahu had threatened to dismiss government members voting in favour of the law.
- On 8 June an Israeli court authorises the deportation of 1,500 irregular immigrants from South Sudan rejecting an appeal from various NGOs claiming that deportation would endanger the lives of the African citizens in question.
- On 8 June the Defence Minister announces that between 20,000 and 25,000 tents will be erected in different holding centres for accommodating irregular immigrants from Africa.
- On 17 June the government initiates the repatriation of South Sudanese irregular immigrants with an initial flight carrying 120 "voluntary" deportees, who in return are compensated with 1,000 euros and the return ticket to their country of origin.

Palestine

- On 29 June UNESCO declares the Church of the Nativity and parts of the old city of Bethlehem as World Heritage Sites.

Conflicts between the parties

- On 1 June a gunfight at the Kissufim border crossing, between Israel and Gaza, close to the Ein HaShlosha kibutz ends with the death of an Israeli soldier and a Palestinian militant, after the latter cuts a hole in the security fence.
- On 17 June a night attack by the Israeli army on positions of the armed wing of Hamas, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, in northern Gaza leaves

five injured. On 18 June two Palestinians are killed in a fresh attack in Beit Hanoun, Gaza.

- On 18 June the death of an Israeli in a Jihadist attack from the Egyptian Sinai, triggers a spiral of violence between the Gaza Strip and Israel. Israel retaliates with an offensive launched on Gaza in which six Palestinian militants are killed. On 20 June Hamas claims responsibility for launching more than 50 rockets from Gaza into southern Israel. The Israeli army responds with airstrikes on seven targets in Gaza. On 21 June in the early hours of the morning, Palestinian militants fire seven rockets at Eshkol, Ashkelon and other places in the Negev. On 23 June a ceasefire enters into effect agreed by Jerusalem and Hamas, which momentarily eases tensions in the area.

July 2012

Israel

- On 1 July in the Tel Aviv District Court the trial begins against the former Prime Minister, former Mayor of Jerusalem and former Minister of Trade and Industry, Ehud Olmert, the former Mayor of Jerusalem, Uri Lupolianski and another 11 public figures and real estate developers, over the Holyland case, which the Public Prosecutor says could be the biggest corruption case in the country's history.
- On 10 July Olmert is cleared by the Jerusalem District Court in the Rishon Tours and Talansky corruption trials but is found guilty of breach of trust in a fourth case, the so-called Investment Centre affair.
- On 14 July a demonstrator sets himself alight during a protest in Tel Aviv condemning the excessive rise in the cost of living in Israel. Protests are also staged in Jerusalem, Haifa and Beer-sheba.
- On 15 July Hillary Clinton arrives in Tel Aviv from Cairo on her tour of the Middle East. One of the US Secretary of State's highest priorities is to dissuade Israel from taking any unilateral offensive action against Iran over its refusal to halt its nuclear programme.
- On 17 July Kadima announces its departure from the government coalition

after failing to reach an agreement with Likud over the differential treatment of ultra-orthodox Jews regarding military service. Following the High Court's decision in February to overrule the renewal of the controversial Tal Law, which exempts ultra-orthodox Jews from Israel's compulsory military service, Benjamin Netanyahu drafted a proposal to appease the more conservative members of the coalition delaying this collective's entry until they are 23 years of age. However, Kadima demands that ultra-orthodox Jews perform military service under the same conditions as the rest of the population.

- On 23 July police save a citizen from self-immolation during a protest by the Israeli social justice movement in Ofakim, a day after a disabled man did the same and was admitted to hospital in Yehud.
- On 31 July Israel and the PNA reach an agreement in Jerusalem to fight together against tax evasion and illegal trade.

Palestine

- On 2 July police announce the arrest in an operation carried out by the Palestinian security forces in June of 200 people, including security agents, for trafficking and illegal possession of weapons in the West Bank, part of which was connected with the attack on the home of the Jenin Governor Qadoura Moussa, who died as a result of the attack.
- On 4 July *Al-Jazeera* publishes a report that reopens the debate on the causes of Yasser Arafat's death on 11 November 2004, in the Percy military hospital, France. The news follows an investigation carried out by the Institute of Radiation Physics at the University Hospital of Lausanne that found traces of polonium 210, the substance used in 2006 to poison the former Russian spy Alexander Litvinenko in London, in body fluid samples of the former PNA President. On 15 July the press reports that Yasser Arafat's widow, Suha Arafat, intends to press charges at a French court against persons unknown for poisoning.
- On 10 July the PNA calls local elections in Gaza and the West Bank set for 20 October.

- On 14 - 15 July clashes with police break out in Ramallah during a demonstration against a meeting scheduled to take place between the Israeli vice-President Shaul Mofaz and the PNA President Mahmoud Abbas.
- On 16 July 40 Palestinians from Gaza visit family members in prison in Israel in the first visit authorised by Israel since 2007. This is one of the central demands of the Palestinian prisoners, who were on hunger strike for 27 days during April and May.
- On 17 July the Hamas authorities in Gaza hang three Palestinians found guilty of premeditated murder.
- On 23 July the Hamas authorities in Gaza announce Egypt's decision to facilitate entry and exit between Gaza and Egypt after approving visa-free travel for Palestinian citizens.

Conflicts between the parties

- On 12 July a Hamas member is killed in Gaza during an Israeli airstrike.

August 2012

Israel

- On 1 August, during his Middle Eastern tour, the US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta declares at a press conference in Ashkelon, together with his Israeli counterpart Ehud Barak, that Iran must negotiate acceptable limits on its nuclear programme or face the possibility of military action if all diplomatic options fail.

Conflicts between the parties

- On 5 August 16 Egyptian police officers are killed on the border between Egypt and the Gaza Strip in an attack by an armed Jihadist group attempting to infiltrate into Israel. Eight terrorists were killed according to the Israeli Defence Ministry. The President Mohamed Morsi holds an urgent meeting with the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces to assess the incident, condemned by Hamas. After the meeting, Egypt closes its border with Gaza indefinitely and prepares to launch a military campaign in the Sinai to strengthen security in the region.

- On 5 August the Israeli army shoots at two Palestinians on a motorcycle in the Gaza Strip who belonged to a Popular Resistance Committee, killing both of them. Shortly after the incident, several rockets are launched into southern Israel without causing any damages.

September 2012

Israel

- On 2 September two days before the deadline set by the Supreme Court, the 300 inhabitants of the West Bank Migron settlement are evacuated to the neighbouring settlement of Ofra under heightened security, thereby putting an end to a six-year legal dispute.
- On 5 September Benjamin Netanyahu abruptly dissolves the presidential security cabinet during a meeting on the Iranian nuclear programme accusing its members of leaking confidential information. The decision follows the appearance hours earlier of an edition of the newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth* with information relating to the deliberations and disagreements of the cabinet in its meeting the previous day.
- On 21 September an armed group on the border between Israel and Egypt shoots at an Israeli patrol carrying out construction work on the security fence running between the two States, leaving one Israeli soldier and three Egyptian militants dead.

Palestine

- On 7 September and preceding days mass demonstrations are staged in the West Bank against the 5% increase in fuel prices.
- On 8 September Mahmoud Abbas announces that the PNA will request entry to the UN at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on 27 September in a fresh attempt for recognition, which, unlike in 2011, will not be presented before the Security Council, where a US veto is guaranteed.
- On 13 September dozens of protesters gather to demonstrate in Gaza's Rimal district, against the appearance of the video entitled *Innocence of Muslims*, which ridicules the prophet Mo-

ammed and triggers a wave of protests among Islamic conservative sectors in various countries. The international bodies present in Gaza temporarily close their offices as a measure of precaution.

- On 17 September a Gaza court hands down life sentences to two Islamic fundamentalists and ten and one-year sentences to two others, all of whom are members of the terrorist group *Tawhid wal Jihad*, for the murder of the Italian aid worker Vittorio Arrigoni in April 2010.
- On 27 September Mahmoud Abbas announces at the UNGA that he will submit a request for the Palestinian Territories to be given observer State status in the UN. Abbas's request for symbolic recognition, which is far more moderate than last year's when the Palestinian leader requested full UN Member-State status, serves to affirm that the PNA's intentions are not to delegitimise the State of Israel, but rather to lay claim to Palestine's right to be recognised as a State in its own right.

Conflicts between the parties

- On 6 September three Palestinians, identified by Israel as terrorists attempting to launch missiles into southern Israel, are killed in an Israeli airstrike on the Gaza Strip.
- On 9 September two rockets launched from Gaza land in Netivot and Beersheba.

October 2012

Israel

- On 9 October Benjamin Netanyahu calls early elections for February 2013 following the departure of Kadima from the national unity government, thereby weakening the chances of a parliamentary approval of the austerity budget for 2013.
- On 21 October Israel and the US begin a five-day joint military exercise known as Austere Challenge 12, the largest in the history of either country. The operations coincide with the Turning Point 6 drill, the largest in Israeli history, for dealing with the possible situ-

ation of an earthquake measuring 7.1 on the Richter scale.

- On 25 October Benjamin Netanyahu announces that his Likud party will run in the early 2013 elections together with Yisrael Beiteinu, the party of Foreign Affairs Minister Avigdor Lieberman. The new joint list of the Israeli right, Likud Beiteinu, will increase Netanyahu's reelection chances.

Palestine

- On 21 October the West Bank holds municipal elections with a 54.8% turnout. Hamas decides to boycott the elections and bans them in Gaza announcing that it will not recognise the results in the West Bank, where Fatah, without competition from its rival, wins in the biggest towns.
- On 23 October the Emir of Qatar, Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, arrives in Gaza, in the first visit by a Head of State to the Strip since Hamas took power in 2007. The visit receives criticism from Fatah in the West Bank, claiming that the act serves to deepen the Palestinian divide.

Conflicts between the parties

- On 5 October clashes break out in the Old City of Jerusalem between police and Palestinian demonstrators throwing stones at police vehicles parked near the Temple Mount.
- On 8 October around twenty missiles are launched from the Gaza Strip at Ofakim, in southern Israel, in response to the previous day's Israeli bombardment in Rafah that killed one civilian and injured several others.
- On 13 October the Jordanian Hisham al-Saedini, one of the founding members of the Mujahedeen Shura council and military chief of the Tawhid Wal Jihad, the largest Salafist group in Gaza, is killed together with another militant in an Israeli airstrike in Jabaliya.
- On 22 October the Israeli air force attacks a training ground in northern Gaza killing two members of Hamas and the Popular Resistance Committee, in response to earlier rocket launches at a military patrol near the Nir Am Kibutz, in southern Israel. On 23 October eight missiles are fired from Gaza into south-

ern Israel. Israel's response to the attack leaves four Palestinian militants dead. On 24 October more than 60 rocket launches from Gaza injure five people in an attack on Ashkelon. Damages are minimised by the Iron Dome defence system. Israel responds with two airstrikes in the north of the Strip which kill two Palestinians.

November 2012

Israel

- On 5 November Israel announces plans for the construction of 1,213 new homes in Ramot and Pisgat Zeev, in Jerusalem.
- On 6 November the trial in absentia begins in a court in Istanbul against four Israeli military commanders for the 2010 attack on the Freedom Flotilla as it was attempting to break the Gaza blockade, in which nine Turkish activists were killed.
- On 11 November a missile launched from Syria reaches an Israeli military base in the Golan Heights without causing any casualties. Israel heightens its surveillance on the border and the Tshal (Israeli army) responds with warning shots against a Syrian artillery battery. This is the first time since the end of the 1973 Yom Kippur war that Israel has fired into Syrian territory, having registered eight similar incidents since the outbreak of the Syrian revolution.
- On 14 November in reaction to the new unilateral attempts of the PNA to be recognised as an observer State of the UN at the General Assembly on 29 November, Israel threatens to retaliate with a number of acts ranging from freezing the transference of tax revenue to the Palestinian authorities to the full or partial cancellation of the 1993 Oslo Accords and even the dismantling and banning of the PNA itself. Israel also assesses the possibility of offering the PNA incentives if they backtrack, such as an agreement to recognise a Palestinian State with temporary borders until there is no longer a divide between Hamas and Fatah or Palestine holds joint elections.
- On 24 November Israel increases the fishing limit in Gaza from three to six

miles, as part of the truce agreement reached with Hamas on 21 November following eight days of violence.

- On 25 November Likud holds primaries to elect its party members from 97 candidates that will run in the elections on 22 January 2013 in joint lists with Yisrael Beiteinu.
- On 26 November Ehud Barak, the Defence Minister and leader of Atzamaut, a breakaway party from the Labour Party, announces he is leaving political life for personal reasons.
- On 25 November Israel successfully tests the new missile interception system David's Sling, capable of stopping medium and long-range launches in a 125-kilometre radius.
- On 27 November the former Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni announces her return to politics, which she left in May after losing the leadership of Kadima, with the creation of a new political party called Hatnua (Movement), which she will lead in the January 2013 elections. One of the main aims of the new centre-left party will be to achieve peace with the Palestinians.
- On 29 November the government authorises the construction of 3,000 new homes in Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, after the UNGA grants Palestine observer State status. Israel also decides to authorise the construction project in E1 Area to connect Jerusalem and the Maale Adumim settlement, which was vetoed by the US 20 years ago and would separate Ramallah from Bethlehem.

Palestine

- On 12 November the President of the PNA Mahmoud Abbas announces before the Arab League that Palestine will go ahead with its request at the UNGA on 29 November to be accepted as a non-member observer State despite warnings from Israel and the US.
- On 13 November work begins to open the tomb of Yasser Arafat in Ramallah, as part of an investigation launched by French prosecutors in August to determine the real causes of his death in a French military hospital on 11 November 2004.
- On 29 November the UNGA recognises Palestine as an observer State

with 138 votes in favour, nine against and 41 abstentions. This is a symbolic victory over Israeli and US diplomacy but does not mean recognition of full membership in the UN.

Conflicts between the parties

- On 5 November a Palestinian is shot dead by Israeli soldiers after failing to obey orders to stop as he approached the fence that separates Gaza from Israel to the east of the Bureij refugee camp.
- On 10 November a new wave of cross-border attacks between Israel and the Gaza Strip increases tensions in the area. Between 70 and 90 launches from Gaza into southern Israel, which injure four Israeli soldiers, are answered with an attack on seven targets in the Strip killing six Palestinians, one of them a member of the Islamic Jihad. On 12 November the Chief of the Israeli Armed Forces Benni Gantz meets with the country's military high command to analyse a large-scale response to the Gaza attacks. On the same day, 15 Israeli rocket launches bolster the country's response. Hamas, while appealing to the Egyptian mediation, ceases its attacks; although other Palestinian factions continue. On 14 November Ahmed Jabari, head of the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, is killed by an Israeli rocket in an offensive launched by Israel to destroy the Hamas and Islamic Jihad positions in the Gaza Strip. With at least 13 dead and hundreds injured the escalation of violence between Gaza and Israel reaches its worst levels since Operation Cast Lead in 2008-2009. In response, on 15 November, for the first time since the Gulf War in 1991, a rocket hits Tel Aviv as part of an offensive of 150 missiles launched by Hamas against cities in southern Israel, in which three people are killed. On the same day, Israel launches Operation Pillar of Defense and announces the mobilisation of thousands of army reserves as well as preparations for a possible ground offensive on Gaza. Three senior Hamas members are killed in Khan Yunis in one of the Israeli attacks. Israel bombards different points of the Gaza Strip throughout the night of 15-16 November hours before

the Egyptian Prime Minister Hesham Qandil's visit to the territory to support the Palestinian cause. On 16 November a second Palestinian missile lands in Tel Aviv as part of a fresh offensive on different cities, forcing Qandil to hurriedly leave the Strip. The Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi assures that efforts will be made to halt the Israeli aggression against Gaza on the same day that a mass demonstration in Alexandria demands measures to be taken against Israel. On the same day, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades launch two missiles at Jerusalem that reach the capital, landing close to the Gush Etzion settlement. Hamas also claims to have shot down an Israeli fighter plane. On 16 November two Hamas leaders, Ahmed Abu Lalal and Jaled Shaer, are killed in one of the bombing raids of Operation Pillar of Defense. On 17 November multiple Israeli airstrikes hit, among other targets, the office of the Prime Minister of Gaza and movement leader Ismail Haniya, as well as the al-Marazi and Rafah refugee camps, leaving eight dead. Dozens of missiles are fired from Gaza at Israel's major cities, which are intercepted by the Iron Dome defence system and include two Iranian-manufactured Fajr-5 missiles aimed at Tel Aviv. In view of the gravity of the situation, diplomatic contacts are intensified in an attempt to reach a truce. On 18 November the Hamas supreme leader Khaled Mashaal travels from exile in Qatar to Cairo to try to formulate a truce agreement with the Arab States and Turkey, at an emergency meeting called by the Arab League in the Egyptian capital, where it is announced that a delegation will be sent to Gaza in the coming days. Likewise, the French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius travels to Jerusalem and Tel Aviv to meet with Benjamin Netanyahu, Avigdor Lieberman, Ehud Barak and Mahmoud Abbas. Meanwhile, Operation Pillar of Defense increases its intensity, with attacks by the Israeli navy on several points of the Gaza coastline. Among the day's 29 victims is Tamer al-Hamri, the leader of the Islamic Jihad. On 20 November Mohamed Morsi announces that the Egyptian, Qatari and Turkish mediators have achieved an agreement in principle to halt the Israeli attacks, and Hamas

spokesperson Ayman Taha announces that Israel and the Palestinian militia in Gaza have agreed a brokered truce that will enter into effect at midnight; however the Israeli attacks continue and a Hamas missile hits the Palestinian area of Jerusalem and the Jewish Gush Etzion settlement. Parallel to this, the UN Security Council prepares a text condemning the hostilities, opposed by Washington, which claims that the document refutes Israel's right to defend itself, while Moscow accuses the US of being an obstacle to international consensus. On 21 November at least seven Palestinians and seven Israelis are killed in another day of cross-border attacks. On 21 November a bomb explodes on a bus in the centre of Tel Aviv leaving 32 injured in an attack celebrated by the Hamas television station, *al-Aqsa*, two of whose reporters are killed in the same day in an Israeli attack on a Gaza press office. Hours later, Shin Bet agents (internal security), the police and the Israeli Defense Forces arrest various residents of Beit Lafia, a town near to Ramallah, for their alleged connection with the attack in Tel Aviv. Among the arrested, who admitted having ties with Hamas or the Islamic Jihad, is an Arab-Israeli citizen born in Beit Lafia but resident in Tayibe, in the centre of Israel. On the same day, the Egyptian and US Foreign Ministers, Mohamed Kamel Amr and Hillary Clinton, announce the truce in Cairo, which should enter into effect at midnight and includes an agreement between Israel and Hamas to stop all violence in the area within 24 hours, after which Egyptian-brokered negotiations will commence between the parties. On 23 November a Palestinian is killed approaching the fence that separates Israel and Gaza by a shot fired from the Israeli side. The incident endangers the truce and Hamas says that it will condemn the attack before the Egyptian mediators.

December 2012

Israel

- On 2 December Israel confirms that it will block the transfer of taxes corresponding to November – 92 million

euros – which in virtue of the Paris Agreement – an economic protocol of the Oslo Accords – the Israeli State collects for the PNA, and will use it to reduce the Palestinian debt to public companies and Israeli bodies, which amounts to more than 200 million euros. The measure constitutes a new Israeli response to the PNA's unilateral decision to request recognition as an observer State at the UNGA, which Israel sees as a violation of the Oslo Accords. Benjamin Netanyahu assures that a Palestinian State will not be created without a prior agreement guaranteeing the absolute security of all Israelis and Israel's legitimate right to exist as a State and to have Jerusalem as its capital.

- On 3 December the Israeli ambassadors in Spain, the United Kingdom, France, Sweden and Denmark are summoned by those countries' Foreign Ministers to explain the measures adopted by Israel after the acceptance of Palestine as an observer State by the UNGA.
- On 11 December Israeli soldiers raid the offices of three Palestinian NGOs in Ramallah, the Women's Union, the Palestinian NGO Network and Addameer.
- On 13 December the Public Prosecution announces its ruling to charge the Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman with breach of trust and fraud in connection with the irregular appointment of his successor Zeev Ben Arie, as ambassador in Belarus. On 16 December Lieberman submits his resignation thereby waiving his immunity with the intention of settling a trial that he hopes will be quick and over by the legislative elections on 22 January 2013.
- On 19 December the Jerusalem City Council approves a plan to construct 2,612 homes in Givat Hamatos, south Jerusalem, beyond the Green Line, which add to the 1,500 approved on 17 December in Ramat Shlomo, East Jerusalem.
- On 26 December Israeli state radio confirms the news published by the Arab newspaper *al-Quds al-Arabi* and

Yedioth Aharonot, according to which the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently travelled in secret to Amman to meet with King Abdullah of Jordan and military and secret service advisers from both countries over the Syrian crisis and the mutual concern over Syria's control of chemical weapons.

- On 30 December the Attorney General Yehuda Weinstein officially indicts the former minister and leader of the Yisrael Beiteinu party Avigdor Lieberman for abusing his authority by appointing an Israeli diplomat as Ambassador to Latvia. Years before the diplomat had delivered a confidential dossier to Lieberman, an MP at the time, containing information regarding the police investigation that linked him with a case of alleged corruption and fraud.
- On 31 December Israel raises the 2007 embargo on construction materials in Gaza.

Palestine

- On 2 December an explosion in Deir el-Balah, Gaza, attributed to an Israeli missile, leaves four people injured. Israel denies any connection with the attack.
- On 8 December Khaled Meshal, Hamas leader in exile, promises the end of Israel assuring that he will never recognise it as a State, in a speech in Gaza during the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Islamist group. The declarations made by Meshal, who is visiting Gaza for the first time, are condemned by the vast majority of Israeli parties and media from diverse ideologies for tacitly closing all chances of negotiation and presenting a direct threat to Israeli security.
- On 9 December the Foreign Ministers of the Arab League, meeting in Doha, pledge their assistance to the PNA with a monthly payment of a hundred million dollars as compensation for funds withheld by Israel.

Conflicts between the parties

- On 12 December an Israeli border policewoman kills a Palestinian teenager after he threatened a fellow officer with a toy gun, in Hebron. The incident sparks clashes between Palestinian demonstrators and the Israeli security forces in villages near the Cave of the Patriarchs.

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