

## Chronologies

# Chronology of Events in Israel and Palestine

*With the potential threat to stability in the Middle East posed by the war in neighbouring Syria, the year begins in Israel with legislative elections in January in which the right-wing coalition formed by Likud (The Consolidation, Conservative Zionist) and Yisrael Beiteinu (Israel Our Home, ultra-nationalist liberal) wins a close-run victory that forces both parties to seek a wider governing coalition. The complex negotiations across a wide spectrum of political options bear no fruit until mid-March, when the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announces the formation of a new coalition government. This includes, besides the Likud – Yisrael Beiteinu alliance, Yesh Atid (There is a Future, centrist secular) and HaBayit HaYehudi (The Jewish Home, ultra-nationalist conservative) as well as Hatnuah (The Movement, social liberal progressive) and led by the former Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, who will take over as Minister of Justice and lead the peace talks with the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). The peace talks, however, are not the main priority of the new and, as of yet, unstable cabinet, which is more keenly focused on internal issues, such as how to weather Israel's economic crisis, or the need for government members to agree on the reform bill on compulsory military service, following the Supreme Court's repeal of the Tal Law in February 2012, which exempted young orthodox Jews from service. Also worthy of mention is the specific case of Avigdor Lieberman, who is forced to step down as Foreign Minister until November when he is cleared of corruption charges by the Israeli Ministry of Justice, in a trial which began in February 2013. On the international panorama, the uncertain*

*drift of the Syrian conflict and its effects on the security of the State of Israel constitute the priority of the new cabinet. To this end, besides the preventative attack launched in May by Israel on a convoy in Syrian territory suspected of transporting Iranian missiles destined for the Bashar al-Assad regime, the security measures adopted by Israel are substantially heightened -including periodic closures of its air space and the permanent activation of the Iron Dome defensive system-, especially in the wake of missile attacks from Lebanese territory and the Egyptian Sinai in August, which coincide with the growing possibility of international involvement in Syria. Faced with all of this, and despite the climate of scepticism hanging over the peace talks, the new US Secretary of State John Kerry is able to push ahead with his initiative to reactivate talks just two months after being appointed in February 2013, a year in which the Oslo Accords celebrates its twentieth anniversary. After three months of negotiation initiated in April with the Israeli government and the PNA, on 29 July the talks are resumed, headed by the chief negotiators, Tzipi Livni and Saeb Erekat, with Israel's announcement that it will release 104 Palestinian prisoners throughout the year who have already served over 20 years in prison. However, despite this goodwill gesture, the Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem continue to constitute a major stumbling block to the peace process, largely due to Likud's need to please some of its coalition partners -Yisrael Beiteinu and HaBayit HaYehudi-, who demand that the settlements are maintained and even extended. In this regard, the most contro-*

*versial announcement comes in the middle of August with the authorisation of 1,187 new settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, as well as an expansion of 942 settlements in Gilo (south-east Jerusalem). Despite this and the PNA's protests, negotiations are still resumed and register their first major crisis in mid-November when the PNA, in reaction to the approval of nearly 24,000 new homes in the West Bank and the E1 area of East Jerusalem, threatens to withdraw from the negotiating table, forcing Benjamin Netanyahu to halt the construction plans authorised by the Housing Ministry. The announcement in December 2013 of a draft law to annex the Jordan Valley, the only border between the West Bank and Jordan, poses a new threat to the reactivation of the talks. This announcement comes at the same time as the release of a further 26 Palestinian prisoners of the 104 promised by Israel and rising tensions in the Palestinian Territories.*

## January 2013

### Israel

- On 10 January a car bomb meant for Nissim Alperon, a member of a well-known organised crime family, explodes in northern Tel Aviv leaving four people injured. Alperon escapes the attack unharmed.
- On 11 January 250 Palestinians encamp in the so-called E1 area, an area of land in the West Bank between Jerusalem and Jericho, publicly earmarked by Israel in December 2012 for the construction of thousands of new settlements. On 13 January Israel dismantles the

camp, known as Bar el-Shams (Gate of the Sun) and removes its occupants.

- On 22 January Israel holds legislative elections in which the current Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, leader of the right-wing coalition of *Likud* (Zionist conservative) and Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu (Ultra-nationalist liberal), wins 23.32% of the vote and 31 seats in the *Knesset* (Parliament), eleven fewer than it had held until now. The result forces Netanyahu and Lieberman to form a wider coalition. Yair Lapid's *Yesh Atid* (Centrist religious) comes second with 14.32% and 19 seats. *HaAvoda*, the Labour Party led by Shelly Yachimovich obtains 11.39% and 15 seats. *HaBayit HaYehudi* (Ultra-nationalist conservative) rises to fourth place with 9.12% of the vote and 12 seats.
- On 30 January Israel unblocks 100 million dollars to be transferred to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) frozen by Israel after the recognition by the UN General Assembly of Palestine as an observer state in November 2012. The measure, authorised by Benjamin Netanyahu, comes in response to the seriousness of the PNA's financial situation.

#### *Palestine*

- On 23 January the PNA threaten to take Israel to the International Criminal Court in The Hague over the growing Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

#### *Conflicts between the Parties*

- On 1-2 January clashes at the Esh Kodesh settlement between Palestinians and Israeli settlers leave six people injured. The cause of the fighting is a fertile area of land that has been used for 10 years by Israeli settlers from the Benyamin area, but which must be returned to its original Palestinian owners and the settlers removed, according to a ruling by the Supreme Court.
- On 15 January a young Palestinian man is shot dead by the Israeli army in Budrus, the West Bank, after he and other Palestinians throw Stones at an Israeli military convoy. Budrus is the scene of frequent protests against the wall that separates Israeli from the Palestinian Territories.

- On 19 January a young Palestinian man trying to enter Israel from the Beit Yatir camp near Hebron is shot down by the Israeli army.
- On 23 January a Palestinian citizen is killed in the al-Aroub refugee camp in the West Bank in an attack launched by the Israeli army.
- On 23 January a Palestinian citizen dies after being seriously injured in an Israeli attack on the Aida refugee camp, close to Bethlehem.

### **February 2013**

#### *Israel*

- On 5 February the Bulgarian Interior Minister Tsvetan Tsvetanov assures that two members of Hezbollah were behind the car bomb attack that killed five Israeli tourists in Burgas in July 2012.
- On 14 February the Israeli Justice Ministry acknowledges the existence of Ben Zygier, alias Ben Allen, Ben Burrows, John Doe or Prisoner X. A Mossad agent with dual Australian and Israeli nationality, Zygier committed suicide in an Israeli prison on 15 December 2010 where he was imprisoned, accused of threatening the security of the State. The news is revealed after the gag order is partially lifted and on 17 February a Foreign Affairs and Defence subcommittee of the Israeli Parliament announces the opening of an investigation.
- On 14 February the trial begins in the Jerusalem District Court against the former Foreign Minister and leader of Yisrael Beiteinu, Avigdor Lieberman, for breach of trust and fraud in his appointment of Zeev Ben Arie as ambassador to Latvia, charges that Lieberman denies.
- On 20 February in a surprise joint appearance, Benjamin Netanyahu and the former Foreign Minister and leader of the opposition party *Hatnuah* (Social liberal progressive), Tzipi Livni, announces that Livni will be the Justice Minister in the new cabinet and that she will head the Israeli delegation in the peace negotiations with the Palestinians.

#### *Palestine*

- On 5 February the press reports Hamas' decision to impose the Islam-

ic veil and long-sleeved dresses on students at the al-Aqsa University, a decision fiercely criticised by the liberal student body, which sees it as yet another attempt by religious fundamentalists to Islamise the Gaza Strip and interfere in the personal lives of its citizens.

- On 19 February the Palestinian Samer Issawi, reaches 200 days of a hunger strike in the intensive care unit of Assaf Harofeh Hospital. Issawi demands the release of Palestinian prisoners held in administrative detention – i.e., without charges – and Palestine's access to an independent state, with its capital in Jerusalem and free of all Israeli occupation. Issawi, who was serving a sentence since his arrest in the Second Intifada, was one of the 1,027 prisoners exchanged for Gilad Shalit in 2011, but on 7 July 2012 was arrested again for violating the terms of the exchange by travelling to Ramallah. 14 other prisoners exchanged for Shalit have also been arrested since for violating the terms. On 20 February around 500 Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails go on hunger strike in solidarity with Issawi and three other prisoners who have not eaten for between two and seven months.

#### *Conflicts between the Parties*

- On 24 February the death of the Palestinian prisoner Arafat Jaradat, in Megiddo prison, ignites a wave of unrest in the West Bank. Fearing the beginning of a Third Intifada, Benjamin Netanyahu sends an urgent message to the PNA, which declares Jaradat a martyr for the cause to calm the situation in the PNA-controlled territories. Netanyahu also orders the transfer of 100 million dollars corresponding to tax revenues from January, pending transfer to the PNA and withheld by Israel. The same day, around 4,500 prisoners go on hunger strike in protest against Jaradat's death.
- On 26 February a missile launched from Gaza strikes Ashkelon, the first since the truce signed in November 2012, giving rise to a series of three-way talks between Hamas, Israel and Egypt. The al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade, the armed wing of Fatah, claims responsibility for the attack, which comes in response to the death of the Palestinian prisoner Arafat Jaradat.

**March 2013***Israel*

- On 2 March the President Simon Peres grants Benjamin Netanyahu two extra weeks to form a government, following the Labour Party's refusal to form a coalition with Likud and Yisrael Beiteinu, which are now relying on a post-electoral alliance with Yair Lapid's centrist Yech Atid and Naftali Bennett's ultra-nationalist HaBayit HaYehudi, which together have 31 seats. Both parties ask Netanyahu to ensure that the reform bill regulating military service puts an end to the exemption of ultra-orthodox Jews from the Yeshivas, (educational centres for studying religious texts) provided for by the Tal Law, which was overruled by the Supreme Court in February 2012. This requirement implies the break-up of the alliances held with the ultra-orthodox parties, which allowed Netanyahu to govern in 2009. A coalition without these parties marks the formation of a more centrist cabinet, whose focus would affect extremely sensitive policies, such as negotiations with the Palestinians, the Iranian nuclear issue, settlement policy or measures against immigration.
- On 3 March a bus line for Palestinians only comes into use, created by the Transport Ministry to avoid Palestinians travelling in buses used by Israelis. On 5 March two of the buses from this line that joins Eyal, a town near to Qalqilya, with Tel Aviv, are set on fire in protest against this segregation measure.
- On 14 March Benjamin Netanyahu reaches an agreement to form a government, after two months of complex negotiations. The new cabinet will prioritise the Israel's economy and internal social issues, relegating negotiations with the PNA to a secondary position, which will be led by the new Justice Minister Tzipi Livni. The decision is aimed at maintaining the governing coalition together, which is formed by the Likud – Yisrael Beiteinu alliance, Yesh Atid, HaBayit HaYehudi and Hatnuah. On 18 March the new cabinet is sworn in before the Knesset. Avigdor Lieberman maintains his position as Foreign Minister, a post he will take up once the trial he is undergoing reaches its conclusion. Until that time, Netanyahu himself will take charge

of the ministerial post. Moshe Yaalon, from Likud, becomes Defence Minister.

- On 20 March Barack Obama begins his first official visit to Israel as US President. His tour of the Middle East also takes him to Jordan and Palestine.
- On 24 March Israel fires a Tamuz missile at a military post in Syrian territory in response to an attack launched from Syria against a Tsahal (Israeli army) military vehicle in the Golan Heights, the second such attack from Israel's north-eastern neighbour in less than 12 hours.

*Palestine*

- On 6 March the United Nations are forced to cancel the third edition of the Gaza International Marathon, scheduled for 10 April, due to Hamas' decision to prohibit men and women running together.
- On 12 March Hamas offers amnesty to Israeli collaborators, a crime carrying the death penalty, who are handed over to the Gaza authorities before 11 April. Hamas assures that they will not be detained or interrogated and that their families will receive monthly financial aid.
- On 17 March Israel deports Ayman Sharawneh, one of the Palestinian prisoners on hunger strike, to the Gaza Strip for a period of 10 years.

*Conflicts between the Parties*

- On 13 March one Palestinian is killed and eight injured during clashes in Fawar, in the West Bank, between the Israeli army and young Palestinians who were throwing stones at a military patrol.
- On 21 March two rockets fired from the Gaza Strip land in southern Israel, one of them in the city of Sderot. Other rockets launched during the day land in the Gaza Strip, coinciding with the US President Barack Obama's visit to Israel and Palestine.

**April 2013***Israel*

- On 9 April the Jerusalem District Court hands out two life sentences and a 141,000-euro fine to Jack Teitel, a terrorist with dual US-Israeli nationality,

arrested in 2009 for ten crimes, including the murder of Palestinians.

- On 17 April two Grad rockets fired from the Egyptian Sinai land in Eilat.
- On 21 April the US Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel arrives in Israel to begin his tour of the Middle East. With the Iranian nuclear programme and the war in Syria topping his agenda, Hagel's visit hopes to reach an arms agreement between Washington and Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Israel, valued at 10 million dollars.
- On 23 April the government approves the proposal presented by the Jewish Agency for Israel to liberalise access to the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, extending the prayer time to include a mixed section for men and women.
- On 23 April the Israeli army announces that the Syrian army are using chemical weapons against the armed rebels and the civilian population. The previous day, the Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Yaalon warns that Israel is ready to act if it learns of groups that are hostile towards the State of Israel gaining control of chemical weapons.
- On 25 April an Israeli fighter jet destroys an unmanned plane close to Haifa possibly coming from Lebanon. Hezbollah denies any involvement in the event.

*Palestine*

- On 1 April Khaled Mashal is unanimously re-elected in Cairo by senior Hamas figures as leader of the movement for the next four years.
- On 2 April the Hamas government passes a law that will enter into force in September under which students over nine years of age must be separated by sex and which bans men from teaching in girls' schools.
- On 2 April Palestinian Maysara Abu Hamdiya is reported to have died from throat cancer in a hospital in Beer-sheba. The Hamas militant was a prisoner in Israel's Soroka prison, where he had been serving a life sentence since 2002 for a failed bomb attack on a cafe in Jerusalem. On 3 April Egypt, Lebanon and the PNA appeal to the International Community to force Israel to respect the rights of Palestinian prisoners held in their jails, alleging that Hamdiya's death was due to deliberate

medical negligence. At the same time, some 4,600 Palestinian prisoners in Israel begin a three-day hunger strike in protest.

- On 8 April the UN Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) announces the reopening of its food distribution centres in the Gaza Strip. Operations were suspended on 5 April due to violent protests staged by Palestinians over the termination of the UNRWA's 40-dollar annual aid package until now awarded to 106,000 refugees in Gaza, due to the organisation's lack of funds for 2013, estimated at 68 million dollars. According to UNRWA spokesperson Adnan Abu Hasna, the centres have been reopened after receiving guarantees from Hamas of the safety of UN staff.
- On 11 April the PNA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad submits his resignation to the President Mahmoud Abbas. In 2012 Fayyad had already expressed his intention to resign from the post he had held since 2007.

#### *Peace Negotiations*

- On 4 April *Haaretz* reports the decision of the PNA President Mahmoud Abbas to freeze the unilateral Palestinian initiative to gain membership to various UN agencies, including the International Criminal Court, with the aim of giving leeway to the US Secretary of State John Kerry, who is trying to push forward with a new round of negotiations between Israel and the PNA.

#### *Conflicts between the Parties*

- On 2 April Israel responds to several missiles fired from Gaza by a Salafist group, with an air strike in the north of the Strip, the first since the truce between Israel and Hamas agreed in November 2012.
- On 3 April two Palestinians are killed at a military checkpoint in Tulkarm, in skirmishes with Israeli soldiers in various places in the West Bank, after the news of that the Palestinian prisoner Maysara Abu Hamdiya has died. On 4 April, the day of Hamdiya's funeral, violent clashes break out in Ramallah, Hebron and other places in the West Bank and the Islamic Jihad calls for the Third Intifada.

- On 18 April two rockets fired from the Gaza Strip land in southern Israel without causing any damage.
- On 28 April Israel attacks a Hamas training camp and an Islamic Jihad arms deposit in the south of the Gaza Strip, in response to a Grad missile fired the previous night at Sdot Negev, southern Israel, during the Jewish Lag BaOmer holiday. Israel also closes the Kerem Shalom border crossing.
- On 30 April a Palestinian stabs an Israeli settler to death at the Tapuaj border crossing, in the north of the West Bank, and then opens fire with the victim's weapon on police guarding the crossing. The aggressor is injured in the shoot-out, arrested and taken to Beilinson Hospital in Petah Tikva.

#### **May 2013**

##### *Israel*

- On 3 May Israel launches an air strike on Syrian territory that destroys a convoy transporting Fateh-110 missiles from Iran to Damascus to be subsequently transferred to Hezbollah. On 4 May Israel launches a new attack, this time on the national military research centre in Jamraya. At least 42 Syrian soldiers are killed in the attacks. Lebanon condemns the attack for being launched from its air space and Syria describes it as a declaration of war. Syria and the Arab League also ask the UN Security Council to act to halt the Israeli attacks, which are violating the sovereignty of an Arab country. Israel, for its part, closes entry from Lebanon and Syria into its air space for civilian flights and deploys batteries of its defence system on its northern borders.
- On 9 May the Israeli Civil Administration in the West Bank, an independent body of the army and the Defence Ministry approves the construction of 296 homes in the Beit El settlement. The decision is part of the agreement made in 2012 to relocate the settlers evacuated from the Ulpana enclave, which was ordered to be dismantled by the Supreme Court.
- On 12 May thousands of people protest in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Haifa against tax increases and austerity measures in public spending presented by the

Finance Minister and leader of the centrist Yesh Atid Yair Lapid. On 13 May the Council of Ministers approves the two-year austerity plan, which includes a reduction of 647 million euros in the defence Budget, an increase of 1.5 points on income tax, a one-point increase on corporate tax and a one-point rise on VAT, as well as cuts in family benefits.

- On 14 May the Israeli government announces that it will legalise the settlements of Maale Rehavam, Haroeh, Givat Assaf and Mitzpe Lachish, located in Israeli enclaves in the West Bank.
- On 19 May the government committee set up in 2012 by order of Benjamin Netanyahu to investigate the circumstances surrounding Mohamed al-Dura's death concludes that the death of the child, which symbolised the Second Intifada – from September 2000 to February 2005 – was not caused by shots fired by the Israeli army, as was reported worldwide through images captured by a Palestinian *France-2* cameraman.
- On 19 May Israel announces that it will return the land where the Homesh settlement is located, founded in 1978 in the north of the West Bank and evacuated in 2005, to its original Palestinian owners, mostly people living in the Palestinian village of Burka. After their removal, the land remained under the control of the army, allegedly for security reasons. The decision taken by the State of Israel puts an end to a process opened in 2011 by the Supreme Court at the request of the Palestinian owners.
- On 21 May the Israeli army shoots at targets on the Syrian border in response to shots fired from their northern neighbour against Israeli soldiers in the Golan Heights.
- On 26 May a missile fired from southern Lebanon lands in Israel.
- On 29 May the government-appointed committee comprising six ministers brings a bill before the Ministerial Council. If approved in the Parliament, the bill would mean that, as of 2017, compulsory military service would also apply to the vast majority of students at Jewish seminaries, exempt from military service since the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. The text, which was backed by the Finance Minister Yair Lapid provides for sanctions to be taken against ultra-orthodox Jews who refuse to carry out military service. Among its main opponents is the



Defence Minister Moshe Yaalon. For its part, the extreme right-wing Yisrael Beiteinu attains a promise from the government to also regulate, within a period of five years, a voluntary civil service for the Arab community, which is also exempt from military service.

#### *Palestine*

- On 27 May the US Secretary of State John Kerry ends his tour of the Middle East with the official announcement in the closing meeting of the World Economic Forum held on the Jordanian Banks of the Dead Sea, of a new 4-billion-dollar investment plan to bolster the Palestinian economy, particularly the real estate and tourist sectors.

#### *Peace Negotiations*

- On 8 - 9 May Benjamin Netanyahu and Mahmoud Abbas meet in Beijing, with the Chinese President Xi Jinping over China's offer to conduct mediation between Israel and the PNA and unblock the peace process.
- On 23 May the US Secretary of State John Kerry begins a new round of talks separately with the Israeli and Palestinian negotiators to try to relaunch the peace process.

#### *Conflicts between the Parties*

- On 15 May, Nakba Day, meaning catastrophe in Arabic, in reference to the creation of Israel in 1948 and the consequent exodus of 760,000 Palestinians, clashes break out between Palestinian demonstrators and the Israeli security forces in front of the Israeli military prison Ofer, close to Ramallah, in Beit Ommar, close to Hebron, in East Jerusalem and in other places in the West Bank. Demonstrations are held in East Jerusalem, Ramallah, Nablus and Hebron, as well as in the Gaza Strip, from where a missile is also fired into southern Israel without causing any damages.

### **June 2013**

#### *Israel*

- On 5 June the judge Nissim Yeshaya resigns over a comment he made during

an appeals committee for the trial of a rape of a 13-year-old girl in Jerusalem by four Palestinians, in which he said, "some girls enjoy being raped."

- On 6 June Austria announces the imminent withdrawal of all its Blue Helmets from the Golan Heights. The withdrawal of 382 Austrian soldiers adds to other withdrawals in recent months from Croatian, Canadian and Japanese soldiers. The decision from Vienna is confirmed the same day as serious clashes break out in the area between Syrian rebels and the Syrian army, which gains control of the Quneitra border crossing, which separates Israel from Syria through the demilitarised zone and constitutes the main supply route for the UN troops deployed in the area.
- On 13 June the *Jerusalem Post* reports Israel's plan to authorise the construction of 538 new homes in the Itamar settlement as well as legalising 137 homes already built in the area. It also reports the State's decision to review plans for the construction of a further 550 settlements in Bruchin.
- On 21 June an Israeli security guard shoots dead a Jewish visitor to the Western Wall in Jerusalem confusing him with a Palestinian militant after the victim shouted "Allah is great."

#### *Palestine*

- On 2 June the PNA President Mahmoud Abbas appoints the rector of An-Najah University in Nablus, Rami Hamdallah, as the new Prime Minister to replace Salam Fayyad. The appointment is described as illegal by Hamas. On 20 June Hamdallah submits his resignation due to differences with Mahmoud Abbas over his abilities and the allocation of duties.
- On 20 June Iran announces a reduction in the economic aid given to Hamas in the Gaza Strip because of the latter's siding with Syrian rebels against the Bashar al-Assad regime, which traditionally has supported Hamas' cause, whose central headquarters was located in Damascus until 2012. Tehran's decision comes days after Hamas asks its Lebanese ally, Hezbollah to stop supporting the Syrian regime. With the Damascus-Teheran-Hezbollah-Hamas axis seriously damaged, relations between Hamas and Egypt are also suf-

fering: the Islamist Egyptian government accuses Hamas of repeated illegal incursions and complicity in attacks on Egyptian soldiers in the unstable Sinai.

#### *Peace Negotiations*

- On 27 June the US State Secretary John Kerry arrives in Amman in a new attempt to resume the frozen peace negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis with the help of Jordan. On the same day, Kerry travels to Israel to meet with Benjamin Netanyahu and on 28 June meets in the Jordanian capital with Mahmoud Abbas.

### **July 2013**

#### *Israel*

- On 7 July the government approves, with 14 votes in favour and four abstentions, the bill that requires young orthodox Jews to carry out compulsory military service as of 2017 and which only exempts 1,800 scholarly-gifted students who may continue to study the Torah.
- On 9 July *Haaretz* reports that Israel has asked the US not to reduce the military aid it grants Egypt each year, -1.3 billion dollars- as retribution for the downfall of Mohamed Morsi and which Egypt has benefited from since the signing of the Peace Treaty with Israel in 1979.
- On 15 July thousands of Israeli Arabs demonstrate in different places around the country against the bill to forcefully expropriate between 30,000 and 40,000 Bedouins, the demolition of around 40 villages not recognised by the State and the confiscation of more than 70,000 hectares of land in the Negev.

#### *Palestine*

- On 16 July the Palestinian government asks the World Bank to increase its support of the PNA to ease the effects of the economic crisis in Palestine and reduce the public debt, which has risen to 4.2 billion dollars.

#### *Peace Negotiations*

- On 19 July after six tours of the Middle East in five months in the post, the

US Secretary of State John Kerry announces that the peace talks, which have been deadlocked since 2010, will resume. Hours later, Israel confirms that it will gradually release 104 Palestinian prisoners in the coming months, who have served more than 20 years in prison. Both Benjamin Netanyahu and Mahmoud Abbas announce that any agreement eventually reached in the new round of talks will be put to a national referendum in their respective populations.

- On 29 July John Kerry appoints the former US ambassador to Israel Martin Indyk as the new US Special Envoy to the Middle East.

- On 29 July Israelis and Palestinians resume indirect peace talks in Washington after being deadlocked for almost three years, despite the prevailing climate of scepticism in both camps. This initial contact in the US capital concludes on 30 July with the adoption of a work plan by the chief negotiators Tzipi Livni and Saeb Erekat, to try to reach an agreement within the next nine months. This plan includes all thorny questions: the status of East Jerusalem, Israeli settlements in the West Bank, the return of Palestinian refugees, security issues and border demarcation, although the future status of the Jordan Valley, the only Palestinian border with Jordan, is left to be negotiated separately.

*Conflicts between the Parties*

- On 30 July a Qassam rocket fired from the Gaza Strip lands in Shaar HaNegev without causing any damages.

**August 2013**

*Israel*

- On 8 August the Israeli government agrees to freeze any negotiations or agreements with the EU until the latter clarifies the guidelines that according to a new EC directive approved in June and in force since 19 July “prohibit funding, cooperating with or assisting entities operating within Israeli settlements located in territories considered to be occupied.”
- On 11 August Israel announces the construction of 1,187 new homes in the

West Bank and East Jerusalem, in a move to calm the more conservative members of the government coalition, following July’s announcement of the release of 104 Palestinian prisoners.

- On 13 August the Jerusalem City Council, approves the construction of 942 homes in Gilo, East Jerusalem, announced a year ago.

- On 13 August the Israeli Iron Dome defence system intercepts a missile fired from the Sinai at the Israeli city of Eilat.

- On 22 August four missiles are fired from Lebanese territory into northern Israel, which closes its air space following the first attack launched from Lebanon in years. On 23 August Israel bombs a terrorist target close to Beirut in response to the previous day’s attack, for which the Abdullah Azzam Brigades, linked to al-Qaeda, claim responsibility.

- On 28 August faced with the prospect of an international intervention in Syria, Israel activates all its Iron Dome and Arrow 2 anti-missile defence shields. The country also activates its military and civil self-defence protocols.

*Palestine*

- On 13 August the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas asks the former Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah, who resigned in June over an internal dispute, to form a new government.

*Peace Negotiations*

- On 14 August in the early hours of the morning, Israel releases the first 26 prisoners of the 104 detained under the Oslo Accords, despite the appeal brought before the Supreme Court by the families of the victims of attacks committed or planned by the prisoners.

- On 14 August the Israeli and Palestinian chief negotiators Tzipi Livni and Saeb Erekat, resume peace talks in Jerusalem and Jericho.

- On 26 August, despite Saeb Erekat’s announcement to cancel that day’s meeting with Tzipi Livni to be held in Jericho in protest over the death of three Palestinians in Ramallah, the Israeli and Palestinian delegations finally meet to proceed with the peace negotiations.

*Conflicts between the Parties*

- On 14 August the Israeli Air Force bomb Gaza in response to the prior launch of a rocket from the Strip that landed in southern Israel. None of the attacks causes any damages.

- On 20 August a Palestinian man is killed in the Jenin refugee camp during a raid led by the Israeli army to capture an Islamic Jihad leader Bassam Al-Saadi, in which a further two Palestinians and two Israeli soldiers are injured.

- On 26 August following a raid in the Qalandia refugee camp, close to Ramallah, clashes break out between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian demonstrators, in which three Palestinians are killed and at least 15 injured. Hours later, thousands of people gather in Qalandia to attend the funerals of the three men who died, which end in new clashes with Israeli soldiers at a checkpoint.

**September 2013**

*Israel*

- On 3 September two Palestinians burst onto the runways at the Ben Gurion International airport in Tel Aviv in a stolen truck heading towards the terminal 3 building. The security services are able to stop the truck and arrest the two men.

- On 17 September Benjamin Netanyahu presents his roadmap to halt the Iranian nuclear programme, which consists of four fundamental points: halting uranium enrichment, the confiscation of all uranium already enriched by Iran, the closure of the Qom nuclear plant and suspending the alternative enrichment of plutonium. The announcement comes days after the Iranian President Hassan Rouhani offers the closure of the Fordo nuclear plant in exchange for the lifting of sanctions imposed by the US and the EU, an offer that Netanyahu considers insufficient since most centrifuges are not located in the plant in question.

- On 29 September the Israeli authorities arrest a Belgian citizen of Iranian origin identified as Ali Mansouri, accusing him of spying for Iran.

*Peace Negotiations*

- On 26 September the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas speaks be-

fore the United Nations General Assembly to ask the international community to exert all pressure possible for the negotiations between Israel and the PNA to conclude with a definitive peace agreement and to put an end to the expropriation of land in Palestine and the construction of Israeli settlements.

*Conflicts between the Parties*

- On 20 September the Israeli sergeant Tomer Hazan is killed near Qalqilya, the West Bank, at the hands of a Palestinian colleague Nedal Amar. Amar was intending to negotiate the exchange of Hazan's body for the release of his brother, who has served 10 years of a sentence accused of participating in several attacks for the Fatah militia known as Tanzim.
- On 22 September the Israeli soldier Gal Coby is shot dead by a Palestinian sniper close to the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron, the West Bank. Both deaths heighten the pressure on the Israeli army to cancel the release process underway of 104 Palestinian prisoners, which constitutes part of the deal with the PNA within the framework of the peace negotiations.

**October 2013**

*Israel*

- On 7 October the Israeli army discovers a 2.5 km tunnel next to the Ein HaSHlosha kibbutz between the Gaza Strip and Israeli territory, the construction of which is attributed to armed Islamist groups suspected of planning an attack.
- On 9 October the Israeli army shoots into Syrian territory after two mortar bombs land in an Israeli-controlled area in the north of the Golan Heights injuring a soldier.
- On 22 October Israel holds local elections with a turnout of 35.9% of the five and a half million Israelis called to the ballot boxes to elect 191 mayoralties. In the capital, Jerusalem, the independent candidate Nir Barkat renews his term beating the ultra-orthodox Moshe Lion. Ron Huldai, the mayor since 1998, wins again in Tel Aviv, beating Nitzan Horowitz (Meretz, left-wing). In Haifa, Yona Ya-

hav (Shinui, liberal-secular) wins a third term. The mayors of Rishon LeZion -Dov Tzur- and Beersheba -Ruvik Danilovich- are also reelected.

*Palestine*

- On 11 October the former Israeli colonel Seraiah Ofer is hacked to death by Palestinian citizens in the north of the Jordan Valley, the West Bank. This is the fourth attack on Israeli citizens in the West Bank in recent weeks.
- On 14 October Swiss forensic experts investigating the cause of death of Yasser Arafat, who died in Paris in 2004, issue a report stating that it is highly likely that the historic PNA President was poisoned with polonium. Experts from the Russian team, however, strongly deny that his death could have been caused by polonium.

*Peace Negotiations*

- On 27 October despite protests by families of terrorist victims and strong opposition from certain ministers, the government approves the release on 26 October of 26 of the 104 Palestinian prisoners that Israel promised to release before the end of the year, within the framework of reopening peace talks with the PNA.

*Conflicts between the Parties*

- On 28 October two rockets are fired from the Gaza Strip into Ashkelon. One of the missiles is intercepted by the Iron Dome System while the other lands in the Mediterranean. Hours later, Israel fires at two missile launchers in the north of Gaza.

**November 2013**

*Israel*

- On 6 November Benjamin Netanyahu announces that the former Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman is returning to his post in government after being acquitted by a court in Jerusalem of the corruption charges held against him.
- On 13 November an Israeli soldier is stabbed to death on a bus in Afula

in northern Israel by a young Arab-Israeli from Jenin, in retaliation for the imprisonment of one of his family members.

*Palestine*

- On 8 November, three years since its formation, the committee investigating the death of Yasser Arafat announces its conclusions in a press conference at Mukataa (headquarters of the PNA) in Ramallah and points to Israel as the only possible guilty party.
- On 11 November Hamas appoints journalist Isra al-Modallal as international spokesperson for the Islamist movement in control of the Gaza Strip.

*Peace Negotiations*

- On 13 November the PNA President Mahmoud Abbas announces that the Palestinian delegation is abandoning the peace talks with Israel – reactivated by the US in May – due to the approval by the Israeli Housing Ministry of the construction of almost 24,000 new homes in the West Bank and the E1 area of East Jerusalem. The same day, Benjamin Netanyahu cancels the housing tenders saying that their approval by the Housing Minister Uri Ariel is damaging the peace process with the Palestinians and endangering Israel's hopes of receiving support from the international community to halt the Iranian nuclear programme.

**December 2013**

*Israel*

- On 10 December representatives of the Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian government sign an agreement described as historic to connect the Red Sea with the shrinking Dead Sea and fight against the region's water shortage.
- On 10 December Israel inaugurates a monument in Tel Aviv to the more than 10,000 homosexuals that were murdered during the Holocaust.
- On 15 December around a hundred sub-Saharan immigrants escape from a holding centre in southern Israel and begin a march on foot to Beersheba and then towards Jerusalem to protest

against the low number of asylum visas issued by Israel and Israel's new legislation on asylum seekers, which stipulates that illegal immigrants will have to remain in holding centres indefinitely.

- On 23 December Benjamin Netanyahu announces that he will ask Washington for explanations for the "unacceptable" acts of espionage committed four years ago by the US National Security Agency (NSA) against senior officials in the Israeli government, according to new secret documents revealed by the former employee of the NSA Edward Snowden, and disclosed on 20 December by the *New York Times*. These revelations are of particular relevance to Israel as they could complicate the handling of Jonathan Pollard's release, an Israeli spy serving a life sentence since 1987 for stealing classified information from the US.

- On 29 December the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon calls on Lebanon and Israel to show "maximum restraint" following the border incident that broke out during the day, in which two missiles fired from Lebanese territory land in northern Israel, provoking an Israeli military response. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, UNIFIL, increases its patrols and surveillance on the border following the incident. For its part, the Lebanese army locates a total of four rocket launchers on the outskirts of the town of Khraibet Hasbaya, from where the rockets would have been launched. Israel blames Hezbollah for the attack.

#### *Palestine*

- On 4 December the results from the team tasked by the Nanterre Public Prosecutor in France to investigate the death of Yasser Arafat in 2004 rule out poison and point towards a generalised infection as the cause of death, thus contradicting the non-conclusive results published in November by a team of Swiss investigators. On 26 December the Russian forensic team that also tested samples from Arafat's body supports the conclusions of the French team.

#### *Peace Negotiations*

- On 21 December the foreign ministers of the Arab League support the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' rejection of the security plan to facilitate peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians proposed by the US Secretary of State John Kerry. The Arab countries accuse Kerry of not being an impartial mediator saying that his proposal favours the Israeli expansionist policy and guarantees Israeli military presence in the Jordan Valley when, according to the Palestinians, this item should have been negotiated outside of the peace talks.

- On 30 December Israel proceeds to release 26 more Palestinian prisoners from the total of 104 releases agreed as a goodwill gesture for reactivating the peace negotiations. The PNA President Mahmoud Abbas, who takes part in the act, warns that he will not sign any peace agreement with the Israeli government until all the prisoners are released.

- On 29 December the Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erekat condemns the approval by the Israeli government's Ministerial Committee for Legislation of a bill by which Israel formally annexes the Jordan Valley, Palestine's only international border with Jordan, and accuses Israel of once again showing that it is not interested in a two-state solution.

#### *Conflicts between the Parties*

- On 18 December the Israeli security forces kill a Palestinian citizen and injure a further six during a raid on the home of a Hamas militant in Jenin, the West Bank, which triggers clashes between the police and various residents.

- On 22 December a police officer is injured in a bomb blast on a bus in Bat Yam, in the south of Tel Aviv.

- On 24 December an employee of the Israeli army is shot dead by the Popular Resistance Committee from the Gaza Strip. In retaliation, the Israeli army launches an attack on the north of Gaza in which a young girl is killed. On 25 December Benjamin Netanyahu holds an urgent meeting for his cabinet and the heads of security for Israel faced

with the rising tensions registered both in Gaza and the West Bank in recent days. Several members of the cabinet recommend postponing the release of a further 26 Palestinian prisoners scheduled for 29 December from a total of 104 releases, agreed as a goodwill gesture for the reactivation of the peace negotiations.

- On 26 December two missiles are fired into southern Israel from Gaza without causing any damages. Israel responds by firing two missiles into the strip leaving one person injured.

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