

# Chronology of events in Israel and Palestine

*The following chronology assembles details of the most relevant events that have taken place in Israel and Palestine in the period covered by this edition of the yearbook: between July 2002 and June 2003. During these twelve months, the second Palestinian intifada has continued, as has Israel's violent response. In Israel, Ariel Sharon was re-elected. Some progress is made in the peace process, in projects such as the Road Map and the appointment of Abu Mazen as Palestinian prime minister. However, peace is constantly threatened by the unceasing spiral of violence and the inability for the two parts to come to any stable agreement.*

## July 2002

### Israel

- On 7th July, the government offers its support to a private initiative that aims to prohibit Arabs from building houses in the areas allocated to Jewish communities.

### *Report on human rights and diplomatic relations*

- On 11th July, the international human rights organisation Amnesty International publishes, for the first time, a report dedicated exclusively to Palestinian violence. In the report, suicide bombings and other attacks against Israeli civilians are deemed crimes against humanity. They would therefore be included under the jurisdiction of the new UN International Criminal Court.
- The 23rd July Israeli action mentioned below sparks harsh criticism

from United States president, George W. Bush, from the general secretary of the UN, Kofi Annan, and from the president of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), Yasser Arafat. The action undermines the diplomatic advances that have been produced in the meetings held between the Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs, Shimon Peres, and various Palestinian ministers. These meetings have sought to alleviate conditions in the occupied territories and even to call for the Israeli army to withdraw from some of the occupied areas of the West Bank, as well as to increase humanitarian access to the besieged Palestinian areas and transfer funds collected by PNA taxes. Furthermore, during the month of July, different Palestinian factions had been drawn closer together, and efforts were being made to reform the security structure of the PNA.

### *Violence between the two sides*

- Israeli forces continue their severe military siege of Palestinian settlements and refugee camps, cutting off access routes that link them together and with the outside, and therefore weakening their economic activity. The Israeli military mobilises the army reserves.
- On 14th July, five people are wounded when an Israeli F-16 fighter attacks the home of Hamas leader in the south of Gaza, Youssef Abed al-Wahab, who escapes seconds before the Israeli missiles strike his house.
- On 16th July, three members of Hamas attack a bus on the outskirts of the Israeli settlement Emmanuel, near Nablus. Eight Israeli civilians, an Israeli military officer and one of the

attackers are killed. The Emmanuel attack is followed by a double suicide bombing in Tel Aviv on 17th July, which kills three people. Responsibility is claimed by a group related to Fatah.

- The Israeli military responds to the attacks in Emmanuel and Tel Aviv by destroying the homes of Hamas and Fatah leaders in Nablus, arresting some of their relatives and threatening massive deportations to Gaza. On 18th July, the Israeli government freezes the operations that were aimed at relaxing the curfew and other restrictions imposed in the West Bank.
- On 23rd July, an Israeli F-16 bombs a densely populated area of the city of Gaza, killing twelve people (including the leader of the military wing of Hamas, Salah Shihada), and injuring 140 people, sixteen critically. Without delay, Palestinian demonstrators take to the streets of the cities of Gaza, Rafah and Khan Yunis, and the leader of the political wing of Hamas, Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi, vows immediate revenge.
- On 25th July, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades assassinate a Jewish rabbi, Elimelech Safira, near the Alei Zahav settlement, in the West Bank.
- On 26th July, the Israeli army returns to the Gaza Strip to destroy buildings that according to reports are workshops dedicated to the manufacture of missiles. On the same day, a group of armed Palestinians assault two Israeli vehicles near the Carmel settlement, southeast of Hebron, and kill four people.
- On 28th July, a Palestinian girl is killed and nine people are wounded in an attack by Jewish settlers on Arab homes in Hebron.

- On 30th July, another suicide bombing in East Jerusalem wounds five Israelis. On the same day two Israeli civilians are killed by armed Palestinians when they enter Jamain, in the West Bank.
- On 31st July, seven people die, five of whom are foreigners, when a bomb explodes in the cafeteria of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Hamas claims responsibility for the attack as reprisal for the killing of Shihada on 23rd July.

## August 2002

### *Israel*

- On 6th August, the Israeli Minister of Internal Affairs announces plans to revoke the citizenship of two Arab Israelis, accused of helping Palestinian activists.
- On 13th August, the Israeli Supreme Court orders the army to stop the unjustified deportation to the Gaza Strip of three relatives of West Bank Palestinians suspected of organising suicide bombings in Israel. If the expulsions were carried out, they would be the first since 1992.
- On 14th August, Marwan Barghouti, general secretary of Fatah in the West Bank, appears before the District Court in Tel Aviv to be formally accused of various crimes that range from assassination to terrorism. His arrest and transfer to a prison in Israel during Operation «Defensive Shield» in April is a controversial issue, as it infringed upon the terms of the Oslo accords signed in 1993.

### *Diplomatic Negotiations*

- Palestinian and Israeli authorities reach a stalemate in the August negotiations aimed at achieving a gradual withdrawal of troops from Israel, beginning with the Gaza Strip, the «Gaza First Plan», and Bethlehem, in the West Bank. Israel demands that Arafat and his cabinet show themselves capable of neutralising Palestinian activists. However, the spiral of violence only accentuates, and the «Gaza First» security plan is frozen.
- On 8th and 9th August, US secretary of state Colin Powell and National

Security Advisor, Condoleezza Rice, meet in Washington with a delegation of ministers from the Palestinian cabinet. The two parties discuss Palestinian civil reform efforts and security cooperation. During the meeting, Powell reaffirms US support for the creation of a Palestinian state in three years. He side steps, however, the call for a new Palestinian leader that George W. Bush made in June.

### *UN Report*

- On 1st August, the UN releases a long-awaited report on the Israeli re-occupation of Jenin in April, which has had to be written using secondary sources, since Israel prevented investigators from entering the region. The report sustains that no massacre took place and that more people died during the Israeli incursion in Nablus, which took place at around the same time. The report severely criticises Israel for destroying the Palestinian territory and preventing humanitarian aid workers from helping the four thousand refugees there once the attack was over. The report also addresses the Israeli reoccupation of the West Bank where, according to the study, 497 Palestinians were killed between 1st March and 7th May of 2002. On a separate issue, the account also reports that during the same period Israel suffered sixteen bombings, most of them suicide attacks, which resulted in over a hundred deaths.

### *Violence between the two sides*

- The Israeli army intensifies its campaign of demolishing the homes of the families of suicide bombers, a form of collective punishment that is condemned by the UN.
- On 4th August, nine Israelis, including six soldiers, are killed, and more than fifty people are wounded in the suicide bombing of a bus near Safed, in northern Israel close to the border with the Lebanon. Hamas claims responsibility for the attack and deems it part of the response to the assassination of Salah Shihada, leader of the organisation's military wing. Hours after the attack, a nineteen year old Palestinian boy opens fire on workers at an Israeli telecommunications com-

pany, killing a security guard and injuring a driver. The police are able to shoot the boy down but a bystander also dies in the crossfire. Israel tightens restrictions on Palestinians and declares the complete closure of the largest part of the West Bank. In further action, Israeli helicopters launch missiles at suspected weapons factories in the city of Gaza, injuring four people.

- On 7th August, Israeli forces intervene in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, killing six Palestinians, including two activists.
- On 14th August, Israeli forces launch a missile attack on a house in Tubas, near Nablus, killing Nasr Jarrar, leader of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam battalion in Jenin, and another Palestinian.
- Reports are released of the presumed suicide of Abu Nidal, leader of the radical Palestinian guerrilla group, the Revolutionary Council of Fatah, before he could be arrested, in Baghdad, Iraq, on 16th August. Members of his group deny the Israeli version and say he was murdered by Israeli intelligence services.
- On 20th August, in the operation of withdrawing troops from Bethlehem, Israel defies the «Gaza First» security plan by ordering its commanders in Ramallah to assassinate Mohamed Saadat, brother of the secretary general of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Ahmed Saadat, who was incarcerated in a Palestine prison in Jericho in May as part of the treaty that led to the end of Arafat's siege of Ramallah. Meanwhile, in Gaza, an Israeli soldier is killed near a Jewish settlement by a Hamas sniper and a fifteen year old boy is killed by Israeli fire. In Tulkarm, an armed Palestinian dies during an army raid in a refugee camp.
- On 21st August, the Israeli internal security force announces the arrest of five members of Hamas in Jerusalem, accused of planning some of the most violent of the recent attacks. Moreover, on 27th August, Israel arrests seven Arab Israelis accused of assisting the Palestinian suicide bomber who attacked the bus on 4th August in Safed.
- On 23rd August, members of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades attempt to infiltrate into a Jewish settlement in the

Gaza Strip. Two are killed in the operation. On the same day, Ikhlas Khouli, a Palestinian mother of seven children, is taken prisoner by members of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and executed in a public square after being accused of collaborating with Israel. On 30th August, eighteen year old Rajah Ibrahim dies in a similar incident.

- On 28th August, a Palestinian mortar attack is launched against a settlement in Gaza. Also in Gaza, Israeli tanks attack a Bedouin camp, killing four Palestinians.

## September 2002

### *Israel*

- On 3rd September, the Israeli Supreme Court supports the decision of the military court to expel Intisar Ajouri and Kifah Ajouri, without filing charges or holding a trial, from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip for a period of two years, alleging that they helped their brother, Ali Ajouri, and Nasser Atzida organise suicide bombings. The judges, however, prevent the exile of a third Palestinian, Azzam Atzida, due to lack of evidence that he was involved in his brother's activities.

- On 5th September, in the District Court of Tel Aviv, the trial formally begins against Marwan Barghouti, the General Secretary of Fatah in the West Bank, charged with murder and terrorism. Barghouti does not recognise the authority of the court and considers it a «court in seized occupancy» that does not have the right to try him.

- On 9th September, Israel strips Nahad Abu Kishaq of his citizenship, accused of planning suicide attacks with Hamas. This is the first time the Israeli government has revoked citizenship from anybody.

- On 30th September, the US president, George W. Bush, signs a symbolic law expressing his country's commitment to considering Jerusalem the capital of Israel; this means the US embassy will be moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Several Palestinian leaders express their discomfort at the new legislation and consider it to be an obstacle in the way of further peace talks.

### *Palestine*

- On 11th September, the recently elected cabinet closes after the Palestinian Legislative Council threatens to pass a motion of censure against Arafat for appointing, in June, more government members than is permitted according to the law. The Council wants to affirm its authority before Arafat, who for his part announces legislative and presidential elections for January 2003.

### *Diplomatic Negotiations.*

#### *The Road Map*

- On 2nd September, in an interview with an Israeli television station, the prime minister of Israel, Ariel Sharon, seems to be more open to the possibility of negotiations with the Palestinians, and confident, for the first time, in the «opportunity to advance in the context of a diplomatic agreement.» He adds that «the Palestinians have reached the conclusion that terrorism does not achieve anything». A short time previously, the Palestinian minister of the interior, Abdel Razzaq al-Yahya, had shown himself to be open to a move toward conciliation, and had demanded an end to Palestinian violence and activists' adoption of tactics of civil disobedience.

- On 10th September, Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, with contribution by EU mediation, agrees to a declaration that will condemn all attacks against Israeli civilians, directed in particular at the most violent groups of the movement, and specifically at the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades.

- On 17th September, in the digressions of the UN General Assembly, the Quartet for the Middle East (the European Union, the United States, the United Nations and Russia) fix a schedule of three phases to establish a Palestinian state in accordance with the Road Map. According to the plan, the Palestinians must hold elections and reform their security services by the end of 2003. In response, Israel will have to draw their troops back to the positions held before the start of the second *intifada*, in September 2000. The final phase would be the definitive accomplishment of a new status for Palestine before the end of 2005.

However, the proposal is not well received by either Palestine or Israel.

### *Amnesty International Report*

- In a report published 30th September, the human rights organisation Amnesty International criticises both Israel and Palestine for killing a record number of children in the past two years. The study affirms that Israel has killed 250 Palestinian children since the start of the second *intifada* in September 2000, and describes the military response as «excessive and disproportionate». Palestinian groups are also responsible for the deaths of seventy-two Israeli children in «direct and indiscriminate» attacks.

### *Israeli siege on Arafat's headquarters*

- After an emergency cabinet meeting, Israel responds to the attack of 19th September by sending tanks and troops to the *mukataa*, Yasser Arafat's compound in Ramallah. Eight Palestinians surrender to the Israeli troops, who demand that twenty men on their wanted list be handed over. Those twenty men remain hidden inside the quarters along with two hundred other people. The buildings, already damaged from a previous incursion, are then destroyed by Israeli bulldozers. On 22nd September, Yasser Arafat calls for international intervention to safeguard his life, which he considers to be in danger. At least five Palestinians are killed and thirty more are wounded in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, while thousands of people defy the curfew in protest of the siege.

- On 22nd September Arab and European governments, as well as the EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, denounce the action against Arafat. Likewise, the Bush administration and certain Israeli sectors add their condemnation of the siege. On 24th September, the UN Security Council approves the Resolution 1435 (2002), pushed by the United Kingdom and France, which urges Israel to «immediately cease its actions in and around Ramallah, including the destruction of Palestinian civilian and security infrastructure», and demands that «the occupying forces pull back

from Palestinian towns and return to the positions they held prior to September 2000».

- On 29th September, Israel abandons the siege of the Arafat compound, and this action is interpreted as a rectification on Sharon's part. Yet Israel maintains troops in the area in order to keep the «terrorists» that are hiding in the *mukataa* from escaping. Sharon assures that he has ended the siege in the desire to maintain good relations with the United States.

#### *Violence between the two sides*

- On 1st September, various Palestinian civil servants accuse Israel of targeting civilians after Israeli troops kill eleven Palestinians during the outbursts of violence over the weekend. On 6th September it is announced that the investigation promised by the Israeli Defense Minister exonerates Israeli soldiers, after ruling that their orders to open fire were «appropriate».

- On 5th September, Palestinian activists end a month-long ceasefire with a series of attacks that leave two Israeli soldiers and a Palestinian activist dead. On the same day, the Israeli security forces detonate a car bomb loaded with 650 kilograms of explosives discovered near Hadera, in northern Israel, thus avoiding a catastrophe, which according to the Israeli exterior minister, Shimon Peres, would have had immediate and significant effects on the situation in the Middle East.

- On 18th September, eight Palestinian schoolchildren are wounded when a projectile explodes in a schoolyard in the city of Yatta, near Hebron in the West Bank. The director of the school attributes the act to Jewish extremists.

- On 18th September, in a further Palestinian suicide bombing, a Palestinian police agent dies and several Israelis are wounded in Umm el Fam, in northern Israel. On the same day, two Israelis and two Palestinians die in different incidents in the West Bank.

- On 19th September, a Palestinian suicide bomber attacks a crowded bus in the centre of Tel Aviv, injuring around fifty people and killing five Israelis and a student from the United Kingdom, whose liver was transplant-

ed to a Palestinian girl who had been on dialysis for two years. Hamas and the Islamic Jihad claim responsibility for the attack.

- On 24th September, Israel organises one of its heaviest invasions on the Gaza Strip, killing nine Palestinians, six of whom are civilians. The assault quiets voices in the Israeli press that criticised Sharon for focusing reprisal of recent attacks on the Arafat siege rather than on operations against Hamas who had claimed responsibility for many of the attacks from Gaza.

- On 26th September, an Israeli air strike kills two members of Hamas and wounds one of its leaders, Mohamed Deif, as well as twenty-five other people.

#### **October 2002**

##### *Israel*

- At the beginning of October, in the light of the possible US military operation against Iraq, Avi Dichter, Chief of Security Services in Israel, meets the US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, and the US National Security Advisor, Condoleezza Rice, in order to plan Israel's defence and discuss the country's response to a possible Iraqi attack. The system of Arrow defence missiles is deployed for the protection of the major population centres in Israel.

- On 22nd October, the newspaper *The Guardian* reports that the Israeli government is requesting emergency aid from the US in order to reactivate its economy, which has been in a grave recession since the second intifada began in September 2000. Israel has experienced a drastic drop in tourism and foreign investment, unemployment has risen ten percent and the exchange rate of the national currency has fallen.

- On 23rd October, eight conscientious objectors incarcerated for refusing to do military service in the occupied territories call for the supreme court to declare the military operations in those territories illegal.

- On 30th October, the Israeli government of «national unity», headed by Ariel Sharon's Likud party, falls apart

when the Labour Party leaves the coalition. Labour opposes the allocation of 135 million Euros to Jewish settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, arguing that these funds should instead be given to social programmes. However, the budgets are approved, and it is predicted that Likud will have to reach out to the ultra-nationalist block National Union-Yisrael Beiteinu in order to compensate for the loss of the Labour Party's support.

##### *Palestine*

- The president of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), Yasser Arafat, is able to evade reformist pressures requiring him to appoint a prime minister, who would then assume a great deal of his executive power. The demand is stipulated by both the US and Israel as a requisite for peace negotiations. Arafat, whose power was strengthened by the siege of his Ramallah headquarters at the end of September, receives support from the central committee of Fatah in order to delay the naming of a cabinet and replace the one invalidated by the Palestinian Legislative Council in September.

- On 29th October, Yasser Arafat presents a new cabinet to the legislative council and it is approved by them. He declares that his priorities in government are reforms in security, education and healthcare. Furthermore, Arafat issues a message of conciliation to Israel and condemns all attacks against civilians. He also announces that a further priority of the new administration will be the preparation for the legislative and presidential elections, set for January 2003.

##### *Diplomatic Negotiations*

- On 2nd October, Israeli and Palestinian officials confirm that Efraim Halevy, chief of the National Security Council of Israel and former Head of Intelligence of Mossad, has held secret negotiations with Palestinian executives in Qatar in August, in an attempt to contain the escalation of violence in the region.

- In mid-October, the Israeli prime minister, Ariel Sharon, travels to the United States to meet with President

George W. Bush and other US leaders. Sharon and Bush pact a gradual transference of the Palestinian taxes to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) with the provision that the funds are not used to finance terrorism. Regarding another matter, officials urge Sharon to temper the Israeli military response to Palestinian violence, in order not to jeopardise the Arab backing sought by the US in its plans to attack Iraq.

#### *Violence between the two sides*

- On 6th October, a group of Jewish settlers kill a Palestinian farmer and wound another in an area near the Akra settlement in the West Bank. On the same day, also in the West Bank, police arrest four Israeli settlers accused of attacking Palestinians.
- On 7th October, in Khan Yunis in the Gaza Strip, an Israeli helicopter opens fire on a crowd of Palestinians, killing at least fifteen people. On arrival to the hospital, there is a further exchange of fire that kills one person and leaves another three wounded. A short time later, four more Palestinians die in a clash between members of Hamas and Palestinian security forces loyal to Arafat. The conflicts stem from the Hamas assassination of Palestinian police commander Rajeh Abu Lehiya.
- On 9th October, Israeli troops kill two Palestinian youths and wound eighteen people in an attack on a refugee camp in Rafah, in southern Gaza.
- On 10th October, on the outskirts of Tel Aviv, a woman dies and sixteen people are wounded when a member of Hamas blows himself up near a bus. The man was prevented from boarding the bus by the driver and another passenger.
- On 13th October, two Palestinians die and more than thirty are wounded when the Israeli military bulldozes homes in the Rafah refugee camp, in the Gaza Strip.
- On 14th October, in Bethlehem, the Israeli security forces set off a booby-trap bomb in a public telephone box, killing Mohamed Abayat, a member of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades.
- On 17th October, at a refugee camp in Rafah, in the Gaza Strip, an Israeli tank opens fire on a crowd of people, killing at least six Palestinians

and injuring fifty. The Israeli army was said to have been responding to a group of armed Palestinians who had attacked bulldozers sent to destroy Palestinian homes.

- On 18th October, the Israeli troops withdraw from Jenin, in the West Bank, after digging a ditch in order to prevent suicide bombers from leaving by car. Jenin is the second city in the West Bank to be evacuated; Bethlehem was the first.
- On 21st October, several Palestinian activists set off a car bomb near Hadera in northern Israel, killing at least fourteen people and injuring more than fifty. Israel responds by cancelling its partial withdrawal from Hebron and prohibiting the Palestinian people from searching for water sources and from harvesting olives.
- On 25th October, hundreds of Israeli soldiers backed by tanks and armed vehicles return to Jenin to re-take control of this West Bank city, from which they had withdrawn on 18th October. Meanwhile, the Israeli army pulls out of parts of Hebron, although certain strategic positions are not abandoned.
- On 27th October, a Palestinian suicide bomber blows himself up, killing three Israeli reservists and injuring eighteen people in the Jewish settlement of Ariel, in the West Bank. The attacker, Mohamed Ishkair, a member of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and one of the most wanted men in Israel, was from Nablus. A short distance further north, Israeli soldiers kill two members of al-Aqsa in a car headed toward Nablus.

#### **November 2002**

##### *Israel*

- On 3rd November, after the Labour Party has officially withdrawn from the government of «national unity», former Likud prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, accepts the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs, despite the fact that he is a political rival of Sharon, and on the condition that elections are to be held soon.
- On 4th November, Ariel Sharon overcomes three censure motions from the opposition.

- On 5th November, as a result of the «national unity» government crisis, Ariel Sharon gives up plans to form a new cabinet and announces that President Moshe Katsav has accepted his request to dissolve the legislature and hold new elections within ninety days. Sharon accuses of this situation his far right allies and considers himself a victim of political blackmail. During negotiations with the ultra-nationalist block National Union-Yisrael Beiteinu, Sharon refuses to give in to the demand to reject the Road Map proposed by the US and to oppose a future Palestinian state. On 11th November the constitutional committee of the legislature therefore schedule elections for 28th January 2003.
- On 19th November, in the primary elections, Abraham Mitzna, Reserve General and mayor of Haifa, ousts Benjamin Ben Eliezer as the leader of the Labour Party.
- On 28th November, Ariel Sharon wins the leadership of the Likud party by a clear victory, beating Benjamin Netanyahu without difficulty, who promises to support Sharon in order to assure victory for Likud in the next elections. On the day of the elections, in Beit Shean, two armed Palestinians kill six people and wound more than twenty. Sharon interprets this attack against Israeli citizens, as well as the one in Kenya, as attempts to disrupt the elections.

##### *Human Rights reports*

- In a report published on 1st November, the US-based organisation Human Rights Watch describes the Palestinian suicide attacks against Israeli civilians as crimes against humanity. It also declares that the Palestinian president, Yasser Arafat, is morally and politically responsible for those attacks even though he cannot be described as the person who planned or ordered them.
- In a report published on 3rd November, London-based Amnesty International accuses the Israel Defense Forces of committing crimes of war, unjustifiable killings and torture, and of using Palestinian civilians as «human shields» during their attacks in Nablus and Jenin in April.

### *Violence between the two sides*

- On 10th November, an activist from the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades kills five Israelis in the Metzger *kibbutz* in northern Israel. This kibbutz has long had a reputation for maintaining friendly relations with its Arab neighbours.
- On 12th November, Israel enters the towns of Tulkarm and Nablus, in the West Bank with helicopters and tanks, and several arrests are made.
- On 14th November Israeli forces enter the Gaza Strip, where they arrest three Palestinians wanted by the State. Later on the same day, Israeli forces capture Mohamed Naifeh, the member of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade accused of organising the attack on the Metzger *kibbutz*.
- On 15th November, at least twelve Israelis are killed and another twenty injured in Hebron, in the West Bank, after several armed Palestinians open fire on the guards protecting a group of Jewish settlers heading toward the Kiryat Arba settlement. Among the dead, aside from the three members of the Jihad involved in the ambush, is Colonel Weinberg, the highest-ranking officer assassinated during this *intifada*. Shortly after the attack, the Israeli forces enter Hebron to impose a curfew.
- On 17th November, Ariel Sharon, the prime minister of Israel, announces the expansion of the Jewish settlements in Hebron, in a contravention of international requests for a freeze on the government's settlement policy.
- On 19th November, four civilians die in Tulkarm when the Israeli military forces attempt to capture a member of Fatah.
- On 21st November on the outskirts of Jerusalem, Nael Abu Hilayel, a twenty-two year old member of Hamas, blows himself up in a bus, killing eleven Israelis and injuring fifty others. This attack represents the failure of the Palestinian proposal to maintain the cease-fire during the campaign for the January 2003 elections.
- On 22nd November, Israeli troops return to Bethlehem, where they impose an indefinite curfew and take up the most strategic positions. In Jenin, on the same day, a British United Nations official, Iain Hook, dies during an Israeli raid.

- On 25th November, a Palestinian child dies after several Israeli soldiers open fire on a crowd who are throwing stones at the door of a school in Nablus, in the West Bank.
- On 28th November, in Beit Shean, two armed men from the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades attack the Likud offices, killing six people. The attackers are later hunted down while the elections for party leadership is taking place.
- On 29th November, in Jalbun, near Jenin, the Israeli army proceeds to demolish the houses belonging to the families of the men suspected of committing the attack the day before.

### **December 2002**

#### *Israel*

- Israel prepares to follow the US into war against Iraq and for possible Iraqi missile attacks. Official sources confirm that over fifteen thousand soldiers and public health workers have been vaccinated against smallpox. The vaccinations were carried out according to an intensive programme to protect the country from a possible Iraqi attack with smallpox or other biological weapons.
- An investigation is opened into the accusations of bribery and corruption weighing on the governing Likud party. The police investigation has been ordered by General Prosecutor Elyakim Rubinstein and focuses on accusations of buying votes, bribery and possible presence of criminal elements in the recent Likud primaries.
- On 17th December, the UN Security Council unanimously approves Resolution 1451 (2002), renewing the mandate of the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) that intervenes between Israeli-Syrian lines in the Golan Heights for a further six months.
- On 30th December, the supreme court rules against the eight reservists who, backed by 512 signatures from their fellow soldiers, refused to serve in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, due to the illegality of the Israeli military presence in those territories.
- At the end of December, the electoral commission of Israel bans the two Arab Israeli leaders with represen-

tation in the Knesset (the unicameral legislature of Israel), Ahmed Tibi and Azmi Bishari, and their perspective parties from running in the forthcoming elections, due to their support for the Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

#### *Palestine*

- On 22nd December, the Palestinian government announces the indefinite postponement of the elections in the self-governed Palestinian territories, which were planned for 20th January 2003. They allege the difficulty of carrying out elections while the Israeli army continues their occupation of cities in the West Bank. The Palestinian cabinet therefore accepts the recommendation of its electoral committee to postpone the elections until one hundred days after the Israeli troops have withdrawn from the West Bank.

#### *Diplomatic Negotiations.*

##### *The Road Map*

- On 4th December, the Israeli prime minister, Ariel Sharon, offers to re-adopt the plans for the Road Map in order to achieve peace between Israel and Palestine. However, Sharon demands certain conditions in return, including «an absolute end to Palestinian terror», profound reforms in the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), and the resignation of Arafat and his administration. According to Sharon, once these conditions have been met, a «provisional» Palestinian state could be established in approximately forty-two percent of the West Bank and seventy percent of Gaza, excluding the regions essential to Israeli security.
- The plans of the Quartet for the Middle East (the EU, Russia, the US and the UN) to formally adopt the Road Map during a meeting that should be held in Washington on 20th December crumble on 11th December when the US president, George W. Bush, declares that he is not ready to adopt the plan. But The EU thinks the modifications Bush wants to add are too strongly in favour of the Sharon administration and Israel in general. The British prime minister, Tony Blair, attempts to salvage the plan by invit-

ing the Palestinian leaders to London, in January 2003, to discuss possible ways of creating solid administrative structures for the Palestinian people.

#### *Violence between the two sides*

- On 3rd December, a ninety-five year old woman dies when Israeli troops open fire on a minibus travelling in Ramallah, in the West Bank, along a motorway where, according to the Israeli army, Palestinians are not permitted to travel.
- On 4th December, Israeli helicopters attack a building in the city of Gaza, killing Mustafa Sabah, who was suspected of inventing a powerful bomb that had been used successfully against Israeli tanks. The Popular Palestinian Resistance Committee, with whom Sabah was affiliated, vows revenge. In Tufah, in the West Bank, Israeli troops kill two Islamic Jihad activists.
- On 6th December, ten Palestinians (five of them members of Hamas, according to Israeli sources) die in the refugee camp of Bereij in the Gaza Strip, when Israeli tanks and helicopters enter the camp. However, Israel is not able to capture the man who supposedly caused the raid: Ayman Shishniya, leader of the Committee of Palestinian Popular Resistance. The Palestinians declare that at least eight of the ten victims were civilians, and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) declares that two of the victims were members of their staff.
- On 9th December, Israeli troops kill a mentally handicapped boy near the city of Tulkarm in the West Bank. An army spokesperson explains the action with the justification that that the boy tried to escape when an Israeli patrol officer ordered him to stop.
- On 10th December, in Khan Yunis, in the Gaza Strip, Israeli troops kill Yasin Rah, a member of Hamas who had escaped from being arrested by Israeli officials and sought refuge in a building, from where he was throwing objects at the army.
- On 13th December, the Israeli army bulldozes three houses after a Palestinian sniper shoots from one of them, killing two Israeli soldiers at a checkpoint in Hebron, in the West Bank.

- On 26th December, Israeli troops shoot and kill eight Palestinians in various incursions in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Once again the curfew is imposed in Bethlehem, ending a brief Christmas break requested by Pope John Paul II, which had also implied the withdrawal of troops from the outskirts of the city on 24th December.
- On the night of 27th December, two members of the Islamic Jihad enter the Jewish settlement of Utniel, near Mount Hebron in the West Bank, and kill four Israelis before being shouted down. The organisation declares that the attack was in revenge against the Israeli army for the military action of 26th December.

#### **January 2003**

##### *Israel*

- On 9th January, the Supreme Court lifts the ban prohibiting the two Arab Israeli leaders of the Knesset from running in the elections. The rightwing Central Electoral Commission banned Azmi Bishari and Ahmed Tibi from participating at the end of 2002, under the accusation of conspiring against the state. However, despite the Court's ruling, many Arab Israelis boycott the elections due to the government's policy on Palestine.
- The general elections are held on 28th January, and achieve participation levels of only sixty-eight percent (the lowest in the history of Israel). The result is a solid victory for Prime Minister Sharon's party Likud, which doubled its seats in the Knesset (Israel's unicameral legislature), to achieve a total of thirty-seven. Likud does very well in the elections despite the country's precarious economic situation and recent accusations of bribery and corruption. The party is twenty-four seats short of an absolute majority, meaning they will have to form a coalition with one of the other twelve parties that have also won seats.

##### *Diplomatic Negotiations*

- On 6th January, Tony Blair's plan to hold a conference in London in order to study the creation of solid adminis-

trative structures for the Palestinian people experiences a serious setback due to Israel's ban on foreign travel for Palestinian representatives. The Israeli government declares that the travel prohibition is a further response to the 5th January suicide attacks in Tel Aviv.

- On 14th January, the conference begins in London to reform the Palestinian administration with the members of the Quartet (the US, the UN, the EU and Russia) and representatives from Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Israel is not invited to send a delegation, and the Palestinian delegates participate by telephone connection. The Palestinians promise to prepare an outline for a constitution based on democratic principles, and to consider instating the figure of prime minister, in answer to a fundamental demand from the United States. They also present, with supplementary caution, a ceasefire proposal draft, which is accepted by Fatah but not by the two main groups linked to the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO): Hamas and the Islamic Jihad. The negotiations on the draft will be resumed in further discussions in Egypt at the end of January.

#### *Violence between the two sides*

- The Israeli security forces attribute the relative lull in Palestinian attacks in Israel to the effectiveness of their anti-terrorist campaign. Palestinian officials assure, however, that the lull is a partial ceasefire before the future talks between Hamas and Fatah that are scheduled to be held in Cairo, and which may bring a halt to the suicide attacks against Israeli civilians.
- On 5th January, after six weeks of calm in reference to Palestinian attacks in Israel, a double suicide attack in Tel Aviv kills twenty-two people and wounds more than a hundred. The two bombs explode in sections of Tel Aviv that are frequented by poor immigrant workers. Shortly thereafter, Israeli helicopters attack suspected weapon factories in the Gaza Strip.
- On 25th January, an Israeli military assault in the Gaza Strip kills at least twelve Palestinians. The attack, which is directed at city of Gaza, where there is a strong Hamas presence, wounds around forty people and is launched in response to the Hamas missile attack

on the Israeli village of Sderot, near Gaza, on 24th January. On 26th January, there are further missile attacks on Sderot. No one is hurt and no damage is reported.

## February 2003

### *Israel*

- After the general elections, during the month of February the prime minister and leader of Likud, Ariel Sharon, makes an attempt to form a new coalition government. On 3rd February, he approaches the Labour Party for support, but Labour leader Abraham Mitzna is only willing to join the coalition if Likud agrees to close Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip and initiate new peace talks with the Palestinians. The Labour Party meets the possibility of withdrawal from talks with Likud on 23rd February, when Likud close a coalition agreement with the orthodox National Religious Party (NRP). At the end of the month, Likud also establishes a coalition agreement with the secular centrist party Shinui.
- At the beginning of the month, there are reports that a member of the Israeli intelligence service has been tried in a military court for having refused to obey an order in a revenge attack for a Palestinian suicide bombing, which according to the accused soldier targeted innocent Palestinians.
- On 12th February, the Supreme Court, the highest court of appeal in Belgium, declares that Ariel Sharon may have to appear in court accused of committing war crimes, once he loses diplomatic immunity at the end of his term as Prime Minister. Israel responds by immediately withdrawing its ambassador from Brussels.
- On 16th February, the government approves the admission of twenty thousand Ethiopian Jews who have been requesting the right to settle in Israel for many years.
- On 19th February, there are reports that twelve people, including two soldiers, have been arrested and are accused of supplying military secrets, in exchange for hashish, to the Lebanese Shiite Muslim group Hezbollah.
- On 28th February, the Prime Minister and leader of Likud, Ariel Sharon,

presents a new government. The new coalition is formed by Likud, the secular centrist party Shinui, the orthodox National Religious Party (NRP) and the leftwing party National Union. Together, they control sixty-eight of the 120 seats of the legislature, the Knesset.

### *Palestine*

- The anti-fraud office of the European Commission makes a decision to investigate the EU payments to the National Palestinian Authority (NPA), which amount to ten percent of the NPA's budget, and according to several sources, may be being used to finance terrorist activities.
- In an open letter published on 7th February, Sheik Ahmed Yassin, founder and spiritual leader of Hamas, calls for Muslims around the world to enact revenge against «Western interests» if the United States declares war against Iraq. Despite these declarations, other leaders of the organisation oppose extending their conflict with Israel to include other Western targets.
- On 10th February, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) warns that without immediate international aid, the funds for feeding more than a million people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip will be exhausted in the coming month.

### *Diplomatic Negotiations.*

#### *The Road Map*

- On 8th February, Palestinian and Israelis leaders announce that negotiations between them have led to the proposal of a ceasefire. The contact has included the meeting between the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, and the President of the Palestinian legislature, Ahmad Qureia, and these talks coincide, in Israel, with Sharon's attempts to establish a coalition government with the Labour Party.
- On 14th February, without specifying names or functions, President Arafat agrees to the idea of appointing a Palestinian prime minister, in response to the fundamental prerequisite set by the United States government for the recommencement of the peace process. Arafat assumes the commitment during a meeting in Ramallah with representatives from the UN, the EU

and Russia, three of the four members, as the US is not in attendance, of the Quartet, the diplomatic group that propose the Road Map in order to achieve peace and a Palestinian state by 2005.

### *Violence between the two sides*

- On 5th February, in the bulldozing of the family home of a Palestinian activist in the Gaza Strip, his stepmother is killed amongst the rubble. She may not have heard the warnings to abandon the house. In other conflicts and confrontations in the West Bank, Israeli soldiers kill two Palestinians and wound several others.
- On 6th February, two armed Palestinians attack an Israeli army post in Nablus, in the West Bank, killing an Israeli official and a soldier before being brought down. Two factions claim responsibility: the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and the Popular Front for Palestinian Liberation. A short time later, an Israeli helicopter opens fire on the Al-Wafa geriatric hospital in the city of Gaza, killing two nurses.
- On 9th February, three suspected Palestinian activists die when their car explodes near an Israeli army post in the Gaza Strip.
- On 11th February, in Qalqilya in the West Bank, a Palestinian child is killed when several Israeli soldiers open fire on a crowd that is throwing stones. On the same day, in Bethlehem, a Palestinian sniper kills an Israeli soldier on patrol.
- On 12th February, near the Dugit settlement in the Gaza Strip, two Palestinians are captured, who according to the Israeli army were armed with grenades and knives.
- On 16th February, at least six members of Hamas die near Gaza when the aeroplane they are assembling explodes. Members of Hamas blame Israel, and Israel neither denies nor accepts the accusation. Hours prior to the explosion, the defence ministry had promised to take action in response to the Hamas bombing the day before, which destroyed an Israeli tank and killed its four occupants. On the same day, two more Palestinians die in Nablus during confrontations rooted in the Israeli incursion in order to arrest a senior official of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO).



- On 17th February, secret Israeli troops assassinate Hamas leader, Riyad Abu Zeid, in an ambush along a road in the Gaza Strip. Meanwhile, another group of Israeli soldiers dynamite the house of a suspected explosives expert and member of Hamas, and kill two Palestinians, in the Gaza Strip.

- On 19th February, at least thirteen Palestinians die during Israeli assaults in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In an immediate response, four rockets hit southern Israel, injuring several people.

- On 23rd February, eight Palestinians and an Israeli die in the Gaza Strip during Israeli military operations to prevent rocket attacks from the Palestinians territories.

### March 2003

*Prime Minister named for the Palestinian National Authority*

- On 10th March, the Palestinian Legislative Council, with a vote of seventy-three against one, approves the creation of the post of Prime Minister, a measure that will serve as a counterbalance against the powers of the President, Yasser Arafat, and which is a fundamental prerequisite on the part of the US government for the resumption of peace talks.

- On 19th March, the Palestinian Legislature Council officially names Mahmoud Abbas, better known as Abu Mazen, as Prime Minister. Two days previously, on 17th March, the same council had rejected the measure that would have allowed Yasser Arafat to restrict the powers of the prime minister.

*Violence between the two sides*

- On 2nd March, two Palestinians die when a group of soldiers with support from tanks and helicopters destroy an eight-storey apartment building in the Khan Yunis refugee camp. A short time later, at the funeral of the two Palestinians killed, fighting breaks out and a Palestinian child is killed by Israeli fire.

- On 3rd March, eight Palestinians die in the Gaza Strip when Israel steps up military operations against Hamas.

The assault is directed at the Bureij refugee camp and ends with the arrest of Mohamed Taha, one of the founders of Hamas, and his three sons. Hamas responds by launching rockets from Gaza at the nearby Israeli town of Sderot. There are no victims.

- On 5th March, in the Israeli city of Haifa, a Palestinian suicide bomber blows himself up in a bus, resulting in the further deaths of fifteen passengers. The Israeli government blames the Palestinian National Authority for not doing anything to stop these acts.

- On 6th March, Israeli forces kill eleven Palestinians and leave over a hundred more injured during an assault on the Jabalya refugee camp, in the Gaza Strip. According to Palestinians sources, there are eight civilians three of whom are children.

- On 7th March, two Palestinians attack the Jewish settlement of Kiryat Arba, in the West Bank, killing three Israelis and injuring six others before being overpowered.

- On 10th March, a sniper opens fire on Israeli troops on patrol near the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, killing a soldier and injuring another five. On the following day, Israeli troops surround the building where the sniper, a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (FPLP), is hiding. They proceed to demolish the building, killing the sniper.

- On 12th March, Israeli soldiers are attacked in Saida, in the West Bank, unleashing an exchange of fire in which a Palestinian citizen and an Israeli soldier die. The Islamic Jihad claims responsibility for the attack.

- On 16th March, an Israeli bulldozer kills a young American woman who was kneeling in front of the machine to stop the destruction of a Palestinian home in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip. The woman formed part of a group of British and US citizens acting as human shields in an attempt to prevent the demolition of homes in Rafah.

- On 17th March, ten Palestinians die during separate Israeli attacks on the Nuseirat refugee camp and the Israeli city of Beit Lehiya, both on the Gaza Strip. Hundreds of other Palestinians are captured and held for interrogation.

- On 25th March, Israeli special forces kill four Palestinians, including a

child, during an ambush attack on a car in the city of Bethlehem in the West Bank. According to Israeli sources, three of the people killed were members of Hamas. On the same day, during outbreaks of violence in the city of Jenin in the West Bank, a child is shot and killed by Israeli forces.

- On 27th March, Israeli troops assault Beit Hanoun in the Gaza Strip and capture three people Israel considers to be responsible for launching rockets at a neighbouring Israeli municipality. Two Palestinian police are killed during the incursion and up to sixteen Palestinians suffer injuries of varying severity.

- On 30th March, a Palestinian suicide bomber detonates a bomb in the Israeli resort of Netanya. The attacker dies and thirty Israelis are wounded. The Islamic Jihad claims responsibility, describing it as a «gift» for the people of Iraq.

### April 2003

*Israel*

- On 30th April, up to 700,000 workers hold a strike in protest against the government's plans to cutback on salaries and jobs. At the end of the first day of strikes, the Knesset (the unicameral legislative body) approves a plan for cutbacks that serves to accentuate the dispute.

*Palestine: presentation of the government and of the Road Map*

- On 13th April, Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) presents his new government to President Yasser Arafat. The formation of the government leaves ruffled feathers both among those loyal to Arafat, who feel underrepresented in the new administration, and among the reformists, who feel that Abu Mazen has not been radical enough in selecting his ministers.

- On 22nd April, after Arafat's renouncement of authority, the US and Israel's approval of the move, and pressure from Egypt and several international leaders, an agreement is reached concerning the formation of Abu Mazen's government. The Prime Minister had threatened to resign un-

less Arafat accepted his choice of government.

- On 28th April, the government is approved by Fatah, the dominant faction of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO). On the following day it is ratified by the Palestinian Legislative Council.
- On 30th April, after successive delays due to the elections in Israel, the war in Iraq and Abu Mazen's ascension to office, the Quartet (the EU, the US, the UN and Russia) formally launches the Road Map aimed at achieving peace in the Middle East and a Palestinian state by 2005. Its goal is to create a favourable situation for resuming peace talks after thirty-one months of violence, during which two thousand Palestinians and seven hundred Israelis have died.

#### *Violence between the two sides*

- On 2nd April, Israeli troops enter Turkam in the West Bank and arrest two thousand people in order to interrogate them. All but seven are released shortly afterward. A further four suspects are arrested in the West Bank.
- On 3rd April, four Palestinians die when the Israeli army carries out a raid on the Rafah refugee camp in the Gaza Strip. In Qalqilya in the West Bank, a child is killed by Israeli fire.
- On 8th April, an Israeli fighter plane opens fire on a car driving along a motorway in Gaza, killing the three members of Hamas who are inside the vehicle, as well as four bystanders.
- On 9th April, Hamas launches two missiles from northern Gaza to Sderot, which cause no injuries or damage. However, Israel responds immediately by sending forces to attack the north of the Gaza Strip, resulting in the death of five Palestinians, one of them a member of Hamas.
- A group of Jewish extremists claim responsibility for the 9th April bombing of a school in Jaba in the West Bank, which left around twenty students with injuries of varied degrees of severity.
- On 10th April, an Israeli army helicopter opens fire on a car and kills a Palestinian citizen, and on the same day two armed Palestinians kill two Israeli soldiers at a military base in the West Bank before they are overpowered.

- On 11th April, an Israeli sniper seriously wounds a peace activist from the United Kingdom, who was trying to protect a group of Palestinian children near a police checkpoint in the Gaza Strip.

- On 15th April, two armed Palestinians, two Israeli civilians and an Israeli army officer die in separate incidents of armed conflict. On the following day, the Israeli army imposes a total shutdown of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, owing to the fact that there are high indications of possible attack from Palestinian activists during the Passover festival, which begins on 16th April.

- On 20th April, an Israeli soldier and five Palestinians die during the largest Israeli raid to date on the Rafah refugee camp in the Gaza Strip.

- On 24th April, a security guard dies and thirteen other Israelis are wounded in a suicide bombing in the Israeli village of Kfar Saba, near the West Bank. A few hours later, the Israeli army kills two Palestinians who were throwing stones in a locality close to Ramallah, in the West Bank.

- On 29th April, a suicide bomber strikes a nightclub in Tel Aviv, killing three Israelis. Hamas claims responsibility and assures that they organised the attack with the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. On the same day, in the Gaza Strip, a leader from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) is assassinated with a missile launched from an Israeli helicopter. A Palestinian civilian also dies in the attack. In the West Bank, Israeli forces kill two members of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades.

#### **May 2003**

##### *Israel*

- On 4th May, the Reserve General Abraham Mitzna resigns as leader of the opposing Labour Party, which suffered an irrefutable defeat in the January elections.

- On 25th May, Ariel Sharon presents the Road Map to his government, which accepts, though by only a narrow margin, the content of the document. It is the first time the Israeli government has backed a plan that specifically calls for the creation of a

Palestinian state in the territories occupied by Israel during the Six Day War in 1967. The government does however demand that Israel maintain its refusal to recognise the right of the Palestinian refugees to return to their former homes in Israel.

- At the end of May, from the Knesset, Michael Eitan, former minister and an important figure in the governing Likud party, accuses Israeli soldiers of committing «serious violations of human rights» in the occupied territories, and their superiors of being indifferent to such extremes.

##### *Palestine*

- On 17th May, Saeb Erekat, veteran Palestinian negotiator, resigns as Minister of Negotiation with Israel after Abu Mazen disregards his warning not to hold talks with Sharon. Erekat, an old ally of Yasser Arafat's, opposed the meeting with the argument that it could give people cause to think that Palestine and Israel can resolve their problems bilaterally.

##### *Diplomatic negotiations*

- At the beginning of the month, the US secretary of state, Colin Powell, begins a tour through the Middle East in order to discuss the Road Map with Israeli and Palestinian leaders, as well as with leaders in Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia; all countries that supported the peace plan.

- On 11th May, Colin Powell talks separately with Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon and with the Palestinian Prime Minister, Abu Mazen, and warns them both to begin work on implementing the Road Map. Sharon announces the lift on the closure of the occupied territories.

- On 15th May, Syria withdraws its objections to the Road Map after intervention from the EU High Representative for the CFSP, Javier Solana.

- On 17th May, Ariel Sharon and Abu Mazen hold a meeting for the first time since September 2000, in which both emphasise the need to stop the escalation of terror. The Palestinian side demands that Israel proceed with certain concessions of the Road Map, such as dismantling the settlements put down over the last two years.

- On 29th May, Ariel Sharon and Abu Mazen have a second meeting and part company satisfied. Sharon is committed to lowering restrictions on Palestinians, and Mazen to stopping Palestinian violence.

#### *Violence between the two sides*

- On 1st May, the Israeli forces penetrate Shajaiya, a densely populated quarter of Gaza. Violence breaks out and thirteen Palestinians are killed, including a Hamas arms dealer and his two brothers. In Hebron, in the West Bank, the Israeli forces kill two armed Palestinians, one of whom is identified as a leader of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades.
- On 2nd May, James Miller, a British freelance journalist is killed by an Israeli tank while he is filming for a documentary in the Rafah refugee camp in the Gaza Strip.
- On 7th May, an important member of Hamas dies near Nablus in the West Bank when a bomb explodes. Hamas lays the blame on Israel, but it denies any implication.
- On 8th May, an Israeli helicopter kills Iyad al-Beik, described by Israel as a «very significant» leader of the military wing of Hamas. Palestinian forces assure that the action will foil the understanding that Hamas had reached with the Palestinian government for achieving a ceasefire and advancing with implementation of the Road Map.
- On 11th May, a member of Hamas blows himself up and kills seven people in an attack in Jerusalem.
- On 13th and 14th May, Israeli troops carry out various raids in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which result in the deaths of five Palestinians and leaves over thirty people wounded. Fifteen suspects are arrested in connection with the incident.
- On 18th May, in Jerusalem, a Palestinian activist sets off a bomb on a bus, killing seven people and wounding over twenty. Hamas claims responsibility. A day earlier, just before the initiation of the high-level talks between Israel and Palestine, Hamas carries out another suicide bombing in Hebron in which a married Jewish settler couple dies.
- On 19th May, in the Gaza Strip, a member of Hamas blows himself up

and injures three soldiers who are in a vehicle right next to where the bomb was detonated. On the same day, another Palestinian activist sacrifices his own life and kills three Israelis when he detonates a bomb in a shopping centre near Jenin, in the West Bank.

- Israel responds to the consecutive suicide bombings by, once again, completely closing the Gaza Strip, so preventing Palestinians from leaving the territories or moving from one region to another.

### **June 2003**

#### *Diplomatic Negotiations*

- On 3rd June, the US President, George W. Bush, meets with five Arab leaders in Sharm el-Sheik, on the Egyptian shore of the Red Sea, to debate the Middle East peace process, with particular attention to the Road Map. Bush meets with Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, King Abdullah II of Jordan, King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain, the Saudi Prince Abdullah ibn Abdul Aziz, and the Palestinian Prime Minister, Mahmoud Abbas better known as Abu Mazen. He urges the Arab leaders to fight the sources that feed terrorism and not allow the financing of terrorist groups. Furthermore, unaware that his remarks are being recorded by Arab television microphones, Bush reveals the US determination that the Palestinian state will not be divided into two or three unconnected sections.
- On 4th June, in Aqaba, Jordan, the US President George W. Bush holds talks with Palestinian Prime Minister Abu Mazen, and with the Israeli prime minister, Ariel Sharon. Bush affirms that peace in the Middle East is a priority of his presidency, while Abu Mazen proclaims the need to end the armed *intifada*, and denounces violence against the Israeli people. Sharon affirms the support of his government in forming a «democratic Palestinian state at peace with Israel», promises to improve the humanitarian conditions of Palestinians, accepts the Palestinian demand for a viable and adjacent state, and announces that Israel «will begin immediately to eliminate unauthorised settlements».

- On 6th June, the fundamentalist Islamic group Hamas announces that they have broken off their ceasefire negotiations with the Abu Mazen administration, under the reasoning that the prime minister disappointed the Palestinian people at the Aqaba summit by calling for the end of the armed *intifada* and expressing compassion for the suffering of the Jewish people. One of the leaders of Hamas, Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi, declares the «dialogue» finished and declares that the Palestinian people «will never give up an inch of their land».
- On 9th June, the Palestinian Prime Minister, Abu Mazen, insists on his commitment to ending the attacks on Israel, emphasising, however, that he will only use dialogue, and never force, in relations with militant groups. On the same day, Israel proceeds to close down a group of fifteen settlements built over the last few years in the West Bank, in accordance with one of the steps laid out in the Road Map.
- On 14th June, efforts are made to appease the situation and to pact another ceasefire. An Egyptian team and a US team led by special envoy John Wolf participate in the debate.
- On 16th June, in a special session of the Knesset, the unicameral legislature of Israel, Prime Minister Sharon affirms that a peace accord with the Palestinians is impossible until the violence ends, and anticipates new actions against Palestinian terrorism.
- On 20th June, US secretary of state, Colin Powell, arrives in Israel to hold talks with the leaders of Palestine and Israel, and to speed up the peace process. According to Powell, the talks approached the issue of transferring responsibility for security in the Gaza Strip and Bethlehem, in the West Bank, to the Palestinians.
- On 22nd June the US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, travels to Aqaba for a meeting of the Quartet for the Middle East. Powell describes the latest Israeli actions against Palestinian activists as obstacles in the way of advancement for the Road Map. The previous day, in Hebron in the West Bank, Israeli had killed Abdula Qawasme, a key figure in Hamas, and in Gaza they had killed three members of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades.

- On 27th June, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators announce that have reached an agreement according to which the Israeli forces will begin their withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. The announcement is made shortly after the spiritual leader of Hamas, Sheik Ahmed Yassin, affirms that he intends to halt Israeli-targeted attacks for an unspecified amount of time.
- The advances in negotiations coincide with the arrival of President Bush's National Security Advisor, Condoleezza Rice, who meets with Palestinian and Israeli representatives in order to accord the details of the withdrawal of the Israeli army from certain parts of Gaza. It is established that the army should eliminate roadblocks located along the coastal motorway that runs along the length of the Gaza Strip, open the Rafah checkpoint that connects the territory with Egypt, and loosen restrictions on Palestinians who work in Israel. In exchange, Israel demands that the Palestinians prevent Israeli-targeted attacks from the Gaza Strip and that they take firm action against activists.
- On 29th June, the three main Palestinian factions, the Islamic Jihad, Hamas

and Fatah, announces a ceasefire with Israel that will stand in place during the coming three months. Hamas and the Islamic Jihad specify that they will stop attacks immediately provided Israel ends its assassination campaign, frees all Palestinian convicts held in Israeli prisons and lifts the restrictions on President Arafat.

#### *Violence between the two sides*

- On 8th June, a group of armed Palestinians kill four Israeli soldiers in the Gaza Strip in an attack that reinforces the Palestinian activists' rejection of the Road Map. In Hebron, in the West Bank, a fifth soldier dies after being attacked by armed men.
- On 10th June, in the Gaza Strip, an Israeli helicopter attacks a car carrying Hamas leader Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi. Rantisi only suffers injuries, but his bodyguard and a civilian are killed. The US severely criticises the attack for creating an obstruction to the Palestinians process to end terrorism. On the same day, Hamas responds by launching missiles at the Israeli village of Sderot, just over the border from

Gaza, and at the same time, Israel responds with another air strike that kills three Palestinians and wounds more than thirty people.

- On 11th June, in an action organised by Hamas, a Palestinian suicide bomber detonates a bomb in Jerusalem, killing at least sixteen people and causing Israeli air strikes over Gaza in revenge of the attack. The air raids kill eleven people, including four members of Hamas.
- On 12th and 13th June, Israeli helicopters attack Gaza for a second time, killing at least eight people and wounding dozens.
- On 19th June, in an act claimed by the Islamic Jihad, a suicide bomber blows himself up in a grocer's shop in Sde Trumot, in north-eastern Israel, killing himself and the shop owner.
- On 25th June, in the Gaza Strip, Israeli helicopters lead a new air strike, killing two people and critically injuring a member of Hamas.
- On 27th June, the death of four Palestinians and an Israeli soldier following an Israeli military operation in Gaza hinders a ceasefire agreement from the Palestinian side.