

## Chronologies

# Chronology of Events in Israel and Palestine

2021 begins in Israel with what is considered to be the world's most streamlined Covid-19 vaccination rollout, with 2.5 million of the country's close to 9 million inhabitants immunized by mid-February. Despite promising results from the programme, containment measures against the pandemic are re-introduced as of July after new rises in infections are recorded with the appearance of the delta and omicron variants of the virus, for which Israel is the first country in the world to approve administering third and fourth doses of the vaccine, in July and December respectively. There are two other developments that mark the start of the second year of the pandemic. Firstly, Israeli government plans to give 45,000 of the country's doses to 20 countries that have normalized relations with Israel, have recognized Jerusalem as the country's capital or have increased their diplomatic presence in the city, in an example of vaccine diplomacy. The move, however, is interrupted in February under orders of the Attorney General over suspicions that the programme lacks transparency. Secondly, is the controversial introduction of tracking methods used by the domestic intelligence service to monitor those who are or may be infected. In stark contrast, Palestine does not begin its immunization campaign until March, with just 15,000 doses for its population of over five million, most of which have been contributed by Russia – 10,000. The remaining 5,000 of these initial doses have been contributed by Israel, which also decides to vaccinate the nearly 130,000 Palestinians that cross the border on a daily basis to work or trade in Israel.

Besides the pandemic, another major area that has marked 2021 both in Is-

rael and Palestine are the electoral processes. For Israel, the fourth legislative elections in less than two years are held in March, after, in December 2020, a failure to agree on the state budget definitively breaks up the short-lived and forced coalition between Likud (Consolidation) and KajoI Lavan (Blue and White). With a 71.51% turnout, Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud once again wins most votes, on this occasion with 36 of the 120 seats in the Knesset (Parliament), followed very closely by Benny Gantz's Blue and White party, with 33 seats. The close results mean the inevitable formation of a new coalition government. With Netanyahu, as the most voted candidate, unable to form a government before the deadline, having failed to reach an agreement that secures the minimum parliamentary support required, it is not until 2 June, coinciding with the election by the Parliament of Isaac Herzog as the new President of Israel, that an agreement is reached to form a government. Approved on 13 June by the Parliament, the new coalition government comprises a complex alliance of eight parties in which Naftali Bennett, from Yamina (Rightwards) and Yair Lapid, from Yesh Atid (There is a Future), will take turns as Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. This brings the end to Benjamin Netanyahu's 12-year government, which has struggled against the growing citizen protests and ongoing trials over the cases known as 1000, 2000 and 4000. The new Bennett-Lapid Administration, after securing approval for the state budget and thereby avoiding a fifth election, continues to respect the Abraham Accords and normalize relations with the UAE and Bahrain, as well as focusing on normalizing

relations with Morocco. The country also continues with its settlement expansion policy in Palestinian territories and the Golan Heights. This, together with measures such as October's designation of six of the main Palestinian human rights NGOs as terrorist organizations, does not bode well for the resumption of the frozen peace talks.

As regards the Palestinian electoral process, in January, the Fatah-dominated PNA announces parliamentary, presidential and Palestinian National Council elections for May, July and August. However, they are suspended in April with President Mahmoud Abbas' decision to postpone the elections until Israel guarantees that Palestinians living in East Jerusalem can participate. The election call itself provokes confrontations between Fatah's Central Committee and splinter groups like Mohammed Dahlan's Democratic Reform Current (DRC) and the factions of Nasser al-Qudwa and Marwan Barghouti. This only serves to cast greater doubt over Abbas' leadership, brought further into question following the assassination in June of Nizar Banat, an opponent of both Abbas and Dahlan. Thus, the first round of local elections, on 11 December, are the only elections held in Palestine in 2021, the second round being scheduled for March 2022. These elections are only held in the West Bank because of Hamas's decision to boycott the vote.

Noteworthy among the conflicts between the parties are the clashes in April at the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem, between police and Palestinians from the eastern part of the city, and, in May, protests and clashes in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa, Beersheba, Acre, Musmus, Lod and Jaffa con-

demning the Israeli settlement policy and the effective annexation of the eastern sector of Jerusalem following an order to evict several Palestinian families from the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood. This, in turn, triggers a fierce exchange of rocket fire between Israel and the Gaza Strip, culminating in the biggest Israeli offensive against Hamas since the war in 2014, an offensive that ends on 21 May, with a ceasefire secured by Egyptian mediation, which is broken in June with fresh Israeli attacks on Gaza in response to the launch of incendiary balloons into Israel throughout the summer.

## January 2021

### Israel

- On 1 January the Israeli health authorities report that they have already vaccinated a million citizens against Covid-19 in the first two weeks of the immunization campaign.
- On 5 January Israel introduces tougher measures against Covid-19 for at least two weeks, ordering the closure of schools and non-essential businesses, after more than 8,000 infections are recorded the previous day.
- On 19 January the government opens a tender for the construction of 2,575 new homes in Israeli settlements in Palestinian territory in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.
- On 24 January the government approves the normalization of relations with Morocco, following the US' recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara. On the same day, Israel opens its embassy in the UAE, four months after the signing of the Abraham Accords in Washington.
- On 25 January Merav Michaeli is elected leader of the Labor Party.
- On 25 January Israel suspends flights into the country following the rise in Covid-19 infections and an increase in social opposition to the measures adopted by the government.

### Palestine

- On 15 January the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas announces that

Palestine will hold parliamentary elections on 22 May, presidential elections on 31 July and elections for the Palestinian National Council on 31 August, in the first Palestinian elections to be held in 15 years. The announcement causes an immediate confrontation between Fatah and the Democratic Reform Current (DRC), led by the dismissed party leader Mohammed Dahlan, who asks to run on a joint list with Fatah or, failing that, on an independent list, following Fatah's dismissal of DRC members. Dahlan, exiled in the UAE since 2011, was investigated by the Palestinian Authority (PNA) and convicted *in absentia* in 2016 for embezzlement. Fatah says it will stop the DRC running in elections, based on the 2007 Palestinian Elections Law and the amendments to this, outlined in the decree law enacted on 11 January 2021.

### Conflicts between the Parties

- On 5 January a Palestinian man is killed after attempting to stab an Israeli during a protest in the Gush Etzion settlement, close to Bethlehem.
- On 31 January a Palestinian man is shot dead by the Israeli security forces after attempting to stab a soldier in the Gush Etzion settlement, south of the West Bank.

## February 2021

### Israel

- On 1 February Israel and Kosovo sign an agreement via online links establishing diplomatic ties between the two countries.
- On 5 February the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is declared competent to investigate war crimes committed in Palestinian territories, opening up the possibility of an investigation against Israel or Palestinian militias like Hamas or Islamic Jihad. Israel is not party to the 2002 Rome Statutes, which the PNA signed in 2015.
- On 8 February the trial resumes against Benjamin Netanyahu for corruption cases 1000, 2000 and 4000, in which the Prime Minister pleads not guilty to all charges.

- On 18 February Israel and Syria complete a Russian-mediated prisoner swap of an Israeli woman held captive in Syria for two Syrian shepherds captured by Israel, in a rare instance of indirect cooperation. According to the newspaper Asharq al-Awsat, the swap includes a clause, denied by Syria and Israel, under which Israel would send thousands of Covid-19 vaccines to Syria, a country with which it is technically at war.
- On 21 February Israel begins the reopening of its economy as the Covid-19 vaccination rate reaches 50%, while keeping social distancing measures in place.
- On 21 February the government urges the population to avoid bathing in Mediterranean waters following a serious oil spill that reaches a large part of the coastline.
- On 23 February the trial against Benjamin Netanyahu in three corruption cases is postponed until 5 April, after the elections on 23 March, in response to a request made by the Prime Minister's defence.
- On 25 February Benjamin Netanyahu suspends the donation of tens of thousands of Covid-19 vaccines to a list of allied countries after the Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit asks for legal clarifications concerning the plan.

### Palestine

- On 1 February Israel delivers an initial batch of 2,000 doses of the Moderna Covid-19 vaccine, out of a total 5,000, to the PNA.
- On 4 February 10,000 doses of the Russian Sputnik V vaccine arrive at Ben Gurion airport to be transferred to the PNA on the same day.
- On 8 February 14 Palestinian parties meet in Cairo to discuss the procedures for the legislative and presidential elections scheduled for 22 May and 31 July, respectively.
- On 14 February, in the West Bank, Palestine begins its Covid-19 vaccination campaign with only 15,000 doses available, in the hope that the WHO's COVAX programme will enable the country to vaccinate 20% of its population during 2021.
- On 5 February, with Gaza struggling with a severe crisis, the announcement

of the replacement of the Khalil al-Wazir mosque, which was destroyed during the war with Israel in 2014, at a cost of over a million dollars sparks controversy among the population of the Palestinian enclave.

- On 17 February a shipment of 2,000 doses of the Sputnik V Covid-19 vaccine, donated by Russia, reaches the Gaza Strip from the West Bank after Israel approves the delivery.
- On 27 February the PNA announces new restrictions in the West Bank for 12 days, faced with the increase in coronavirus infections and delays in the vaccination campaign.

#### *Conflicts between the Parties*

- On 5 February a guard at the Sadeh Ephraim outpost, close to Ramallah, shoots dead a Palestinian man who, according to Israeli sources, was trying to attack a settler at the post. The incident comes in a context of increasing attacks since the beginning of 2021 in the West Bank, involving settlers and Palestinians.
- On 12 February the PNA reports several clashes to the east of Nablus and in Deir Jarir, between settlers and Israeli security forces and demonstrators protesting against the settlements in the West Bank.

### **March 2021**

#### *Israel*

- On 1 March Benjamin Netanyahu blames Iran for the attack in the Gulf of Oman in late February on the Bahamian-flagged, Israeli-owned cargo ship *Helios Ray*.
- On 1 March the Supreme Court authorizes the inclusion in the Labor Party's electoral list of the Arab candidate Ibtisam Mara'ana Menuhin for the upcoming elections. The parliamentary electoral committee had annulled her candidacy at the request of a far-right candidate, due to statements made by Menuhin in the past casting doubt over the Jewish nature of Israel and in support of the Palestinian cause.
- On 1 March the first UAE ambassador to Israel arrives in Tel Aviv in order

to establish bilateral diplomatic ties, as outlined in the 2020 Abraham Accords.

- On 5 March thousands of demonstrators take to the streets in Um el-Fahem, in northern Israel, to protest against the police response, a week earlier, when they used force to disperse a demonstration against the widespread violence suffered by the Arab city.
- On 7 March Israel begins a large-scale campaign to vaccinate the 120,000 Palestinians working legally in Israel and the Israeli settlements in the West Bank.
- On 11 March Jordan refuses to allow the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to fly through its airspace on his first official visit to the UAE. The decision could be, according to diplomatic sources, a reprisal for Israel's cancellation on the previous day of a visit by the Jordanian Crown Prince to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.
- On 11 March the Czech Republic opens a diplomatic office in West Jerusalem as a sign of its recognition of the city as the capital of Israel.
- On 14 March Kosovo opens its embassy in Jerusalem in recognition of the city's status as the capital of Israel and in exchange for Israel recognizing Kosovo's independence in September 2020.
- On 17 March the Israeli Parliament approves the use of an electronic bracelet to help supervise the mandatory Covid-19 quarantine for anyone returning to the country.
- On 18 March the UAE suspends preparations for the summit scheduled for April with Israel, the US and the Arab countries that have normalized relations with Israel, accusing Benjamin Netanyahu of exploiting the normalization between the two countries in his campaign for the elections on 23 March.
- On 20 March thousands demonstrate in Jerusalem to call for the resignation of the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, three days before the elections on 23 March.
- On 22 March the Israeli army announces the imminent closure of all border crossings from the West Bank and Gaza a day before the legislative elections.
- On 23 March Israel holds early elections, the fourth in less than two years,

in which, with a high turnout, Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud wins again with 36 of the 120 seats in the Knesset (Parliament), thereby requiring the party to form a new coalition to be able to govern. Benny Gantz's Blue and White party wins 33 seats.

- On 24 March the United Nations Human Rights Council renews its support for another year for four resolutions against Israel for its activities in occupied Palestinian territories.
- On 25 March Channel 12 reports a "recent" Iranian missile attack in the Arabian Sea on an Israeli container ship heading to India from Tanzania.
- On 30 March Bahrain appoints Khaled Yousif al-Jalaha as the Emirate's new ambassador to Israel, in virtue of the 2020 Abraham Accords.
- On 30 March Israel gives the green light to an international operation to administer Covid-19 vaccines to 7,000 Palestinian traders from the Gaza Strip, who travel regularly through Israel and the West Bank.

#### *Palestine*

- On 2 March the PNA confirms it has diverted 10% of the 12,000 doses of the Covid-19 vaccine earmarked for medical workers to the Palestinian football team, government ministers, presidential guards and members of the Executive Committee of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). A further 200 doses were given to the royal court of Jordan, following a request from Aman.
- On 4 March the PNA decrees a state of emergency in the West Bank after reporting a record daily infection rate of 2,000 and with hospitals overflowing. On 6 March, a provincial lockdown and curfew are imposed in Ramallah and Nablus.
- On 11 March Fatah's Central Committee expels Nasser al-Qudwa, one of its most prominent members, for his attempt to field a separate list of candidates for the parliamentary elections in May.
- On 14 March Hamas announces the appointment, for the first time since its creation in 1987, of a woman, Jamila al-Shanti, as a member of its politburo.
- On 17 March the PNA receives an initial batch of 60,000 doses of the

coronavirus vaccine through the Covid-19 Vaccines Global Access Fund (COVAX).

- On 31 March the EU announces that it is studying alternatives for observing the upcoming Palestinian elections, faced with Israel's refusal to allow it to deploy an exploratory mission ahead of the vote, due to the pandemic.
- On 31 March members of Fatah that support Marwan Barghouti break away from the party governing the PNA to form a separate electoral list, which will compete against Fatah in the May elections in an alliance with the faction led by Nasser al-Kidwa, Yasser Arafat's nephew and former Palestinian envoy to the United Nations, who abandoned Fatah in the middle of the month.

#### *Conflicts between the Parties*

- On 3 March the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Fatou Bensouda, announces the opening of "an investigation respecting the situation in Palestine," which will include crimes within the jurisdiction of the Court allegedly committed by Israel or Hamas during the 2014 Operation Protective Edge, which formed part of Israel's settlement expansion policy, and in the Israeli army's response to the Great March of Return protests, organized in Gaza between March 2018 and December 2019.
- On 8 March the Israeli army says it has "neutralized" a Palestinian assailant who attempted to stab a soldier in Nablus.
- On 23 March the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) reports that a rocket was fired from the Gaza Strip at Beersheba, shortly after the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to the city during the Israeli legislative elections.

### **April 2021**

#### *Israel*

- On 6 April Benjamin Netanyahu is tasked to form a government by the President Reuven Rivlin, Likud (Consolidation) being the most voted party in the early elections in March.
- On 8 April Israel reiterates that it will not recognize the ICC's jurisdiction with

respect to alleged Israeli war crimes during the 2014 conflict with Gaza.

- On 12 April Iran accuses Israel of being behind the power cut, on that same day, at the Natanz nuclear plant, describing it as an act of "nuclear terrorism."
- On 18 April Israel lifts the mandatory use of face masks outdoors.
- On 19 April the police enter Mea Shearim, Jerusalem, to arrest a man suspected of participating in violent protests which led to clashes with local residents, most of them ultra-Orthodox Jews.
- On 22 April there is a big explosion close to Dimona, where Israel's nuclear reactor is located, attributed by Israel to a missile launched from Syria. Shortly after, Syria announces that four of its soldiers have been injured in Israeli airstrikes on the outskirts of Damascus.
- On 30 April at least 45 people are killed, crushed to death or asphyxiated, and over a hundred injured in the worst civilian disaster in the history of the State of Israel. The crush was caused by a human avalanche at Mount Meron in Galilee, during the Jewish pilgrimage of Lag Baomer at the tomb of rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai. 100,000 people were attending the event.

#### *Palestine*

- On 6 April the Gazan authorities order school closures, a night curfew and a ban on movement between populations faced with the high percentage of new Covid-19 infections.
- On 30 April the PNA President and Fatah leader Mahmoud Abbas announces another postponement of the Palestinian legislative elections, scheduled for 22 May, "until the participation of our people in Jerusalem is guaranteed," pending an Israeli decision. Hamas describes Abbas's decision as a "blow" to avoid a defeat at the ballot box with polls suggesting good results for the ruling party in Gaza and faced with Fatah's internal divisions. Following Abbas's announcement, there are protests in Gaza and the West Bank.

#### *Conflicts between the Parties*

- On 6 April a Palestinian man is shot dead by the Israeli army when he attempted to ram a vehicle into a check-

point close to Ramallah, according to the IDF.

- On 13 April there are clashes at the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem between police and Palestinians from the eastern part of the city, which continue for over a week, in reaction to the Israeli decision to set up barriers to open up the steps outside the gate, thereby preventing people from sitting down and facilitating transit.
- On 15-16 April the Israeli army reports two attacks carried out on Hamas targets in retaliation for two rockets launched from Gaza.
- On 18-19 April clashes break out in the Jaffa district of Tel Aviv between Arab and Jewish demonstrators, after Arab residents attack the head of a Jewish religious school who was looking to buy property for the centre's facilities.
- On 22 April over 100 Palestinians and some 20 Israeli police officers are injured in clashes that erupted when the police escorted a protest organized by the extremist Jewish movement Lahava in Jerusalem's Old City.
- On 26 April the Israeli security cabinet authorizes broad military action if rockets continue to be fired from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory, following the recent surge in attacks.
- On 29 April the Israeli army condemns a Molotov cocktail attack on a building in a settlement east of Ramallah.

### **May 2021**

#### *Israel*

- On 4 May Israel and Lebanon resume direct talks brokered by the US on the demarcation of their maritime border, which began in October 2020 and have been on hold since December.
- On 5 May the President Reuven Rivlin begins consultations to deliver the mandate to form a government to Yair Lapid, leader of the centrist Yesh Atid party (There Is a Future), after Likud's 28-day deadline as the most voted party in the March elections expires without the acting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu able to attain the 61 seats needed to form a coalition government.
- On 5-6 May Syria blames Israel for two airstrikes on different areas of Latakia and Quneitra, respectively.

- On 13 May the leader of Yamina (Rightward), Naftali Bennett, withdraws his support for the formation of a coalition government between Yesh Atid, the United Arab List and his party, and begins to negotiate a government agreement with Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud, faced with the escalation of the conflict with Hamas in Gaza and the ongoing clashes in mixed Arab-Israeli cities. On 26 May, Yair Lapid announces an agreement between Yesh Atid and the left-wing Meretz (Vigor) party of Nitzan Horowitz for the possible formation of a government that does not include Likud. On 30 May, Bennet retracts his decision and announces his support for the Yesh Atid leader, Yair Lapid, in the formation of a new government in which Bennet would occupy the position of prime minister for the first half of the term and Lapid during the second half. For its part, Gideon Saar's centre-right party Tikva Hadasha (New Hope) rejects Netanyahu's offer to prevent the formation of the new Bennett-Lapid coalition.
- On 14 May Israel condemns the launch of three missiles into its territory from Syria, a day after it condemned another three launches from Lebanese territory.
- On 18 May Israel responds with artillery fire to the launch of at least six rockets from Lebanon, which fail to reach Israeli territory.
- On 27 May Israel summons the French ambassador following remarks made by the French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian in which he warned of the "risk of apartheid" in Israel if there were no guarantees of a Palestinian state that coexisted with an Israeli one.

#### *Palestine*

- On 18 May a nationwide general strike is held in Palestinian Territory to condemn the Israeli bombing of the Gaza Strip, which has already claimed 200 lives.

#### *Conflicts between the Parties*

- On 3 May clashes break out in East Jerusalem between the Israeli security forces and Palestinian demonstrators protesting against the eviction by court order of 28 families from their homes in

the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, under an Israeli law that stipulates that if Israelis can prove their family lived in East Jerusalem before the 1948 war, they can file for the recovery of their "property rights." On 6 May, 15 people are arrested after new clashes take place between Israelis and Palestinians. The United Nations calls upon Israel to halt the evictions, recalling that there are already 3,500 settlers living in Arab neighbourhoods with the support of the government.

- On 5 May the Biden Administration announces before the US congress a new arms deal with Israel to the value of 735 million dollars. The announcement leads to an internal division in the Democratic Party.
- On 6 May two Palestinians are killed and a third injured during an attack on a checkpoint in Salem, the West Bank.
- On 7 May 205 Palestinians and 17 Israeli police are injured in clashes in Jerusalem, which include a police raid on the al-Aqsa mosque, where thousands of Muslims were gathered following the Friday prayers in solidarity with the evicted families from the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood. On 9 May, Israel decrees a state of maximum alert in Jerusalem hours before the beginning of the Israeli celebration to commemorate the 54th anniversary of the city's unification, while the fighting between Arabs and Jews spreads to other cities.
- On 10 May the Israeli army hits 130 Palestinian targets, mostly Hamas and Islamic Jihad positions, in its Guardian of the Wall offensive, in response to 200 rockets launched from the Gaza Strip in Palestine's Sword of Jerusalem offensive against the evictions of Palestinians from East Jerusalem. On 12 May, the attacks continue with 110 rockets fired from the Gaza Strip at Tel Aviv and Ben Gurion Airport. In response, Israel attacks Hamas positions in the Palestinian enclave leaving dozens dead. The UN Security Council concludes an emergency session without a final statement condemning Israel, due to a US veto.
- On 14 May the clashes between Arabs and Jews continue in cities like Tel Aviv, Haifa, Beersheba, Acre, Musmus and Jaffa with interventions from riot police, over a hundred arrests, property set on fire and gunfights. The situation

is particularly intense in Lod, where a state of emergency is decreed, and fears grow of an outbreak of civil conflict, fuelled largely by Itamar Ben Gvir and his far-right Otzama Yehudit (Jewish Power) party.

- On 14 May Israel launches its biggest offensive against Hamas since the 2014 war with 50 rounds of bombing by land and air in 40 minutes, destroying practically the entire network of clandestine tunnels, and deploys combat troops along the border with Gaza. The quick escalation of the conflict between Israel and Hamas, which in five days has already left over a hundred dead in Gaza, threatens to put an end to the rapprochement process between Israel and the Gulf countries, set in motion by the Abraham Accords.
- On 15 May 10 members of the same family are killed in an Israeli airstrike on the al-Shati refugee camp. On the same day, the al-Yala building is destroyed, which houses the Associated Press and al-Arabiya offices in Gaza and which, according to the Israeli army, was used by Hamas to try to jam the Iron Dome defence system.
- On 16 May Israeli missiles hit key Hamas targets, including its intelligence headquarters and homes of prominent Hamas leaders in the Gaza Strip, without harming anyone. The day ends with 42 Palestinians dead in Gaza. For its part, Egypt confirms it has stepped up diplomatic contacts to put an end to the spiral of violence, and, during the third emergency meeting of the UN Security Council, the United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres urges both sides to immediately cease hostilities, faced with the risk of a regional conflict and uncontrollable humanitarian crisis. The US veto once again prevents the adoption of a joint statement condemning Israel.
- On 17 May Hamas threatens to step up its attacks on Tel Aviv after an Israeli airstrike kills the Islamic Jihad commander Hussam Abu Harbeed in the Gaza Strip.
- On 18 May a Palestinian demonstrator is killed and another 40 injured in fighting with the Israeli army near al-Bireh, in the West Bank.
- On 19 May the US urges Israel to immediately de-escalate the bombing of Gaza.

- On 21 May, thanks to Egyptian mediation, a unilateral Israeli ceasefire enters into effect in Gaza, to which Hamas responds with similar measures. After 11 days of fighting, the death toll stands at 230 in Gaza and 12 in Israel, added to which thousands have been injured and over 70,000 internally displaced.
- On 21 May more violence is reported between Palestinians and Israeli police at the Temple Mount, East Jerusalem, after the Muslim Friday prayers.
- On 24 May the US State Secretary Antony Blinken travels to Jerusalem and Ramallah to reaffirm the Biden Administration's commitment to a two-state solution with Jerusalem as the shared capital.
- On 27 May the United Nations Human Rights Council agrees to open an investigation into the violations of international humanitarian law during the fighting between Israel and the Palestinian militias in Gaza.
- On 28 May Israeli soldiers kill a Palestinian man during a protest against the Israeli settlements in Beita, in the West Bank.
- On 30 May the Egyptian Foreign Minister, Sameh Shoukry, receives his Israeli counterpart Gabi Ashkenazi in Cairo to reinforce the ceasefire with Hamas in Gaza.
- On 31 May an Israeli soldier is injured near Sdei Avraham by a man who entered Israeli territory from the Gaza Strip and who is subsequently "neutralized."

## June 2021

### *Israel*

- On 1 June Israel withdraws its Green Pass system and allows equal access for vaccinated and unvaccinated citizens to restaurants, bars and cultural and leisure centres, in view of the drop in Covid-19 infections.
- On 2 June the Parliament elects Isaac Herzog as the new President of Israel, to succeed Reuven Rivlin, whose seven-year term expires on 9 June.
- On 2 June Israel reports that it has destroyed a Syrian army observation post in the Golan Heights. On 9 June, Syria condemns new Israeli attacks in the centre and south of its territory.
- On 2 June Yair Lapid announces that he has enough support to form a coalition government formed by the secular liberal Yesh Atid party and another seven parties: Benny Gantz's Kahol Lavan (Blue and White, right-wing); Naftali Bennett's ultra-nationalist Yamina and Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu; Gideon Saar's Tikva Hadasha (New Hope, liberal nationalist); Merav Michaeli's Labor Party (Avoda); Nitzan Horowitz's Meretz (Vigor, left-wing) and Mansour Abbas's United Arab List (Ra'am, Islamist).
- On 7 June the police bans the Flag March called by ultra-nationalists and pro-settlement groups in Jerusalem due to the high risk of unrest, since the organizers are planning to march through the Muslim neighbourhood of the Old City. On 9 June, the outgoing government of Benjamin Netanyahu authorizes the march, which finally goes ahead on 15 June amid a heavy police presence and incidents between security forces and Palestinian demonstrators along the route.
- On 13 June, after 12 years of a government led by Benjamin Netanyahu, the Parliament approves Naftali Bennet as the new Prime Minister, by a single vote, along with the rotating coalition government comprised of eight parties and 27 ministries. In a power-sharing deal, in two years, Yair Lapid will move from his position as Foreign Minister to occupy the post of Prime Minister.
- On 15 June the government announces the end of the mandatory use of face masks in indoor spaces. However, on 25 June the requirement is reintroduced in view of a surge in infections, and the country's reopening to tourism is delayed until 1 August.
- On 29 June the Israeli authorities begin the evacuation and demolition of Palestinian homes in Silwan, East Jerusalem, to expand the settlements.
- On 29 June the Foreign Minister Yair Lapid becomes the first Israeli leader to make an official visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) since the normalization of relations and opens his country's first embassy in the Persian Gulf.

### *Palestine*

- On 18 June the PNA cancels a deal with Israel to receive up to 1.4 million

doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine, as they are nearing their expiry date.

- On 21 June Israel allows commercial exports from the Gaza Strip to resume, on a limited and conditional basis, a month after the truce that put an end to 11 days of fighting.

- On 25 June protests break out in Ramallah over the death of Nizar Banat, the well-known opponent of the President Mahmoud Abbas, after being arrested by the Palestinian security forces in Hebron. The Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh orders an investigation to be opened.

### *Conflicts between the Parties*

- On 2 June at least two members of the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, are killed trying to deactivate a bomb fired by Israel during the latest attacks on Gaza.

- On 4 June more than 130 Palestinians are injured in clashes against Israeli police near Nablus, in protests against an Israeli settlement in Beita, and in Jerusalem, in protests against the evictions of Palestinians in East Jerusalem.

- On 4 June 23 runners that participated in a race in solidarity with the Palestinian families facing forced expulsion in East Jerusalem are injured when Israeli police fired tear gas and stun grenades.

- On 4 June Hamas threatens to renew fighting with Israel after Israeli officials stop Qatari funds at the Gaza border. The party-militia gives Israel a week to allow the aid passage into the country.

- On 10 June at least three Palestinians are killed, two of them intelligence officers, in an Israeli raid in Jenin, in the West Bank.

- On 16 June Israel launches airstrikes against the Gaza Strip in response to the launch of incendiary balloons the previous day from Palestinian territory. This is the first significant incident since the ceasefire on 21 May, as well as the first attack under the new Israeli government headed by Naftali Bennett.

- On 17 June the Israeli army launches new airstrikes on alleged Hamas targets in Beit Lahia, Jabalia and Khan Yunis, in the Gaza Strip.

## July 2021

### *Israel*

- On 3 July an Israeli cargo ship is damaged after being hit by a missile in the northern Indian Ocean on its way to the Persian Gulf, in an action attributed to Iran.
- On 6 July the Parliament refuses to extend the Citizenship and Entry Law in Israel passed in 2003, thereby affecting the reunification of Palestinian families and preventing citizenship or residency being automatically granted to Palestinians married to Israelis, after a member of the coalition government votes against the agreement.
- On 7 July Israeli forces destroy the homes and animal enclosures of 11 families from Khirbet Humsa al-Fouqa, who are moved to another area in the Jordan Valley. On 14 July, another operation in the Jordan Valley ends with the seizure of tents, belongings and livestock from 84 Palestinians from the Ras al-Tin Bedouin community.
- On 8 July the Supreme Court rejects an appeal from various NGOs against the 2018 law that defines the country as the “nation-state of the Jewish people.”
- On 12 July the Health Ministry authorizes the administration of a third dose of the Covid-19 vaccine to adults with immunodeficiency.
- On 14 July the UAE opens its first embassy in Israel in the framework of the Abraham Accords.
- On 18 July a Washington Post investigation reveals a list of 50,000 telephone numbers from all over the world which may be the target of the Pegasus spyware software leased by the Israeli firm NSO Group.
- On 19 July the ice-cream brand Ben & Jerry's, owned by the multinational Unilever, announces that it will stop the sale of its products in Palestinian Occupied Territories joining the boycott campaign against the construction and expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.
- On 20 July the Israeli army launches artillery into Lebanese territory in response to the launch of two rockets.
- On 21 July Israel imposes new restrictions faced with the increase in

Covid-19 cases, including the so-called Green Pass to access closed spaces.

- On 23 July the African Union grants Israel observer member status.
- On 25 July the Environmental Protection Ministry announces its decision to delay implementing the oil transport deal with the UAE, fruit of establishing bilateral relations between both countries following the signing of the Abraham Accords.
- On 27 July the Religious Affairs Minister Matan Kahana presents a plan to privatize the supervision and issue of kosher certificates and increase competition in the industry.

### *Palestine*

- On 11 July the Israeli government announces that it will withhold 154 million euros as a reprisal for funds that, over the last year, have been given to Palestinian institutions for what it considers purposes of “terrorism.”

### *Conflicts between the Parties*

- On 1 July Israel bombs Hamas facilities in response to the launch of incendiary balloons from the Gaza Strip.
- On 3 July a young Palestinian is shot dead by the Israeli army during clashes in the village of Qusra, in the West Bank.
- On 18 July clashes break out between the Israeli police and Muslim demonstrators at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem during the Jewish celebration of Tisha B'Av, which coincides with the Eid al-Fitr Muslim holiday.
- On 26 July Israel bombs Hamas positions in the Gaza Strip in response to incendiary balloons launched at Israeli territory.
- On 27 July a Palestinian municipal worker in Beita, in the West Bank, is shot dead by Israeli soldiers during the weeks of protest over a dispute on an Israeli settlement.

## August 2021

### *Israel*

- On 3 August major wildfires are reported in wooded areas east of Jerusa-

lem stopping the traffic on the motorway that connects the city with Tel Aviv.

- On 5 August the Israeli Air Force attacks areas of Lebanon from where it is believed three rockets were fired on 4 August at the Upper Galilee.
- On 17 August the Health Ministry reports more than 8,500 Covid-19 infections, the highest figure since January in a generalized surge in the pandemic that has forced the country to reinstate some of the lockdown measures.

### *Palestine*

- On 29 August, in Ramallah, the Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas hold the first high-level meeting between Israel and Palestine since 2010, during which they agree on measures for rescuing the Palestinian economy, such as a 132-million-euro loan to the PNA, the legalization of the status of thousands of Palestinians in the West Bank, Palestinian building permits in Zone C in the West Bank and an increase in permits for Palestinians working in Israel.

### *Conflicts between the Parties*

- On 22 and 28 August the IDF attacks Hamas targets in Gaza following “violent unrest” and the launch of incendiary balloons.
- On 24 August a young Palestinian is shot dead by Israeli soldiers during a raid at the Balata refugee camp, near Nablus.
- On 30 August an Israeli sergeant dies in Beersheba from injuries suffered nine days earlier in fierce clashes close to the border with Gaza.

## September 2021

### *Israel*

- On 6 September the commander of Fatah's armed wing Zakaria Zubeidi and five members of Islamic Jihad escape from the Gilboa Prison using a tunnel they dug in their shared cell. In the West Bank, protests are organized to hamper the Israeli security forces' search efforts.

- On 13 September Naftali Bennett becomes the first Israeli prime minister to make an official visit to Egypt in the last 10 years, during which he talks with the President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi regarding formulas to reactivate the peace talks with the Palestinians, the Turkish influence in Libya, tensions between Egypt and Ethiopia and the threat of jihadist groups in the region.
- On 13 September the trial resumes against the former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, on charges of corruption, fraud and abuse of power in Case 4000 over alleged favours granted to the magnate Shaul Elovitch, chairman of the Bezeq telecommunications company.
- On 30 September the Foreign Minister Yair Lapid becomes the first Israeli minister to make an official visit to Bahrain.

#### *Palestine*

- On 1 September Israel announces the lifting of certain restrictions imposed on the Gaza Strip and the expansion of its fishing zone by 15 nautical miles.
- On 2 September the trial begins of a group of six activists and national figures at the Ramallah Magistrate Court, accused of illegal gatherings, incitation of sectarian strife and defamation. The six were arrested in August for taking part in protests against the murder in June of activist Nizar Banat while he was in police custody and to condemn the oppression of freedom of expression in Palestine.
- On 6 September the Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip temporarily suspend their activities at the border fence to give space to Egyptian and Qatari mediation and work towards raising the embargo.

#### *Peace Negotiations*

- On 1 September the Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid rules out resuming the peace process with Palestinians describing it as “unfeasible” at the current moment.

#### *Conflicts between the Parties*

- On 7 September the Israeli army carries out attacks on the Gaza Strip in

response to the launch of incendiary balloons from Palestinian territory.

- On 10 September the Iron Dome defence system intercepts a rocket fired from the Gaza Strip after four of the six Palestinian prisoners that escaped from the Gilboa Prison on 6 September are recaptured.
- On 10 September the Israeli police kill a man in Jerusalem’s Old City who had attempted to stab several officers, in the context of increasing tensions following the escape of Palestinian prisoners from the Gilboa Prison.
- On 13 September a young Palestinian man tries to stab an Israeli soldier in the Gush Etzion settlement, in the West Bank. Hours later, at least two people are injured in a new knife attack at the Jerusalem central bus station, allegedly perpetrated by a young Palestinian man who is arrested after the attack.
- On 24 September at least one person is killed and 17 injured in clashes in Beita, in the West Bank, between Palestinians and Israeli security forces.
- On 30 September two Palestinians are shot dead by Israeli forces in different incidents in Jerusalem’s Old City and in Jenin.

### **October 2021**

#### *Israel*

- On 7 October Israel alerts its embassies around the world warning of possible terrorist threats from Iran.
- On 10 October a demonstration in Tel Aviv by health workers protests the government’s decision to uphold 26-hour shifts for most doctors.
- On 10 October official Israeli data reveal that Jewish immigration to Israel has grown by 31% in 2021, with 20,360 arrivals in the last year, compared with 15,598 in 2020.
- On 11 October the Prime Minister Naftali Bennett announces that the government will approve establishing two new settlements in the Golan Heights, in efforts to increase the Israeli population in the occupied area to 100,000.
- On 22 October the Defence Ministry designates six of the main Palestinian human rights NGOs as terrorist organizations for supporting and financing the

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).

- On 25 October Israel approves a 4.1-billion-euro plan involving 13 ministries to reduce carbon emissions.
- On 27 October Israel announces a plan to build 3,144 new homes in settlements in the West Bank, the first since Joe Biden assumed the US Presidency. Washington, the EU and the UN all urge Israel to halt the project.

#### *Palestine*

- On 8 October a group of Palestinian factions from the Gaza Strip call on the population to participate in demonstrations to condemn the landmark ruling of an Israeli court to authorize Jewish prayer at the Temple Mount. On 9 October, the President Mahmoud Abbas instructs the Palestinian representative to the United Nations Riyad Mansour to initiate immediate action before the UN to counter the court decision.
- On 23 October a group of prisoners from Islamic Jihad ends a nine-day hunger strike to protest against Israeli policies towards inmates since several prisoners escaped from the maximum security Gilboa Prison in September.
- On 25 October Hamas announces that several of its prisoners in Israeli jails will join the hunger strike initiated in July by six other members of the Islamic Resistance Movement being held in administrative detention.
- On 28 October Hamas announces that six Palestinians have been sentenced to death for spying for Israel with other sentences handed down ranging from life imprisonment to hard labour.
- On 28 October the Israel Electric Corporation (IEC) threatens to cut the power supply to parts of the West Bank for failing to pay debts to the value of 104 million euros.

#### *Conflicts between the Parties*

- On 16 October at least 44 Palestinians are injured in clashes with the Israeli army in Beita and Beit Dajan, in the West Bank, during protests against the expansion of Israeli settlements.



- On 19 October Israeli police officers clash with Palestinian demonstrators at the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem's Old City.

## November 2021

### *Israel*

- On 1 November Israel's Civil Administration authorizes the construction of 1,303 homes for the Palestinian community in Jenin and Bethlehem, in the Israeli-controlled Area C.
- On 2 November four Palestinian families awaiting expulsion in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in East Jerusalem reject the Israeli Supreme Court's solution to allow them to remain in their homes as tenants for at least 15 years, paying rent to the organization of Jewish settlers trying to evict them.
- On 4 November the Knesset approves the 2022 state budget presented by the coalition government by a narrow margin, thereby avoiding a fifth election since 2019.
- On 10 November Israel initiates the first joint naval exercise with Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, coordinated with the US Fifth Fleet, in the Red Sea.

### *Conflicts between the Parties*

- On 17 November two Israeli border police officers are injured in Jerusalem's Old City in a knife attack carried out by a Palestinian who is shot down in the act by security forces.
- On 21 November an imam and Hamas member disguised as an ultra-Orthodox Jew kills one person and injures another three at the Chain Gate, one of the entrances to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The attack leads Israel to call Turkey to shut down the Hamas office in Ankara and ban its activities.

## December 2021

### *Israel*

- On 2 December the United Nations General Assembly calls on Israel to

withdraw from the occupied Golan Heights in a resolution which describes the country's decision to impose its jurisdiction on the territory as "null and void."

- On 3 December Israel suspends the controversial programme overseen by Shin Bet, the internal security service, to track people affected by the Covid-19 omicron variant just a few days after it entered into effect, in view of the widespread criticism of the measure.
- On 6 December Israel postpones the controversial construction of some 9,000 homes on the grounds of the old airport of Atarot, in East Jerusalem, citing the need to assess the project's environmental impact.
- On 8 December Israel finishes the construction of a 65-kilometre underground border wall by the Gaza Strip to stop possible Hamas attacks.
- On 13 December Naftali Bennett carries out the first official visit to the UAE of an Israeli head of government.
- On 22 December Israeli medical experts recommend a fourth dose of the coronavirus vaccine be given to citizens over 60, at-risk groups and medical workers. On 31 December, administration of a fourth dose begins on patients with immunodeficiency.
- On 27 December Israel urges the UN to intervene after Lebanon announces a tender for international companies to carry out exploratory drilling in a maritime area under dispute between the two countries.

### *Palestine*

- On 11 December Palestine holds the first phase of local elections, which are boycotted by Hamas. The independent lists of local clans close to Fatah win more than 70% of the contested seats. The second round, for the larger constituencies, will be held in March 2022.
- On 15 December the Palestinian armed factions in Gaza begin two weeks of military exercises, known as al-Quds Shield. The manoeuvres coincide with an Israeli army drill in Dimona, which simulates a large-scale defence against the launch of rockets from Gaza, as well as the ultimatum given by Hamas

to Egypt to put an end to Israel's blockade on the Gaza Strip.

- On 28 December the PNA President Mahmoud Abbas meets with the Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz to discuss security issues on his first trip to Israel since the 2016 funeral of the former Prime Minister and former President of Israel Shimon Peres, and his first working visit in 11 years. After the meeting, Gantz announces measure that include the delivery of around 28.5 million euros in funds raised by Israel on behalf of the PNA to reduce the Palestinian deficit and the legalization of the status of 9,500 Palestinians and foreigners living without papers in Gaza and the West Bank.

### *Conflicts between the Parties*

- On 3 December at least two Israeli police officers are injured when they are rammed by a vehicle in Umm al-Fahm, in the West Bank, after a night of unrest over the death of a resident during an Israeli police raid.
- On 5 December a Palestinian man is shot down by police after trying to stab an ultra-Orthodox Jew at the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem's Old City.
- On 13 December a Palestinian is killed during armed clashes with Israeli forces in Ras al-Ain, Nablus.
- On 16 December a student from a rabbinical school is murdered in an attack attributed to Palestinians in the Homesh settlement. The incident provokes attacks over the following days by hundreds of Israeli settlers on residents of the Palestinian villages of Burqa, Sebastia and Silat ad-Dhahr.
- On 23 December the IDF kills a Palestinian man who had opened fire from a vehicle on Israeli soldiers entering Ramallah to search for people suspected of approaching the settlement of Psagot.
- On 31 December Israeli forces shoot down a Palestinian man who had tried to stab several police officers in the northern West Bank.

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